

"The media's the most powerful entity on earth. They have the power to make the innocent guilty and to make the guilty innocent, and that's power. Because they control the minds of the masses."

-Malcolm X

In the past weeks, the 'Wolf-Warrior Media' from Nepal and India have had different topic than COVID-19 to discuss; it was the territorial dispute between the two states. The dispute rather turned into the war, not in the military terms, but *a war in the psychology of Nepalese and Indian people's mind.*

Certainly, the dispute is the issue of sovereignty, territorial integrity, independence and national dignity, but Nepal-India has an age-old and deep-rooted friendship and should resolve the concerns with diplomatic meetings and agreements, in which the growth of hatred among the people of two neighbourly states is out of the box.



A screenshot from an Indian news channel's Prime Time debate

Who is to blame?

As Hermann Göring said about waging war, "All you have to do is tell them (people) they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same in any country."

The border dispute fueled up when Indian Defense Minister Raj Nath Singh remotely [inaugurated the Link Road from Dharchula to Lipulekh](#) on May 8, then Nepalese media reported about the incident, and different prominent persons and experts through various media platforms came up with the arguments based on historical and administrative evidence about Nepal's authority on the disputed territory. Some Nepalese Medias blamed India for having *the colonial mentality, hegemonic behaviour, Big Brother's Attitude towards Nepal*, following some angry sentiments from Nepalese through different social media platforms. Among the Indian media also, experts were explaining the issue with the evidence on behalf of the Indian side on the claim to the territory.

Amidst this, Nepal born Bollywood actress Manisha Koirala supported and replied to Nepalese Foreign Minister's tweet on Government of Nepal's decision to publish a new map including the disputed areas. Afterwards, the Indian media sources reported the actress's tweet controversial, blamed her for bringing China to support Nepal, and questioned her loyalty as well. Thereafter, among the Nepalese netizens, a hashtag #IamWithManishaKoirala on Twitter supporting her was trending. After issuing of a new political map by Nepal, Indian media angered with debunking false arguments reporting Nepal as China's puppet, accusing Nepalese Prime Minister K.P. Oli to be pro-Chinese, and other sensational and angry exchanges.

Thank you for keeping the dignity of our small nation..we all are looking forward for a peaceful and respectful dialogue between all three great nations now ☐
<https://t.co/A60BZNjgyK>

— Manisha Koirala (@mkoirala) [May 18, 2020](#)

Furthermore, the media ethical crisis inflamed when Indian journalist and TV news anchor Arnab Goswami gave a brash and biased presentation in a recent episode of his debate show. Some media even compared two states' army, economy and South Asian power rivalry. To respond to such crowd catalyzing and rapacity of getting pat, Nepalese citizens

through various social media platforms expressed anger, and the tweets like #BackoffIndianMedia, #greaterNepal, and others were trending. The memes and cartoons defaming the leaders of both countries were also shared among the people.

The media from Nepal and India has also provoked the emotional nationalism into chauvinism. The nationalism that both the media has incited into the people have led to obsession, instability in the state of mind, and indifference in reality. The populist journalism has certainly misled the people of both the states and have increased the diplomatic and political risk of the dispute. Political discussion, in such setting, cannot establish an attempt to get at the truth, or to achieve some degree of mutual understanding, or to persuade others of one's view.

It is instead a kind of game in which both the victory and the stakes are largely imaginary. More importantly, the media ethical crisis and the populist journalism have put the leaders into the "competitive stage" of the "power unit" to which they have committed themselves. The ethical crisis has degraded the overall quality of political debate and political thought. Facts have been selected or suppressed to make a case, and if need be, the facts have been simply invented or contrariwise erased.

This is not the first time, the media ethical crisis has been seen in Nepal-India relations. During the 2015 devastating earthquake, the friction in the people-to-people relations in both states was degraded. Hence, media from both states should be responsible and sensitive enough not to reap any awry narratives in the time of this dispute as well.

As T.E. Carter (in "I Stop Somewhere") has mentioned, "The court of public opinion moves much faster than the law." Hence, the question arises:



Image source: WION

What should be and have been done instead?

There is no question about press freedom, but free and responsible journalism is what society demands. Hence, rather than populist journalism, investigative and civic journalism is inevitable in the current dispute. Both the sides must have and should present truthful and complete reporting of all arguments from both the sides and promote peace and stable Nepal-India relations. Both the states media should have and act as a forum to exchange comments and criticism from both sides rather than a debate in which a party should win. The media should not give a bias decision on the dispute, but rather create a national unity among the people to resolve the dispute and continue the cordial relationship they have.

The media from Nepal and India should create a politically and diplomatically conducive environment for the talks to happen between the two states. After the erosion of trust on both sides, the media should play an important part in creating trust between the people and among the leaders for a successful meeting and conclusion.

The media should help deescalate the dispute and lead towards positive peace. Both media should prompt political dialogues to understand the views of both states. The media should be responsible enough not to invoke chauvinism among the people, but rather garner a

positive nationalism (which is for one's own country) rather than a negative nationalism (against another country). The media should opt a journalistic literary-political culture and decrease the increasing trend of mediatization in Nepal-India border dispute.

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