



THE CONSTRUCTIVIST ANALYSIS OF NARRATIVE BUILDING BY PAKISTAN AND INDIA THROUGH OFFICIAL STATEMENTS DURING MAY 2025 CONFLICT

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Abstract

Pakistan and India are two hostile nations with various territorial and identity differences since their inception in 1947. Kashmir is the root cause of border tensions between the two states. In May 2025, Pakistan and India engaged in a four-day war over this issue. The constructivist framework looks beyond material and strategic gains and focuses on ideas, norms, and perceptions that shape state behavior. Both states built narratives after the Pahalgam incident, portraying themselves as responsible states and victims of terrorism. This study uses a constructivist lens to analyze official statements and speeches from both countries. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) reveals how language was employed to shape national and international perceptions. India emphasized self-defense and secularism, while Pakistan stressed sovereignty, ideology, and regional balance. The study argues that Kashmir is not merely a territorial issue but also an identity issue for both states.

Keywords: *Constructivist Analysis, India, Narrative, Official Statements, Pakistan*

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1. Introduction

The hostilities between Pakistan and India are a pure example of the difference in narrative since their independence. Pakistan was created on the narrative of the two-nation theory, while India does not believe in this theory and says India is a country of multi ethnicity, multicultural and multi religion but one nation. These hostilities have led to four major wars and numerous border standoffs. The Most recent being in May 2025. Kashmir is the major cause of wars between these countries where again Pakistan believes that insurgency in Kashmir is an indigenous freedom fight while India states it as terrorism. Kashmir issue is one of the oldest issues in South Asia which has created tensions between two nuclear powers since 1947. The partition of India in 1947 is more than a territorial partition as Pakistan based its identity as a home to Muslims of South Asia and shows its commitment to guard rights of Muslims in the region while India based its narrative on being the secular and diverse one nation. Kashmir being a Muslim majority region is reason of conflict due to identity issues also rather than merely a territorial issue.

The constructivist perspective argues that this conflict cannot be understood completely by only focusing physical, territorial or resources but the identity issue impacts the behavior and actions of the states. Pakistan considers Kashmir as a key element of post-colonial identity of Pakistan as a “Homeland of Muslims” and for India it’s important to keep Kashmir to maintain its image of secular and undivided nation (Paul, 2005).

On 26th April 2025, in Pehalgam a terrorist attack happened where civilians were targeted and from that incident India built a narrative of cross border terrorism from Pakistan and military escalations between two countries took place. The world came on toes as it was a conflict between two nuclear countries and since Cuban Missile Crisis it’s the biggest clash between two nuclear states.

The two sides briefed the world through their official military spokespersons and foreign office to create narrative in their side and claimed to be victim of aggression. The press briefings, official statements and interviews are seen through the Constructivist framework by using Critical Discourse Analysis. Pakistan and India maintained a narrative to claim itself as a victim and other as an aggressor. The study will explore the choice of language and the aims of both the states to achieve their aim.

2. Theoretical Framework, Constructivism

Theoretical world of international politics is dominated by Realist and Liberal perspectives but Constructivism provides a different way to look at global politics. The constructivism is more concerned with logical and material stakes and interests of the state that shapes the attitudes and behavior of the state. The key elements that make and develop the global reality according to Constructivism are identities, Ideas, norms and interactions (Wendt, 1999). Identity is seen as the mutual understandings within a state is to define “who we are” with respect to others, these understandings might be based upon

cultural narratives, geo-political perceptions, religion or shared history (Wendt, 1999). India has constructed its identity as a secular, democratic, diverse society with strong opposition to terrorism while Pakistan has created its identity as a guardian of Muslim Ummah in general and in Kashmir region particular. The identities are not constant but they are dynamic and keep on being developed and redeveloped through diplomatic and political narratives, media discourses and policies to interact with foreign countries. The countries assess the intention of any state or legitimacy which is based upon the constructed identity and it is called perception. Narrative of a state is the frame in which a state adjusts and shows itself to domestic and international community to explain and give logics for its action and portrayal of the state image (Wendt, 1999). Constructivism provides an analysis of Pakistan India conflict of May 2025 after Pahalgam incident through using these concepts that it was not only a military clash but how both states tried to justify their non-military actions, national identities and politically motivated actions also in front of domestic and international audiences.

Pakistan and India provide a perfect content for Constructivist theory because their partition in 1947 is based upon identity and identity is the main reason behind tension between two states. s. Pakistan pictures itself in the eyes of Muslims of South Asia as a home while India despite being Hindu Majority country calls itself a secular country on the basis of having multiethnic, multi religious and multicultural communities (Nicolson, 2022). Two-Nation Theory is the ideological foundation of Pakistan's formation which defines that Hindu and Muslims are two separate nations in British India so they must have two separate countries as they cannot live together in peace (Shaikh, 2009). Pakistan considers Kashmir as an integral part of the country on the basis of Two Nation Theory because Kashmir has Muslim Majority as its population while India claims it to be rightful to claim Kashmir as a part of Indian Union because signing of Instrument of Accession (1947) (Khalid, 2011) and also to maintains its image as a secular state and keep its hegemony in Kashmir Region which is vital region for Water resources in South Asia.

