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Globalizing Pakistani Identity Across The Border: The Politics of Crossover Stardom in the Hindi Film Industry

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GLOBALIZING PAKISTANI IDENTITY ACROSS THE BORDER: THE POLITICS

OF CROSSOVER STARDOM IN THE HINDI FILM INDUSTRY

INTRODUCTION

In 2010, Pakistani musician and actor Ali Zafar noted how "films and music are

one of the greatest tools of bringing in peace and harmony between India and Pakistan.

As both countries share a common passion – films and music can bridge the difference

between the two."[1] In a more recent interview from May 2016, Zafar reflects on the

unprecedented success of his career in India, celebrating his work in cinema as

groundbreaking and forecasting a bright future for Indo-Pak collaborations in

entertainment and culture.[2] His optimism is signaled by a wish to reach an even larger

global fan base, as he mentions his dream of working in Hollywood and joining other

Indian émigré stars like Priyanka Chopra.

Fast-forward four months, and Zafar and other Pakistani stars working in India

were given a 48-hour ultimatum to evacuate the country following a deadly attack by

alleged Pakistani terrorists on an Indian military base in Kashmir.[3] Facing threats of

violence from communalist groups and an industry ban suspending their current and

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[1] Press Trust of India, "Films, Music Can Bridge Indo-Pak Gap," *NDTV*, July 15, 2010, http://movies.ndtv.com/movie_story.aspx?Section=Movies&ID=ENTEN20100146659&subcatg=MOVIESINDIA&keyword=bollywood&cp.

[2] "There will be a lot more Indo-Pak collaboration in the future, says Ali Zafar," *Dawn.com,* May 4, 2016, https://images.dawn.com/news/1175268/there-will-be-a-lot-more-pak-india-collaboration-in-the-future-says-ali-zafar

[3] France Press Agency, "Bollywood Film Set to Open in India After Pakistani Actor Ban," *TheGuardian.com,* October 23, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/oct/23/bollywood-film-set-to-open-in-india-after-pakistani-actor-ban.

GLOBALIZING PAKISTANI IDENTITY ACROSS THE BORDER: THE

POLITICS OF CROSSOVER STARDOM IN THE HINDI FILM INDUSTRY

CHAPTER ONE: A HISTORICAL LEGACY

The emergence of Pakistani crossover stars must be situated within an ongoing

historical legacy of political, economic and cultural engagement between India and

Pakistan, beginning with the watershed moment of both countries' independence in 1947.

The legacy of Partition has had a profound impact on national discourses, conflicts and

modes of cultural representation between both countries. Likewise, it is impossible to

discuss the development of commercial entertainment in either nation without examining

the mutual origins and imbrication of both film industries during the early years of

independence. This critical intersection between industries, along with the shared tapestry

of North Indian culture and the linguistic dominance of Hindi-Urdu, have shaped the

character of popular cinema in both countries, leaving a lasting impression on these

institutions and their consequences for national identity.

These conditions both enabled and constrained the possibilities for crossover stars

historically. The strong foundational ties and internal similarities between both industries

created a compelling impetus to exchange talent; indeed, isolating and defining the first

crossover stars is difficult considering that migration and re-settlement was a formative

phenomenon in the Hindi film industry following Partition. Where India ended and

Pakistan began was a malleable idea physically, culturally, and mentally in the

transitional phases of nationhood. However, the gradual inurement of nationalist

discourse and the consequent "Othering" of Muslim/Pakistani identity in Hindi cinema

severely limited crossover migration, deterring the staying power of Pakistani stars on the

rare occasions when they did grace Indian screens. This trend would be further

exaggerated by political events after 1970, when both industries faced economic

challenges and began to diverge structurally and culturally. The tide would not shift again

until liberalization and globalization transformed the Indian and Pakistani economies in

the 1990's through the present. However, the reciprocal origins of both film industries

remain an important factor in the historical migration and recent success of Pakistani

crossover stars, just as the legacies of Partition and nationalist politics continue to impact

their representation, popular reception and durability.

The events surrounding the dissolution and Partition of British India in 1947

highlight, as Ian Talbot points out, the stark modernity of India and Pakistan as distinct

political entities.[1] The sudden and incongruous designation of geographic borders cut

across vibrant co-existing communities, businesses, property and integral heritage sites,

rupturing the everyday social and historical experience of millions of people while

leading to the largest documented migration in human history, with an estimated 12.5

million refugees crossing the border to join both newly independent states.[2] While the

events leading to Partition are complex and multi-faceted, its roots in British colonial

administration and systems of electoral representation grounded in religious determinism

are central to its legacy. These forces and their attendant rhetoric gained momentum

during the independence struggle; however, it was not until Partition that notions of

identity based solely on religious affiliation were normalized, obfuscating traditional and

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[1] Ian Talbot, *India and Pakistan: Inventing the Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 6.
[2] Ibid, 157.

more nuanced perceptions of identity organized around caste, language, class, and region.[3]

The result was some of the most violent sectarian massacres in recent history, while Partition itself created an immediate sense of ambiguous place and belonging both for those residing in the affected border provinces as well as for those who would now be considered minorities in a 'foreign' land because of their faith. Besides a number of forced migrations due to lost resources, family separation, or calculated ethnic cleansing campaigns, many of those who elected to migrate did so on a temporary basis, assuming they would return to their homelands and communities in the imminent future.[4] The plight was especially difficult for women; at least 83,000 were raped, abducted and forcibly converted, compelled into new lives and families against their will.[5] It was in the painful and contradictory crucible of Partition that national ideas about India and Pakistan were formed, and the borders between each nation solidified.

The irony and emotional dissonance characterizing the aftermath of Partition gave rise to selective and deeply partisan histories regarding its provenance in both countries. The paradoxes of Partition's foundational logic were thrown into relief as friends and neighbors murdered one another ruthlessly and people converted faiths simply to ensure their own safety, sometimes pledging allegiance to both nations or rejecting either.[6] In addition, each nation had to absorb and justify hoards of refugees whose lives were uprooted for the sake of tenuous ideological ideals. As a result, national mythologies

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[3] Yasmin Khan, *The Great Partition: The Making of India and Pakistan* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 63-166.
[4] Ibid, 105-166.
[5] Ibid, 135.
[6] Ibid, 151.

were built up around Partition; in India illegitimate Muslim claims to statehood were blamed for the loss of cherished territory and dreams of a united Hindustan, in addition to being the primary cause of heinous atrocities committed against Hindus and Sikhs. In contrast, Pakistani discourse emphasized the sanctity and destiny of the "Land of the Pure," configuring refugees as sacrificial martyrs courageously fighting for a rightful Muslim state free from Hindu subjugation.[7] In both official discourses mutual culpability in Partition-related violence is elided.

Each nation's history was thereby forged in response to a religious and culturally polarized "Other" that echoed long-standing colonial definitions of identity and political sovereignty – even as this opposed very different indigenous histories and social realities. This credo was strengthened by the bitter memories and injuries inflicted during Partition, generating durable feelings of resentment and suspicion against the "Other." As Yasmin Khan persuasively argues, this "perceived aggression"[8] on behalf of both states was the outcome of phobias exacerbated by the transitional phase of nation building post-independence, in which "the vulnerability of both new nations was nakedly exposed by the dislocations of Partition."[9] Each assumed a defensive posture, borne by fears of re-annexation on the Pakistani side and of sabotage across the border in India, all before the first conflict over Kashmir had even erupted.[10] These discourses have since become further fixed in national consciousness, drawing strength from three subsequent wars, multiple border skirmishes, and competition in areas of defense and foreign relations. The attitude of 'perceived aggression' continues to inform contemporary

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[7] Ibid, 200-202.
[8] Ibid, 185.
[9] Ibid, 183.
[10] Ibid, 183-184.

bilateral relations and their cultural representation – particularly in popular cinema – despite a growing rapprochement in recent years.

Notwithstanding its visible legacy in politics, education, and culture, Partition remains a contentious subject that is both evoked and repressed in popular memory. There is a notable lacuna in media representations, which tend to reference Partition only implicitly, barring a few scarce exceptions. This is likely due to the fact that in the context of the newly independent nation state popular media became a proponent of nationalism in both countries during the 1950's and 60's. However, the events of Partition had a profound impact on the emergence of distinctive film cultures in India and Pakistan. On the one hand, the porousness of borders, identities and cultural affinities characterizing pre-Partition India were realized in the intellectual liberalism of film personnel who contributed to Hindi cinema's pluralist composition, establishing a common aesthetic and cultural basis that continues to exert influence today. On the other hand, Partition challenged such continuities as cinema became aligned with a hegemonic nationalism that marginalized Muslim identity, including derogatory depictions of Pakistan as the enemy "Other" that reached exceptional heights during the 1999 Kargil dispute.[11] In Pakistan, Partition meant resurrecting a film industry from scratch whose cinema would become equally nationalist and jingoist in its views, only to collapse altogether under the weight of regional and linguistic tensions, censorship, and piracy.[12]

The immediate cultural environment post-independence was one of profound ambivalence, trauma, and fear. People, goods, propaganda, and word-of-mouth rumors

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[11] Talbot, "India and Pakistan," 188-194.
[12] Ali Nobil Ahmad, "Cinema and Society: Film and Social Change in Pakistan," in *Cinema and Society: Film and Social Change in Pakistan,* eds. Ali Khan and Ali Nobil Ahmad (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2016), 3-19.

circulated freely across the newly established and still contested borders of both countries. Many people struggled to see themselves as "Indian" and "Pakistani;" as Khan notes, there was no "blueprint" for identity available to these new national citizens.[13] The refugee crisis also created a cultural and economic upheaval for each state, as people belonging to entire professional communities and industries re-located, leaving behind tremendous gaps in skill and labor economies.[14] The film industry was no exception; in the months following Partition dozens of technicians, writers, and entrepreneurs migrated from Lahore, now in Pakistan, to India's emerging cultural capital of Bombay.

The incentives and opportunities for employment were strong – as Urdu was the prevailing language of the city before Partition, there was a high demand for Urdu-speaking musicians, lyricists and writers.[15] As a result, the developing national industry was strongly molded by Punjabi artists, both Hindu and Muslim, originally hailing from urban centers now in Pakistan. This Punjabi and North Indian cultural influence continues to define the character of Hindi cinema, despite the subordination of Urdu and Islamic aesthetics that occurred once nationalism – and its official language, Hindi – was firmly entrenched in the cultural imaginary of popular cinema. Regardless, the film industry remains notable for its history of religious integration and tolerance, even in the face of hegemonic identity politics. This stance dovetailed with the secular outlook of India's new socialist democracy under Nehru, who sought to assimilate India's sizeable Muslim minority into the national fold.[16]

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[13] Khan, "The Great Partition," 166.
[14] Ibid, 155.
[15] Rachel Dwyer and Divia Patel, *Cinema India: The Visual Culture of Hindi Film* (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 2002), 33.
[16] Talbot, "India and Pakistan," 166-169.

The left-leaning perspective of many of its early contributors also explains Hindi cinema's atmosphere of acceptance, and was influential in maintaining an early cultural continuum between both nascent industries. The product of middle-class intellectual organizations like the Indian People's Theater Association (IPTA) and the Progressive Writer's Movement (PWM), their participants embraced liberal social creeds, from Communism and atheism to radical civic philosophies.[17] Members of both groups were dedicated to social reform and political mobilization through art; advocates included prominent actors, film producers, and writers who would leave an indelible stamp on the industry. Key figures under the IPTA banner included Prithviraj Kapoor, Raj Kapoor, K.A. Abbas, Balraj Sahni, Khwaja Ahmed Abbas, and Dev Anand.

An example of the IPTA's principles can be seen in the work of K.A. Abbas and Prithviraj Kapoor, who collaborated on multiple plays and films dealing with social oppression, imperialism, and communal harmony. Some of these works, such as the theatre productions *Deewar* (Wall, 1945) and *Gaddar* (Traitor, 1948), agitate explicitly against Partition and were eventually censored. The first symbolizes the social alienation of the India/Pakistan binary through the metaphor of two quarreling brothers, and was intended to "break down the wall of misunderstandings between communities."[18] Kapoor, a staunch opponent of the two-nation concept, was committed to the cultural unity of India, himself a migrant from the large frontier region of Peshawar currently located in northwest Pakistan.[19]

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[17] Akshay Manwani, *Sahir Ludhianvi: The People's Poet* (Noida: Harper Collins, 2013), 37-59.
[18] Madhu Jain, *The Kapoors: The First Family of Indian Cinema* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 2005), 33.
[19] Ibid, 32.

Like the IPTA, the PWM had a chiefly Marxist outlook and championed social justice for the laboring and middle classes. Its writers, a combination of playwrights, prose novelists, poets, and lyricists, were equally vocal about the detriments of Partition and consistently argued for Hindu-Muslim amity; its enclave included illustrious and controversial authors of the period like founder Sajjad Zaheer, Sadat Hasan Manto, Kaifi Azmi, Faiz Ahmed Faiz, and Majrooh Sultanpuri, to name only a few.[20] Those who opted for cinema produced work that touched directly on social critique; an ideal illustration is the lyrical canon of Sahir Ludhianvi, whose reputation as a firebrand poet was subsumed in the popular social melodramas of the time.[21] In a memorable song from *Dhool Ka Phool* (Flowers of Dust),[22] Ludhianvi writes of the artificial divisions between Hindus and Muslims in a way that interrogates the legitimacy of Partition, while other cinematic compositions comment on subjects ranging from women's rights to the hypocrisies of nationalism.[23] Beyond directly broaching issues of communalism, perhaps the most important contribution of progressive artists was their recognition of the psychological and affective homologies between Indians and Pakistanis in the wake of Partition, at a time when national segregation was becoming a concrete political reality.

Their work also affirmed the fluidity and shared inheritance of North Indian cultural traditions, engaging a spatial, temporal, and spiritual nexus between India and Pakistan in their use of colloquial Urdu, music and dance forms like the *ghazal*, *qawwali,* and *mujra*, and iconographies of the beloved and divine common to literary and performance genres throughout India, from Hindu devotional plays to mystic Sufi poetry.

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[20] Talbot "India and Pakistan," 72.
[21] Manwani, "Sahir Ludhianvi," 210-223.
[22] *Dhool Ka Phool,* directed by Yash Chopra (B.R. Chopra, 1959).
[23] Ibid, 210-223.

Jyotika Virdi notes how Hindi cinema was the last bastion for some of these traditions in India, particularly the Urdu lineage that was renown for its florid, mellifluous prose and was well suited to the dramatic arts.[24] Reaching a popular zenith in Parsee theatre – a joint antecedent of Hindi and Urdu narrative film style – Urdu had an elite connotation, and its evocative potency has survived in Hindi cinema as a trace form in "film titles, screenplay, lyrics, and the language of love, war and martyrdom." [25]

These developments are a reminder of the intricate alliances among film personnel, aesthetics, and creative values in the early expansion of both national industries, testament to the nebulous distinction between identities and borders in the formative years after Partition. Figures like Manto and Ludhianvi are claimed mutually as icons of national culture in both countries, with their work and those of other pivotal artists post-Partition expressing common sentiments of loss and nostalgia, if not outright resistance. Disillusionment with the grim realities of Partition, including refugee displacement, and uncertainty about the nation can be detected in the socially cynical films of K.A. Abbas, Dev Anand, and Guru Dutt, while the "tragic" hero Dilip Kumar embodied a deep pathos and longing that conveyed the emotionally conflicted mood of the times amid lingering memories and remorse over Partition. These sensibilities also manifested themselves in registers of the surreal and uncanny, as the emergence of gothic, noir, and supernatural genres in the late 1940's through the 1950's suggest.

It can be argued that this post-Partition generation of Bombay filmmakers produced the very first crossover stars, considering that they reached audiences in a

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[24] Jyotika Virdi, *The Cinematic ImagiNation: Indian Popular Films as Social History* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2003), 19.
[25] Ibid, 20.

culturally receptive and mainstream context in both countries during the first decade after independence, before Indian film imports became restricted in Pakistan beginning in 1954. This move was not so much political as a commercial strategy aimed at boosting the competitiveness of the local Urdu industry, revealing how strong the shared cultural appetite and demand for films was between countries, a reality still evinced today by the piracy and smuggling of Indian films across the border.[26] Film personnel also shuttled across national boundaries on a regular basis; Ludhianvi migrated from Bombay to Lahore and back gain between 1948-1949, while actors like Nasir Khan and famed singing star Noorjehan dabbled in both industries, before eventually settling in Pakistan permanently.

These early post-Partition film artists would not be the only connection between Indian and Pakistani media cultures. In the first two decades of independence, both industries followed a similar arc in narrative, economic and ideological spheres. Besides mutual origins in Parsee theatre and an infrastructure and vision influenced by refugees of Partition, both cinemas had a middle class preoccupation as well as a modernizing agenda, reaching their "golden age" in the 1950's and 60's under the political optimism of Prime Ministers Jawaharlal Nehru in India, and Ayub Khan in Pakistan. Both industries possessed political economies organized around a star system and independent financing, backed mainly by powerful producers. In addition, their cinema featured parallel narrative styles, aesthetics, and themes – not to mention audiences. Mushtaq Gazdar describes how Pakistani filmmakers struggled to find local talent in the early

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[26] Mushtaq Gazdar, "Pakistani Cinema 1947-1997," in *Cinema and Society: Film and Social Change in Pakistan,* eds. Ali Khan and Ali Nobil Ahmad (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2016), 39.

