FILTERED VIOLENCE: PROPAGANDA MODEL AND POLITICAL ECONOMY OF THE INDIAN FILM INDUSTRY

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ABSTRACT
Production, distribution, and consumption of cinematic violence raises several questions of academic import. Despite a plethora of research studies exploring the nature of screen violence and its effects on viewers, a serious debate on the influence of state machinery on the production of sanitized violence in movies is still wanting. Likewise, Bollywood’s role in advancing the Indian government’s agenda in war and peace times has been paid petite attention in academic discourses dealing with media-state interconnection. This article explores the relevance of Herman and Chomsky’s propaganda model as a framework for analysis and analyzes Bollywood’s movies based on stories of violence in war and peace times. The article discusses the connections with the Indian state apparatus that influences production processes in the Indian film industry by providing financial assistance and applying multifarious political, social, economic, and ideological pressures (filters). The findings suggest that the Bollywood movies support diplomatic initiatives of the Indian government through cinematic narratives of sanitized violence.

Keywords: soft power, propaganda model, violence, Bollywood, political economy

INTRODUCTION
It was a remarkable moment in the history of the Indian film industry when the former Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh, declared that Bollywood, the Indian film industry, would function as a diplomatic tool in the 21st century. He pronounced that the Indian soft power would be employed to influence world public opinion about the mounting importance of India as a global political and economic actor (Bollywood, 2008; Manmohan, 2009). The statement of the Prime Minister in June 2008, envisioning a new role for the entertainment industry, signified a symbiotic relationship between the Indian government and Bollywood. The relationship, symbiotic or ambivalent, between culture industries and states received paltry attention in academic circles despite the fact that various states have actively promoted entertainment

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industries to enhance their political and economic clout (Hesmodhalgh, 2007). This article applied Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model (2002) and political economy of mass media approach to examine the nature of relationship between Bollywood and the Indian state in times of active conflict and peace. Since majority of the films based on the external relations of a nation-state with other countries contain violence (Zelizer & Allan, 2011), this article explores the production of violent themes in Bollywood films in war and peace times and the relationship between sanitized cinematic violence and foreign policy of India.

Traditionally, the state intervened in the business of media due to their social relevance and impact on public opinion. In Europe, for example, the state is an important player that maintains its influence in the media market through its “own activities in the field of radio and television” (Richeri, 2011: 135). Similarly, extant research (Anderson, 2006; Herman and Chomsky, 2002; Mosco, 1986; Schiller, 2011; Zelizer and Allan, 2011) has identified patterns of close cooperation among transnational corporations, government, military, and media. Hesmondhalgh (2007) argues that the connection between state institutions and culture industries should be thoughtfully examined as cultural products not only secure export income from foreign markets but also expediently disseminate state ideology and a set of values to other societies. The internal and external policies of a state, beyond doubt, have a deep impact on the operations of mass media as well as the production and consumption of cultural commodities (Hesmondhalgh, 2007; McQuail, 2010). In recent years, a few studies (Prindle, 1993; Wasko, 2004; Zelizer and Allan, 2011) have focused on the manipulation tactics applied by the policy-makers to harness the potential of soft power through cajoling culture industries to propagate peculiar ideological perspectives.

Extant literature under the banner of the political economy approach indicates that the interconnection between culture industry and public policy is a hazy area receiving minimal attention in the academy. In their germinal studies, Guback (1969) and Schiller (1969) documented Hollywood’s proximity with the policy-making circles to dominate the European film industries with an active support of the US government. Recently, a few scholars (Bagdikian, 2004; Bettig and Hall, 2012; McChesney, 2008; Prindle, 1993; Wasko, 2004; Zelizer and Allan, 2011; Van Zoonen, 2005, 2007) have discussed the nature of relationship between the state and the film industry from a critical perspective. Nonetheless, a serious debate on the influence of the silver screen on foreign policy or vice versa is still wanting. It is therefore heuristically significant to analyze the relationship between Bollywood and the Indian state in times of war and peace to examine how film industry is affected by the state policies when violence is approved by the state (sanitized violence). By explicating political economy of mass media, this article first explores the relevance of Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model as a framework for analysis followed by a discussion and analysis of the Bollywood's films containing violent narratives and their connection with the Indian state apparatus that influences production processes in the Indian film industry by providing financial assistance to Bollywood, and applying multifarious political, social, economic, and ideological pressures (filters).
**Political economy of mass media and the film industry**

