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Abstract

This study provides a comparative analysis of the various aspects of public diplomacy between India and Pakistan during the two BJP governments under consideration. Both countries have a long history of war and strife and people-to-people interactions could not find space to thrive; however, there have been attempts at maintaining public diplomacy from both sides. This study is an endeavor to estimate the successes and failures of public diplomacy strategies and approaches, as well as the behavior and attitude of the leadership towards soft power under the Vajpayee and Modi governments. By exploring various events of public diplomacy, e.g., visits by leadership, sports, cultural, and religious tourism, student exchanges, trade, Track II diplomacy, etc. Furthermore, emphasis is laid on various internal and external barriers and obstacles to public diplomacy faced by both BJP governments, particularly around the Kashmir dispute.

Keywords: Public diplomacy, conflict, BJP, leadership, comparative analysis.

Introduction

A fundamental characteristic of public diplomacy is to safeguard the national interests of a country and to engage the citizens in the process. Public diplomacy incorporates all official endeavors to persuade designated areas of unfamiliar assessment to help or endure an administration's essential objectives. Public diplomacy includes all official efforts to convince targeted sectors of foreign opinion to support or tolerate a government's strategic objectives. In India, the External Publicity Division and the Public Diplomacy Division were converted into a single substance and turned into the External Publicity and Public Diplomacy Division. The BJP's first government under PM Vajpayee had a good record of public diplomacy as compared to the 2014 BJP government of PM Modi because of several public diplomacy factors, aspects, features, and events.

During Vajpayee's BJP government, there were several reciprocal visits of leadership from both sides, first when PM Vajpayee visited Lahore and signed the Lahore Declaration, and then during Musharraf's tour of India in 2005. However, in PM Modi's BJP government, there are no such leadership visits. Support and cricket diplomacy occurred when PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee met with PM Muhammad Nawaz Sharif in the United States in September 1999, and a Pakistani cricket team's tour to India was planned for February 1999. In 2004, the Indian cricket team toured Pakistan. Subsequently, in 2005–2007, cricket series were played between both nations, and because of these series, tension and hostility between both nations were reduced. Secondly, in the said meeting, bus service between Lahore and Delhi was suggested. However, there was no such thing as cricket diplomacy in the Modi government. There are several other areas, e.g., student exchange,

religious tourism, Sikh Pilgrim Visits to Pakistan and Track II diplomacy. The role of the media in the Samjhota Express etc.¹

However, solitary public diplomacy was observed in PM Narendra Modi's government during Modi's meeting with Nawaz in 2015. Despite the fact that both nations share common norms and cultures such as language, weather, clothing, traditions, festivals, agricultural products, customs, and so on, cultural exchange occurs because these norms and values are binding phenomena between both countries. Although Pakistan and India have significant diplomatic differences, the above-mentioned common norms will help to reduce tension and hostility between the two South Asian countries.

The role of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RRS) and other extremist organizations in Modi's BJP government is expanding, creating hostility, particularly against Muslims. As the PM Modi currently functions with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh and its allied groups, which make Indian society more radical and extremist generally against Muslims of India and particularly Pakistan state, this is affecting public diplomacy between both countries.

Public diplomacy also faced several internal and external barriers and obstacles in both nations. In general, there are four wars 1948-1965-1971-1999, both having nuclear arsenals (India in 1974 and Pakistan in 1998), Babari Masjid 1992, and especially in the BJP, both governments, Kargil Conflict 1999, Gujarat Massacre 2002, Mumbai Attacks 2008, Uri incident 2016, Pathankot, Palwama Attack, Balakot Incident Air Strikes 2019, extremist elements, non-state actors, identity, ideology, and so on. Particularly Jammu and Kashmir, which is always a flashpoint and core dispute between both nations. Every time Public Diplomacy is derailed by an incident in Jammu and Kashmir

¹ Saeed Khan et al., "Public Diplomacy Between Pakistan and India: An Analysis," 2, no. 1 (n.d.): 83–97.

Pakistan and India are both leading states in the south Asia region, and it is in the interest of both nations to establish good relationships at different levels for the peace and prosperity of both countries as well as the region.²

While comparing PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee and PM Narendra Modi's leadership facets one can comprehend that PM Vajpayee was moderate and had a democratic spirit, whereas PM Modi is a hard liner and a Hindutva icon. PM Vajpayee's government was considered much stronger in the context of public diplomacy, as reflected above in public diplomacy events, as compared to PM Modi's government, because Modi's style of governance is one of constant threat and radicalization, which has hampered the public diplomacy process between both countries.