1950's capable of competing with the box office appeal of Indian stars like Nargis, Dilip Kumar, and Raj Kapoor.[27]

This parity is reflected in the conventions of melodramatic storytelling that each industry adopted as a dominant commercial form. Scholars like Madhava Prasad,[28] Ravi Vasudevan[29] and Ifthikar Dadi[30] have previously discussed the unique narrative contract of melodrama in the South Asian context; its corpus includes representational tropes that are iconic, frontal or in a static 'tableaux' arrangement, while meaning is conveyed as pre-ordained and symbolic, taking the form of direct address from a "God, King, or Star."[31] This is complemented by a mode of viewing known as *darshan/dastan,* in which the film's symbolic subject reciprocates the spectator's gaze (the subject is the film's source of moral authority, typically the protagonist).[32] In the 1950's these narrative elements were combined with realist devices and point-of-view storytelling that suited the modernity and urban milieu of the 'social' genre, an omnibus form that later included spectacle attractions like music, dance, and fight choreography.[33] The social was geared towards reform and explored moral, emotional and relational conflicts against the metaphorical backdrop of the family-as-nation. In both India and Pakistan this genre

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[27] Ibid, 35-36.
[28] Madhava M. Prasad, *Ideology of the Hindi Film: A Historical Construction* (New Delhi: Oxford, 1998).
[29] Ravi Vasudevan, "Shifting Codes, Dissolving Identities: The Hindi Social Film of the 1950's as Popular Culture," *Journal of Arts and Ideas* 23.4 (1993) 60-75.
[30] Ifthikar Dadi, "Modernity and its Vernacular Reminders in Pakistani Cinema," in *Cinema and Society: Film and Social Change in Pakistan,* eds. Ali Khan and Ali Nobil Ahmad (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2016), 77-100.
[31] Prasad, " Ideology of the Hindi Film," 52.
[32] Dadi, "Modernity," 82-83.
[33] Ibid, 84.

would serve as a vehicle for nationalist ethics, while its similarities would forge a common narrative thread for audiences on both sides of the border.

Popular cinema would come to exemplify the nation-building imperatives of both countries as the 1950's and 60's progressed, aiming for a mass audience heavily fragmented by pre-existing regional, ethnic, and class differences. In India, the conundrum of accommodating a Muslim minority larger than the population of Pakistan – a harsh reminder of Partition's absurd consequences –was a pressing concern. Nehru's ambitions for a secular, progressive state called for the inclusion of Muslims in the nationalist project; however, majoritarian politics nonetheless posited a Hindu identity for India, evident in campaigns to 'purify' Hindi of its Urdu influences and associate Hindu symbolism with the nation, for instance by representing India as the goddess Bharat Mata (Mother India).[34]

In the film industry, parochialism would solidify discourses about the Muslim and Pakistani "Other" that gained currency both during and after Partition. This process was demonstrated in the transformation or erasure of Muslim names among actors and creative personnel; stars like Dilip Kumar (birth name Yusuf Khan), Nargis (Fatima Rashid), Madhubala (Mumtaz Jehan Begum Dehlavi), and Meena Kumari (Mahjabeen Bano) are a few examples. Despite the industry's profile of religious integration, this effacement served to obstruct a wider validation of Muslim identity in mainstream culture. It was also an effort to re-negotiate identity along the terms of post-Partition nationalism by distancing Muslim stars from territory now located in Pakistan, a figurative reassurance of their fidelity to the nation. The concept of loyalty was integral

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[34] Talbot, "India and Pakistan," 175-177.

to Partition discourse, as identity was perceived unilaterally; if you had not chosen to be Indian or Pakistani, you were "Other" and thereby suspect.[35] National allegiance was the main prerequisite for social, cultural and economic integration.

As a result, the Muslim 'burden of proof' in illustrating service and sacrifice to India continues to be a recurring theme in the representation of Muslims onscreen, whether overtly or tacitly. The trope speaks to an ongoing anxiety about Indian Muslims furtively supporting an adversary Pakistan state that has its ideological ancestry in Partition and subsequent "McCarthyite" campaigns against "fifth columnists, spies and those who displayed a dubious commitment to the national interest."[36] One of the reasons why today's Pakistani crossover stars pose a uniquely political threat is that they unsettle established concepts of choice, loyalty, and belonging in a rapidly globalizing cultural landscape.

These discourses have impacted the representation of Muslims in Hindi cinema until very recently. The marginalization of Muslim identity began with the splintering of the social into its sub-genres – the 'Muslim' social and the *tawaif* or courtesan film. The first depicts a morally bankrupt and obsolete Muslim feudal class anathema to the rational modernity of Indian democracy,[37] while the other romanticizes a decadent Islamic court culture heavily imbued with Orientalist imagery. Both are placed in anachronistic settings and feature characters at the precipice of social decay; however, while the first advocates Muslim social reform in line with the modernizing goals of the nation state, the latter offers a timeless and essentialist view of Muslim identity. The

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[35] Khan, "The Great Partition," 155.
[36] Ibid, 178.
[37] Dadi, "Modernity," 83-84.

transience of the *kotha* (brothel) and the courtesan's inability to achieve social acceptance block the legitimacy of the Muslim subject by foreclosing a space within the nation. Since nationalist discourse positions women's bodies as a locus of cultural and national authenticity, it is clear that the *tawaif's* body remains "Other" and can never be redeemed or harnessed to the reproduction of society.

This idea would be reinforced in the abnegation of Hindu-Muslim romance onscreen. This again has its roots in Partition and nationalist renderings of the female body as a reservoir of cultural sanctity motivated by "the emphasis on female chastity and female honor."[38] Protecting women's bodies from defilement became synonymous with guarding the Indian nation against the Muslim "Other" and Pakistan's illicit claims to territory, including the embattled region of Kashmir. The politicizing of women's sexuality reached an apogee post-Partition, when forced repatriation initiatives for women who had been abducted were conducted on both sides of the border in an attempt to restore national integrity.[39] Managing women's sexuality entailed securing the nation's prosperity, rightful cultural inheritance, and geographical borders. It is significant that when inter-religious relationships are represented, they frequently bear out these gendered nationalisms. The blockbuster film *Veer-Zaara* (2006), for example, portrays a saga of romantic separation between a Hindu/Indian male – the ideal national citizen – and a Pakistani/Muslim woman, whose reunification at the end of the story can be read as an allegorical reclaiming of the "lost" territory of Pakistan by its rightful claimant, fulfilling nationalist fantasies of an undivided India that deny the validity of Pakistan.

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[38] Fazia Hirji, "Change of Pace? Islam and Tradition in Popular Indian Cinema," *South Asian Popular Culture* 6.1 (2008): 60.
[39] Ibid, 60.

Despite these persistent and trenchant representations of the Muslim and Pakistani "Other," there have been multiple crossover attempts by Pakistani performers in the twenty odd years between the golden age of Hindi cinema and the current stage of globalization, beginning in the early 1980's. There are several reasons for this sudden transition; first and foremost is the fact that both industries were facing significant declines in production, quality and box office returns, fueled by political upheavals but also competition from commercial television, which lured middle class audiences away from cinema halls until well into the 1990's.[40] Ironically, television would also become the primary vehicle for Pakistani crossover stars during this period, a trend that has remained constant. This is due to the strong overlap between Pakistani and Indian broadcast signals, which, unlike cinema, easily bypass the import barriers and censorship constraining film distribution, while reaching audiences directly in the home.[41] In addition, Pakistani television serials would maintain the character of the melodramatic social so familiar to Hindi film audiences, even as Pakistani cinema resembled its Hindi counterpart less and less, becoming fragmented by regional and linguistic divisions with little crossover appeal. As a result, the exposure of Pakistani talent across the border was facilitated by the new socio-cultural and economic realities of television.

The withdrawal of middle class audiences and diminished film revenue during this period caused Hindi cinema to adopt a working class aesthetic, featuring highly formulaic plots and an emphasis on sexuality and violence aimed predominantly at male

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[40] Gazdar, "Pakistan Cinema," 54-58.
[41] Ibid, 56.

spectators.[42] It also meant an explosion in B-grade and low-budget productions that were not star-centered and which privileged the entry of inexpensive, novice talent. In fact, the only authentic star of the period continued to be India's original "Angry Young Man" Amitabh Bachchan, who ruled the roost above a range of medium caliber stars like Mithun Chakraborty and Anil Kapoor. This atmosphere was conducive to the small influx of Pakistani talent that emerged, and was reinforced by the collapse of the Urdu film industry in Pakistan after 1975, which was replaced mainly by exploitative Punjabi and Pashto films.[43] Compounded by a decreased national market for cinema after the recent Bangladesh war, crippling censorship codes and aggressive restrictions on film production and exhibition under the regime of martial dictator Zia ul-Haq,[44] there was clearly an increased motivation for Pakistani talent to migrate to India.

However, it is difficult to categorize Pakistani actors working in India during this interim as 'stars.' Their careers were ephemeral (spanning only a handful of projects) and they often received secondary or ensemble billing in films, possessing little to no clout with trade journals or film promotion circuits like contemporary crossover stars. They also did not engage in brand sponsorship, as there was no sophisticated system of talent franchising recognizable in the Hollywood and Hindi film industries today. In addition, their onscreen and off-screen personas mirrored the Muslim/Pakistani "Other" in predictable ways, through a limited availability of roles, dramatic typecasting, and scandalous publicity.

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[42] Tejaswini Ganti, *Producing Bollywood: Inside the Contemporary Hindi Film Industry* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012), 60-72.
[43] Gazdar, "Pakistan Cinema," 56.
[44] Ibid, 54-55.

Nearly thirty-five years after Partition, the first acknowledged Pakistani actor to accept a leading role in a Hindi film was Salma Agha in the 1982 production *Nikaah* (Marriage).[45] A prototypical example of the Muslim social, the film explores the regressive aspects of Muslim feudal society, in this case the abuse of Islamic community law regarding divorce and re-marriage. Unlike the representations of devotion, noble sacrifice and fulfillment attached to the ideal Hindu wife in popular Hindi cinema, Agha's role epitomizes the Muslim woman as victim in the social genre – an object of oppression, suffering and pity. The socially defunct nature of traditional Islamic institutions is thereby highlighted and demands change, even as faithfulness to traditional Hindu values is valorized in other genres. This archaic, immutable portrait of the Muslim woman is also echoed in the courtesan film, in which the downtrodden or corrupt condition of women reflects the unsustainability of Muslim society as a whole.

Agha's dramatic repertoire and that of other Pakistani female actors from this period bear out this stereotypical binary of Muslim women as victim/temptress. In Hindi cinema overt sexuality and moral prurience was historically the preserve of the Westernized or foreign "Other," and was projected onto a body marked by difference. In the Muslim social and courtesan genres, explicit markers of Muslim identity through character names, mise-en-scene, costumes, language and music also operate as registers of difference that fetishize Muslim femininity, fulfilling Orientalist fantasies of the exotic, inscrutable "Other" while enabling a heightened projection of desire, sensuality and voyeurism onto the bodies of Muslim women. The courtesan in particular is defined

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[45] *Nikaah,* directed by B.R. Chopra (B.R. Chopra, 1982).

by her ability to seduce and enchant male audiences through poetry, music and dance; her entire being, from voice to body, is an aesthetic ornament aimed at titillating the senses.

It is revealing that Pakistani female actors were repeatedly cast as temptresses regardless of genre that pointed to their underlying "Otherness;" after *Nikaah*, for example, Agha appeared in a series of films where she either reprised the courtesan type or played exploitative roles, including as an item attraction in song sequences. Examples include *Kasam Paida Karne Wale Ki* (A Promise is Made),[46] *Jungle Ki Beti* (Daughter of the Jungle)[47] and *Pati, Patni, aur Tawaif* (Husband, Wife and Courtesan).[48] The only time Agha portrays a Hindu, culturally normative character in a leading role is in the film *Oonche Log* (High Society People),[49] a performance that was poorly received by audiences and critics. In the majority of her films, however, Agha remains negligible to the narrative.

Marginalization also characterized the careers of other Pakistani performers who attempted to enter the Hindi film industry in Agha's wake. Zeba Bakhtiar acted in a prominent Pakistani TV play before being launched in Raj Kapoor's acclaimed release *Henna*,[50] emphasizing the critical role of television in mediating both early and current crossover stardom. Like Agha, Bakhtiar's other roles were sparse and forgettable, fitting in with the hackneyed box-office fare of the period, while her only meaningful starring role in *Henna* capitalized on the "Otherness" of Muslim identity. A melodramatic romance about the relationship between a Pakistani woman and an Indian man, it

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[46] *Kasam Paida Karne Wale Ki*, directed by Babbar Subhash (Babbar Subhash, 1984).
[47] *Jungle Ki Beti*, directed by R. Thakur (1988).
[48] *Pati, Patni aur Tawaif,* directed by Rajkumar Kohli (1990).
[49] *Oonche Log,* directed by Brij (R.K. Kapoor, 1985).
[50] *Henna,* directed by Randhir Kapoor and Raj Kapoor (Randhir Kapoor, 1991).

premises its story on a hypothetical but illusory fantasy of cross-border unity, which becomes nullified at the end of the film with Henna's (Bakhtiar's) death, obviating the possibility of genuine consummation. In addition, it is only the hero's amnesia at the beginning of the story – allowing him to temporarily forget his true identity as Hindu/Indian – which permits him the transgression of falling in love with Henna in the first place. As Hirji notes, the film "concludes with a reminder of the impossibility of cross-border, or cross-cultural, love. The hero's final call for peace between India and Pakistan comes as he stands over Henna's body, and ultimately it is in India that the hero and his wife resume their lives."[51] While nonetheless an important story for its direct confrontation of Partition and the India-Pakistan question, including a more sympathetic representation of Muslims and Pakistanis, these redeeming qualities are overshadowed by the finality of the film's message.

The off-screen personas of émigré actors supported this consistent "Othering" of Pakistani/Muslim identity. Agha is an illustrative example; despite being Pakistani by birth and residing there much of her life, she publically dismisses her national origin as a Pakistani, stating in an interview, "I'm not from Pakistan. We're Pathans from Amritsar settled in London where I grew up."[52] This strategic distancing from Pakistan geographically and culturally stands in contrast with the celebrity discourse surrounding contemporary crossover stars and reflects the controversy and stigmatization characterizing early Pakistani actors, typical of the patriotic 'burden of proof' that would continue to dog Muslim stars in India and that served to eviscerate any ideological,

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[51] Hirji, "Change of Pace," 62.
[52] Farhana Farook, "Salma Agha: What's the Big Deal if I Married Twice?" *iDiva,* March 15th, 2013, http://idiva.com/news-entertainment/salma-agha-whats-the-big-deal-if-i-married-twice/20158.

political or cultural ties with Pakistan. This rejection was supported by the scandals that erupted when liaisons between Pakistani and Indian actors were exposed. Besides television, romantic and professional relationships were a principal conduit for the introduction of Pakistani actors in India, and it is significant that the majority of crossover actors from this period were identified less by their careers or potential for stardom than as objects of sensational gossip and indiscretion. Their professional tenure typically lasted as long as the relationships that sustained them.

The careers of Mohsin Khan and Somy Ali are prime examples. Khan achieved fame on two fronts; first for his existing reputation in cricket (another source of cultural contiguity between India and Pakistan) and second for his controversial marriage to Indian actor Reena Roy in 1983. His association with Roy motivated a brief stint in Hindi films, the most successful of which was a co-starring performance in *Saathi* (Soulmate).[53] However, Khan's career never advanced and was fully moribund by the turn of the millennium, aggravated by his subsequent divorce from Roy and re-settlement in Pakistan.[54] Like Khan, Ali's transient career in the 1990's was largely attributed to her long-term relationship with blockbuster star Salman Khan. The fact that she left home and moved to India at the age of fifteen to pursue him – entering film projects primarily on the basis of sex appeal – attracted lurid speculation[55] in another incarnation of the 'temptress' image frequently attached to Muslim and Pakistani female actors.

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[53] *Saathi,* directed by Mahesh Bhatt (Mukesh Duggal, 1991).
[54] Vicky Lalwanil, ""Sonakshi Doesn't Look Like Me: Reena Roy," *Times of India,* October 13, 2012, http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/entertainment/hindi/bollywood/news/Sonakshi-doesnt-look-like-me-Reena-Roy/articleshow/16793423.cms
[55] TNN, "Aishwarya Rai Came Between Salman and Me: Somy Ali," *Times of India,* August 3rd, 2011,

The unhappy ending of these relationships for both celebrities, including Mohsin Khan's arduous custody battle over his daughter with Roy,[56] dominate each actor's public image in a way that perpetuates cultural discourses about the impossibility or inevitable failure of inter-faith, cross-border relationships. This rhetoric has been used in celebrity journalism to embellish legends of doomed and unrequited romance as early as the 1950's, such as in the Dev Anand-Suraiyaa affair, where the star couple's marriage was famously prevented as a result of religious differences. [57] Most importantly, these discourses overlap with wider cultural representations that abjure intimacy between religious and cross-border communities, affirming nationalist identity politics while de-legitimizing the professional and social integration of Pakistani talent in the Hindi film industry.

The legacy of these initial crossover actors is mainly one of subordination. The period in which they emerged provided few opportunities for real stardom, exacerbated by the fact that many were women who faced a paucity of roles in a patriarchal industry dominated by male star power. In addition, their status as Pakistani and "Other" firmly marked them as outsiders in religious, national and cultural terms, limiting the range of available roles and representational possibilities. Their on-screen performances continued narrative traditions of marginalizing Muslim and Pakistani identity, while their off-screen publicity emphasized a liminal and unstable location in the Hindi film industry, borne out by lack-luster careers and an illicit notoriety generated by romantic or professional

http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/entertainment/hindi/bollywood/news/Aishwarya-Rai-came-between-Salman-me-Somy-Ali/articleshow/9466777.cms.
[56] Lalwanil, "Sonakshi."
[57] Harjap Singh Ahujia, "An Affair to Remember," *The Tribune,* March 9, 2008, http://www.tribuneindia.com/2008/20080309/spectrum/main7.htm.

connections with Indian stars. Their taboo reception contrasts the flexibility surrounding

stardom and migration in the years immediately following Partition, when communal

resistance and strong cultural affinities characterized both national industries. The

transition reveals how nationalist discourse and political and industrial developments

altered the landscape for crossover stars over time, much as globalization is doing today.

Regardless, the shared origins of Indian and Pakistani media industries continue to

provide an ongoing incentive for cultural exchange, while the political and ideological

legacies of Partition remain visible in the shifting controversies surrounding present day

Pakistani stars and their careers in India. With this historical context in place, the

representation and reception of these newer stars can be more fully explored.