The seminal works of Herman and Chomsky (2002), McChesney (2008), and Mosco (2009) on political economy of mass media explained the intricate nature of relationship between mass media and government apparatus. Political economy of communication identifies patterns of relationship between government and the mass media controlled by the political and business elite, which seek to perpetuate an ideology that helps maximize their profits in geometric progression. It is a useful framework to understand “the role of media in different societies and examines how market structures, policies and subsidies, and organizational structures shape and determine the nature of media system and media content” (McChesney, 2008: 491). The modern technology-intensive and commercially driven media promote dominant ideologies because their political and economic interests are intertwined with those in the corridors of power (Bettig and Hall, 2012; McChesney, 1999, 2008; Mosco, 2008, 2009; Thomas, 2010; Wasko, Murdock, and Sousa, 2011).

The political economy of communication as a methodological approach is sparingly applied to explore the relationship between film industry and policy-making. Guback (1969) offered an explanation by proclaiming that the film texts and content were easily accessible for research, while information about the economic and ideological structure of the culture industry was difficult to retrieve due to complex structures of ownership and control. Subsequently, Wasko (2004) argued, “analysis is mostly based on materials generated by the industry itself and is hardly ever critical of the industry” (134). Besides, researchers examined film as a text and context in the humanities tradition that made film a less attractive subject area for social scientists and political economists (Wasko, 2004). Since film is an entertainment genre encompassing fictional content, academics have a tendency to ignore it as a serious medium suitable for research in political communication and policy debates (Van Zoonen, 2005). In recent decades, however, researchers focused on the political and economic interests and influence of the film industry, and the rapid development and cartelization of film industries in the US, Europe, Japan, and India were carefully examined in the political economy literature (Kunz, 2006; Lorenzen, 2007, 2009; Author removed, 2012). Accordingly, the interest of the critical scholars in Bollywood, Mumbai’s over-the-top film industry, has amplified, and the number of studies on Bollywood has multiplied (Flew, 2007; Geetha, 2003; Jaikumar, 2003; Rao, 2007). Bollywood applied a vigorous marketing strategy in the recent decades, which was actively supported by the Indian government through Bollywood-friendly policies such as enactment of laws facilitating foreign direct investment and reduction in entertainment tax (Jaikumar, 2003; Author removed, 2012). This was not fairly unique, as governments traditionally supported their culture industries in various parts of the world. For example, the US government keenly promoted Hollywood in East Asia, Europe, and Latin America to exploit entertainment markets and sustain an American sphere of influence in different parts of the world (Miller et al., 2005; Prindle, 1993; Trumpbour, 2002).

During the previous decade Bollywood produced films carrying political themes and advancing the Indian government’s political agenda in the region. Films such as LOC Kargil (2003) and Lakshya (2004) had strong patriotic and jingoistic undertones that were in consonance with the government’s foreign policy (Author removed, 2011).
Conversely, when a process of détente had caught momentum in the region after 2003, Bollywood films such as Veer Zara (2004) and Main Hon Na (2004) endorsed harmony and friendship between India and Pakistan. Analyzing these films from a political economy of mass media perspective and applying Herman and Chomsky’s propaganda model would be a significant contribution in the political economy of mass media tradition as the propaganda model has previously been employed to study the influence of various filters on the selection of news content. This study would advance the scope of political economy research by using propaganda model to analyze entertainment products that have plots revolving around foreign policy issues.

**Passing through the filters: Herman and Chomsky’s propaganda model**

Herman and Chomsky’s propaganda model focuses on the strategies employed by the politically and financially powerful elite to marginalize dissident voices. Control over media results in homogeny and proves destructive for the existence of a healthy and diverse public sphere essential for the smooth functioning of democratic institutions. The essential constituents of the propaganda model are termed as news filters. The first content filter is outlined as the size, ownership concentration and owners' wealth, and profit-driven operations of media conglomerates. Recent decades have witnessed momentous changes in the structure of media industry, and there is a growing trend towards conglomeration through joint operations, mergers, interlocking directorships, and large investments (Altschull, 1995; Bagdikian, 2004; Herman and Chomsky, 2002; Mosco, 2009). For example, five major corporations control flow of information and entertainment content in the United States (Bagdikian, 2004). These organizations generate huge profits through advertising and other commercial ventures, hire lobbying firms to cajole politicians to relax regulations in their favor, and increase their size and wealth at the expense of local and minority media organizations (Mosco, 2009).

