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### **Findings**

We are living in the age of mediatisation wherein media is intertwined with social, political and cultural life. Be it politics, religion, culture or conflict, every domain of live life is mediatized nowadays (Lundby 2009; Hjarvard 2013; Esser and Strömbäck 2014; Hepp 2013; Cottle 2006; Mortensen 2015). With the proliferation of broadcast technologies and advent of internet and social media, the nature of conflict drastically changed from the last decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century. Now media is not engaged in seemingly neutral task of mediation, i.e., transmission of information from point A to point B, but it is shaping, performing and enacting social, cultural and political life of nation-states.

Despite the global flow of capital and information continuously penetrating the national borders (Beck 2000; Giddens 2002), the nation-state still remains the national communicative space (Schlesinger 2000). Thus, the mediatization takes place primarily within the national communicative space. Since the nation-state is the communicative space in which the media operates, it is assumed to (re)produce the national identity. The current study finds that the national media is not only articulating and sustaining Indian nationalism and national identity but also performing the Kashmir conflict. This study explored how media constructs the Kashmir conflict and represents violence therein in the overarching nation-state framework.

Through multi-sited ethnographic explorations of media representation practices regarding the Kashmir conflict in national and local media offices in Delhi, Noida and Srinagar and ethnographic observation of daily life in the most-strife torn region of south Kashmir and Srinagar, the study shows that the national media stages the Indian nation-state and national identity. As the Kashmir has been producing ontological insecurity for the Indian nation-state since 1947, the national media produces the national security discourse with reference to Kashmir. In this discourse, the nation-state emerges as the sacrosanct cultural and political formation. However, the discourse of national security doesn't go unchallenged. The Kashmiri people disrupt it as their lived experiences, counter-memories and counter-histories generate resistive political subjectivities that militate against the hegemonic conceptions of the Indian nation-state and the national security.

The analyses of news reports and interviews of media persons working for the national news television revealed that the national frame guides national media representation of the Kashmir conflict. The general refrain among media persons I spoke to was 'Desh hai to hum hain [if the country exists, only then we exist] and that Kashmir is an integral part of India. As a journalist of Aaj Tak admitted that the most important thing that a media person has to keep in mind while making news on Kashmir is "to ensure nothing goes against the country."

Nationalism scholar Gellner (1983) argues that nationalism seeks congruence between cultural entity and political entity, that is, a close fit between nation and state, and thus emerges the nation-state. Guibernau (1996, 47) argues that “while the nation has a common culture, values, and symbols, the nation-state has as an objective the creation of a common culture, symbols and values.” The Indian nation-state seeks to create a nation which includes Kashmir as well; thus, the Indian nationalism, in Brubaker’s (1996) term, could be called a nation-shaping nationalism. However, its attempts at building the Indian nation gets a serious challenge in Kashmir. Herein the national media comes into the scene. From the inception of the modern nation-state, it was assumed that “mass media *must* play a crucial role in the construction, articulation and maintenance of various forms of cultural identity” (Schlesinger 1991, 303).

The study revealed that the national media discourses on the Kashmir conflict made two distinct categories: those who are in favour of the Indian nation-state and those who are against it. It tried to mobilise people for the project of safeguarding the Indian nation-state and evaluated the practices of various stakeholders of the conflict such as the government, army, militants, separatists and protestors. In other words, the national media came across as a nationalist actor who pursues the objective of protecting the Indian nation-state’s sovereignty which faces serious challenge due to *azadi* movement in the Kashmir valley.

Nation-shaping nationalism (Brubaker 1996) was also visible in the national media representation of the Kashmir conflict. It mourned the killings of Kashmir army and police officers like Col. Fayaz, rifleman Aurangzeb and J&K DSP Pandit and lambasted militants for their ‘cowardly acts of killing real heroes of Kashmir’. Schlesinger (2000, 99-100) observes that the “links between mode of social communication and national political space remains fundamental for conception of collective identity.” Personal and collective identities are imagined in national forms (Skey 2013, 1; Martinez 2020, 38). The study revealed that national forms of identification and organisation also mattered for media persons while they construct the news on the Kashmir conflict. As the interview of one of journalists, for instance, exhibits that media persons make sure that nothing goes on air “which may weaken the Indian position on Kashmir in the world community” since “desh hai toh hum hain”.

The study of media representation revealed that incidents like the deaths of Saima Wani and Hazim Bhat, and pellet gun injuries to 20-month-old kid Heeba Jan and Insha Mustaq during the Indian army’s operations did not get space on two news channels under study – Aaj Tak and Zee News – because they had the potential to tarnish the national identity. Though NDTV covered such incidents but in a measured way. In their study of Austrian national identity, Wodak et al. (2009, 202) observe that political and media élites at times “endeavoured to satisfy...demands for national identity...by playing down particular features of this identity.” The current finds that the national media becomes selective while covering violence in Kashmir. As Smith (1991) notes, “national identity underpins the state and its organs,” the national news television and its journalists identified with the Indian nation-state since it was the matter of national interest.

The major conclusions that could be drawn from the study are: The national news television stages the Indian nation-state. As the Kashmir has been producing ontological insecurity for the Indian nation-state, it produces the national security discourse with reference to Kashmir conflict. But the Kashmiri people disrupt the national security discourse posing the question: Whose security it does?