GLOBALIZING PAKISTANI IDENTITY ACROSS THE BORDER: THE

POLITICS OF CROSSOVER STARDOM IN THE HINDI FILM INDUSTRY

CHAPTER TWO: GLOBALIZATION, NEW POLITICAL ECONOMIES, AND

CULTURAL CHANGE

While the 1980's are remembered for the critical and commercial decline of Hindi cinema, new policies of economic liberalization and global growth radically transformed its character and appeal in the 1990's through the present, both on a domestic and transnational scale. The process began with the lifting of wider economic sanctions across India in 1991, but was dramatically increased once the government officially recognized the film industry as a GDP-supporting enterprise in 1999.[1] The granting of industry status meant that, for the first time, Indian films qualified for legitimate sources of commercial funding, including corporate loans, government sponsorship, and Foreign Direct Investment (FDI). This has altered the production landscape for Hindi cinema and restored its cultural currency and dominance as a national industry, offering a more urbane reputation with audiences in India and abroad. As Tejaswini Ganti notes, Hindi cinema suddenly became 'cool,' emerging as a fashionable preoccupation with middle class and youth consumers that was fully in sync with global cultural trends.[2]

This economic and cosmopolitan renaissance has inevitably impacted cultural exchange between India and Pakistan, a process supported by the intermittent thawing of bi-lateral relations that has steadily increased over the past decade, despite dramatic interruptions like the 1999 Kargil dispute and 11/26 bombings of Mumbai in 2008.

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[1] Tejaswini Ganti, *Bollywood*: *A Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema* (New York and London: Routledge, 2004), 53.
[2] Ganti, "Producing Bollywood," 17.

Regardless, the primary lynchpin of India-Pakistan relations since 2000 has been growing opportunities for trade and collaboration on domestic and foreign policy issues. This is discernible in the relaxing of visa and travel restrictions, the opening of new transport channels like the "Peace Bus" between Srinagar and Muzaffarabad, and record numbers in bi-lateral commerce, which broke the $500 million mark for the first time in 2005, auguring a new era of intertwined growth that has since escalated.[3] These changes have rendered material and cultural barriers between India and Pakistan less rigid, widening the scope for commercial and creative cooperation. The mutual experience of globalization, neo-liberal capitalism and a flourishing consumer culture indicates that both societies resemble one another more closely than they have in the past forty years. This equivalence is especially visible in consumer entertainment, as the demand for both Hindi and Pakistani media products has risen sharply and the number of Indian cultural exports and co-productions has increased, establishing Hindi cinema's hegemony as an agent of economic, cultural and geopolitical influence. The fad for "Bollywood-style" weddings in Pakistan and the regular screening of Hindi (as well as international) films in posh multiplexes, once restricted to pirated prints smuggled across the border, is testimony to how much the climate has changed.[4] It is in this new environment that today's Pakistani crossover stars emerge as emblems of globalized capital and consumer culture, shifting perceptions of the historicized Pakistani and Muslim "Other."

This chapter looks at the role of globalization in setting the stage for Pakistani crossover stardom, the outcome of new industrial and cultural forces from corporatization

[3] Khan, "The Great Partition," 209.
[4] Ali Nobil Ahmad, "New Cinema from Pakistan: Film, Technology and Media in Transition," in *Cinema and Society: Film and Social Change in Pakistan,* eds. Ali Khan and Ali Nobil Ahmad (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2016), 362.

and the growth of overseas markets to digital fandom. Nonetheless, these same forces of

globalization have also served to strengthen identity politics and nationalism over the past

decade, creating what has been called a "macabre marriage of consumerism and

fundamentalism" in popular culture.[5] As a result, this chapter further interrogates how the

representation of Pakistanis and Muslims continues to fluctuate in a globalized age,

shaped by social and political developments such as the rise of Hindutva and a

preponderance of transnational discourses on Islam and terrorism. Pakistani stars emerge

against this backdrop even as they exceed neat categorizations of national and religious

identity in a global media convergence environment.

The liberalization of the 1990's not only encouraged an influx of foreign and

corporate dollars, but also created a cinema that was outward-looking, expansionist, and

fixated on consumer branding, with films proudly boasting product placement and a

'designer' aesthetic. Watershed productions like Karan Johar's *Dilwale Dulhania Le

Jayenge* (The Brave-Hearted Takes the Bride)[6] and *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai* (Something

Happens)[7] reflected this orientation while ushering in new narrative and thematic

sensibilities. These films set the archetype for two critical trends in Hindi cinema: the

NRI (Non-Resident Indian) film and the privileging of Hindu identity as a source of

cultural and national authenticity.[8] Both appealed to a rapidly gentrifying Indian middle

class and diaspora audiences predominantly located in the UK, North America, Australia,

and Hong Kong. Centered on the upper class, North Indian Hindu family, the NRI film

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[5] Talbot, "India and Pakistan," 189.

[6] *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge,* directed by Aditya Chopra (Yash Raj Films, 1995).

[7] *Kuch Kuch Hota Hai,* directed by Karan Johar (Dharma Productions, 1998).

[8] Sheena Malhotra and Tavishi Alagh, "Dreaming the Nation: Domestic Dramas in Hindi
Films post-1990," *South Asian Popular Culture* 2.1 (April 2004): 19-37.

featured renowned foreign locales, opulent lifestyles, and an idealized sense of Indian identity located in the "hearts" of NRIs across the globe.[9]

A renewed emphasis on the extended family and traditional Hindu values likewise prevailed in these films, obviating other cultural, religious and social means of constructing identity. The elaborate display of Hindu rituals, from engagement and marriage ceremonies to festival holidays like Navratri or Karva Chauth, dominate blockbuster films such as *Hum Aapke Hain Kaun!* (Who Am I to You!),[10] *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam* (I Have Given My Heart Away Darling)[11] and *Kabhi Khushi Kabhi Gham* (Sometimes Happiness, Sometimes Sorrow).[12] Invoking the idea of 'Ramrajya' or benevolent rule, they depict the patriarchal Hindu family as the cornerstone of social harmony and cultural belonging – even if the characters drive Ferraris and reside in places like New York City. In this way capitalism and Western modernity became seamlessly integrated with notions of Indian identity, which was increasingly defined according to a Hindu-centric moral universe characterized by filial piety, appropriate sexual and personal conduct, and the observance of Hindu belief. This symbolic adherence to traditional norms compensated the rapid incorporation of Western capitalist

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9 Lakshmi Srinivas, "Nonsense as Sense-Making: Negotiating Globalization in Bombay Cinema," in *Reinventing Global Communication: Indian and Chinese Media Beyond Borders,* eds. Michael Curtin and Hemant Shah, (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2010), 17-35.

10 *Hum Aapke Hain Kaun!,* directed by Sooraj Barjatya (Rajshri Productions, 1994).

11 *Hum Dil De Chuke Sanam,* directed by Sanjay Leela Bhansali (SLB Films, 1999).

12 *Khabhi Khushi Khabhi Gham,* directed by Karan Johar (Dharma Productions, 2001).

values and commodities in Indian society, in addition to legitimizing the growing economic and cultural importance of the NRI.[13]

For the first time in a decade Hindi cinema posed a realistic competition to television, drawing middle class audiences back to theatres while engaging relevant popular discourses – and anxieties – about national identity under the new cultural regime of globalization. This nationalism was reflected onscreen as both 'soft' and 'hard' power – whether the protagonists were venture capitalists or soldiers battling for India's sovereignty and prestige, they operated as metaphors for India's competitive growth in the global arena. It is no coincidence, then, that the NRI film found its ideological counterpart in patriotic war and 'terrorist' genres. Borrowing a lead from Hollywood's depiction of the Arab and Muslim "Other," Pakistani Muslims were officially cast as the adversaries of Indian prosperity and liberal democracy under the new guise of radical terrorism.[14] These genres mark a departure from the secularism and enshrined multiculturalism of the Nehruvian era towards a new era of hardliner identity politics in mainstream culture.

This development can be linked to multiple political and social movements that gained traction since the 1990's, notably a resurgence of Hindu nationalism, the 1999 Kargil conflict, and post-9/11 Western aggression in the Middle East and South Asia. The rise of Hindutva as a major political force has been a critical factor; beginning with

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[13] Robina Mohammad, *"Phir Bhi Dil Hai Hindustani* (Yet the Heart Remains Indian): Bollywood, the 'Homeland' Nation-State, and the Diaspora," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* Vol. 25 (September 28, 2007): 1015-1040.
[14] Hirji, "Change of Pace?," 63-65.

the destruction of the Babri Masjid in 1992[15] (a mosque allegedly built on the site of Lord Ram's birthplace in Ayodhya), Hindu nationalist organizations like the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have commanded greater influence in the public sphere and ascended India's governing bureaucracy.[16] Hindutva discourse projects "the breakdown of order and society under population pressures and globalization…onto a demonized Muslim 'other.'[17] This rhetoric recycles archaic Orientalist stereotypes about the Muslim invader/conqueror and of Muslim men in particular as repressive, violent, rapacious, and sexually profligate.[18,19] According to this perspective, India's Muslim minority is an undesirable relic of its past occupation under 'illegitimate' Muslim rule, beginning with Mahmud of Ghazni's pillage of Delhi in 1025 to the subsequent installation of Mughal power in 1526.[20] The proclamation of a timeless Hindu nation and exhortations to devout Hindus to restore the glory of India's 'golden age' won the BJP its first electoral victory in 1998.[21]

This championing of the Hindu right was partly manifested in efforts to arm and defend the nation, leading to India's first nuclear detonation that same year.[22] The show of aggression prompted a standoff with Pakistan over the enduring Kashmir issue, leading to the brief but acute Kargil encounter over the Line of Control (LOC) separating both nations. India demonstrated its military might during the conflict, narrowly

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[15] Stanley Wolpert, "*India and Pakistan: Continued Conflict or Cooperation?*" (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 90-92.
[16] Talbot, "India and Pakistan," 175-177.
[17] Ibid., 175.
[18] Ibid., 39-42.
[19] Deepa Kumar, *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012), 41-60.
[20] Ibid., 41.
[21] Ibid., 284.
[22] Ibid, 176-177.

declaring victory before Pakistan surrendered with an immediate ceasefire.[23]

Nonetheless, the skirmish inflamed passions on both sides of the border, engendering strong jingoist sentiment where "everything from light entertainment to advertising was linked to the events in the remote Tiger Hills."[24] As Talbot notes, patriotism had become profitable and popular culture from cricket to cinema was imbued with a nationalist fervor that sold tickets, product endorsements, and even video games, such as the "I Love India" game where players could bomb Lahore. [25]

Around this time a number of Indo-Pak themed films surfaced, followed shortly by films like *Fiza*[26] and *Mission Kashmir*[27] that inaugurated the Muslim/Pakistani terrorist genre. Films like *Border*,[28] *Gadar: Ek Prem Katha* (Revolt: A Love Story),[29] and *LOC: Kargil*[30] sensationalize military and political conflict with Pakistan, offering a historically polarized view of bi-lateral relations and associating the Pakistan state with espionage, insurgency and de-stabilization. The ideological legacies of Partition are starkly visible in the sagas of betrayal, distrust and sabotage these stories reiterate about the Pakistani "Other." Likewise, Pakistani and Muslim civilians are routinely associated with terrorist infiltration, made all the more threatening by the fact that they cannot be distinguished from 'true' Indian citizens. Examples like *Sarfarosh* (Fervor),[31] and *Fanaa*

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[23] Wolpert, "Continued Conflict," 74.
[24] Talbot, "India and Pakistan," 187.
[25] Ibid., 194.
[26] *Fiza,* directed by Khalid Mohammed (Pradeep Guha, 2000).
[27] *Mission Kashmir,* directed by Vidhu Vinod Chopra (Vinod Chopra Productions, 2000).
[28] *Border,* directed by J.P. Dutta (J.P. Films, 1997).
[29] *Gadar: Ek Prem Katha,* directed by Anil Sharma (Nitin Keni, 2001).
[30] *LOC: Kargil,* directed by J.P. Dutta (J.P. Films, 2003).
[31] *Sarfarosh,* directed by John Matthew Mathan (Cinematt Pictures, 1999).

(Annihilation)[32] require the Muslim perpetrator to be socially eliminated; in the latter example, the Muslim female protagonist must assassinate her terrorist husband for the sake of national security. Again, performing loyalty to the nation is integral to Muslim subjectivity and belonging in the narrative imaginary of Hindi film.[33]

These representations have been partly strengthened by post-9/11 global events, even as they are also increasingly contested in popular media. The BJP's cooperation with U.S. and European foreign policy, including a pledge to combat terrorism through increased defense expenditure and surveillance, has added fresh potency to Hindu nationalist dogma that co-opts the political, bureaucratic and cultural apparatus of Islamophobia in countries like the U.S and Britain.[34] While certainly not identical in an Indian context – a culture that has dealt with religious diversity for thousands of years – this discourse nonetheless affirms an antagonist stance towards Pakistan and historical suspicions of its abetting and harboring terrorism, from Partition-related violence to the Kashmir dispute. Jigna Desai and Rani Neutill contend that Indian cultural responses to the global 'War on Terror' connect Western imperialist discourse "to a longer history of violence extending forth from Partition and communalism in South Asia. It marks 9/11 not as a rupture, but as a continuation of this history…with the subcontinent as an originary site of global Islamic terror."[35] This perspective was reinforced in the wake of the 11/26 terror attacks in Mumbai, allowing India to further leverage its geo-political authority against Pakistan, whose civic corruption, reputed collusion with global terrorist

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[32] *Fanaa*, directed by Kunal Kohli (Yash Raj Films, 2006).

[33] Hirji, "Change of Pace?," 61-64.

[34] Kumar, "Islamophobia," 113-200.

[35] Jigna Desai and Rani Neutill, "Wound, Injury and Restoration: Bollywood's Formations of Global Terror," *Studies in South Asian Film and Media* 5.2 (2013), 147-165.

networks and links to Kashmiri revolt are frequently contrasted with positive examples of a progressive and economically robust "India Shining," contradictory as realities may be.[36]

The operations of Western punitive force in the Middle East and South Asia since 9/11, however, have also spawned resistance to Islamophobia and its political exploitation in India, a post-colonial nation with the second-largest population of Muslims in the world. The shift includes more palatable images of Muslims in Hindi cinema that directly counteract the 'terrorist' prototype, although these allowances continue to rely primarily on the traditional depiction of Muslims as victims or martyrs. Examples include films like *New York*[37] and *My Name is Khan*,[38] which show Muslims in a compassionate and/or heroic light as they encounter religious intolerance and terror-related violence in the globalized West. In a re-working of the NRI genre, these films deflect Islamophobia and administrative injustice away from the Indian state and its citizens onto the contradictions of Western capitalist society, evoking racial minority politics along the way. *My Name is Khan* goes so far as to link Muslim suffrage in the U.S. with the historic civil rights movement. As Desai and Neutill note, the majority of these narratives end up confirming a neo-colonial outlook on the 'Islamic threat' by calling for an "expansion of the global security state"[39] and other forms of citizen vigilantism.[40] A common representational trope is that Muslims are responsible for identifying, policing and compensating justice against radical terrorism within their own

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[36] Wolpert, "Continued Conflict," 96-97.
[37] *New York,* directed by Kabir Khan (Yash Raj Films, 2009).
[38] *My Name is Khan,* directed by Karan Johar (Fox Searchlight Pictures, 2010).
[39] Desai and Neutill, "Wound," 148.
[40] Ibid, 160.

communities, a key component of Islamophobic policy. Ultimately such films continue

to pass through terrorism as the principal lens for interpreting Muslim identity, offering a

problematic and constrictive profile of Muslim agency and experience.

However, there have been additional recent shifts in the representation of

Pakistani and Muslim identity that can be attributed to the industry's continuing efforts at

globalization. These pivotal transitions include 1) infrastructural reform, 2) the targeting

of overseas markets, and 3) an accelerating trend towards corporate media convergence,

including ancillary franchising and brand consolidation. It also incorporates what Henry

Jenkins calls "grassroots" convergence through the emergence of digital media cultures

that are consumer-oriented, permitting innovative means of distributing, appropriating

and generating media content.[41] These factors have opened a genuine window of

opportunity for Pakistani stars and the production of niche or alternative content

supporting their crossover status, allowing greater flexibility in the cultural representation

of Pakistanis and Muslims. These changes have also established Hindi cinema as the

region's prevailing cultural export and an important counter-flow to Hollywood's

monopoly in major global markets.

Changes in the political economy of Hindi film have provided the main stimulus

for this large-scale global growth. Whereas the industry functioned as an independent,

financier-driven enterprise post-WWII, the production scenario over the past twenty

years has shifted towards a fully corporate studio model.[42] This movement towards

vertical integration has modified how contemporary films are financed, produced,

designed and distributed. The emergence of discrete genre categories, franchise sequels,

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[41] Jenkins, "Convergence Culture," 135-139.
[42] A. Subramanian, "Blockbuster Barons," *Business Today,* April 2012, 120-124.

and staggered blockbuster releases – known as the '100 crore' film in industry parlance --

have replaced incitements for a guaranteed and 'universal' box office hit. This effect has

been enhanced by the demise of single-screen theatres and the exponential growth of

urban multiplexes, where big budget, foreign and niche films can now be screened

simultaneously.[43] In addition, the centrality of streaming and VOD (Video on Demand)

services as part of a larger global distribution strategy for Indian media companies entails

that dependence on first-run theatrical screenings has taken a backseat to lucrative

satellite and licensing profits.[44] This corporate investment milieu has supported the

emergence of a global media franchising approach in an industry once constrained by

black money, profiteering, oral contracts, and an overall lack of transparency.[45] Such

developments parallel similar trends across emerging media markets throughout Asia, the

Middle East, and Latin America.

In addition to the entry of foreign conglomerates like Viacom, Disney and

DreamWorks, mainstay production houses like Yash Raj Films (YRF) and Eros

International Ltd. have acted as industry leaders in this overall corporate re-structuring.

Eros was one of the first companies to sell overseas distribution rights for their films and

foray into digital distribution, launching their own subscription service in 2012, while

YRF (once a family-run, 'boutique' production business) was among the first to engage

in media branding as an effort to market their films to diaspora audiences.[46] The company

now has a U.S-based division, a niche production banner, *Y! Films,* for youth audiences,

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[43] Ganti, "Producing Bollywood," 328-358.
[44] Ganti, "Bollywood." 89-95.
[45] Ganti, "Bollywood," 53-67.
[46] Subramanian, "Blockbuster Barons," 119.

and ancillary merchandising for their most popular entertainment franchises.[47,48] Unlike

the speculative practices and 'heterogeneous mode of manufacture'[49] previously

characterizing the Hindi film industry, in which film projects were assembled piece-meal,

being dependent on multiple, and frequently disparate, sources of financing, these new

entertainment conglomerates engage in a profitable 'de-risking' agenda. This strategy

includes debuting international stock, acquiring multiple media properties, and

diversifying revenue outlets, enabling studios to work on multiple projects concurrently

and invest in co-productions.[50] This method has inevitably widened content choices for

filmmakers and consumers by accommodating low budget or experimental cinema – a

major conduit for launching both new and crossover talent.