Literature Review

During the past few decades, India made significant investments in both traditional and emerging approaches to create and strengthen its soft image before the world. India utilized several public diplomacy strategies and forms, and it's an effective use of public diplomacy. It invested heavily because of several factors, particularly its interest in countering China's and Pakistan's perception and growth in this regard.³

Pakistan and India share several elements and features, including legacy, customs, traditions, borders, visitors, antiquity, and history, so there ought to be a friendly relationship between the two nations, and it is not generally to savagely disparage the neighbor, it ought to be met with repugnance by all educated and learned residents of

² Khan et al., "Public Diplomacy Between Pakistan and India," 83-97.

³ Ian Hall, "India's New Public Diplomacy: Soft Power and the Limits of Government Action," *Asian Survey* 52, no. 6 (November/December 2012): 1089–1110.

these nations who can persuade the state entertainers to open hands for a tranquil and peaceful relationship.⁴

India utilizes a unique public diplomacy system that gives exceptional concentration to its tremendous delicate/soft power, social legacy, and maturing diasporas. In 1948, the Ministry of External Affairs laid out the External Publicity Division to exchange India's rich inheritance, traditions, and culture with the communities of the nations. In this context, in 2006, the Indian Government laid out an independent Public Diplomacy Division inside the Ministry of External Affairs.⁵ The core and essential goal and objective of public diplomacy are to protect and promote national interests, and to achieve this, one must employ and connect directly with people of other countries to peruse and influence their governments.⁶

Considering India's independence, every head of government positioned the neighborhood as a pinnacle priority in its overseas coverage. Nonetheless, on this attempt, Pakistan has been facing a difficult situation and this remains the case for Prime Minister Narendra Modi. In this regard, this paper examines three years of the Modi era policy towards Pakistan and its implications for the bilateral relationship of both the countries. It will eventually indicate potential measures that the administration could take to strengthen bilateral ties and ensure peace in the South Asian region.⁷ To

⁴ Muhammad Ibrar et. al., "Pakistan's Cultural Diplomacy with India," *Journal of Law and Society*, 40, no. 55 & 56 (2010): 41-50.

⁵ Nicolas Blarel, *India: The Next Superpower?: India's Soft Power: From Potential to Reality?*, London School of Economics and Political Science., 2012, <http://eprints.lse.ac.uk/43445/>.

⁶ Azka Gull, Shabnam Gul, and Shujat Ali, "Appraisal of Public Diplomacy Strategies of Major States: Lessons for Pakistan" 2020 (2020): 307–16, [https://doi.org/10.31703/grr.2020\(V-III\).32](https://doi.org/10.31703/grr.2020(V-III).32).

⁷ Ryan, Cooper, and Tauer, "The Narendra Modi Government's Policy Towards Pakistan," *Paper Knowledge: Toward a Media History of Documents* 21, no. 4 (2013): 12–26.

achieve the desired national interest and goals, evaluate the public diplomacy strategy, tools, and policies used by several countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, China, South Korea, India, and Pakistan.⁸

Another pivotal element of Indian public diplomacy is the focus on Indian Diasporas, and to achieve that target, the Indian government has from time to time launched various campaigns and connected with them. Pravasi Bharatiya Divas is one of the programs to connect with the diaspora. Indian Diasporas are also notorious for severing national interests.⁹ In this context, there are a few success stories of the effective use of Diasporas: first, a collaboration between the Indian diaspora and the United States of America business community known as USINPAC. Second, the USA-India friendship council was critical in promoting and protecting the nuclear agreement with US lawmakers and public opinion.¹⁰

Tension between both the countries increased in 2019 after air strikes from both sides as both nations took an antagonistic and aggressive stance against each other, as well as the Indian revocation of Articles 35 'A' and 370 in the Kashmir context. He also narrated various cultural aspects like the Kartarpur Corridor, films, visits to religious shrines, cultural agreements, the media campaign 'Amna Ki Asha', etc. Social and cultural associations, as well as an interaction between the people of both sides, are necessary, as is the need of the time to jointly struggle against enmity, hate politics, bigotry, rhetoric, etc.¹¹

⁸ Azka Gull, Shabanum Gul, and Ali, "Appraisal of Public Diplomacy Strategies of Major States," 307-16.