Herman and Chomsky (2002) argue that advertising, the primary source of revenue for the media, works as the second filter. Advertisers are not interested in large number of audiences, but they are interested in right kind of audience -- those who have the purchasing power (Herman and Chomsky, 2002; Jhally, 1989). Bettig and Hall (2012) maintain that “one of the primary goals of advertising is to differentiate between scores of virtually indistinguishable products that promise to fulfill our needs” (82). Thus, consumers of mass media are sold to the advertisers as eyeballs without their consent. Because advertising is one of the chief sources of revenue for the mass media, it works as an important content filter in routine operations of media industry.

The third filter, according to the propaganda model, is “the reliance of media on information provided by the government, business, and ‘experts’ funded and approved by these primary sources and agents of power” (Herman and Chomsky, 2002: 2). There has been a growing trend in media organizations to depend on the information provided by government sources and private experts. Anderson (1997) asserts that while covering political and environmental issues, media depend on government sources, and only one side of the story is told. McChesney (2008) notes that during media reforms movement in 2003, the mainstream media offered negligible coverage to the activists protesting against proposed media ownership policy changes by the FCC. Beyond doubt, media’s dependence on government, not only for news but also
for friendly regulations to protect their economic interests, has been exacerbated in recent decades.

Herman and Chomsky (2002) argue that the powerful political and economic elite have also used flak to discipline the media. They describe flak as powerful negative reactions to the media programs and coverage. They also assert that the “ability to produce flak that is costly and threatening is related to power, and the government and private commercial interests are chief producers of flak and cooperate with one another to contain any deviations from the established line” (Herman and Chomsky, 2002: 26). Congruently, to maintain control over the culture industry, anti-communism ideology is used as the fifth filter to hold back dissident voices. Although this filter has been substituted by other ideological confrontations after the demise of the Soviet Union, it has remained a ruling paradigm in media discourse for decades. The progressive campaigners expressing liberal opinions have been kept on the defensive because they are labeled as pro-communist and traitors. Herman and Chomsky (2002) suggest that “anti-communism control mechanism reaches through the system to exercise a profound influence on the mass media” (30). In recent times, anti-terrorism rhetoric has supplanted communism as a potential enemy. Herman (2009) has noted that the notion of a Red Threat helped United States to support rogue states that served its political and economic interests, and anti-communism rhetoric was used as an intellectual cover during the Cold War. He asserts that the war on terror started by the Bush administration is providing a similar cover to the United States to support terror regimes across the globe. The promotional economy subjugates consciousness of the media workers and encourages mainstream media organizations to operate as colonized propaganda apparatuses (Sussman, 2011).

These five filters affect the nature of content produced by media and curtail the range of content capable of passing through these filters. For example, violation of human rights, torture of political prisoners, and corruption of the allies in other countries is likely to be tolerated by the American government and media (Herman and Chomsky, 2002; McChesney, 2008). Media are expected to follow the government’s policy as they will attract flak from the government if they plan to comment unfavorably on a friendly government. Inversely, “reports of the abuse of worthy victims not only pass through the filters; they may also become the basis of sustained propaganda campaigns” (Herman and Chomsky, 2002: 32). These propaganda campaigns would by and large be adjusted to safeguard interests of the elite, and the government or large media firm(s) would most likely initiate such operations. Murdoch’s media empire is a glaring example of ideological apparatuses that had closely worked with the Bush administration to further its agenda in different parts of the world (Sussman, 2011). Bollywood, being one of the largest media industries in the world, worked closely with the government to avoid flak and in return, harvested tangible economic benefits such as tax cuts and soft loans.