The corporate system has also made Hindi cinema more globally profitable than

ever before, with an average annual growth rate of 11.6%[51] and approximately 20-55% of

total box office revenue deriving from overseas markets. Between 1998 and 2005 the

Hindi film industry achieved peak growth post-liberalization, with revenues increasing

nearly 360 percent, bolstering India's global market share from less than 0.2 percent in

2004 to more than 2 percent in 2017.[52] In 2018 the film industry is expected to grow at

[47] Nyay Bhushan, "Veteran Bollywood Banner Yash Raj Films Launches Hollywood-Based YRF Entertainment," *The Hollywood Reporter,* November 22, 2011,
[48] IANS, "Dhoom 3 Creating Dhoom With Tie-In Merchandise," *The Express Tribune,* November 20, 2013, http://tribune.com.pk/
[49] Prasad, "Ideology of the Hindi Film," 42-46.
[50] Subramanian, "Blockbuster Barons," 122.
[51] Price Waterhouse Cooper, "India – Strong Growth in Digital Segments While Traditional Media Remain Resilient," *Price Waterhouse Cooper Global Entertainment Media Outlook* (2014): 1-11, http://www.pwc.com/gx/en/global-entertainment-media-outlook/assets/indian-summary.pdf.
[52] Lucia Kramer, "The End of the Hollywood 'Rip-Off'? Changes in the Bollywood Politics of Copyright," in *The Politics of Adaptation: Media Convergence and Ideology,*

least 14.3% annually and reach earnings of over $33 billion by 2020.[53] This can be credited to higher ticket sales abroad and an increased profit margin in the distribution sector, which now accounts for around 60% of total film revenue, much of which is recouped before a film is even released.[54] This has impacted the hit to flop ratio of Hindi cinema, since films that otherwise perform poorly at the domestic box office can still be profitable in a limited overseas release – not to mention through pre-sold satellite, music and related licensing rights. This new profit configuration has re-oriented the content appeal, as well as intended audience, for Hindi cinema. In addition to NRI and global audiences in the West, the incentive to 'tap' less penetrated markets – such as in Pakistan, the Gulf states, Turkey, and Southeast Asia – have created a strong export culture with targeted marketing and crossover interests. The Hindi film *Raees*,[55] for example, earned 70% of total box office takings in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) during its opening weekend, collecting over $2,973,088 in that market alone.[56]

Such expansion has positioned Pakistan in particular as an important locus for commercial investment, re-aligning its economic and cultural influence in the Hindi film industry. With only around a dozen domestic films released annually, Indian cinema imports occupy a large share of Pakistani box office receipts, with Pakistani distributors depending on the latest Hindi releases to fill theatre occupancies and reap profits,

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eds. Dan Hassler-Forest and Pascal Nicklas (London and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015).

[53] PTI, "Cinema Screens in India Woefully Low, Hitting Global Ranking," *Times of India,* June 18, 2017, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/business/india-business/cinema-screens-in-india-woefully-low-hitting-global-ranking/articleshow/59201818.cms.

[54] Ganti, "Producing Bollywood," 259-270.

[55] *Raees,* directed by Rahul Dholakia (Red Chillies Entertainment, 2017).

[56] Box Office Mojo, "Raees," *BoxOfficeMojo.com,* http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=raees.htm.

screening more than 50 films per year.[57] Even the most successful Pakistani blockbusters earn less overall than their Indian counterparts; for comparison, Pakistan's highest-grossing film to date, *Jawani Phir Nahin Ani,*[58] earned Rs. 74.5 crore, or around $2 million, while the recent Hindi film release *Sultan*[59] earned at least Rs. 110 crore ($17 million) in one of the biggest box-office windfalls in Pakistan's history.[60] It also means that a substantial portion of the film's total revenue – nearly 20% – was gained in Pakistan, considering the film grossed around Rs. 580 crore ($91 million) worldwide.[61]

Much of this disproportion in box office earnings has to do with Pakistan's depressed exhibition market, which has a low screen density relative to the national population, amounting to approximately one screen per million.[62] While India's screen density is also among the lowest in the world – at about 10 per million – its shortcomings in the exhibition sector are compensated by a high rate of return in global distribution markets.[63] The recent intermission in bi-lateral trade as a result of the 2016 Uri attack put a further dint in Pakistan's exhibition sector, and the country quickly lifted its ban on Indian film imports after steep declines in revenue threatened to leave screens empty for

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57 Bharati Dubey, "Bollywood Scripts Huge Success at Pak Box Office," *Times of India,* January 22, 2012, http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/entertainment/hindi/bollywood/news/Bollywood-scripts-huge-success-at-Pak-box-office/articleshow/11583049.cms.
58 *Jawani Phir Nahin Ani,* directed by Nadeem Beyg (Six Sigma Plus, 2015).
59 Sultan, directed by Ali Abbas Zafar (Yash Raj Films, 2016).
60 Rahul Aijaz, 'Sultan' Makes Rs 300m on Pakistani Box Office," *The Express Tribune,* July 19, 2016, https://tribune.com.pk/story/1144999/winning-streak-sultan-makes-rs-300m-pakistani-box-office/.
61 Box Office India, "Sultan Hits $24 Million Overseas," *BoxOfficeIndia.com,* August 3, 2016, http://www.boxofficeindia.com/report-details.php?articleid=2212.
62 Ahmed, "New Cinema," 361.
63 PTI, "Cinema Screens."

40-45 weeks, or 85% of the year.[64] Regardless, selective import restrictions and newly imposed distribution fines for Hindi films indicate that Pakistani distributors stand to lose at least 30% of overall profits as a result.[65] Considering the average box office earnings for Hindi films in Pakistan, this suggests that India is also losing one of its top five overseas markets, which has grown by 300% since the import freeze was completely lifted in 2006.[66]

This growing interdependence between the Pakistani and Indian media industries is further evident in what Ahmad describes as "The sheer level of professional and artistic interpenetration that makes modeling, acting, and singing for film, television drama and advertisements in Pakistan and India flow seamlessly into each other within individual career trajectories," something that has escalated in the past decade, making it "increasingly difficult to draw clear borders between cultural forms and national mediascapes."[67] The liminal status and cultural whitewashing of early Pakistani crossover aspirants has been more recently replaced by Indian patronage and corporate-backed initiatives in the local entertainment industry. Reliance is credited with opening the Pakistani exhibition market, particularly in Pakistan's northern Punjab region, through its sophisticated distribution network,[68] while Indian financing and creative partnerships

[64] Michael Safi, "Indian Films Banned, Pakistani Actors Ejected – How the Kashmir Crisis is Hitting Bollywood," *The Guardian,* October 9, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/09/indian-films-banned-pakistani-actors-ejected-how-the-kashmir-crisis-is-hitting-bollywood

[65] Koimoi.com Team, "Salman Khan's Tubelight May Not Release in Pakistan At All!" *Koimoi.com*, June 15, 2017, http://www.koimoi.com/bollywood-news/reason-why-pakistan-distributors-producers-dont-want-salmans-tubelight-to-release-in-eid-there/

[66] Dubey, "Bollywood Scripts"

[67] Ahmed, "New Cinema," 356.

[68] Dubey, "Bollywood Scripts"

have helped resuscitate 'New Urdu Cinema,' providing fresh incentives for mutual investment and growth.

That Hindi cinema acts as a cultural and commercial paradigm for the Pakistani industry is a reflection of India's soft equity in business and entertainment, part of the government's impetus to situate the media sector as both national brand ambassador and fiscal engine for India's globalizing capitalist economy. Members of the film industry belong to a global capitalist class fueling privatized growth and innovation through the export of corporate funding, technology, skilled talent, and material/intellectual resources. The effects are apparent through an increasing number of co-productions and the intervention of Indian dramatic talent and capital – along with aesthetics, narrative styles and genre formats strongly motivated by Hindi cinema. While such influence has been long-standing, similar patterns of media globalization and direct cooperation in recent years has made access to shared markets both an objective and reality. An early precedent was *Khamosh Pani,* (Silent Waters)[69] scripted by Indian filmmaker Paromita Vohra and starring Hindi film actors Kirron Kher and Shilpa Shukla, which earned cross-border and international acclaim[70] and involved "precious skill transfers from foreign crews and casts to inexperienced media workers on location."[71]

Such collaborations have translated into viable avenues of mutual profit and demand, supported by a burgeoning multiplex culture in both countries and a consumer-directed media environment. Notable Pakistani releases *Khuda Ke Liye* (For God's

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[69] *Khamosh Pani,* directed by Sabiha Sumar (Peter Hermann, 2003).
[70] Nandini Ramnath, "A Brief History of Pakistan-India Cultural Ties," *Dawn,* September 27, 2016, https://images.dawn.com/news/1176320/a-brief-history-of-pakistan-india-cultural-ties.
[71] Ahmed, "New Cinema," 349.

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Sake),[72] and *Bol* (Speak Out)[73] were distributed by Eros Entertainment in India, while

dramatic talent in both productions reflect the freshly cosmopolitan ambience of new

Urdu cinema. However, as Ahmad acknowledges, it is not only corporate sponsorship

motivating this process; the role of individual agents in fostering cross-border cultural

transactions remains critical, much as it has since the decades of the Progressive

movement. Veteran actor Naseeruddin Shah, an abiding advocate of parallel and

experimental cinema in India, has lent both credibility and expertise to a reviving

filmmaking tradition in Pakistan. His roles in *Khuda Ke Liye* and *Zinda Bhaag* (Run for

Your Life)[74] helped the films achieve global recognition while contributing top-caliber

production values, professionalism, and digital formatting to these joint ventures, even

hosting a week-long acting workshop for *Zinda Bhaag's* otherwise novice actors.[75] The

film also benefited from state-of-the-art color grading and sound synchronization in

Mumbai "to produce a truly South Asian collaboration"[76] that reflects the united global

trajectory of both industries today.

The impact of globalization has been far from unilateral. *Khude Ke Liye* and *Bol*

served as critical exposure vehicles for Fawad and Mahira Khan in India, while new Urdu

cinema more widely has attracted attention to a host of lesser known and supporting

actors like Javed Sheikh and Humaima Malick.[77] The ongoing convergence of corporate

business strategy and talent resources evident in the above films has thereby created

circumstances conducive to crossover stardom. By sponsoring novice talent and

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[72] *Khuda Ke Liye,* directed by Shoaib Mansoor (Shoman Productions, 2007).
[73] *Bol,* directed by Shoaib Mansoor (Shoman Productions, 2011).
[74] *Zinda Bhaag,* directed by Meenu Gaur and Farjad Nabi (Matteela Films, 2013).
[75] Ibid., 349.
[76] Ibid., 349.
[77] Ramdani, "A Brief History"

unconventional projects aimed at niche audiences, Eros' distribution of the above films

reflects a classic de-risking approach, which involves minimal cost expenditure while

proliferating sources of revenue and potential markets. Multi-platform media franchising

and a growing home entertainment market, including new spaces of digital consumption,

enhance this outcome.

Likewise, corporatization presupposes higher brand integration than ever before,

stemming from both foreign and local investment. For example, Disney first entered the

Indian entertainment market with a 32% stake in the local company UTV Motion

Pictures, a move that made all of its commercial properties and brands available in

India.[78] This is in addition to producing original content; nonetheless, the focus on

family-oriented films and youth entertainment supports Disney's overall brand synthesis.

UTV/Disney's assured brand equity and global distribution has made their content

accessible in a range of markets, including Pakistan, and it is relevant that their film

Khoobsurat featured crossover star Fawad Khan in his first leading Hindi film role. This

is an optimum example of how convergence supports the localization of transnational

brand empires; in this case, fulfilling commercial objectives to expand the Pakistani

sector along with a growing cultural appetite for crossover talent and media in India.

Brand empires are also evident in entertainment affiliates with large parent

industries, such as the Reliance Group's multiple holdings not only in cinema but also in

other major industries from manufacturing, energy, textiles and financial services to

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[78] TNN, "Walt Disney to More Than Double UTV Stake to 32%," *The Economic Times,* February 19, 2008, http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/media/entertainment/walt-disney-to-more-than-double-utv-stake-to-32/articleshow/2793218.cms.

telecommunications.[79] This type of horizontal integration increases platforms for consumption and enables diffuse points of brand engagement; for example, using Reliance's high-speed mobile service network to stream brand-owned content on their video app, BIGFLIX.[80] Controlling a property's development from production to exhibition also makes a unified brand experience easier and more cost effective than ever, considering again, for example, that Reliance runs its own 40-acre production studio, home entertainment franchise, and India's largest theatre chain, Big Cinemas.[81] Due to vertical integration and a prodigious investment strategy, Reliance is now a world-class brand presence from India and Pakistan to the UK, and like UTV/Disney, possesses its own unique brand capital that facilitates the mobility of crossover content across linked venues, products, and markets.

The ramifications of corporate convergence are especially visible in the growing intersection of film, television, and music that further capitalizes on prestige brand attachments. Ancillary franchising has been a key component in the globalization of Pakistani media through shared circuits of promotion and distribution. It has also enabled individual performers to exploit a common industrial scaffold, permitting the interpenetration Ahmad has already alluded to, including a distributed labor and resource economy in which film technicians, facilities and technology are used to produce a host of ancillary media content.[82] As a result, convergence can be witnessed at levels of finance, text/narrative, and production, in which cinema is co-implicated with everything

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[79] Reliance Entertainment, "About Us," http://relianceentertainment.net/aboutus.html.
[80] Reliance Entertainment, "Reliance Entertainment Launches BIGFLIX, India's First Multi-Language HD Movie Platform, Globally," *RelianceEntertainment.net,* April 25, 2017, http://www.relianceentertainment.net/pdf/Media_Release_Bigflix.pdf.
[81] Reliance, "Reliance Big Entertainment," http://www.rbe.co.in/index.html.
[82] Ahmad, "New Cinema," 354

from advertisements to music videos and television programming.[83] The shared

ownership, sites of production and resemblance among these formats can again be

ascribed to a reciprocal trend of media privatization in India and Pakistan, in which

corporate consolidation and propagating outlets generate a globally interchangeable

media landscape.

As Ahmad observes, Pakistan's satellite boom since the early 1990's catalyzed

media franchising, with broadcast firms like Geo and ARY entering film production and

distribution,[84] while in India global and domestic-origin film corporations dominate a

fully integrated, televisual media spectrum. Global behemoth News Corp hosts the Star

network that combines transnational programming with original television and film-based

content, while franchises like MTV specialize in brand acculturation, customizing content

for South Asian viewers.[85] Film corporations have also ventured into television

production that depends in large part on the aggregate power of Hindi cinema as a

cultural form.[86] The fluidity of media sensibilities in India and Pakistan, as Ahmad

argues, "can be comprehended through the spread of television, since it is equally

traceable to the influence of Hollywood and Bollywood films and songs that screen daily

on any number of satellite channels.[87]"

The role of television in supporting crossover stardom has been instrumental since

the 1980's; however, the exaggerated rate of contemporary brand and media integration

has created altogether novel conditions – along with audience demand. An ideal example

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[83] Ibid., 354

[84] Ibid., 354

[85] Melissa Butcher, *Transnational Television, Cultural Identity and Change: When STAR Came to India* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003), 62-74.

[86] Ganti, "Producing Bollywood," 260-61.

[87] Ibid., 354

is Indian media network Zee Entertainment's recent satellite venture *Zindagi TV*, a

broadcast platform devoted to the syndication of Pakistani serials and content from the

Middle East.[88] The channel's groundbreaking success advanced the exposure of

Pakistani media artifacts and talent in India, validating the crossover appeal of stars like

Mahira and Fawad Khan, whose commended performances in *Humsafar*[89] and *Zindagi*

Gulzar Hai[90] caused both serials to air in top-rated slots on *Zindagi TV*.[91] The

unprecedented esteem of these shows presaged both stars' entry into the Hindi film

industry, pointing to an evolving system of talent development that depends heavily on a

star's projected capacity to transcend media franchises (and of course, markets). This

includes music, with the role of outlets like MTV Pakistan and Coke Studio sustaining a

pop culture continuum that blurs the division between talent categories and formats. The

multifarious credentials of all three crossover stars under discussion is a case in point;

from Zafar and Fawad Khan's backgrounds in music, television and film to Mahira

Khan's sojourn from MTV personality to television and film actor. As a result, the

convergence of ancillary media in creating a new route for the influx of crossover talent

cannot be overlooked.

Besides these facets of corporate convergence, consumer-driven convergence has

also intervened in the emergence of crossover stars. The migratory habits of new media

users in pursuing, selecting and re-distributing content, creating fan-based knowledge

hierarchies and discourses, illustrates Jenkins' notion of collective intelligence in the

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[88] Entertainment Desk, "*Zindagi Gulzar Hai*: Pakistani Drama Serials Win Hearts in India," *Dawn.com,* July 17, 2014, http://www.dawn.com/news/1119811/zindagi-gulzar-hai-pakistani-drama-serials-win-hearts-in-india.
[89] *Humsafar,* directed by Sarmad Sultan Khoosat (Moomal Productions, 2011-2012).
[90] *Zindagi Gulzar Hai,* directed by Sultana Siddiqi (Moomal Productions, 2012-2013).
[91] Ibid.

digital age.[92] Operating within and beyond corporate-sponsored platforms, products and marketing, the pop cosmopolitanism of these consumers has influenced the exposure and reception of Pakistani crossover stars in India. The re-posting of original TV broadcasts, interviews, and related web-links has promoted the rapid circulation of cross-border content that reflects the time-space compression of globalization, evading the border sensitive import restrictions of traditional media. These new settings for consumption assume greater agency and interactivity, allowing fans to engage in intensive consumption practices while contributing their own cultural narratives on identity.