⁹ Ritambhara, "On Indian Public Diplomacy," *E-International Relations*, 2013, 1–11, <http://www.e-ir.info/2013/04/30/on-indian-public-diplomacy/>.

¹⁰ Blarel, "India: The Next Superpower?,"

¹¹ Rushali Saha, "The Shrinking Space for Cultural Diplomacy between India and Pakistan," *South Asian Voices*, 2020, <https://southasianvoices.org/the-shrinking-space-for-cultural-diplomacy-between-india-and-pakistan/>.

Only a few key incidents and events highlighted public diplomatic relations between both nations, particularly from 1999 to the present, like public diplomacy through cricket, various bilateral tours of the leadership of both sides, and the role of the media as well. The inference of sport, particularly cricket diplomacy, in maintaining Pak-India ties fosters cultural diplomacy.¹² One of the essential parts of Indian public diplomacy is the specific focus on and attention paid to the Diasporas of India. Keeping in mind the Indian Diaspora, the Government of India relies on national radio services instead of national television.¹³ As far as sport diplomacy goes, India has used cricket diplomacy to improve its relations with Pakistan's government from time to time.¹⁴

In the progression, evolution, and conduct of the existing literature review, its recognition and strengthening of the stance that there is a gap that needs to be addressed. Although public diplomacy between India and Pakistan has received much attention, it is also analyzed in the form of articles, books, reports, and other materials written by scholars, policymakers, legal experts, and political and strategic analysts. However, most of the intellectual work is of a general nature, public diplomacy will be addressed in the context of both the BJP governments of 1998 and 2014. In the light of all the above discussion, a few questions need to be addressed, such as:

- Had there been some common effectiveness in the public diplomacy strategies in both BJP governments?
- Can the role and nature of leadership affect public diplomacy?

¹² Khan et. al., "Public Diplomacy Between Pakistan and India : An Analysis," 88-93.

¹³ Hall, "India's New Public Diplomacy Soft Power and the Limits of Government Action."

¹⁴ Madhumati Deshpande, "Sports Diplomacy and International Relation : A Case Study of India," *Journal of Emerging Technologies and Innovative Research (JETIR)*, 6, no. 3 (2019): 530–35.

- What were the internal and external barriers to public diplomacy faced by both BJP governments?
- Was Kashmir a pivotal point and decisive factor in public diplomacy under both BJP governments?
- Under which BJP government did enmity and hostility between both nations diminish through public diplomacy?

This study utilizes qualitative and in-depth descriptive methods to investigate Indo-Pak public diplomacy under the BJP governments. The purpose of this exploratory study was to gather real, in-depth information about both the governments and leadership's attitudes and behaviors towards public diplomacy. A conceptual framework suitable for structural liberalism suitable for the study will be employed to analyze and evaluate in the context of a geo-political and geo-strategic scenario, that is, whether it can decrease enmity and hostility between both nations and otherwise.

Public Diplomacy in PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee's Government

Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee visited Lahore, Pakistan, through bus services in 1998, along with a high-level delegation consisting of parliamentarians, officials of foreign offices, technocrats, businessmen, media, etc. During his stay in Pakistan, in addition to his official meetings at different levels, he visited Lahore Manto Park (Minar-e Pakistan), currently known as Iqbal Greater Park. During a speech, he said that he accepted and recognized Pakistan and signed the Lahore Declaration, which was a significant development between both nations. This visit was a good-will gesture that created friendly relations between both sides. International media also highlighted this event, which created a good re-opening of cordial relations between both nations.

Another public diplomacy factor was an interaction in the sports arena. During PM Vajpayee's visit to the United States in New

York, the Indian Prime Minister, Vajpayee, and the Pakistan Prime Minister, Main Muhammad Nawaz Sharif, agreed for Cricket Diplomacy through a cricket series between both countries. Pakistan's cricket team visited India for a tour consisting of test and ODI matches, and the atmosphere remained pleasant throughout the visit. Subsequently, India's cricket team visited Pakistan. During this visit, the people of Pakistan welcomed the Indian team with great hospitality and zeal. In 2005, 2006, and 2007, Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee continued his goodwill gesture of cricket diplomacy.

During Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's tenure, the bus service initiative was another success story. This bus service has a bridge role between both nations and helped release tension on both sides. Bus services were provided with a true people-to-people contract, which brought people closer together and reduced enmity on both sides. Samjhota Express was another stumbling block for public diplomacy, as it reduced the image of enmity and hostility; however, this initiative was purely for the benefit of the people on both sides.

During Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's regime, there were several initiatives and goodwill gestures in various areas, particularly in religious tourism, as during this period thousands of Sikh pilgrims visited Pakistan and visited their religious sites in Sheikhpura, Nankana Sahab, Sucha Suda, Hasan Abdal, Kartarpur, etc. In this period, the Sikh community and other Indian minorities feel safe travelling to Pakistan, which strengthens public diplomacy. Track II diplomacy also remained functional during Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's era, despite the Kargil War and the 2002 Boarder Standoff, with a regular hot line at the Directorate General of Military Operations (DGMO) level and other levels. The role of the media was also virtuous due to the exchange of media personnel, journalists, and so on.

Public Diplomacy in PM Narendra Modi's Government

Unlike Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's tenure, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's tenure had only one public diplomacy event when PM Narendra Modi met with Prime Minister Main Muhammad Nawaz Sharif; there were no official visits of both Prime Ministers to their respective countries except once, when PM Narendra Modi came for a few hours unofficial visit to Lahore on the wedding ceremony of Prime Minister Main Muhammad Nawaz Sharif's granddaughter in Jatti ummara.

Secondly, as far as sports diplomacy, particularly in cricket, there were no bilateral series between Pakistan and Indian cricket teams. Other sports activities were also scattered, despite the well-established fact that the people of both nations want to see sports activities in both countries. Particularly, they want to see cricket, as both nations have great potential, and it can have an even bigger impact than the Ashes Series.

Social and cultural diplomacy can most suitably be characterized as a course of activities fixated on utilizing the trading of perspectives, morals, customs, and different highlights of a culture. Social diplomacy is utilized by the public, the government, as well as private divisions, areas, and common societies to either speed up social cooperation, strengthen relationships, or support state prosperity.¹⁵ However, there has been no significant development as far as cultural exchange despite the fact that both nations share common norms and cultures such as language, weather, clothing, traditions, festivals, agricultural products, customs, etc. These norms and values are binding phenomena between both countries.

¹⁵ Areeja Syed, Sohail Ahmad, and Muhammad Makkey Bhutta, "Cultural Diplomacy: A Tool for Pakistan's Positive Image Internationally," *Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal (LASSIJ)* 3, no. 2 (2020): 85–95, <https://doi.org/10.47264/idea.lassij/3.2.11>.

Although Pakistan and India have severe diplomatic differences, the common norms mentioned above will help to alleviate tension and hostility between the two South Asian countries; however, neither cultural exchange nor progress on other fronts occurred during PM Narendra Modi's tenure. This period may be the worst for the Indian government in terms of public diplomacy because PM Modi is currently working with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) and its allied groups, which make Indian society more radical and extremist in general against Muslims in India and particularly Pakistan, affecting public diplomacy between the two countries. The situation got worse when PM Narendra Modi annulled 370 and 35A in Jammu and Kashmir on August 5, 2019 and abolished the special status of Jammu and Kashmir. The rise of the RSS and its allied wings has also created insecurity among India's minorities, particularly Muslims, sabotaging all public diplomacy efforts.

Difference between Attitude and Nature of Leaderships

There are several factors that distinguished PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee and PM Narendra Modi. To begin understanding the nature of leadership attitude and behavior, PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee had a moderate and democratic spirit; however, PM Narendra Modi is a hardliner and the Hindutva and the RSS ideology icon, which is the fundamental difference between both Indian Prime Ministers. Secondary, one of the most significant differences is that PM Atal Bihar Vajpayee always worked and performed his functions in accordance with the party manifesto and the BJP's organizational structure. However, PM Modi neither worked and performed as per the party manifesto nor within the party structure; instead, PM Modi has been working outside of the party structure and mostly relying on Hindutva and the RSS and its allied organizations, which create hostility, particularly against Muslims and Pakistan. Modi is collaborating closely with the RSS and its affiliate organizations, which are causing Indian society to become more radical and

extremist against Muslims in India and Pakistan, affecting public diplomacy between the two countries.

Tertiary, PM Vajpayee, and the senior leadership of the Bharatiya Janata Party had democratic credentials as compared to PM Modi's style of governance. PM Modi believes that he can work with, assert, and draw power from India's extremist and radical segments and ideologies, such as the RSS) and Hindutva, among others. On the surface, the BJP is now led by hardliners such as Amit Shah and RSS leaders.