**Soft power and Culture industry: Bollywood and the Indian Government**

Vaish (2011) argued that the growing popularity of Bollywood – a term coined by the Indian English press in 1970s – had been signifying Indian soft power in a globalized world during the last couple of decades. Due to its global outreach,
Bollywood’s worth in the Indian market had been Rs. 5,990 crore ( $12 billion) in 2004, and the pace of growth was likely to approach Indian Rs. 17,500 crore ($35 billion) in 2011 (Subramanian, 2007). Various media institutions such as radio and TV (Doordarshan) and new technologies such as Internet and DVDs have supported the vertical growth of Bollywood as a global cultural industry (Punathambekar, 2010). After officially declaring Bollywood an industry in 1998, the Indian government vigorously helped Bollywood sustain its commercial growth by reducing entertainment tax, enacting laws to simplify foreign direct investment, and offering soft loans to the producers (Author removed, 2011). The government also offered Bollywood a tax relief on the income grossed through releasing films in foreign countries (Thussu, 2006). The synergetic relationship between Indian government and the film industry had been articulated on numerous occasions through statements of official representatives. For instance, the Information Minister, Sushma Swaraj, plainly declared in 2003 that the Bollywood-friendly policies of the Indian government helped Bollywood increase its exports from $40 million in 1998 to $180 million in 2001 (Athique, 2012; Thomas, 2010).

Keeping in view the wide-reaching reception of Bollywood films, the Indian Finance Minister termed film industry as the Indian soft power on the floor of the Lok Sabha - the lower house of the Indian parliament in 1998 (Arpana, 2008). The Indian parliament had legislated rules enabling commercial banks to sponsor the film industry and allowing foreign direct investment to support the production of high quality films. The government also reduced entertainment tax and relaxed rules governing the shooting of foreign films in India (Thomas, 2010). Due to cuts in taxes and softer regulations, the Indian entertainment exports leapfrogged from $10 million in 1990 to $100 million in 1999 (Power and Mazumdar, 2000). Kaur and Sinha (2005) argued that the Indian government had realized the commercial potential of Bollywood on account of production of “family films” and emergence of the middle class Indian diasporic communities, which were capable of investing “in the Indian state’s political, economic, and cultural plans” (107).

Bollywood also cultivated strong ties with the Indian Foreign Ministry. According to Chatterji (2008), the Public Diplomacy Division of the Indian Ministry of External Affairs cooperated and financed Saregama India Ltd to produce a special volume of Indian popular songs, which was presented to diplomats and foreign dignitaries as a part of diplomatic courtesy. Interestingly, this album was presented to the officials of Pakistani Foreign Ministry for the first time when an Indian delegation visited Pakistan in 2006. The corporate sector in collaboration with the Indian government used the soft power for economic gains as well. For example, iPods and CDs loaded with popular Indian music were distributed among delegates in the World Economic Forum in Davos in 2006 to boost Indian influence among global business and political leadership (Thussu, 2006). Similarly, Skamak Davar (a Bollywood choreographer) choreographed shows to enhance awareness about India’s growing political and economic importance in the global community through an “India everywhere” public-private promotional campaign (Kavoori and Punathambekar, 2008).

Accordingly, the Indian government has been actively exploiting Bollywood’s potential to achieve foreign policy goals. Prime Minister Manmohan Singh declared
that the soft power of India could work as a pivotal instrument of foreign policy, and became the first Indian leader to acknowledge the impact of the culture industry and business on the making of foreign policy. Baru (2009) argued that the External Publicity Division of the Indian Foreign Ministry has not only promoted India abroad but also developed consensus on key internal policy issues among highly diverse domestic publics by efficiently using Bollywood and other mass media. The Indian government successfully applied the soft power potential of Bollywood to unite the country at national level and exported Indian values to other parts of the world. Nye (2005) termed cultural prowess of a country as its soft power, which “rests upon the attractiveness of its culture, the appeal of its domestic political and social values, and the style and substance of its foreign policies” (2005: 11). Soft power was recognized as a significant promotional tool in various parts of the world, and Joseph Stalin – the Russian Marxist leader -- had also proclaimed that he would have diffused communism globally if he had a powerful film industry such as Hollywood under his control (Miller et al., 2005). Being a soft power weapon, Bollywood keenly filtered the content of its blockbusters to accommodate state ideology as its economic interests were intertwined with the political interests of the Indian state.