For example, fans streaming episodes of *Humsafar* or *Zindagi Gular Hai* on Netflix may be driven to seek additional content, biographies and related media concerning their favorite star – and on Pakistani culture more widely. Commenting on *Zindagi Gulzar Hai*, one member of the media-streaming site shares "So glad to see this Pakistani drama/serial is available for all to discover and watch. I've seen a couple of Pakistani dramas before (Humsafar, half of Sadqay Tumhare, Bin Roye, part of Dil Banjara) but this one is my absolute favorite for a number of reasons…Sanam Saeed as Kashaf is the standout for me, but I also loved Ayesha Omer (Sara) and Manisha Pasha (Sidra)…The show covers weighty topics like access to higher education, husband-and-wife relationships, and the place of women in Pakistani society, and a lot of episodes have some serious discussions taking place…I live in America and am not Pakistani, but

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[92] Jenkins, "Convergence Culture," 26-28.

was still able to relate to the themes in the serial…All in all, I highly recommend this drama and I hope you enjoy watching it."[93]

This fan displays hallmark characteristics of the new digital consumer/pop cosmopolitan. While confessing that they are not Pakistani, this viewer had come across Pakistani serials before while browsing that eventually developed into a persistent curiosity about Pakistani media artifacts and culture, causing them to actively seek out the serial under discussion. Their interest prompted them to gather additional information on related serials featuring their favorite star, in this case Sanam Saeed, and to conduct research on supporting actors whose performances they liked. While it is unclear exactly how 'intensive' this fan's consumption of Pakistani media is, their familiarity and accuracy with specific drama titles and cast names reveals that they are at least receptive to a more exhaustive fan experience. Most importantly, their interest led them to consider aspects of Pakistani society and identity through the serial, satisfying and advancing an open-minded viewpoint towards global cultures. Rather than feeling alienated by the serial's foreign context and locally specific themes, the fan found the series 'relatable' and encouraged other viewers to have a similar interaction by engaging with Pakistani programs like this one. The fan is careful to avoid pre-conceived notions about Pakistan, while revealing how media exposure can provoke meaningful deliberation and greater cultural literacy; regarding the issues covered in the show, they state "I would not take these as representative of all of Pakistani society (just as any American TV show wouldn't represent all of American society) but unlike most Pakistani

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[93] Netflix.com, "Zindagi Gulzar Hai: Member Reviews," accessed January 10, 2018 at https://www.netflix.com/search?q=zindagi%20gulzar%20hai&jbv=80087078&jbp=0&jbr=0.

dramas, it is at least willing to probe a bit below the surface and make its viewers

question how things are."[94] As a result, consumers have more resources and opportunities

for potential encounters that challenge dominant discourses – a process assisted by the

top-down convergence of corporate media agents. Without Netflix's extensive library of

global media content, this fan might not have encountered Pakistani media in the first

place.

Both official and sub-official flows of content online also help close the gap

between public and private culture, extending already existing forms of media sharing

across the border, much of which has been historically illicit. Despite vested corporate

interests in media franchising and the co-optation of consumer participation, active media

use has enabled a more complete erosion of cultural, political and geographic borders on

the subcontinent. While these effects are constrained by factors of unequal access and

distribution, which is heavily skewed towards the urban middle class in India and

Pakistan,[95] the reality of digital convergence in shaping consumer media ecologies is

significant. Scholars like Adrian Athique have previously explored how media piracy,

from traditional analog formats like VCR to DVD and digital file-sharing, have played an

integral role in the globalization of Hindi film, opening up crucial overseas distribution

markets; as he argues, "it is doubtful if the Indian film would have anything like the

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[94] Ibid.

[95] Vigneswara P. Ilavarasan, "The Digital Divide in India: Inferences from the
Information and Communication Technology Workforce," in *The Digital Divide*, eds.
Massimo Ragneda and Glenn Muschert, (New York and London: Routledge, 2013), 130-
143.

global presence it now has without such operations."[96] Digital media has escalated this global circulation of content to new levels; thanks to advertisement-based platforms like YouTube, many companies and media distributors load content for direct access on such key interface websites. Channels like ARY Digital (a subsidiary of the satellite broadcast network) have around 1,782,000 subscribers on YouTube, uploading hundreds of shows from classic and contemporary Pakistani television that are easily accessible to Urdu and Hindi-speaking viewers around the globe.[97] This variegated consumer landscape allows users to experience disparate media content through both fan-produced outlets as well as commercial sources. Users who do not have access to Netflix, for example, can easily view content posted by their digital peers, such as Soho Khan's eclectic channel that ranges from classic Hindi films and Star Wars fan videos to the entire episode cycle of *Humsafar.*[98] The ability of ordinary consumers to select, archive and manipulate media through grassroots production cannot be underestimated as a powerful force of lateral distribution, a reality aided by the new affordances of digital architecture. Search algorithms, for instance, make locating targeted content efficient and instantaneous regardless of when or how it is posted.

Bottom-up convergence also allows fans to participate in a collective interpretation process on the relevance of individual stars and their careers, often providing contradictory accounts to industry-generated publicity. It likewise supports the

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[96] Adrian Athique, "The Global Dynamics of Indian Media Piracy: Export Markets, Playback Media and the Informal Economy," *Media, Culture & Society* 30(5) (2008), 705.

[97] ARY Digital, "Home," *You Tube,* accessed January 11, 2018 at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC4JCksJF76g_MdzPVBJoC3Q/videos.

[98] Soho Khan, "Home," *YouTube,* accessed January 11, 2018 at https://www.youtube.com/user/saawariyasns/featured.

formation of discrete fan communities or interest groups organized around the niche

attractions of a particular star, or of specific media genres. This kind of activity has

bestowed Pakistani crossover stars with a certain cult appeal in India, especially for

female fans and television drama enthusiasts. The initial success of *Humsafar* and

Zindagi Gulzar Hai had propelled Mahira and Fawad Khan to stardom in India, with

Fawad in particular attracting a dedicated and predominantly female fan community

online. Forums like "Fawad Khan Fever," "FawadAK-Fanatic," and "FawadKhanFan"

indicate the ingenious peer-to-peer cooperation of media-savvy fans in establishing and

disputing the star's celebrity discourse, while their proactive curiosity, along with those

of other Pakistani TV connoisseurs, have helped popularize everything from Pakistani

comedy to food, fashion and colloquial Urdu.[99] The overwhelming popularity of the

drama-centric channel *Zindagi TV* is likewise evident in its ubiquitous social media

presence and fan following, which as of 2014 had over 90,000 followers on Twitter and

nearly three million Facebook fans in India.[100] However, in the wake of the 2016 import

ban and drastic adjustments to *Zindagi's* programming, which now focuses on Korean

TV serials and East Asian content, these numbers have dropped significantly. As of this

writing, the channel has only around 28,000 followers on Twitter, signaling a startling

loss in community following and demand.[101]

Collectively, the above industrial, narrative and ideological changes have

diversified available representations and discourses on Islam, Muslims, Pakistan, and

cross-border relations. Globalization has elicited new industrial and cultural conditions

[99] Verma, "The Pakistani Invasion."
[100] Ibid.
[98] @Zindagi, "ZindagiTV," *Twitter,* accessed July 25, 2017 at
https://twitter.com/Zindagi.

for alternative media content, instigating the arrival of genuine crossover stars with transnational appeal. This new crop of Pakistani stars play a crucial role, both onscreen and off, in shifting the cultural dialogue around national and religious identity. How these stars – and their media texts and audiences – negotiate identity politics is the subject of the following three chapters.

GLOBALIZING PAKISTANI IDENTITY ACROSS THE BORDER: THE POLITICS

OF CROSSOVER STARDOM IN THE HINDI FILM INDUSTRY

ASPIRATIONAL AFFECTS AND BOUNDARY CROSSING: ALI ZAFAR, THE

PAKISTANI 'PRINCE OF POP'

This chapter examines the various dynamic forces shaping the representation and

reception of India's first genuine Pakistani crossover star, Ali Zafar. An independent

musician, singer and actor, Zafar embodies a new global imaginary for Pakistan that

contradicts the heavily ghettoised depictions of the country as a "terrorist state" that

continue to be perpetuated in both Indian and international media. His parallel work in

film and music, which blurs sonic and visual boundaries between India, Pakistan and the

West, creates an expanded cultural ontology grounded in consumer capitalism that is

mediated by processes of globalization. Collectively, his media texts, celebrity persona,

and audience reception problematize questions of identity and belonging on multiple

levels.

Zafar's ongoing corpus of Hindi films since his debut in 2010 with the political

parody *Tere Bin Laden*[1] is an ideal example of these processes at work. While *Tere Bin*

Laden directly confronts homogenizing stereotypes regarding Islamic and Pakistani

identity, and its association with terrorist violence, his roles in films like *Total Siyapaa*[2]

and *London, Paris, New York*[3] similarly evoke the politics of border crossing – whether

geographical, religious, or cultural – by emphasizing transnational identity and the

transcendent power of love in overcoming individual difference. While *Tere Bin Laden* is

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[1] *Tere Bin Laden,* directed by Abhishek Sharma (Walkwater Media, 2010).
[2] *Total Siyappa,* directed by Eshvar Niwas (Reliance Entertainment, 2014).
[3] *London, Paris, New York,* directed by Anu Menon (Fox Star Studios, 2012).

a critically engaged satire that uses irony to position the viewer politically and historically in relation to the text in a way that problematizes identity boundaries, the other two films belong to romance and comedy genres that use the affective potency of love to negotiate narrative identification. The impact of globalization as a mediating force can be identified in the narrative ingenuity of all three films, which break melodramatic storytelling conventions in popular Hindi cinema. This departure reveals how a global political economy can open spaces to explore alternative subjectivities and modes of representation through experimental filmmaking. In addition, all three films frame Zafar as a globalized object of consumer desire. This representation projects consumer capitalism as an alternative framework for accessing identity in a de-territorialized cultural landscape, where religious, national and social boundaries are often fluid and ambiguous. Popular cinema and music, therefore, become an important locus for consuming identity organized around shared values of hedonism and 'love' that can dispel bounded identity categories. This is further evident in Zafar's music, which not only combines Western, Indian and Pakistani genre traditions, but also foregrounds individual desire and references to global popular culture in a way that defies singular notions of identity.

Through a close textual reading of the above films and two of Zafar's recent musical albums, *Masty*[4] and *Jhoom*[5] as well as his soundtrack compositions for cinema, I aim to de-code the nuanced intersection between cultural politics and representational slippage that defines Zafar's persona as a crossover celebrity in a wider transnational context. Although Zafar has participated in multiple film projects beyond the three

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[4] *Masty,* performed by Ali Zafar (Fire Records, 2006).
[5] *Jhoom,* performed by Ali Zafar (Yash Raj Music, 2011).

already mentioned, these films have been chosen for analysis because they exemplify the boundary-crossing features previously outlined. In addition, Zafar's onscreen and offscreen personas converge in these narratives in interesting ways. All three films feature Zafar in leading roles that draw reflexively on his offscreen persona as a 'crossover' Pakistani star striving to gain legitimacy in the Hindi film industry.

The overlap between Zafar's persona in media texts and the articulation of his celebrity identity in popular journalism is further examined through press interviews and commentaries about the star. This primary source material both positions Zafar as a figure of vicarious identification and fantasy while extending his accessibility as an eroticized object of desire already prevalent in his films. Rather than occurring *in spite* of the star's marked national and religious identity, however, I argue that this process is an outcome of transnational shifts in the political economy of culture in India and their consequent impact on celebrity. Unlike previous Pakistani émigré actors, Zafar's alleged 'difference' as a Muslim/Pakistani is foregrounded in his crossover appeal, being consciously inscribed through commercial marketing techniques. As a result, Zafar's celebrity discourse both amplifies his novelty as cross-border import while assimilating his stardom within norms of global celebrity embodied by the Hindi film industry. This dual representation supports the star's unique brand currency while positioning his stardom as an access point for identity transcendence through the material and affective structures of global commodity culture.

Zafar's crossover stardom is already situated within a legacy of trans-industry collaboration between India and Pakistan through ancillary media products like television and music. However, the increasingly multi-platform and vertically integrated structure

of the Hindi film industry as a global enterprise[6] has enhanced the transition from television to cinema as an outcome of corporate franchising, exemplifying the various aspects of convergence culture.[7] This culture can be seen at work in the use of Pakistani television serials and music to launch Zafar into the industry, and in the continuity between these various outlets in generating celebrity discourse that elicit shared points of cultural reception between audiences across borders. Convergence is thereby a powerful force in re-negotiating religious and national identities through popular culture.

Tere Bin Laden, Total Siyapaa and *London, Paris, New York* epitomize the above-described processes at work. Each is a product of shifting economies of production and distribution characterizing the contemporary Hindi film industry that has significant consequences for narrative structure and thematic content. These infrastructural changes have had an impact on all aspects of political economy, as studios now host multiple production projects ranging from big-budget blockbusters to more modestly scaled films[8] featuring socially nuanced stories, alternative subject matter, and narrative virtuosity. Compounded by the growth of multiplexes, which are rapidly overtaking the traditional single-screen theater in India[9] and the prevalence of global distribution networks, these shifts have opened new markets for niche cinema that fits an increasingly fragmented media audience.[10] They are also part of what Tejaswini Ganti

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[6] Tejaswini Ganti, *Producing Bollywood: Inside the Contemporary Hindi Film Industry* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012).

[7] Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2006).

[8] Ibid., 122.

[9] Ganti, *Producing Bollywood,* 345-346.

[10] Ibid., 328-329.

calls the "gentrification" of Hindi cinema into a globally recognizable brand driven by cultural capital and commercial sophistication.[11]

The production framework for each film illuminates these new domains of funding, generating and distributing media products in the Hindi film industry. All were produced by multi-franchise corporations with assets in affiliate entertainment and consumer industries – Walkwater Media in the case of *Tere Bin Laden,* Reliance Entertainment for *Total Siyapaa,* and Fox Star Studios, a division of global film studio 20th Century Fox, for *London, Paris, New York.* The company profiles of these vertically integrated studios demonstrate how public limited companies with diversified investment portfolios have become the norm in Indian entertainment.

The material outcome of these industrial changes is a widening array of choices in media content and style for both filmmakers and consumers. As I have argued previously elsewhere, the impact of the industry's globalizing imperatives can be witnessed in the newly cosmopolitan portrait of contemporary Hindi cinema that encompasses changes in narrative structure, thematic impetus and intended audience address.[12] This is evident in the emergence of genre-based storytelling that accommodates the cine-literate consumer by incorporating global storytelling trends with local influences in a bid to reach both regional and transnational audiences.[13] All three films reflect this movement towards genre-based storytelling that displaces the blockbuster 'masala' film as the dominant

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[11] Ibid., 17.
[12] Dina Khdair, "Piecing Together the Puzzle: *Kahaani, Talaash* and the Complex Narrative in Popular Hindi Cinema," *Studies in South Asian Film and Media* 5.2 (2013): 179-194.
[13] Ibid., 190-192.

narrative mode in popular Hindi cinema.[14] In each case, the sophistication of genre

categories and the targeting of discrete audiences – such as the young, urban middle class

in *London, Paris, New York* or the diasporic family in *Total Siyapaa* – reveals how films

are no longer destined primarily for the box office; rather, it is expected that they will

have an extended distribution cycle in a global media convergence environment. More

widely, these transitions reflect how Hindi cinema has become a cutting-edge medium

sensitive to the diverse political, artistic and social inclinations of a growing audience

unfettered by geographic or temporal boundaries.

A Hindi-language film produced within India featuring Pakistani actors, settings

and protagonists, *Tere Bin Laden* is an ideal example of the new material and narrative

permutations of popular cinema deriving from global forces. Overtly addressing the topic

of Islam and radical terrorism, the film offers a satirical treatment of global geo-politics

that implicates U.S. imperialism, neo-liberal expansion, and state corruption in the

construction of "terrorism," as embodied in the film by a heavily caricatured Osama bin

Laden. In the film's plot, an aspiring Pakistani journalist named Ali, portrayed by Zafar,

dreams of immigrating to the U.S. in a post-9/11 world only to realize that his nationality,

race and religion cause him to be criminalized as a terrorist threat. Frustrated and cash-

strapped after being forcibly deported from the U.S., he devises a lucrative scheme to

produce and sell a bogus video of Osama bin Laden that inadvertently escalates the war

in Afghanistan, causes a global financial crisis, and initiates a high-profile CIA man-hunt.

In the end, Ali single-handedly settles the War on Terror by producing a reconciliatory

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[14] Khdair, "Piecing Together the Puzzle," 179-194.

video of Osama bin Laden that changes the course of political history, while transforming him into a global celebrity and US media icon.

Tere Bin Laden's departure from conventional thematic and narrative choices is indicated by the film's break with melodramatic narrative, which has remained an omnibus form of storytelling in Hindi cinema since the post-independence period.[15] With an emphasis on collective modes of address and social moralism, melodrama was compatible with the nation-building imperatives of popular cinema while acting as a universalized narrative format accessible to a culturally, socially, and linguistically diffuse viewing public.[16] Due to its unique narrative contract and appeal to symbolic authority, melodrama conveys a transcendent, connotative message to the viewer that supports moral or emotional edification rather than critical reception.[17] Similarly, frontal devices of representation, such as iconic framing, invest the text with a one-way transmission of thematic content that refract interpretive agency from the spectator onto the act of signification itself.[18]

Tere Bin Laden defies these characteristic elements of melodrama, and their consequences for spectatorship, by adopting satire as its primary narrative mode. The use of satire and irony in the film has pivotal consequences; it challenges the expression of clearly defined subject positions by distancing the viewer critically from the text, precluding psychological investment in the story while opening the film's content to reflexive critique. In mocking its own devices, the film operates as a deliberate farce that

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[15] Rachel Dwyer and Divia Patel, *Cinema India: The Visual Culture of Hindi Film,* (New Brunswick: Rutgers, 2002).
[16] M.K. Raghavendra, *Seduced by the Familiar: Narration and Meaning in Indian Popular Cinema,* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2008).
[17] Prasad, *Ideology of the Hindi Film*, 51.
[18] Ibid., 50.

denies emotional or ideological closure for the spectator, exaggerating characters and plot events while obstructing processes of vicarious identification. Thus Ali's ambitions to live the "American dream" are portrayed with as much derision as the elusive Osama bin Laden (represented in the fictional video by a sexually naïve chicken farmer) or the capriciousness and self-serving interests of US foreign policy embodied by the media and CIA in the film. This facetiousness is reinforced at the film's conclusion when CIA agent Ted Wood makes a pact with Ali to conceal the counterfeit origins of the Osama video to justify U.S. military aggression in the Middle East and South Asia, terminating U.S. occupation while transforming Ali into a rich and respected journalist. This sense of irony and absurdity, present throughout the film, compels viewers to confront the text's provocative engagement with historical and political themes rather than celebrate the protagonist's achievement of his goals.