The roots of hostilities between Pakistan and India can be traced to the conflicting identity construction. The actions of one side will give rise to suspicion of the other side. The countries with social structure based on distrust will look each other's action in prospect of their national interests and in conflicting manner (Wendt, 1994). Constructivist analysis will be used to see how Pakistan and India framed themselves and other in recent clash during official briefings and statements. The current study will analyze the impact of perception and identity as the key concepts of constructivist framework with respect to Pakistan and India's response and justification of their actions during MAY 2025 war. Alexander Wendt (1992) argues that the global politics is socially constructed through mutual ideas and is not defined and directed by material capabilities. The distrust between Pakistan and India is mutual and it arises from the persistent conflicting narratives which

are repeated constantly, the socially constructed contradicting identities and history of conflicts between both countries.

3. Research Methodology

This study uses qualitative research methodology and Critical Discourse Analysis is used as a technique to assess the official statement of India and Pakistan during the recent conflict in May 2025. In this method the dynamics of language of official statements, speeches is analyzed that how it shapes the narrative and public opinion in a certain context

This method explains how statements and choice of words defines national interests and how states define itself in front of domestic and international community. This research explores that how Pakistan and India framed themselves and other state in respect of same events in April/May 2025 clashes and how they tried to build a narrative to have international and national perceptions in their favor

The data collected for this study was secondary in nature. The official statements by Ministries of External Affairs, the interviews of ministers to international media and press briefings issued to media were taken from the relevant sources. The speeches of Prime Ministers of both countries where the mention of current conflict was made were also part of data to be analyzed in discourse analysis. The balance of view point of both the countries was maintained and key concepts of identity, legitimacy through political language were the points of emphasis to be analyzed in context of May 2025 war between Pakistan and India.

3.1. Narrative Building by India

India used Pahalgam attack as a chance to frame Pakistan as a terrorist state and India's political and diplomatic discourse without waiting for any investigation started to blame Pakistan and another example of "Cross-Border Terrorism".

This discourse is not an isolated reactive force but it is constructed to claim that India is a secular democratic country threatened by state sponsored terrorism by Pakistan as this discourse is reflection of Indian prospect of a national identity narrative of the two states. India tried to pursue this narrative through diplomatic channels to pressurize Pakistan (Indian Ministry of External Affairs, 2025). while Prime Ministerial statements in India to get national unity as PM Moodi stated obligations to "defend national sovereignty against foreign-backed militants,"

Pahalgam incident was pointed to Pakistan just hours after the incident which is reflection of Indian Narrative of cross border terrorism originating from Pakistan. The immediate and first response of Indian PM Moodi and Secretary of Foreign Affairs Vikram Misri was to issue strong statements with accusation to Pakistan linked groups for the attack. PM Moodi asserted "pursue the perpetrators to the ends of the earth "is an illustration of use of emotional and retributive language to mobilize the national sentiment

with reinforcement of self-defense right of India. (Reuters, 2025. Foreign Secretary claimed that attackers were trained at Pakistan it is also a rhetorical strategy to externalize the enemy and threat and make the public clear of the enemy image instead of looking answers for internal factors of the attack. (Ministry of External Affairs, 2025). There was no valid and solid evidence of all these claims made by Indian State Officials which can validate the narrative of Pakistani involvement (Shaikh, 2025).

The perspective from discourse analysis show that such statements which are made in public are not meant to merely inform people but they are given to shape the opinion and perception of public about national threats and identity to get moral support in case of an extreme action like a military operation in view of national security. It shapes the importance of narrative as a performative act as it is a measure to counter the security situation and also a political standing of India to claim itself as a victim of terrorism and have superiority on moral grounds.

The first public response of Prime Minister of India, Narendra Moodi clearly set the tone of narrative as he stated in very strong words “I say to the whole world: India will identify, track and punish every terrorist and their backer” (Ellis-Petersen, 2025). The statements do not mention Pakistan but a promise to punish the terrorist and their backers is a clear indication of India’s long term policy that Pakistan backs and plans terrorism activities in India. Indian Prime Minister labelled Pakistan as a state that supports terrorism in his first speech after Pahalgam. This allegation was emphasized by Vikram Misri who is Secretary of Indian External Affairs Minister by issuing a statement where he linked the origination of terrorist’s groups in Pakistan and terrorist being trained by Laskar e Tayyba (India Ministry of External Affairs, 2025). The Secretary was also of the view that this attack aimed to start communal conflict, target the tourism industry and create fear in the hearts of non-Muslims living in Indian Occupied Kashmir.