As far as ideology is concerned, apparently the ideologies of the RSS and Bharatiya Janata Party are the same, as PM Modi reiterated and used the old stance of one of the RSS leaders, Mohan Bhagwat, in his election campaign that 1.3 million people are part of Hindu society through his slogan, 'sabka saath, sabka vishwas'.¹⁶ One of the crucial elements that distinguishes PM Modi from PM Vajpayee is the effective utilization of technology for political purposes and motives, and because of this factor, PM Modi has a clear advantage over his political rivals. The BJP gradually adopted technology at all levels, particularly at the lower levels.¹⁷

Barriers of Public Diplomacy in Prime Minister Vajpayee's Government

Public diplomacy always faces several internal and external barriers and obstacles. In general, there have been four wars (1948-1965, 1971-1999), two of which had nuclear arsenals (India in 1974, Pakistan in 1998). Babari Masjid 1992 and, more specifically, in BJP both Governments, Collation Government, Kargil conflict 1999, Gujarat massacre 2002, Mumbai attacks 2008, Uri incident

¹⁶ Syed Shahnawaz Hussain, "India's New Public Diplomacy Soft Power and the Limits of Government Action," n.d.

¹⁷ Arun Anand, "BJP under Modi Is Flexible, Opened Doors for Rebel Leaders from Other Parties," n.d.

2016, Pathankot 2016, Palwama attack 2019, Balakot incident air strikes 2019, extremist elements, non-state actors, radicalization, identity, ideology, and so on.

Collation led Government

In terms of internal barriers, PM Vajpayee's government is a coalition government comprised of the Bahujan Samaj Party (BSJ), the All-India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK), the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), the National Conference (NC), and the Trinamool Congress (TC) Shiv Sena, among others. Coalition government is always limited and reliant on its allies on political, economic, and diplomatic fronts, particularly on the public diplomacy front, which is a facade optics. But despite Atal Bihari Vajpayee's coalition, the government remained less radical and pro-public diplomacy under PM Narendra Modi. The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been successful in uniting the anti-Congress forces under the banner of the National Democratic Alliance (NDA). The presence of the BJP as a strong pillar in the coalition, the charismatic leadership of PM Vajpayee, and the skillful way in which diverse interests are accommodated ensured the stability of the coalition government. The NDA Government, led by Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee and the BJP, appears to be more stable than previous coalition governments.¹⁸ The breakdown of public agreement on a parliamentary greater role in India, a peculiarity that is typical of the capacity of parliamentary states in developing countries, has prompted a recent fad, alliances.¹⁹

Another barrier to Vajpayee's government was the Kargil war or Kargil conflict between Pakistan and India from 3 May to 26 July

¹⁸ S . H . Patil, "India's Experiment with Coalition Government at the Federal Level," *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 62 , no. 4 (December 2001): : 586–93.

¹⁹ M.G. Khan, "Coalition Government and Federal System in India," *News.Ge* 64, no. d (2003): <https://news.ge/anakliis-porti-aris-qveyinis-momava>.

1999 in the Kargil district, (LOC). During this half-war or conflict, thousands of soldiers died on both sides. Remember that at the same time Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited Pakistan and the joint Lahore Declaration was passed, but this incident created hostility between both countries and the peace atmosphere fizzled out.

The issue of Kargil and its emergency seemed to have serious qualms and concerns about a potential threat towards a conventional war, which would then lead to a nuclear conflict. According to India, the main takeaway from Kargil is that managing Pakistan as it currently stands will be extremely dangerous and may even legitimize insignificant contact with Islamabad. This was the view communicated by a wide cluster of political pioneers, experts, and military authorities in India, in light of multiple factors.²⁰

2002 Standoff

After Kargil war, there was a Military standoff between Pakistan and India. From December 13, 2001 to June 10, 2002, India was embroiled in a dispute over missing soldiers, which both sides claimed. It was a second major military clash between two nuclear states after Pakistan's successful explosion on May 28, 1998. Tension was eventually released when the then president of Pakistan, General Pervez Musharraf, shook hands with Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee at the SAARC conference in Katmandu. However, this incident created hostility, and public diplomacy suffered. People who have a good understanding of both countries believe that both sides are dangerously close to war. However, Pakistan is not interested in war, particularly in the 2002 standoff because, after 9/11, the Americans were conducting a massive operation in Afghanistan, and in this context, two