These effects speak to the inherently political objectives of satire. Northrop Frye characterizes satire as analytic, by "breaking up the lumber of stereotypes, fossilized beliefs, superstitious terrors, crank theories, pedantic dogmatisms, oppressive fashions, and all other things that impede the free movement of society."[19] This effect is apparent in *Tere Bin Laden's* reflexive de-construction of cultural politics, most notably discourses of "terrorism," and the various stereotypes, myths, and institutional powers sustaining it. Its critical orientation to history and politics – the film even begins with a proximate reference to historical time and place, by locating the events on September 14th, 2001 at the Jinnah Airport in Karachi – foregrounds conditional relationships between culture and

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[19] Northrop Frye, "The Nature of Satire," in *Satire: Theory and Practice,* eds. Charles A. Allen and George D. Stephens (Belmont: Wadsworth Publishing, 1962), 20.

power that invites viewers to acknowledge their own role as critical spectators, leaving the text open-ended to multiple heterogeneous, and potentially dissonant, readings.

The film's use of satire also serves to interrupt homogenizing portrayals of Muslim identity historically prevalent in popular cinema, and their discursive linking to the Pakistan state. Chadha and Kavoori have identified three consecutive phases in the 'Othering' of Muslims onscreen throughout the development of Hindi cinema: exoticism, marginalization, and demonization.[20] The last phase coincides with recent representations that systematically associate Muslims with terrorist violence and Pakistan-based insurgency against India. In this framework, Muslims are either condemned as morally polarized villains or required to demonstrate their patriotism to the nation through extraordinary acts of loyalty and sacrifice.[21] Hirji notes that they are most frequently depicted as terrorists, sexual predators, or social pariahs,[22] while Khan similarly contends that Muslims are posed as threats to the national and cultural fabric of India.[23] Echoing the research of scholars like Saadia Toor[24] and Junaid Rana[25], she argues that the Muslim male body in particular is framed as hyper-sexualized, dangerous, and a peril to "the secular democratic goals of the Indian state."[26]

To begin with, *Tere Bin Laden* eviscerates India from its narrative imaginary, circumventing a binary understanding of India-Pakistan relations revolving around

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[20] Chadha and Kavoori, "Exoticized, Marginalized," 135.
[21] Ibid., 144-145.
[22] Hirji, "Change of Pace?," 59.
[23] Khan, "Nationalism and Hindi Cinema," 94-95.
[24] Saadia Toor, "Gender, Sexuality and Islam Under the Shadow of Empire," *The Scholar and Feminist Online* 9.3 (2011): 318-340.
[25] Junaid Rana, "Racial Panic, Islamic Peril, and Terror," in *Terrifying Muslims: Race and Labor in the South Asian Diaspora,* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011).
[26] Khan, "Nationalism and Hindi Cinema," 95.

conflict. More importantly, the film uses parody to mock the global Islamophobic sentiments of a post-9/11 cultural environment, de-constructing its discourses and modes of signification. By making a spectacle of the global security state and other founding epistemologies of the War on Terror, the narrative exposes otherwise normalized inequities surrounding the cultural representation of Muslims. In turning this act of signification onto itself, the text also links representation and discourse to the social realities of discrimination, abuse and punishment that Muslims affected by Islamophobic policy confront. The narrative illustrates this insidious arc in a sequence immediately before the title credits, when Ali is aboard a commercial airliner bound for the U.S. The only Pakistani passenger on the plane, he takes out a camcorder and practices in earnest his best impression of a news journalist, unwittingly repeating the words "Muslim," "bomb" and "hijack" too many times in the same sentence, making his fellow passengers uncomfortable. When Ali later leaves his seat to return a butter knife to the flight attendant, she envisions him accosting her and begins to scream. This serves as a transition into the film's introductory song that shows Ali being questioned, imprisoned, beaten and deported back from the U.S., all against a comic backdrop featuring Bollywoodized music and dance choreography.

The sequence playfully lampoons stereotypical conflations of the Muslim male body with terrorist violence that is enhanced by Ali's oblivion to the punitive apparatuses of power denying his social legitimacy. His ambitions for professional success, romantic fulfillment and transnational mobility, and their arbitrary negation due to prejudicial policies of the War on Terror, reveals the absurdity of these forces in violating the individual civic rights they purportedly aim to protect. The events described evoke

Rana's idea of "racial panic" in the wake of 9/11, which criminalizes the Muslim male through associations with terrorism and illicit immigration that justifies institutional regimes of "social control" and moral policing[27]. Ali is incriminated in the above scene because he fits a broadly racialized portrait of Muslim identity that holds the potential for terrorist violence irrespective of geographical or ethnic variation. Thus Ali holds a sign that says 'South Asian' as his mug shot is processed and scrutinized by U.S. agents that suggest the mutual interchangeability of Islam, regional origin, and terrorism. However, Ali's manipulation of the "racial and moral panic"[28] of Islamic terrorism to his own benefit complicate distinctions between cause and effect, perpetrator and victim, and global and national identities promoted by a civilizational understanding of conflict in the War on Terror. This is powerfully demonstrated by the way Ali uses consumer technologies and entrepreneurship to create his own regime of cultural production that skews the geo-political odds in his favor, supporting the film's overall use of satire to unravel operations of cultural discourse, signification, and institutional practice.

If *Tere Bin Laden* uses satire to critically destabilize national and religious stereotyping, *Total Siyappa* similarly experiments with narrative and thematic content to explore the complex social politics of cross-border romance between a Hindu/Indian woman and Muslim/Pakistani man. Grounded firmly in the comedy genre, the film sheds the sentimental disposition of melodrama in its representation of the North Indian extended family – or what Prasad has previously called the "feudal family romance."[29] While the family has traditionally been central to a melodramatic storytelling

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27 Rana, "Racial Panic," 54-55.
28 Rana, "Racial Panic," 52.
29 Prasad, "Ideology of the Hindi Film," 30.

arrangement, operating as a metaphor for collective social moralism and by extension the nation state, *Total Siyapaa* disrupts these symbolizing processes by offering a satire of filial domestic space. Its story revolves around the romance of Asha (Yami Gautam) and Aman (portrayed by Zafar) and the couple's efforts to achieve family approval of their forthcoming marriage, a plot with strong similarities to the iconic film *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge*[30] (abbreviated as *DDLJ*). However, unlike *DDLJ*, which acts as a narrative foil through direct references and thematic parallels, *Total Siyapaa* does not repatriate the diasporic Indian into the figurative space of the family-as-nation. Instead, it offers an uneasy displacement of national and religious boundaries throughout its plot, particularly at the story's resolution, when the two lovers are united on London Bridge in a symbolic (and open-ended) gesture of territorial, religious, and cultural intersection. Most importantly, the approving gaze of the extended family is deflected by an exclusive focus on the couple's private conjugality in the closing scenes of the film.

This is enhanced by the film's use of parody and comedy to reverse hallmark depictions of the idealized North Indian family that is evinced by the film's comedy-of-errors structure. Aman becomes embroiled in an assortment of awkward confrontations and unintended accidents while meeting Asha's family for the first time, creating circumstantial tensions that constitute the film's humor. However, the source of this friction is not so much Aman's Pakistani identity as the dysfunctional character of Asha's family. The 'chaos' suggested by the film's title is evoked when Aman becomes witness to the family's abundant problems – the mother suffers from depression, Asha's married sister, separated from her husband, is an incorrigible flirt, and the grandfather is a war

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[30] *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge,* directed by Aditya Chopra (Yash Raj Films, 1995).

fanatic who carries loaded guns around the house, to enumerate only a few examples.

This blatant parody of the traditional feudal family disrupts its association with cultural integrity and Indian nationhood, a representation strengthened by the "NRI" genre spanning the late 1990's and early 2000's, of which *DDLJ* is often cited as a defining example.[31] By consciously subverting this representation, *Total Siyapaa* interrogates authoritative paradigms of nation and culture, one of many ways in which identity is 'unsettled,' to use Mankekar's meaning, throughout the film's narrative.

   Total Siyapaa's implementation of parody and comedy also collapses links between the Muslim male body and its association with terrorism, violence and cultural pollution. The absurdity of these connotations is brought to light at the beginning of the film, when Aman is conversing on a cell phone with Asha on a busy London street, having just arrived from Pakistan to meet her family. In self-conscious recognition of his alleged guilt as a Muslim/Pakistani, Aman jokes about being a terrorist threat, stating that he has brought back a "small bomb" as a gift for Asha's family. Unfortunately, a nearby police officer overhears these words and temporarily detains Aman in jail. Like Ali in *Tere Bin Laden*, forces Aman cannot control victimize and divest him of agency in the unfolding narrative. However, unlike the former, Aman's plight is depicted sympathetically, and his subjective perspective dominates the film's narrative vantage. Aman is a constant target rather than perpetrator of "threat" in the film, being exposed to indignity and personal violation on behalf of both the state and Asha's family; he is frequently insulted by Asha's mother and is nearly shot (albeit accidentally) by her grandfather. This is compounded by the family's stubborn bigotry against Pakistan,

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[31] Mankekar, *Unsettling India,* 39-70.

particularly the violent hatred of Asha's brother Manav, who repeatedly conspires to

sabotage their Pakistani neighbors. Urbane and rational, Aman stands in sharp (and

flattering) relief against the bewildering, neurotic milieu of Asha's household. While

intended to be farcical, this inverse process of "Othering" implicates the North

Indian/Hindu family as socially destabilizing rather than the Muslim/Pakistani male in a

surprising reversal of representational norms.

Although national and religious differences clearly motivate the film's dramatic

conflict, romantic desire and love are posed as a unifying force capable of surpassing the

couple's adverse circumstances. After the two have a heated argument at the film's

climax, during which each stereotypes the other for being conventionally "Indian" and

"Pakistani," Asha's mother encourages her to run after Aman, culminating in their final

meeting on the London Bridge. In the intimate moments that follow the couple affirm

their transcendent love for one another, privileging emotional reality over the superficial

categories of identity that ostensibly separate them. "I'm Pakistani, you're Indian, but

nobody's perfect"[32] Aman and Asha agree as the two embrace passionately against the

London skyline, followed by the film's closing song which reiterates the power of the

couple's affection: "I know that we cannot live apart, why fight over trivial things?

You're the one I want to die for…"[33]

This compelling image, and the theme of love's universal power, also resonates

with the representation of romance in *London, Paris, New York.* There is an implication

in both films that transnational spaces neutralize conflicts over identity and belonging,

where terrains of possibility, whether romantic or professional, can be played out. Like

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[32] *Total Siyapaa,* DVD.
[33] Ibid.

the above films, *London, Paris, New York* also takes a narrative detour from melodrama, using global storytelling codes to depict the romance saga of Nikhil (Zafar) and Lalitha (Aditi Rao Hydari), two middle class NRIs who meet and fall in love over the course of eight years in three different cities. With parallels to the classic drama *An Affair to Remember* (1957)[34]*,* the film situates itself within a genre legacy of Hollywood romance that is supported by the film's formal design. Unlike the "masala" structure of many Hindi films, with peripheral narrative attractions ranging from comedy and action sequences to lavish musical numbers, *London, Paris, New York* features a linear plot arc and a singular thematic emphasis, focusing solely on the romantic vicissitudes of the couple over time. The psychological credibility of the protagonists enacts realist modes of narrative engagement that strip away the iconic and symbolic proportions normally encountered in the grandiose framing of melodramatic stories. As a result, the characters and their romance are wholly pedestrian, shaped by identifiable conflicts, choices and emotions that are relatable and believable in scope.

This realist orientation is most strongly registered in the narrative's preoccupation with the formation of an individual 'self' unmoored from family, nation and even culture, as the couples' global peregrinations indicate. This coming-of-age momentum is communicated at the film's outset, when Lalitha and Nikhil both experience independence from their families and homes for the first time in London. The exuberance of being in control of one's own actions is conveyed in the characters' sense of adventure and celebration of mobility. Nikhil makes this clear when he shouts "Freedom!" loudly and with exhilaration as the two cross the London Bridge, encouraging Lalitha to

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[34] *An Affair to Remember,* directed by Leo McCarey (20th Century Fox, 1957).

embrace the spontaneous thrill of the moment. In the process, the characters experiment with their identities and sexuality, with the three cities representing consecutive phases in the evolution of their relationship. If both are apprehensive about their feelings when they meet in London, they boldly indulge their sexual attraction in Paris, engaging in a one-night stand, while finally arriving at a committed relationship during their rendezvous in New York.

The narrative's emphasis on individual choice, agency, and the self-fashioning of one's destiny is brought to fruition when Lalitha advises Nikhil to 'be true to yourself,' an adage which Nikhil adopts in his professional and personal life by pursuing goals which are meaningful to him rather than others. This message also comes full circle at the film's conclusion, when both parties mutually agree that they are older, wiser and self-assured. Having consolidated their own identities, they are now mature enough to spend the rest of their lives together. If the preceding films pass through national, religious and cultural conflicts surrounding subjectivity, the characters' self-fulfilling arc in *London, Paris, New York* fully obliterates external or artificial constraints on identity, casting subjectivity as internally motivated. The characters' unhampered movement through time and space, which is in sync with rhythms of global capital and the circulation of bodies, products and labor across a transnational spectrum, enables this. Thus the protagonists' educational and career goals – Nikhil's as a filmmaker, and Lalitha's as a political scientist – place them on a shared trajectory towards aspirational desire that tap into a larger global imaginary contoured by the affects and logics of consumer capital. In this case, romantic desire and access to global circuits of capital eliminate all imaginable boundaries – geographical, national, cultural, or religious.

It is no coincidence that the couple's romance in *London, Paris, New York* becomes actualized in the world's most acclaimed centers of global capital, or that the concept 'be true to yourself' resonates so evocatively with the individualized ethics and maxims of self-made success intrinsic to consumer capitalism. The invocation of consumer capitalism as an affective terrain is mobilized in all three narratives. In *Tere Bin Laden*, Ali embodies values of neo-liberal capitalism; not only is he a self-made media entrepreneur, but he is also saturated with global commercial brands and symbols, from Coca-Cola to Hollywood icon Marilyn Monroe. In addition, he is positioned as an object of consumer desire that unhinges the Muslim male body from terrorist violence. This is evident in the film's final song sequence, "I Love Amreeka;" however, instead of Ali being victimized and expelled from the US like the outset of the story, the song uses erotic spectacle to frame Ali/Zafar as a global brand commodity through its slick visuals and MTV-inspired editing that signify his incorporation into global structures of consumer capitalism. That Ali has become a type of brand novelty is realized in the closing scenes of the film, as he is chased by a hoard of U.S. journalists reminiscent of media paparazzi. In a self-conscious moment of storytelling, Ali gazes directly into the camera at the viewer, smiles, and dons a pair of stylish sunglasses before breaking out into a run, a large crowd at his heels. In this instant the 'reel' and 'real' collapse, as the character Ali and Zafar's actual celebrity persona seem to converge. The character's route towards celebrity stardom has a metaphorical coincidence with Zafar's own ambitions for global fame and cultural exposure made possible by his integration in the popular Hindi film industry.

This transparent overlapping of Zafar's real-life celebrity attributes is consistent across the three films. In each text he embodies charisma, sex appeal, creative intelligence and self-determination, qualities that are inextricably linked to the affective potency of consumer capitalism and the goods associated with it. Mankekar notes how erotic desire is entwined with the desire to consume commodities (what she calls "commodity affect,"), [35] illuminating how transnational consumer capitalism can structure identification with the affects of pleasure and aspirational longing generated by consumer products. This collapse between consumption and erotic desire is always at the surface of Zafar's representation in these films, as consuming the film text is interchangeable with consuming the star as a lifestyle emblem associated with brand endorsements on the one hand, and as an idealized object of identification/desire on the other. This process is illustrated in *Total Siyapaa* when Asha's sister, a devoted fan of Aman and his music, makes flirtatious advances that leads to a scene in which the two of them dance in an abandoned cafeteria to one of his songs – which is of course written and sung by Zafar himself, thereby underscoring both Zafar/Aman's erotic desirability. In a comparable scene from *London, Paris, New York,* a bachelorette party demands that Nikhil show them some "Bollywood moves" in a full-scale song sequence that again reveals Zafar performing his own star image for the intra and extra-diegetic film audience, to the background score of his own-authored music.

Through common imaginaries of aspirational desire, and united by shared conditions and outlets of global consumption, popular cinema and music increasingly operate as alternate sites of identity negotiation that have the potential to dispel religious,

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[35] Mankekar, *Unsettling India*, 119-127.

national and cultural boundaries. This is manifest in the hybridity of Zafar's music, which often combine classical South Asian genres, like *ghazals* and *qawaali*, with Arabic rhythms and R&B, hip hop, rock, and folk pop variations. Zafar's distinctive fusion sound, and his adaptability as an artist, broaches larger transnational frames of reference that make his work accessible to a globally diffuse audience, while embodying intersecting cultural forces.

 Zafar's songs frequently alternate between Hindi, Urdu and English lyrics, while assimilating a range of instruments and sound patterns. Zafar's recently produced independent album, *Jhoom,* which released in 2011, features several tracks that span musical genres. The title track, which is also the name of the album, has two versions. The primary version is heavily inspired by a classical Indian *rag* melody; it has a long introduction, a cyclical arrangement and uses traditional tabla beats, but combines elements of contemporary pop music by modifying the sitar sound with an electric guitar. The second is an R&B mix that clearly draws from this American genre legacy, privileging vocal harmony over melody and being scored only with keyboard and synthesizers, while also incorporating English lyrics. Other songs from Zafar's previous albums, such as "Aasman" and "Sajania" from the 2007 compilation *Masty*, also use strong components of rock and light pop that have a distinctly hip, global sound. These qualities also characterize Zafar's compositions for films like *London, Paris, New York,* whose songs span diverse genres from the slow piano ballad "Voh Dekhnay Mein" to the upbeat, techno club melody of "Ting Rang."