Various official narratives issued by India remain consistent in building the perception among its people and the international community that the Resistance Front (TRF) group that claimed responsibility for the terrorist attack in Pahalgam is merely a front for Lashkar-e-Taiba based in Pakistan. The Resistance Front (TRF) was accused of carrying on these attacks by Indian Government and its narrative have been consistent to make the national and international community believe that this organization is another face of LeT, which India has long been accusing of carrying attacks across Kashmir and Indian main land also.

The purpose of building this narrative by India is a comprehensive effort to put weight into the perception of role of Pakistan in this attack. India has often tried to frame Pakistan in terrorist attacks across Indian and in Kashmir Region particularly through its narrative on different international forums that Pakistan provides shelter to different terrorist groups. In The Past Mumbai Attacks 2008 were referred to Pakistan and India

accused that Pakistan is providing hideouts and logistics assistance to the planners of the attack. (Indian Ministry of External Affairs, 2025). The official statement of Indian Foreign Ministry after Pahalgam *“Notwithstanding the provision of substantial evidence, there has been no credible action taken by Pakistan against the terrorist infrastructure within its territory.”* There are chances that more attacks are being planned so it is Indian self-defense right to wage a military campaign against Pakistan. (Indian Ministry of External Affairs, 2025). Eventually India launched its war and declared its as *“measured, precise, and proportionate airstrikes aimed at terrorist infrastructure along the Line of Control, with stringent directives to evade civilian regions”* (Indian Ministry of External Affairs, 2025).

This rhetorical framing by India is to legitimize and give it’s a moral ground to conduct a military operation with keeping its image of a responsible and victim state instead of being labelled as an aggressor or jingoistic state.

Indian narrative was based upon the dehumanizing the violence and to mitigate the use of force as a necessity. Indian Military used the register of biomedical and computational fields in its briefings. The use of words like “neutralization” “target engagement” and “vector acquisition” make the action more like a robotic action than an aggression. Indian narrative also aimed to achieve rationality and control by using the expressions such as *“surgical strike,” “calibrated response,”* and *“escalation dominance”*. Indian military used passive voice while talking about the destruction to make a distance from war damages so they used phrases like (*“targets were eliminated and infrastructures degraded”*), while for attacks they used the phrases like (*“we identified,” “we launched”* which shows they are showing it as a celebration to attack Pakistan.

4. Narrative Building by Pakistan

Pakistan built its narrative on a defensive and counter-accusatory basis. Pakistan denied all accusations from India that it supported the terrorist group responsible for the Pahalgam attack. To shape perceptions for national and international forums, Pakistan viewed the incident and Indian allegations another example of repeated pattern to blame Pakistan for any violence that happened in Kashmir Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif issued an official statement on April 26, 2025 to describe Indian accusations as a *“perpetual blame game”* and stressed that *“this endless cycle of accusation must be broken in the interest of regional peace”* (The Dawn, 2025). Prime Minister further elaborated that Pakistan is *“willing to support a neutral, transparent, and internationally monitored investigation into the incident”* (Time of India, 2025). Pakistan presented a narrative to picture itself as a responsible, cooperative and showed its readiness to be scrutinized by Independent investigators well as to bring into the notice of international community that

India is using the incident to pursue its aggressive and hostile policies towards Pakistan and gain political and diplomatic mileage by blaming Pakistan.

Defense Minister of Pakistan, Khawaja Asif claimed in international media interview that these terrorist attacks are suspected by Pakistan as False Flag operation which is designed by India to blame and then isolate Pakistan in International Community (Al Jazeera, 2025). The statement coming from Defense Minister of Pakistan shows that Pakistan built a narrative to counter allegations with controversial arguments as Indian theories of blaming without giving any solid evidence. The Urdu language newspapers and domestic media discussed the timing of the attack to get internal benefits by Ruling Party in India like Gujrat Elections and to find a way to pressurize Pakistan in diplomatic world which made Pakistani society to speculate about countless motives of Pahalgam attack.