²⁰ Khan. "Coalition Government and Federal System in India."

prominent military cultures were engaged at the western border of Pakistan in the war against terror. As a result of its current engagement on the western border, Pakistan is not fully prepared. As a result of the ambiguity, it is extremely difficult to access and understand India's true stance and intention regarding this standoff, neither at that time nor now.²¹

Jammu and Kashmir

Kashmir has always been a flashpoint between both the countries since its creation. Both sides are under public pressure on this issue. A single incident in Jammu and Kashmir can spark hostility, aggression, and tension on the border. This conflict has already caused three major wars (1974, 1965, and 1971), as well as one half-war (1999). Jammu and Kashmir has always been and will continue to be a focal point of both countries' foreign policy, particularly in terms of public diplomacy. Without solving the core dispute of Jammu and Kashmir, which is a complex phenomenon, it is hard to normalize the relationship between India and Pakistan. It is an established fact and hard reality that without the resolution of Jammu and Kashmir's core dispute, no significant development or improvement in the relationship appears feasible and relational in the fields of politics, economics, military affairs, public interaction, and social or strategic relations.²²

Barriers of Public Diplomacy in PM Modi's Government

Identity and ideology: In Modi's BJP government, the role of the RSS and other extremist organizations is expanding, which creates hostility, particularly against Muslims and other minorities. PM

²¹ Alex Stolar, *To the Brink: Indian Decision-Making and the 2001-2002 Standoff* Report No. 68, (Washington: The Henry L. Stimson Center, 2008), 1–32.

²² Waqar-un-Nisa, "Pakistan-India Equation: Determinants, Dynamics and the Outlook," *Policy Perspectives: The Journal of the Institute of Policy Studies* 14, no. 1 (2017): 23–57, <https://doi.org/10.13169/polipers.14.1.0023>.

Narendra Modi is collaborating closely with the RSS and its affiliated organizations to radicalize Indian society against Muslims in India and Pakistan. Neither Muslims nor other minorities in India feel secure; they feel threatened. During PM Narendra Modi's regime, the secular image of India has been exposed. Under such circumstances, Muslims in India have been facing an identity crisis or dilemma, which affects public diplomacy between the two countries.

Uri Incident 2016: On September 18 at the town of Uri, near Indian Army Headquarters in Indian-occupied Kashmir nineteen casualties of Indian forces were reported in an attack. India allegedly claimed that the attack was carried out from Pakistan by insurgents of the Muslim militant organization, Jaish-e Muhammad. This incident created tension and badly affected public diplomacy between both countries.

Subsequently, India dropped its support for the nineteenth SAARC summit, scheduled for November in Islamabad. The Ministry of External Affairs made an assertion, saying, "India has passed on to current SAARC Chair Nepal that rising crossline psychological oppressor assaults in the locale and developing obstruction in the inner undertakings of Member States by one nation have established a climate that is not helpful for the effective holding of the nineteenth SAARC Summit in Islamabad in November 2016." It further stated, "In the overall conditions, the Government of India cannot take part in the proposed summit in Islamabad," the assertion said. On India pulling out from the booked SAARC highest point in Islamabad, Pakistan's Foreign Office named the withdrawal 'lamentable' and posted a response expressing: "Concerning the reason utilized by India, the world realizes that India has been executing and supporting psychological warfare in Pakistan." The assertion incorporated a reference to Indian public official Kulbhushan Jadhav, kept by Pakistan for surveillance, and blamed

India for disregarding global regulations by meddling inside Pakistan. Following that, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Bhutan withdrew from the summit. On September 30, 2016, Pakistan stated that the planned culmination in Islamabad on November 9 and 10 would be hung on an election date.²³

Pathankot Incident: Attack was committed on January 2, 2016, in Pathankot Air force base at Indian Punjab, again allegedly blamed to Jaish-e Muhammad. Several security personals and one civilian were died in this incident. As a result, Indo- Pak relations suffered, and tension rose and a setback to public diplomacy. However, Pakistan Foreign Office spokesperson Qazi Khalilullah condemned the attack and disassociated from this incident.