By combining global and native sources of influence, Zafar's music transcends boundaries and points of cultural, national and religious reference. In this sense, the

hybrid pop culture artifact becomes a formative arbiter of identity. Not unlike

Mankekar's discussion of transnational media and affect, Natalie Sarrazin[36] has

previously explored the role of Hindi film music as a mode of transnational identity,

discussing how recognizable aural and visual codes conveyed in film songs position

emotional sentiment as a mediating force in negotiating cultural attachment and identity

for Indians on a global scale. Song performance plays an important role, Sarrazin claims,

in re-imagining cultural values for an increasingly dispersed NRI and diaspora

audience.[37] The idea of 'love' and the importance of having *dil* (heart), essential themes

in popular Indian performance and musical traditions, are present in both Zafar's films

and his songs, suggesting that feeling is an important indicator of identity that can surpass

or even eclipse geographical, religious or national windows of identification. Consuming

popular culture, and the aspirations and pleasures it produces, thereby becomes a means

of consuming identity. This is accentuated in Zafar's music through an emphasis on

individual desire, whether that desire is romantic, spiritual, professional, or even

commercial. While a song like "Mere Haathon"[38] is intimately romantic, "Sajania"[39] is a

song about gaining money at any cost that invokes the acquisitive rationale of

competitive capitalism. Borrowing from the tropes of a Hollywood action film, the music

video for the song features Zafar and an attractive young woman outwitting one another

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[36] Natalie Sarrazin, "Songs from the Heart: Musical Coding, Emotional Sentiment, and Transnational Sonic Identity in India's Popular Film Music," in *Global Bollywood,* eds. Anandam P. Kavoori and Aswin Punathambekar. (New York and London: New York University Press, 2008).
[37] Ibid., 203-216.
[38] *Masty,* 2007
[39] Ibid.

in a high-stakes bank heist that glamorizes aggressive individualism through a reflexive inscription of global pop culture.

The aspirational lifestyle values that Zafar represents as a celebrity are part of the neutralizing and translatable effects of global consumer capitalism driven by shared sentiments of desire, wealth, and individual destiny, themes that have increasingly common cultural value and transnational resonance. This notion of individual destiny is discernible not only in the above mentioned films, but is something Zafar uses to characterize his own journey from a struggling artist in the entertainment business to an accomplished musician and actor. In his album cover dedication for *Masty*, Zafar alludes to his wish to inspire others through his own dreams of success: "It was the fulfillment of that dream that made me realize that we only dream what is real. Nothing exists that can be imagined and not achieved one day…If my music helps one single soul to accomplish his/her dream, it will be worth it…"[40] The statement and its meaning is not only universally relatable, but is an open invitation addressed to any ambitious individual that exemplifies capitalist principles of personal success. The right to 'dream' and the possibility of achievement is purportedly available to everyone – irrespective of faith, nationality or gender.

Zafar's status as a global crossover celebrity, and the negotiation of his national and religious identity, must be situated within the Hindi film industry's continuing efforts at globalization. As mentioned previously, the industry has a long and visible history of religious integration dating back to the pre-Partition era.[41] However, while many of the industry's most successful creative contributors and stars were Muslim, their origins and

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[40] *Masty*, 2007
[41] Mihir Bose, *Bollywood: A History*, (Chalford: Tempus Publishing, 2007), 128-141.

affiliations with territory now located in Pakistan had to be discursively erased and masked under the guise of Indian (and inevitably Hindu-centric) identity constructions. Even as this practice eventually abated and the religious orientation of stars became clearly publicized, as evident in the phenomenal box office dominance of the three great Khans in the 1990s through the present – namely Aamir, Shah Rukh and Salman – a conformity to status quo representations of Muslims onscreen (including the portrayal of predominantly Hindu characters) and strong associations with nationalism and secularism have characterized their celebrity identities.[42] While not entirely without conflict, a marked disavowal of specifically Muslim subjectivities served to eviscerate any ideological, political or cultural ties with the state of Pakistan, particularly in the wake of a swelling tide of public Hindu nationalist sentiment that has continued to escalate since the turn of the millennium.[43]

In contrast, Zafar's Muslim and Pakistani background is not concealed in his off-screen celebrity persona. Openly hailed as a "crossover" star, Zafar's national and religious identity is not so much a liability as an asset to be capitalized on in his potential for global market appeal, a maneuver that echoes Hollywood's similar endorsement of transnational stars in a talent recruiting and marketing campaign that expanded aggressively in the 1990's.[44] In light of Hindi cinema's bid to penetrate the global market, including not only Pakistan but also Asia and the Middle East, promoting Zafar as a crossover star is commercially and ideologically strategic. This contingent emphasis on

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[42] Sheena Malhotra and Tavishi Alagh, "Dreaming the Nation: Domestic Dramas in Hindi Films post-1990," *South Asian Popular Culture* 2.1 (April 2004), 19-37.
[43] Ibid., 20-21.
[44] Michael DeAngelis, *Gay Fandom and Crossover Stardom*, (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001), 137-145.

Zafar's national and religious identity is perceptible in early discourse on his celebrity at the outset of the star's Hindi film career. Multiple interviews highlight the fact that he is "the first Pakistani actor to debut as a lead in a Bollywood film," while comparisons are made with other Pakistani artists who had transient and unsuccessful careers in India.[45] The strategic distancing from Pakistan geographically and culturally that characterized the public personas of early actors like Salma Agha is notably absent, and Zafar is unambiguously identified as a crossover star in popular journalism.

Zafar's choice to enter the industry with a controversial film centering on identity politics only fueled the press coverage. In fact, he comments that he chose to work on *Tere Bin Laden* because he wanted to challenge wider stereotypes about Islam, terrorism and ethnic identity more generally, citing his unfavorable experience as a visitor to the US as an example of Western cultural hegemony and prejudice.[46] Stressing the sense of victimization and intolerance that many Muslims and religious minorities continue to experience in a post-9/11 world, Zafar expresses awareness that his sentiments resonate with potential viewers in India, Pakistan and throughout the globe. Zafar has also been consistently articulate about the political dimensions of his crossover potential, viewing his work in the production of popular media texts as a platform for cultural diplomacy. In his July 2010 interview he remarks how "films and music can bridge the difference between the two [India and Pakistan]."[47] The objective of blurring boundaries, both

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[45] Nikhil Taneja, "Ali Zafar Turns Actor," *Hindustan Times,* May 30, 2010 http://www.hindustantimes.com/news-feed/entertainment/ali-zafar-turns-actor/article1-550676.aspx

[46] "Ali Zafar hopes to change image with '*Tere Bin Laden*,'" *Prokerala.com,* June 21, 2010 http://www.prokerala.com/news/articles/a145089.html

[47] Press Trust of India, "Films, Music Can Bridge Indo-Pak Gap," *NDTV,* July 15, 2010, http://movies.ndtv.com/movie_story.aspx?Section=Movies&ID=ENTEN20100146659&subcatg=MOVIES INDIA&keyword=bollywood&cp

actual and perceptual, is thereby central to Zafar's artistic agenda and choice of film projects.

Boundary-crossing notwithstanding, Zafar's celebrity persona is mediated by his positioning as both foreign yet culturally proximate to India. As one writer puts it, "Ali Zafar is a rare breed. He is the complete package. Apart from singing…Ali Zafar has the looks, the style and the histrionic abilities to work in Bollywood"[48] something which preceding crossover aspirants apparently lacked – while their distinctiveness as Pakistani remained firmly and exclusively marked. In contrast, the fluidity of Zafar's persona and his placement between industries and borders (straddling national, cultural and religious realms) is repeatedly underscored, denying the star a singular or rooted sense of identity. Zafar's depiction as perpetually migratory in popular journalism collapses easily with the locative boundary transgressions found in his work. When asked how he balances business commitments between industries, Zafar demonstrates a willingness to inhabit both equally and simultaneously, suggesting a continuum of space between India/Pakistan when he replies "I can always have two homes, one in India and one in Pakistan, can't I?" [49] This sense of being in both places at once is reinforced by Zafar's pledge to continue his creative work in the Hindi film industry while insisting "I'll never cut ties with my country," describing various endeavors from advancing Pakistan's domestic entertainment industry to supporting social welfare causes.[50]

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[48] Kamal, "Ali Zafar Goes Border Crossing"
[49] Roshmila Bhattacharya, "I Am Alive and Raising Funds in Pakistan," *Hindustan Times,* September 9, 2010
http://www.hindustantimes.com/entertainment/bollywood/i-m-alive-and-raising-funds-in-pakistan/article1-598028.aspx
[50] Ibid.

This alternating and occasionally contradictory discourse of cultural sameness and difference operates to ensure Zafar's crossover brand integrity. Referred to variably as "Pakistan's Prince of Pop"[51] and "The Pakistani Lion,"[52] he is also compared to both historical and contemporary Indian celebrity figures, ranging from classical playback singer Kishore Kumar to present-day blockbuster icon Shah Rukh Khan.[53] This reciprocal network of cultural references permits a dual identification for Zafar's audiences in both India and Pakistan, while further casting the Hindi film industry as a place where dreams – and raw talent – can be usefully actualized. If this depiction is tokenistic, it is also consistent with the industry's expansionist approach in marketing celebrities on a global scale, including among diaspora audiences where similar processes of identification and desire can be activated.

At the same time, Zafar's integration in the Hindi film industry – as a global system of cultural production – is also clearly inscribed in his 'packaging' to consumers by media press outlets and industry sources. The star's transnational equity is ensured by his attachment to global commodity brands like MTV and Coca-Cola, while his status as a transnational icon is indicated by his naming as "sexiest man" by the trans-regional publication Eastern Eye, which was allegedly based on poll responses from audiences throughout Asia.[54] Again blurring the boundaries between India, Pakistan and the West,

[51] Press Trust of India, "Films, Music"
[52] Harshita Kohli, "Ali Zafar – The Pakistani Lion," *PlanetRadiocity.com,* August 17, 2010 http://www.alizafar.net/media
[53] Kohli, "Ali Zafar"
[54] "Ali Zafar Crowned Sexiest Man on the Planet," *Times of India,* December 11, 2013 http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/entertainment/music/news-and-interviews/Ali-Zafar-crowned-sexiest-Asian-Man-on-the-Planet/articleshow/27218986.cms?referral=PM

Zafar's persona takes on a global character that offers possibilities for identity

transcendence in his role as a global commodity brand. If his national/religious

'difference' for Indian consumers is configured as novelty, and his 'sameness' a

teleology of destiny in the Hindi film industry where artistic fulfillment is enabled

through its pluralist legacy, the multiple points of identification and access to the star

image are consolidated in the global commercialism of Hindi cinema and its

universalizing logic of consumer culture motivated by vicarious fantasy and desire –

terrains of 'feeling' that are consonant with Zafar's performance in films like *Tere Bin*

Laden, Total Siyapaa and *London, Paris, New York,* and throughout his musical corpus.

Zafar's stardom paved the way for the entry of other Pakistani celebrities into the

Hindi film fraternity, most notably Fawad Khan, whose versatile career profile mirrors

Zafar's own sojourn to fame. While Zafar's performance in serials like *Kanch Ke Par*

(2000)[55] were overshadowed by the success of his musical career in generating media

hype across the border, the importance of both corporate and digital media convergence

in his crossover success is visible. This new convergence context relies on the wide-

ranging consumption habits of new media users across inter-connected platforms,

supported by the ability to download and stream assorted content on the same outlets and

devices in real time. The lateral interaction these consumers have with multiple

entertainment formats, from television to music, is a driving force in the emergence of

'crossover' celebrity brands. Zafar, Mahira, and Fawad Khan's existing popularity have

been major factors in the success of their films with domestic audiences in Pakistan[56]

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[55] *Kanch Ke Par;* (2000, PTV Home).
[56] PTI Karachi, "Fawad Khan Breaks Records in Pakistan, *Khoobsurat* Collects Rs 3 Crore," *Hindustan Times,* September 24, 2014, http://www.hindustantimes.com/bollywood/fawad-khan-scores-big-in-pakistan-khoobsurat-collects-in-rs-3-crore/article1-1267316.aspx.

while their reputations in television and music remain important reference points in the publicity surrounding their films.

The above discussion has considered how Ali Zafar's representation in cinema and his parallel work in music problematize concrete conceptions of religious and national identity through material and cultural boundary crossings that are powerfully shaped by processes of globalization. These global dynamics help justify how a Pakistani star like Zafar can attain crossover fame within India that is supported by the new ways in which cultural products mediate identity in an increasingly de-territorial society. Using Mankekar's framework for transnational public cultures and their role in negotiating subjectivity through regimes of affect and temporality, this analysis illustrates how media products can fragment homogenizing discourses on national, cultural and religious belonging. By rendering the boundaries between these identity categories ambivalent, and by using affective registers of romance and aspirational desire as alternate points of subjective identification, Zafar's media products participate in a larger globalized imaginary structured by the logics of consumer capitalism. This newly global character upsets metonymical associations of Pakistani/Muslim identity, and particularly the Muslim male body, with terrorist violence, a representation that continues to be disseminated in both India and the West.

The relative critical success of the three films discussed indicates their viability as novel media products with groundbreaking narratives and themes. Reviews of *Tere Bin Laden,* for example, responded to its political relevance and unconventional subject matter that also attracted global attention, with one reviewer from *The Guardian* describing the film as "a cautionary tale about the perception and unintended

consequences of American policy in South Asia," suggesting that it should be required

viewing for the U.S. government.[57] Comments like these reveal the effectiveness of the

film's satire in engaging critical spectatorship through its political and historical content,

even if this is inevitably modified and re-interpreted to meet the demands of commercial

entertainment. For a low-budget film with a total production cost of only 6 crores, or

approximately $500,000, the film earned nearly $950,000 globally, gaining at least 8

crores or $700,000 in India alone.[58] Considering the film's limited release – including its

ban in key markets like the U.S. and Pakistan – these numbers are significant, revealing

that the film doubled its expenditure among target audiences in urban multiplexes

throughout India, the UK, and Europe. Its partial ban reveals that the film alienated

nationalist politics in the U.S. and Pakistan through its caricatured depiction of both

governments' actions in the War on Terror; however, positive responses to the film like

the one cited above bespeak the success of its subversive content within the film's niche

market. Most importantly, the 2010 embargo on *Tere Bin Laden* predicts many of the

conflicts surrounding the Uri attack ban, particularly the disjuncture between the

ideoscapes/ethnoscapes of political institutions and the mediascapes/financescapes of

global corporate capitalism that are discussed in subsequent chapters.

     Like *Tere Bin Laden, Total Siyapaa* and *London, Paris, New York* achieved

notable reception as modestly budgeted films with experimental dimensions in story,

thematic content, and talent. While *Total Siyaapa* was considered a critical and

commercial failure in India, it performed well overseas, earning $261,484 during its

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[84]Alex von Tunzelmann, 'Tere Bin Laden': Satire With A Sting," *The Guardian,* July 22, 2010 http://www.theguardian.com/film/2010/jul/22/tere-bin-laden-review-tunzelmann.
[58] https://bestoftheyear.in/movie/tere-bin-laden/

opening weekend.[59] In addition, most reviews acknowledged its exceptional storyline

despite an allegedly weak script and poor direction. One writer referred to the film as

having a "lush and interesting premise," while prominent reviewer and filmmaker

Subhash K. Jha praised the film for being "an audacious comedy that dares to poke fun at

a border issue," noting how "Zafar and his screen-other have an excellent Indo-Pak

moment towards the end when they taunt one another's country's politics."[60] Comments

like these suggest that the film's tepid reception by Indian audiences was likely due to the

text's unconventional creative choices rather than its bold message on Indo-Pak relations.

Jha describes the film as "stylized" and "attentively staged" with "a distinctly 'European'

flavor and fervor,"[61] whose narrative humor (more suitable to art house cinema) may

have routed its potential as a commercial box office contender. The film's low-star cast,

offbeat tenor, and formal dissonance would account for its favorable reception among

global audiences in the UAE, UK, Canada and the U.S. – its four top-performing

markets.[62] *London, Paris, New York* faced similar circumstances, earning mixed reviews

that expressed overall approbation for the film's forward-thinking plot on less explored

subjects like individuality, sexual awakening and transnational mobility. Reviews

avowed the film's genre specificity and under-30 content appeal, with one commentator

noting that "the characters and dialogues are real and unpretentious enough to lure the

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[59] Ankita Mehta, "Box Office Collection: 'Queen' Dominates Over 'Gulaab Gang,' "Total Siyaapa' Worldwide, *International Business Times,* March 11, 2014, http://www.ibtimes.co.in/box-office-collection-queen-dominates-over-gulaab-gang-total-siyapaa-worldwide-542781.
[60] Ankita Mehta, "Total Siyaapa Review Round Up: Avoid It!," *International Business Times,* March 7, 2014, http://www.ibtimes.co.in/total-siyapaa-review-roundup-avoid-it-542287.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.

youth, whether it's the slight reference to sex positions or the bodily chemistry of a lip kiss."[63] The film's investment in Hollywood-style storytelling and its politics of aspirational desire were rewarded by admirable takings at the global box office, with the film earning over $500,000 worldwide.[64] Domestically the film also fared decently, grossing around 8 crores or $700,000 in total.[65] The earnings roster for each film emphasize the diminishing centrality of the domestic box office for Hindi cinema, as in each case global yields approached or exceeded national ticket sales. This burgeoning trend justifies the edgy and even politically dissenting content of each film under discussion – with *Tere Bin Laden* turning a profit in spite of its controversial release.

The portrait of these texts' popular reception reveals critical and commercial appreciation for the boundary-crossing philosophy of Zafar's films, which interrogate characteristic frameworks of religious, national and cultural belonging. In a rapidly globalizing media environment, casting a crossover star like Zafar is now considered a creative risk worth taking in the Hindi film industry, amid growing overseas audiences and diversified corporate stock portfolios. In this way studios can spend little money on high-quality, niche films and achieve substantial returns in global revenue and prestige, as each of the above films prove. It remains to be seen, however, if Zafar and his media texts can continue to negotiate the complex, overlapping spheres of religious and national identity as a crossover phenomenon in the post-ban Hindi film industry.

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[63] TNN, "London Paris New York Movie Review," *Times of India,* February 9, 2016, http://m.timesofindia.com/entertainment/hindi/movie-reviews/London-Paris-New-York/amp_movie_review/12096528.cms.

[64] Box Office India, "London Paris New York," https://www.boxofficeindia.com/movie-story.php?movieid=17.

[65] Ibid.