To take high moral grounds as contrast to Indian blame game Pakistan opened itself for all kinds of reliable and independent investigations. Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif said in a reference to Pahlgam attack, "Pakistan is open to participating in any neutral, transparent and credible investigation" (McRae, 2025). Pakistan's official narrative to be part of any independent investigation is strategically important as well as an attempt to find the truth and to get justice for being blamed for any violent act across India and Kashmir region. Although Pakistan sincerely offered this probe yet it depends upon India's willingness to conduct any joint investigation with Pakistan. Pakistan has aimed to achieve two objectives by offering independent investigation. The first purpose is to show confident enough as a state to have any link with this attack and second is to pursue a diplomatic campaign if India rejects such a proposal to make Indian claims doubtful as they refused to conduct neutral and independent investigation. Pakistan not only have defensive narrative but also countered allegations by accusing India of terrorism activities in Pakistan especially troubled area of Baluchistan as stated by Pakistani Interior minister Mr. Mohsen (Dawn, 2025). The statement given by Interior Minister and Prime Minister of Pakistan indicate that Pakistan is making the case that India is the perpetrator of terrorism in Pakistan and Pakistan is on the receiving end of terrorism due to Indian actions. Pakistan showed its firmness to protect its interests at all costs and it's ready to face any aggressive policy of India be it military or strategic. Pakistan responded strongly to Indian announcement to suspend Indus Water Treaty Agreement by arbitrated by World Bank in 1962 and declared it as an "act of war" and PM clearly said in statement that water flow of Indus will not be allowed to be interrupted and any such thing will be stopped with full use of force (Dawn, 2025).

Pakistan's narrative has following key aspect which were focused.

- 1) Indian accusations of involvement in Pahlgam attack was rejected by Pakistan and offer to neutral investigation was put to test Indian claims on a neutral set up in neutral set up.

- 2) To reverse its position from being accused to be victim of accusation, Pakistan floated the idea of Pahlgam being a false flag operation engineered by India.
- 3) In response to Indian threats to invade sovereignty of Pakistan, Pakistan time and again narrated its military warfare and as it was clearly declared that cancellation of Indus Water Treaty would be seen as an act of war.
- 4) To change the perception of the roots of terrorism in Kashmir, Pakistan is working on its Kashmir narrative that its political stability and disputed nature of Kashmir and Indian governance that is the reason of violence in Kashmir.

Pakistan's response from constructivist point of view shows that narrative by Pakistan is not a just reaction response or temporary interests but it's a socially constructed narrative of national identity to balance Indian narrative. National identity of Pakistan is historically rooted in long standing conflict of Pakistan and Indian since the partition of India in 1947 as Pakistan has always maintained its position of guardian of Muslim communities in sub-continent as well as a political and geo political competitor of India. Pakistan refutes Indian narrative to provide a contradictory point of view are aimed to assert the strategic moves and also to place itself as an equal regional power as India to maintain the balance of the power in the region. Pakistan and India usually have a negative political interaction as any violent act in Indian side of Kashmir is linked to Pakistan and Pakistan denies it as well as accuses India with carrying out terrorist activities in Pakistan. Kashmir is the root cause of tensions between Pakistan and India and as it remains unresolved the blame game of both the states is a continuous practice

Pakistan will continue to reject Indian accusations as accepting them would lead to confirm Pakistan as a safe haven or nursery of terrorism in the eyes of international community so to counter Indian attempts Pakistan always brings an alternative narrative where it shows itself as a victim of Indian hostilities and to maintain country's dignity as a responsible nuclear state.

Pakistan came up with a different strategy while briefing the military operations. Military of Pakistan used hybrid discourse which amalgamated military strategy and language use. Pakistan used ideological discourse as it named the operation as "*Bunyan-un-Marsoos*", taken from Holy Quran which means "a wall of steel in the path of God" Pakistani military briefings used the phrases like "*cowardly attack*," "*martyrs*," "*divine justice*," and "*sacred defence*" which are reflection of moral obligation and ideological framework to defend and retaliate. Pakistan also used modern warfare vocabulary to show its superiority in technical field by using the terms and phrases like "*tri-service synergy*," "*loitering munitions*," and "*orthorectified targeting*" The use of phrases like: "*we will respond*," "*we shall retaliate*," by Military of Pakistan show the clarity of concept of the moral duty.

5. Conclusion

The global politics is not merely based upon the physical and materialistic realities but it also includes the narration of these realities. The perceptions of the states about each other play an important role in shaping the behaviors of the states. Pakistan and India are not only hostile against each other for territory disputes but they also have identity and ideological issues which create tensions every now and then. This study explored that how narratives were built to justify military actions against each other. Both the states developed a narrative to show itself as responsible nonviolent state while blaming other state to be responsible for the violence. The narratives were shaped in such a way that both states celebrated their achievement but restrained to be linked with costs of war. Indian narrative was built on the principal of showing itself as a secular state being a victim of terrorism which is sponsored by Pakistan so it tried to justify its aggression by mentioning “terrorist infrastructure” for its targets in Pakistan. Pakistan showed its picture as a victim of aggression as well as a guardian of Muslim community in South Asia and at the same time giving a balance of power in the region. Pakistan also showed that its sovereignty is the key to its political standing in the world and portrayed itself as an ideological, responsible and militarily powerful enough to chase down any act which can invade its sovereignty. The study shows that physical gains and realities of war are dependent upon an effective narrative.

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