Pulwama Attack and Balakot Air Strikes: On February 14, 2019, a vehicle carrying a suicide bomber, a local young Kashmiri named Dar Adil Ahmad, caused more than 40 casualties, and dealt serious blows to Indo-Pak relations, particularly on the security and public diplomacy fronts, on the Srinagar National Highway in Lethapora, Pulwama district, Jammu and Kashmir, on the Indian Military Convey. Following that, on February 26, 2019, the Indian Air Force allegedly entered Pakistani airspace over Balakot, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, and destroyed a militant terrorist campus. But the independent sources confirmed and revealed that no such campus was hit. The Pakistani air force shot down two Indian fighter jets the next day, captured an Indian pilot, and returned on March 1, 2019. The Indian Mi-17 military helicopter was also shot down in friendly fire by Indian air defense. This incident once again heightened hostility and tension, undermining Indo-Pak public diplomacy efforts.

²³ “PM Narendra Modi Will not Attend SAARC Summit in Pakistan,” n.d.

Extremist Elements and Non-State Actors, etc.: In the presence of extremist elements and non-state actors, peace, prosperity, and public diplomacy (people-to-people contracts) between both sides always remained uncertain, as any insurgent incident created tension and aggression. It is evident that PM Narendra Modi's government is closely linked to and associated with RSS philosophy. During this time, the rise of RSS philosophy has been observed, and as a result, public diplomacy on both sides has suffered.

Jammu and Kashmir: During PM Narendra Modi's government on August 5, 2019, the Indian Parliament withdrew the special status of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution and declared that its constitution is applicable to Jammu and Kashmir as well. PM Narendra Modi's government also abolished the 35A in Jammu and Kashmir and imposed a lockdown and curfew for an indefinite period. Although this decision was welcomed in many parts of India, however, a huge reaction also came to the ban and restrictions on the sources of communication, freedom, liberty, and human rights. It is pertinent to mention here that the Pakistani and Chinese governments reacted and expressed concerns. Hence, I want to bring this issue to the United Nations Security Council to stop such restrictions.²⁴ Jammu and Kashmir, since the independence, remained the flashpoint and core dispute between both sides, as Kashmir is an inevitable reality. The worse conditions, particularly human rights violations generally in India and particularly in Jammu and Kashmir, further deteriorate the public diplomacy between India and Pakistan. International reaction was extraordinary, especially after the revocation of Article 370 and 35A. Although several countries favored decision, considering it an internal matter of India. They also considered that all disputes, including those in Jammu and Kashmir, should be settled through

²⁴ Khalid Shah and Kriti M. Shah, *Kashmir After Article 370: India's Diplomatic Challenge*, 2020.

negotiation and dialogue accordingly. Furthermore, several Indian close associates and strategic allies have expressed grave concern and criticism about various aspects of this decision and these restrictions, such as the arrest of political leaders, the violation of human rights and civil liberty, and the collapse of independent media and communication and networking sources. No doubly for India; at present, the core diplomatic concern and issue is to contest and answer the claim that the State of India is overturning the basic rights of the people of Jammu and Kashmir.²⁵ Mindset, mistrust, and intensity are the other barriers and obstacles to public diplomacy that give a substantial setback to the efforts at public diplomacy between both nations.

Conclusion

Primarily, it has been evident that the government of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee has a good record of public diplomacy as reflected in various events and efforts, including bilateral visits, sports diplomacy, and the Lahore Declaration, although this development was affected by the Kargil War. PM Vajpayee's government remained much better as compared to the government of PM Narendra Modi. PM Vajpayee was moderate and less radical than PM Modi's government. In terms of attitude and behavior, PM Vajpayee was moderate and democratic. PM Narendra Modi, on the other hand, is a hardliner and a symbol of the RSS and Hindutva. One of the most significant differences is that Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee always worked and performed his functions in accordance with the party manifesto and within the BJP's organizational structure. However, PM Modi neither worked and performed as per the party manifesto nor within the party structure; instead, PM Modi has been working outside of the party structure and mostly relying on Hindutva and the RSS and its allied

²⁵ Khalid Shah and Kriti M. Shah, *Kashmir After Article 370*.

organizations, which make Indian society more radical and extremist generally against Muslims of India and particularly Pakistan, which affects public diplomacy between both countries. In both BJP governments, several incidents took place that were considered barriers and obstacles in improving relations of both the countries. However, the Kashmir dispute has always remained a flashpoint and a pivotal factor in the relationship between the two countries, with even a minor incident in Jammu and Kashmir sparking and triggering hostility, antagonism, and tension on both sides' borders, hampered and jeopardizing all efforts made by any government on either side towards public diplomacy.