Filtered entertainment: Bollywood films and the Indian foreign policy

The discussion in the preceding paragraphs has delineated a synergistic relationship between Bollywood and the Indian government, which exploited the appeal of the culture industry to propagate state-sponsored ideology at national and international levels (Baru, 2009). This synergy exists almost everywhere in the world, and various states such as the US, Germany, and Japan have actively used their film industries to promote their political and economic interests in different regions of the world (McQuail. 2010; Prindle, 1993). Bollywood has also been following and supporting the external and internal policies of successive Indian governments (Baru, 2009). For example, the narrative of the Bollywood films invariably hanged on the nature of relationship between India and Pakistan despite Bollywood’s massive fandom in Pakistan. The relationship between both South Asian countries had passed through many turbulent phases. In 1999, both countries fought a limited war in the Kashmir region, and the Indian government incessantly accused Pakistan of sponsoring terrorism in India. An ongoing conflict brought mutually hostile neighbors to the brink of a full-scale war as both countries amassed their armed forces on the borders during 2001-2002. After a couple of tense years, the governments led by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee of India and President Pervez Musharraf of Pakistan kicked off a process of détente. It would be naïve to believe that the Indian entertainment industry, being an equally popular entertainment industry in both countries, remained unresponsive in such convoluted geopolitical situations affecting millions of people on both sides of the border.

In recent decades, Hindi films carried political themes and depicted wars in which Pakistan was invariably presented as a villain and a rogue state that sponsors terrorism. During the previous decade, four popular box-office hits from Bollywood -- LOC Kargil, (2003), Lakshya (2004), Veer Zara (2004), and Main Hon Na (2004) -- focused on the nature of changing relationship between India and Pakistan. A couple of these films -- Lakshya (2004) and LOC Kargil (2003) -- contained jingoistic subject
matter as these were filmed on the Kargil War in the Kashmir region, while the other two -- Main Hon Na (2004) and Veer Zara (2004) -- focused on the normalization of relations and commended the peace process between the two countries. These films were produced and distributed by important players in the Indian entertainment industry, and featured Bollywood heartthrobs equally popular in India and Pakistan (Chatterji, 2008). By applying Herman and Chomsky’s propaganda model, the chief objective of focusing on production, distribution, and revenue generation of these films is to identify content filters employed by Bollywood in war and peace situations.

**Ownership, size, and profit orientation of Bollywood: The first filter**

According to the Herman and Chomsky’s propaganda model, media firms have been a part of the market economy, and the media stocks are “favorites” in the market that facilitates the entry of speculators. The media firms, therefore, are focusing more on generating profits through “media concentration, cross-ownership, and control by non-media companies” (Herman and Chomsky, 2002: 8). Deregulation of media and enhanced profits have led to mergers and takeovers in the media industry with a few actors controlling media business at domestic, regional, and global levels (Bagdikian, 2004). Bollywood is not immune to these international trends. Bollywood was formally recognized as an industry in 1998, which helped the entertainment industry integrate into the domestic and international markets, and secure soft loans from banks and institutional investors, which according to Herman and Chomsky (2002) are deeply interested in owning media stocks. The entertainment sector was expected to grow over $10 billion in 2009 while in 2004, the value of Indian creative industry stood at $4.3 billion (FICCI, 2004; UNESCO, 2005a). According to UNESCO (2005a) estimates, exports of cultural products were likely to grow by 50 per cent in India. Thus, Bollywood is a lucrative market for public and private investors not only in India but also across the globe.

The first filter in the propaganda model also describes media’s dependence on the government for profit-making, as business corporations are interested in taxation rules, interest rates, antitrust laws and labor policies of the government (Herman and Chomsky, 2002). Bollywood, being a soft power, enjoys full support of the government that has relaxed entertainment tax rules, permitted foreign companies and individuals to invest in Bollywood, and allowed banks and financial institutions to grant loans to film makers despite the risky nature of entertainment business (Arpana, 2008; Athique, 2012; Thomas, 2010). Ownership is highly concentrated in Bollywood and a few important actors control production, distribution, direction, and other allied activities. For example, Excel Entertainment Pvt. Limited, owned jointly by Farhan Akhtar and Ritesh Sidhwani, not only directed and produced Lakshya (2004) but also distributed films produced by other Bollywood bigwigs including Farah Khan and Sharukh Khan – director and producers of Main Hon Na (2004) respectively (Vaidya, 2007). Sharukh Khan, popularly known as King Khan, is one of the most popular superstars in Bollywood and jointly owns Red Chillies Entertainment with his wife Gauri Khan. Similarly, Veer Zara (2004) was produced by Yash Raj Films, which is the biggest production company in India and the largest distribution firm in the world (Thomas, 2010). Veer Zara (2004) overtly remarked on Indo-Pakistan relations with Shahrukh Khan in the lead role. Another Bollywood film that dealt with the conflict in South Asia was LOC Kargil (2003), which was written, directed and produced by J. P.
Dutta, who was known for his expertise in making war films. SaReGaMa-HMV and J. P. Films were responsible for the distribution of the film. Thus, the current trends of concentration of ownership and control in Bollywood are in line with the first filter of the propaganda model, and evidence suggests that a few influential individuals own production and distribution companies in Bollywood, who make decisions regarding content and direction of the Indian culture industry as they finance, direct, act, and distribute the films in domestic and international markets.

