

India: The Western media's infowar target



Sreeram Chaulia

Sreeram Chaulia is a professor and dean at the Jindal School of International Affairs in Sonipat, India. His forthcoming book is 'Trumped: Emerging Powers in a Post-American World'

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Supporters of BJP, Mumbai, India, October 24, 2019 ©REUTERS/Francis Mascarenhas

India is a key target of the Western liberal media, whose prejudice and ignorance have generated a torrent of negative news coverage aimed at undermining the image of the world's largest democracy

Biases and lies

This August, when Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi revoked special status to improve governance and check Pakistan-sponsored jihadist extremism in Muslim-majority Jammu & Kashmir, Western news outlets pounced on the measure as proof of their preconceived assumption that India was becoming a religiously intolerant Hindu nation in which Muslims (14 percent of India's population) were believed to be persecuted.

The Washington Post's Global Opinions editor [slammed](#) Modi's Kashmir step as "*the darkest moment*" and alleged that his "anti-Muslim comments and visions" were making India "*less democratic*

and stable, one authoritarian step at a time.” This liberal mainstream American establishment newspaper obviously never cared to know that the same Modi, whose ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) it paints as a fanatical ‘Hindu nationalist’ outfit, won **nine percent** of votes from India’s Muslim voters in the 2014 general election and maintained nearly the same level of **support** from them in the 2019 election.

The New York Times, another haloed East Coast liberal standard bearer, entertained Pakistan’s prime minister, Imran Khan, in a personal meeting with its editorial board and **parroted his line** that the UN “*can’t ignore Kashmir any more,*” and that it should oppose Modi’s “*brutal tightening*” of control there. A slew of op-eds and news commentaries followed, mostly hewing to the apocryphal position that India was committing terrible human rights abuses in Kashmir and that Modi’s actions were unconstitutional.

The Indian government also raised **objections** regarding the authenticity of uncorroborated videos circulated by the BBC that were meant to show “*large-scale protests*” by Kashmiris against India.

When India’s Supreme Court was duly considering legal challenges to Modi’s revocation of special status for Kashmir, the doyen of British upper crust liberalism, the Economist, **cried foul** and declared that the judiciary was “*ignoring the government’s abuses*” and conniving to allow Modi’s *fait accompli* in Kashmir to stand.

Although India has been rated in the Freedom House index as a ‘fully free’ country with independent institutions and decent civil and political rights (Pakistan, which seeks to annex Kashmir, is rated as ‘partly free’), it is now a routine phenomenon to see **op-eds** in Western media pages proclaiming Modi’s India to be on a Hindu supremacist highway to ‘fascism’. Such wild Western exaggerations echo the baseless criticisms in **Islamist media narratives** about religious minorities being brutalised or subjected to ‘genocide’ in India.

During the free and fair general election earlier this year, which Modi won hands down by unifying hundreds of millions of voters across religious, caste, and linguistic divides, America’s illustrious Time

magazine carried a [cover story](#) lambasting him as “*India’s divider-in-chief*” and blaming him for “an atmosphere of poisonous religious nationalism.” As a token of editorial balance, an inside commentary in that same edition highlighted positives of Modi’s economic record. But the eyeball effect was deliberately placed on the negative lead item.

By constantly misrepresenting the reality of India and the intent of Modi’s policies, Western media mavens have attempted to create an illusion to influence Western governments. The damage caused by this motivated campaign was acknowledged by Indian External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, who [remarked](#) that the “ideological” and “strong preset views” of the Western media made his task harder when he met American policymakers to explain India’s full integration of Jammu & Kashmir and its commitment to counter jihadist terrorism.

Neo-colonial flop show

Nonetheless, if the hope of the Western liberal media establishment was to whip up global alarm by manufacturing an artificial humanitarian crisis in Kashmir and convincing the Donald Trump administration in America and European bigwigs to intervene and pressurise India to back down, it failed miserably.

India used informational, diplomatic and economic levers to rebut the Western left-liberal and Islamist propaganda and blunted Pakistan’s efforts to internationalise the Kashmir issue. Three central global forums — the UN Security Council, the UN Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly — refused to heed the Western liberal media’s crusade since August to censure and sanction India over Kashmir.

By September, Imran Khan was left [lamenting that](#) “*the world has not done anything (on the Kashmir issue) because India has a huge market (of) 1.2 billion people.*” It was a reality check for the Western liberal opinion-making factories about how much influence they exert in today’s world.

When an American president calls them out daily for ‘fake news’ and a British prime minister himself is found by the judiciary to be in violation of his country’s constitution, the moral high ground and

holier-than-thou priggishness of the Western liberal cognoscenti rests on thin ice. They blow the usual hot air to their captive audiences, but lack the power to bend countries like India to their will. The intellectual hegemony of the Western press corps is a bygone.

Elitist plot

In spite of the extremely low credibility of the Western media, the fact that big names in this fraternity print and broadcast across multiple continents to millions of readers and viewers is undeniable. India could not afford to shrug off the Western media assault as harmless noise. It had to strenuously beat it back. And the tussle is far from over.

Nationalistic Indians are outraged about the free rein that foreign news media journos have to operate in a democracy like India and carry on tarnishing the host country's image. The presumption that Western media moguls know which domestic and foreign policies are best for India is so patronising and elitist that it has been rejected by Indians who abhor external intervention in their sovereign affairs.

The Trojan Horses

To cover up its neo-imperial nature, the Western news establishment has promoted a familiar set of writers and intellectuals who are of ethnic Indian origin to attack India through its platforms. A sharp rebuke of Modi appearing on the Wall Street Journal or CNN from a left-liberal Indian-sounding writer or pundit is the brown equivalent of Uncle Toms who make careers in the West by betraying their community.

Even the sources which Western journalists have in India while filing news stories are questionable. Western correspondents often seek out India's left-liberal activists or intellectuals allied with opposition parties who hold deep grudges against Modi, and magnify their viewpoints to foreign audiences. In Jammu & Kashmir, the go-to voices for Western journalists are separatist politicians and anti-India radicals. Sober nationalistic Indians, who constitute the vast majority in the country, are rarely consulted or cited.

The civilising mission

The result is a barrage of reportage in the West that purposefully villainises Modi and deflates his vision. In today's transformed world, even if no Western official or government resents India's rise, the so-called 'free' Western news industry remains supremely sceptical and cynical of India's viability as one nation and its future progress.

The sight of a developing nation like India growing powerful and respected under a nationalistic politician like Modi is insufferable to the Western liberal media, which detests the success of alternative pathways to its Euro-centric precepts of individualism, multiculturalism and the superiority of Western civilisation. So, the tirades will keep coming from New York, Washington and London. New Delhi has to prepare for a long and smart ideological resistance.

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