**Advertising power: The second filter**

The second filter determining the flow of content in media is advertising that has led to the increased concentration in the media industry (Herman and Chomsky, 2002). Advertising agencies, large media firms, and governments depend on each other in promotional economies in which interdependence between these institutions generates a synergistic relationship that forces them to safeguard each other’s interests (Altschull, 1995; Chomsky, 1989; Sussman, 2011). Advertising revenue generates both competition and cooperation in the market as media firms would not be an economically viable venture without the advertising dollar. Large media organizations commodify entertainment programs by placing advertisements to utilize the surplus watching time in neoliberal economies (Jhally, 1989; Sussman, 2011). Advertising influences the content of media products by filtering programs and narratives that would be liked by majority of the consumers, in particular those with a purchasing power (Altschull, 1995; Herman and Chomsky, 2002). Advertisers would not be interested in content that sparks controversy because it can disrupt the buying mood. Instead, media promotes entertainment-oriented content that supplements the selling messages of advertisers by attracting the “right audience” (Van Zoonen, 2005). Thus, under the light of the propaganda model, Bollywood films are likely to produce a content that attracts middle class viewers who are willing to buy the tickets and purchase other commodities manufactured by firms and sold at multiplexes with which Bollywood shares economic interests (Thomas, 2010).

Typically films do not contain advertisements like television or print media, but the business interests of advertisers and Bollywood production houses are intertwined and they find innovative ways to promote various products in the films. Bollywood is not invulnerable to the commercial pressures in India, and its operations are entwined with the burgeoning market economy and huge multiplexes (Kavoori & Punathambekar, 2008). Corporate sector employs many indirect methods such as product placement to multiply their profits in the culture industry. A few producers acknowledged their cooperation with the advertising companies to appropriately place products in their films (Lehu, 2007). In Bollywood films, certain brands such as Coke, Pepsi, Nike, Adidas, Apple, and Tommy Hilfiger are visible (Lorenzen, 2009; Athique, 2012). Bollywood stars endorse commercial products on television and they are brand ambassadors for various multinational firms. For example, Shahrukh Khan wears branded clothes, often drinks Pepsi or Coke in various scenes, and runs an advertising agency with his wife, Gauri Khan, who has produced a few Bollywood blockbusters (Vaidya, 2007). He also played the lead role in two of the four films on Indo-Pakistan relations in the previous decade. Hirsch (2009) identified 1133 products placed in Hindi films in his analysis of product placement in Bollywood and Shahrukh Khan’s Kuch
Kuch Hota Hai (1998) alone contained 144. These trends indicate that the synergistic relationship between advertisers and Bollywood filters the content and production processes in Indian culture industry.

**Government as content source: The third filter**

Herman and Chomsky (2002) suggest that “mass media are drawn into a symbiotic relationship with powerful sources of information by economic necessity and reciprocity of interests” (18). Mass media rely on information flowing from official sources because government sources are credible information providers. Spokespersons of the governments and armed forces arrange regular briefings for media professionals in times of war and peace. For example, Pentagon authorities passed on most of the information to journalists in the two Gulf Wars, and media organizations thought twice before running anything without prior permission from Pentagon in the wake of the tragic incident of 9/11 (Zelizer and Allan, 2011). While commenting on sensitive issues linked to the foreign policy of a nation, the governments always act as a filter through which only officially sanctioned content can pass. Prindle (1993) argues that despite its liberal bias, Hollywood seeks instructions from Washington before producing films on sensitive diplomatic subjects.

Similarly, the Indian government had cultivated a symbiotic relationship with Bollywood. The central government not only purveyed financial benefits to Bollywood by declaring it an industry, but also facilitated the film makers to shoot films on Indo-Pakistan relations in militarily sensitive area (Author removed, 2011). For example, shooting of the film Lakshya (2004) and LOC Kargil (2003) would not have been possible without Indian government's active involvement in the scripts of the films because shooting at 14000 feet above sea level depended on the logistic support and information provided by the government (Kazmi, 2004). Considering culture industry as an important propaganda tool, the Indian government had been keenly assisting Bollywood. The Indian government also used other cultural products to promote foreign policy agenda. On June 25, 2009, the Indian Ministry of Information's Films Division in collaboration with the Armed Forces’ Film and Photo Division organized a two-day festival on War Films, which was inaugurated by Major General (retired) E D'souza (Mumbai, 2009). In the festival, a prominent Bollywood producer, Mahesh Bhatt, commented on the role of Bollywood films in preventing a full-scale war between India and Pakistan. The Indian culture industry followed the government's official foreign policy while selecting themes related to war and conflict with other countries, and the government's influence on the cinema filtered content on sensitive diplomatic issues through one-sided supply of information.

**Fear of flak: The fourth filter**

Herman and Chomsky (2002) define flak as an adverse reaction of individuals, organizations, and governments to the unfavorable media content. Flak may entail verbal censure, threats, legal actions, financial sanctions, advertisement cuts, physical assaults, anti-press laws, and a host of other reactions through which an unruly media can be tamed (McChesney, 2008). Large scale flak usually brings misfortune to media if a large and powerful group or organization is unhappy with the media coverage of certain issues. Herman and Chomsky (2002) argue that direct or indirect flak can only be produced by the actors in the corridors of power. Since governments and their
allied political and business groups wield unrivaled power in developing countries, media may have to bear the brunt of the “misconduct” and insurrectionary attitude. Therefore, advertisers and financiers of media tend to “avoid offending constituencies that might produce flak and their demand for suitable programming is a continuing feature of the media environment” (Herman and Chomsky, 2002: 26). The propaganda model explains how advertising and regulation had been used in United States during McCarthy years to deal with unfriendly media.

The film industry is not insusceptible to flak. The Indian film industry experienced its first flak in 1918, when the Cinematography Act was passed by the British Colonial rulers who were offended by the subtle nationalist undertones in the first Indian feature film, Raja Harishchandra, which was released in 1913 (Hasan 1997). Several other films were produced in India before independence that attracted the wrath of the rulers who used oppressive tactics and framed laws to control rebellious sentiments in the films. All the same, these films were very popular among people who had an access to cinema. After independence, criticism on the government was still not acceptable, and films containing patriotic themes were huge successes on the silver screen. For example, Haqueeqat (1964), Hindustan Ki Kasam (1973), Watan Ke Rakhwale (1987), Border (1997), and LOC Kargil (2003) were war films that received positive response on the box office. Similarly, all films depicting Indo-Pakistan relationship in the first decade of the 21st century closely followed government's foreign policy agenda. It could be argued that patriotism rules Indian cinema (Kaur & Sinha, 2005) and the movie-makers avoid raising issues that may not run parallel to the official policy for the fear of flak from the government and the audience. A negative reaction from the government would have adverse and exorbitant economic implications for the film industry, which is still experiencing a take-off stage. Content, therefore, is carefully filtered in Bollywood products so as to please policymakers, audience, and financiers.

**Dancing on ideological tunes: The fifth filter**

According to Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model, the fifth filter that determines the flow of content is the anti-communism ideology in the US. This ideology was invoked during McCarthy years and remained popular throughout the Cold War era. The foreign policy issues tended to be framed in terms of anti-communism policy and media routinely published content that could avoid potential problems. However, after the collapse of Russia and 9/11 attacks, war on terror emerged as an ideological filter to purge media content of a possible ideological contamination (Herman, 2009). McChesney (2008), in fact, added another dimension to the propaganda model that explained an intended or unintended connivance between American media and the Bush administration's war and energy policies. He argued that media offered uncritical support to the Bush administration in post 9/11 scenario with little discussion on the repercussions of prolonged military operations.

Anti-terrorism ideology worked well in India, and Bollywood produced films on terrorism in Kashmir and other parts of India. For example, Maaches (1996), Border (1997), LOC Kargil (2003), Lakshya (2004), and Main Hon Na (2004) were the films inclosing narratives related to the troubled Kashmir region. There had been an uprising
in the Kashmir valley since 1990, and the Indian government accused Pakistan of sponsoring terrorism in the disputed state. Both countries fought a limited war in the Kargil, which provided Bollywood an opportunity to produce two films -- LOC Kargil (2003), Lakshya (2004) -- in the succeeding years. In 1962, India had a border conflict with China that led to a brief war in 1962. After a couple of years, Bollywood produced a movie, Haqueeqat (1964) that depicted China as an enemy. Conversely, almost all Bollywood war films portrayed Pakistan as an enemy since the 1960s. Herman and Chomsky (2002) argued that an ideology based on animosity mobilized and united people against the enemy and worked as a mechanism of political control. Politicians also use war rhetoric to win elections and distract people from serious political debates on domestic issues, inefficiency, and corruption of the government (Author removed, 2011; Van Zoonen, 2005). As politicians set an agenda for the public through their speeches, it is difficult for media to overtly oppose official foreign policies. Consequently, pressure of government's ideological position and a fear of loosing audiences turns media docile and filters the content in a direction deemed desirable by the policymakers.

Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model (2002) advances an understanding of the pressures on media and reluctance of the mainstream media to criticize foreign policy issues because of their political and economic interests (Bagdikian, 2004; Bettig and Hall, 2012; McChesney, 2008; Mosco, 2009; Zelizer and Allan, 2011). The Indian government actively promoted the film industry as a soft power, and an important tool to achieve foreign policy agendas. Accordingly, Bollywood films on Indo-Pakistan relations display a symbiotic relationship between Indian cinema and the Indian Foreign Ministry. The policymakers used cultural products to further foreign policy agenda, and Bollywood filtered content of the films in line with the policy of the government. The political economy of mass media approach identifies close patterns of cooperation between media and the governments as mutual political and economic interests force both parties to coexist (Mosco, 2009; Herman and Chomsky, 2002). Film being a culture industry, is dependent on the state organs due to reasons discussed in the preceding lines, and cannot deviate from the officially sanctioned external policy in many parts of the world (Prindle, 1993).

**CONCLUSION**

Through the lens of the Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model and the political economy of mass media, this study highlighted that Bollywood advocated official policies in war times and promoted state-sponsored ideology of secularism and non-violence through sanitized violence. The analysis of the films supported relevance of the five filters in determining content of entertainment industry. The four films on Indo-Pakistan relations involved the largest production and distribution firms in India. These firms are interlocked in joint ventures with one another as their owners act, write, direct, produce and distribute mutual products and happen to be each other's relatives and the richest people in India (Thomas, 2010; Vaidya, 2007). The films on Kargil war would not have been possible to produce sans government and military support, which not only provided information to writers but also provided logistical support as shooting in a militarily sensitive area, 14000 feet above sea level, is not possible for the film industry of a developing country. Thus, the Indian government acted as a source of information, and a facilitator in the processes involving
production. Similarly, fear of flak is visible in the content of films as in war situations, no one likes to be labeled as a traitor and media abandons its objective role by depending on one-sided information supplied by the government (Zelizer and Allan, 2011). The role of ideology as a content filter is particularly relevant to the Bollywood’s portrayal of Indo-Pak relations. Anti-Pakistan rhetoric in the Indian media helped the government maintain political status quo and enabled it to influence mass media.

This study also supported the view that media business was a direct beneficiary of the government policies and managers of the corporate media strived to maintain a close liaison with the government officials to protect their economic interests (Altschull, 1995; Anderson, 1997; Herman and Chomsky, 2002; McChesney, 2008). Similarly, Brookes (1991) posited that media had a commercial interest in supporting the government because “the more the coverage of [the] government, the more power the media will have” (17). Hence, the film industry filtered its content in consonance with the government policies and especially supported the foreign policy to avoid flak from government, citizens, and pressure groups. Mosco (2009) also supported this view by arguing that “political economy of communication has always contained an important international dimension” (40). Bettig and Hall (2012) argued that films sponsored and distributed by commercial and political interests were rarely independent. It is understandable, therefore, if the Indian cinema advocated policy of the government by producing content in agreement with the government’s external policies to exhibit its patriotism (Herman and Chomsky, 2002; McChesney, 2008). However, it remains to be seen whether Bollywood supports Indian foreign policy towards other countries of the region in general and the United States in particular and future research on Bollywood’s interconnection with the Indian state could focus on other dimensions of film industry as a soft power. The growing influence and popularity of Bollywood generates a heuristic demand to study Bollywood’s structure, economic interests, and production and distribution strategies at national and international levels.
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