GLOBALIZING PAKISTANI IDENTITY ACROSS THE BORDER: THE POLITICS

OF CROSSOVER STARDOM IN THE HINDI FILM INDUSTRY

A CROSSOVER ROMANCE: FEMALE FANDOM AND FAWAD KHAN, PAKISTAN'S

'REEL' GENTLEMAN

Like Zafar, Fawad Khan had already attained recognition in parallel media industries before his emergence in Hindi cinema, having been both a musician and actor in television and film. However, while Zafar's virtuosity as a musician defined his crossover potential and remains a reflexive point of reference across his media texts, including cinema, Fawad's dramatic reputation as an actor in a niche genre with targeted audience appeal – namely the 'soap' serial – would motivate his crossover stardom, shaping his celebrity identity. Unlike Zafar, whose transnational pop aesthetic, characterized by a deliberately hybrid musical sound, anticipated his 'branding' as a crossover star, Fawad's trajectory to fame is a reflection of the bottom-up convergence that fan practices and lateral cultural contact can produce in an age of digital media. This type of globalization, from periphery to center, reveals how convergence culture operates across hierarchies of media production and consumption while transforming relationships between political economy, narrative, and audience reception. In the case of Fawad's crossover fame, the fan-based discourses of predominantly female viewers of Pakistani television serials generated an authentic demand for his celebrity across the border that was compounded by top-down avenues of corporate convergence.

The marked continuity between Fawad's onscreen persona in Pakistani television and his subsequent representation in Hindi cinema reflects how audience reception and global political economies collide as a result of media convergence. The overwhelmingly

enthusiastic response to Fawad's existing work in Pakistani serials like *Humsafar*[1] and

Zindagi Gulzar Hai[2] both of which achieved cult status across the border in India, was an

outcome initially of trans-media franchising through Zee TV's maiden syndication

venture, Zindagi TV; however, the unprecedented success of both serials and fan-driven

hype surrounding its main actors, including the formation of cross-border fan

communities and active media sharing across consumer platforms, quickly accelerated

each stars' transition to commercial Hindi cinema based on their existing vitality with

audiences of Pakistani television and ancillary media. As a result, Fawad's highly

desirable image as the romanticized, 'genteel' hero of Pakistani television drama

translated into comparable roles – and box office success – in each of his subsequent

Hindi films performances, from Disney's *Khoobsurat*[3] to his critically acclaimed role in

the unconventional family saga *Kapoor and Sons.*[4]

Fawad's onscreen persona, most notably his onscreen masculinity, has impacted

the representation and reception of Pakistani identity in Hindi cinema as much as Zafar's

border-crossing, reflexive, and peripatetic image in music and film. Like Zafar, Fawad

globalizes a Pakistani/Muslim masculinity that not only refutes but also *de-constructs* the

aggressively patriarchal and violent masculinity inherent to colonial and contemporary

discourses of the Muslim "Other" in India and much of the West. This pattern of de-

construction occurs throughout Fawad's media texts as his masculinity is routinely

asserted, undermined and re-invented in a dramatic arc consistent with the conventions of

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[1] *Humsafar,* directed by Sarmad Sultan Khoosat (Moomal Productions, 2011-2012).
[2] *Zindagi Gulzar Hai,* directed by Sultana Siddiqi (Moomal Productions, 2012-2013).
[3] *Khoobsurat,* directed by Shashanka Ghosh (Disney World Studios and UTV Motion Pictures, 2014).
[4] *Kapoor and Sons*, directed by Shakun Batra (Dharma Productions, 2016).

the serial genre in which he attained fame. In particular, Fawad's conflicted masculinity

positions him as an object of melodramatic identification and desire, in which the fantasy

of emotional or sexual union is idealized but consistently deferred.[5] This leaves Fawad's

persona open not only to multiple projections of desire, one that permits both

heterosexual and homosexual imaginaries, but also to a subjective framing heavily

contoured by the female gaze, including feminine structures of desire and identification.

This depiction can be attributed to the women-centric orientation of the serial genre,

which is written and produced primarily for female audiences.

This chapter thereby looks at the intersection of Fawad's screen persona with his

off-screen celebrity discourse, paying close attention to the role of fans in constructing

and disseminating media material, textual commentary and 'illicit' sources of news,

gossip and publicity contributing to his representation across media platforms. Just as the

active consumer practices of early TV drama fans petitioned Fawad's unique brand of

genteel masculinity, their digital engagement on social media has played a critical role in

shaping perceptions about his celebrity, and the relevance of being a Pakistani star in

India. These discourses have been reciprocated not only in the star's screen portrayals but

also in industry-motivated publicity, endorsements, and journalism, which will be

examined in conjunction with digital fan activity on social media websites, particularly

forums such as "Die Heart Fans of Fawad Khan" on Facebook and "Fawad Khan Fever"

on Twitter. These sources of fan discussion respond to Fawad's romantic iconography in

television and film, positioning him as an icon of utopian sexual desire, masculinity, and

female companionship.

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[5] Michael DeAngelis, *Gay Fandom and Crossover Stardom,* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2001), 6-9.

The media artifacts considered for analysis here include *Humsafar* and *Zindagi Gulzar Hai*, the most prominent performances of Fawad's television career and the most germane to this discussion considering their crossover success in India, and formative influence in cultivating Fawad's dramatic persona across media projects. These texts consolidate his image as the iconic upper middle class protagonist, whose masculinity and social context are interrogated to reveal emotional instability, repression, and a dynamic of longing, loss, and transformation. As will be discussed, much of these tropes derive from a genre that revolves around themes impacting women, most notably class, domesticity, social identity, and romance. As a result, these serials adopt a revisionist perspective on masculinity and patriarchy that is narrated in relation to (and often by) women, while appropriate behavior for both sexes is a central theme in each of the above texts, which focus on achieving social and psychological equity in heterosexual matrimony.

Fawad's Hindi-language launch vehicle, *Khoobsurat,* and his groundbreaking performance in *Kapoor and Sons* are further explored as a continuity of the dramatic precedent set in these serial performances. Like Zafar, shared forces of political economy have enabled a wider array of film portrayals that accommodate Fawad's crossover stardom and unorthodox interpretation of masculinity onscreen. This includes the general influence of Pakistani television serials as a format with distinctive narrative and thematic idioms. While Fawad's Hindi film roles do not engage directly with Pakistani or Muslim identity, as is the case with much of Zafar's repertoire, Fawad's off-screen reputation as a crossover Pakistani star – and his fan following as a result – places this factor foremost in approaching his film texts and is a key component of their reception.

Fawad's masculinity, as negotiated both onscreen and off screen, contrasts the alienating depiction of the Muslim male commonly encountered in Indian and Western popular culture. Muslim masculinity has been historically marginalized in the narrative universe of Hindi film, either through the invisibility or failure of the Muslim male as a legitimate subject in the 'modern' space of the Indian nation – as in the Muslim social – or through outright demonization in the more recent terrorist genre. If the Muslim social and courtesan genres represent Muslim womanhood through a victim/temptress binary, the Muslim male in these narratives is debauched and symbolically castrated by his inability to satisfy the economic and social responsibilities of marriage, the result either of flagrant abuse or other forms of character debasement. In the courtesan film, Muslim men are directly represented as lascivious and pleasure seeking in a traditional Orientalist vein, part of a wider and contradictory portrait of Muslim men as simultaneously effete (hampered by an addiction to leisure, sumptuous wealth, and aesthetic indulgence) and hyper-masculine. Hindu nationalist discourse in particular associates Islam with sensual excess, believed to be the result of a carnivorous diet that exaggerates lust and mean temperedness.[6]

This idea coincides with discourses regarding the 'violent' disposition of Muslim men that has its origins in early European culture, a concept that has been revived since colonial times through the present. This representation can be traced as early as the Crusades, when Islam was viewed as the principle threat to Christian Europe's political sovereignty, and was later attributed to Ottoman rule.[7] The Muslim as ruthless conqueror and despot is a myth that has been perpetuated in Western imperial discourse, and is

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[6] Talbot, "India and Pakistan," 39-40.
[7] Kumar, "Islamophobia," 13-17.

recycled in Hindutva ideology through its historical representation of Mughal reign as a vicious epoch of rape, pillage, and forced religious conversion.[8] Hindutva militancy, evident in martial arts camps, artillery and guerilla combat training, and body building cults for both men and women, responds powerfully to discourses of this violent, threatening Muslim "Other."[9] The rigorous physical and morale-building instruction offered in these factions or *shakas* is an effort to fortify the Hindu nation against an imagined Muslim enemy – namely Muslim civic culture, the Pakistan state, and its political sympathizers. This includes preparing women for self-defense against the perceived sexual aggression of Muslim men amid phantasmagoric fears of a renewed territorial, cultural, and spiritual invasion by Pakistan.[10]

As discussed previously, representations of the Muslim/Pakistani "Other" as a threat to India's national and cultural integrity have been part of the foundational logic of the Indian state since Partition, while the representation of Muslims as terrorists has escalated in proportion to political radicalization in mainstream culture. These ideas have been reinforced by post-9/11 political discourse, which has systematically and administratively criminalized the Muslim male on a global scale. The punitive apparatuses of state surveillance, detention and punishment are one facet of a larger structure of racial discrimination against the Muslim "Other."[11] These policies and the rhetoric of national security have turned the Muslim male body into a ready-made signifier for Islam on the one hand, and terrorist violence on the other. As a result, the

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[8] Talbot, 40-43.
[9] Ibid., 103-105.
[10] Kalyani Devaki Menon, *Everyday Nationalism: Women of the Hindu Right in India,* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), 26-53.
[11] Kumar, "Islamophobia," 139-158.

Muslim male body (accompanied in the West by racialized features like skin tone, facial hair, and ethnic dress) condenses ideas about Islam as a monolithic, irrational/regressive, and inherently violent construct.[12] This epistemology has informed and legitimated U.S.-led foreign policy in much of the world over the past decade, representing a continuation with both pre-colonial and colonial apprehensions of Islam.[13]

Fawad's characterization in each of his media texts challenge the stereotypical imaging of the Muslim male as terrifying, sexually threatening, and oppressive. In the first place his characters are consistently associated with gentility, middle class values and cultural sophistication. Secondly, while multiple texts activate themes concerning patriarchal authority and a controlling or 'vigilant' masculinity, these tenets are fully undermined and even reversed by the story's denouement, and in the case of *Humsafar* and *Zindagi Gulzar Hai,* are accompanied by a whole-scale transition of the protagonist into an ideal husband and father. In fact, it is the protagonist's masculinity that is questioned and problematized throughout both series, motivating the narrative's dramatic crisis and ultimately demanding modification by its resolution. Rather than signifying threat, he is an object of fetishized infatuation within and beyond the diegetic story universe, being an object of passionate aspiration for the text's female protagonists – and by extension the viewer through subjective, point-of-view storytelling.

Humsafar and *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* are thereby crucial texts in consolidating Fawad's screen persona. Both narrate relational sagas against a backdrop of class conflict, marital discord and romantic desire, and in each poor communication and timing create a sequence of unfortunate misunderstandings that keep the protagonists apart,

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[12] Ibid., 41-60.
[13] Ibid., 9-40.

deferring romantic bliss until the end of the series. While this is a characteristic element of television drama, the twin themes of unattainability and failed masculinity are a defining feature of Fawad's work that is visible in nearly all of his productions. This portrayal can be situated within the melodramatic mode anchoring Pakistani drama narrative, in which the "fantasy of origin" and tensions surrounding emergence/redemption for the protagonists is a defining feature.[14] Michael DeAngelis has previously discussed the relationship between melodrama, masculinity and star identities in his seminal work on gay fandom and crossover stardom. While his work focuses on how gay male audiences negotiate star personas, enabled by operations of melodramatic fantasy within and beyond media texts, these observations are also relevant to how melodrama structures desire in the narrative economy of Pakistani television drama and stardom.

If DeAngelis' study explores how "melodrama can help us to understand how such fantasies empower disenfranchised subcultures to "claim" popular cultural icons,"[15] the present analysis extends this theoretical basis to consider how melodramatic fantasy in the serial genre can empower both female and other subaltern audiences across axes of class in Pakistan. This is especially relevant to a society and media culture where the expression of female sexual desire and agency is largely disavowed, along with non-normative gender/social roles heavily constrained by class. As a result, the fantasy of "overcoming obstacles to fulfillment"[16] inherent to melodrama helps negotiate desire and identification in relation to the star image. For female audiences this fantasy is achieved

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[14] DeAngelis, "Gay Fandom," 6.
[15] Ibid., 5
[16] Ibid., 5

through narrative closure in which the object of desire is obtained, albeit within predictable boundaries – namely the socially sanctioned institutions of marriage and family.

Humsafar is an ideal illustration of these processes of melodramatic engagement. In the story Khirad (Mahira Khan), a lower middle class woman, is married against her will to the upper class Ashar at her mother's behest. During a familiar course of separation, romance, conflict and eventual harmony, each protagonist adapts to unforeseeable circumstances, and for at least one of them – Ashar – a complete shift in behavior and attitude is enacted so that marital compromise can be realized. This includes establishing equity through a reduction in class and social barriers; immediately both protagonists are introduced as belonging to different life-worlds. We first encounter Khirad doing laundry in a modest dwelling in Hyderabad, surrounded by extended family and neighbors. Natural, radiant lighting and a melodic background score signal her cultural rootedness and rustic simplicity, an idyllic setting that is accompanied by her framing as a humble and loving daughter. In contrast, we are first introduced to Ashar in a swanky Westernized cafe, chatting with an attractive woman over coffee. His more self-centered and isolated upper-class background is indicated by the austere, professional interiors he routinely inhabits. He is frequently shown at the office in business attire, speaking English, and is surrounded by consumer luxuries and wealth, including a spacious home complete with cable TV and swimming pool.

The characters' ostensible incompatibility is reiterated through editing, with Ashar and Khirad rarely occupying the same frame in the first quarter of the series. However, the characters gradually recognize a mutual attraction that blossoms into love,

although it becomes clear that their relational parity is illusory, with Ashar remaining the dominant figure in what appears to be a traditional patriarchal arrangement. This position is confirmed when his dying father reminds him "that he'll be in charge of things" once he's gone, and that he must teach Khirad how to live in the world, comparing her to "unbaked clay you can mold how you'd like." Ashar's attempts to "mold" Khirad mutate into a struggle to contain her sexuality, while his anxieties about failing as a husband and father become a self-fulfilling prophecy. This is again communicated strategically through mise-en-scene and cinematography; Ashar's patrolling gaze, reflecting a desire to keep Khirad in view at all times, constantly frames her, foreclosing the possibility of her own subjectivity or sexual awareness. In one critical scene Ashar blocks Khirad's self-admiring gaze in the mirror, coming between her reflection and stating that all that matters is that she is "beautiful to him," suggesting that any recognition of Khirad's own desire or sexuality is threatening, as she exists for his eyes (and pleasure) only.

This is reinforced in a subsequent scene when Ashar claims that he could spend all day looking at her – simultaneously an expression of romantic love and a paternalistic urge to monitor her sexuality. Even the viewer is not permitted to gaze at Khirad without Ashar's consent; in one of the show's more erotically charged scenes, Khirad is shown indulgently getting soaked in the rain. The sexual overtone of her actions and the pleasure she displays are mitigated by his authoritative presence, established through reverse shot editing and the fact that he explicitly describes her behavior as childlike, and thereby innocuous rather than sexual. Regardless, the hierarchy of desire in this scene prioritizes both his gaze and the viewer's, while Khirad is deprived of seeing either herself or Ashar in the same light, as he remains in the doorway to watch her. The fact that she is

oblivious to the 'spectacle' of her own sexuality is the motivating source of pleasure in this sequence, affirming Ashar's subjective point of view – the patriarchal gaze which the audience is invited to share.

However, this patriarchal authority is quickly de-stabilized as Ashar enacts a destructive cycle of doubt, envy, and misrecognition towards Khirad. As she finds greater independence through her studies and social engagements at college, Ashar becomes increasingly frustrated by his inability to police her actions. His insecurity is manifested by resentment towards her popularity and success, and his suspicion that she finds a handsome classmate, Khizir, more stimulating than him reflects an unstable masculinity, including repressed fears of his own inadequacy as a husband/lover. Blinded by male ego and pride, he punishes Khirad indiscriminately, misconstruing her true intentions and character. This crisis of masculinity culminates in devastating consequences when Ashar finally throws Khirad out of the house, refusing to believe she is innocent of having an affair with Khizir.

The fact that conventional patriarchy is untenable achieves full realization in the second half of the series. As a woman now expecting a child, with no source of income or home, Khirad suffers the most emotionally, materially and socially from the separation, while Ashar merely withdraws into a cloistered professional life. After begging for his acceptance and facing only rejection, Khirad eventually renounces all connections with Ashar and his family, refusing to depend on anyone but herself. In the meantime, as their child grows up, Khirad is forced financially to confront Ashar and demand paternal support. It is at this turning point that the show's gender roles become reversed; Ashar's vulnerability is revealed as he mourns the anguish he caused Khirad and their child,

regretting his past mistakes and begging forgiveness. In contrast, Khirad is shown rebuffing his advances, and from the first meeting since their separation she dominates their interactions, imposing conditions on him and assuming a newfound authority in their relationship.

The protagonists' mutual opposition and eventual reunion fulfills melodramatic registers of a desire for wholeness, including a 'return to origin' whereby the spectator desires "to witness the union of two protagonists separated through the course of fate."[17] While the emergence/redemption dynamic applies to both main characters, the melodramatic framing of Ashar's character purposefully de-constructs traditional notions of masculinity, enabling a transfiguration which imputes the narrative with moral 'truth.' Ashar's journey is a path towards self-completion that is only possible once he fully embraces conventionally 'feminine' spaces and attitudes, including the filial/domestic sphere and traits like compassion and tenderness – qualities hitherto associated with Khirad. This movement is an extreme fulfillment of the fantasy of origin in that Ashar directly embodies aspects of the maternal feminine once he eclipses Khirad's established role as caretaker for their daughter, Hareem. This transition is indicated by a shift from spaces of professional labor (e.g. the office or study) to the domestic, as Ashar is shown lavishing his affection on their daughter and placing her interests before his own.

The series' finale brings this transformation to its climax. With Hareem suffering from a life threatening heart condition, Ashar contends with the remorse and grief of potentially losing his daughter, having loved her too late. Experiencing emotional suffering and loss that parallels Khirad's, Ashar finally understands the world from her

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[17] Ibid., 5-7.

perspective, and, confronting his fractured ego in the mirror, questions tearfully how he could have allowed her to endure the sacrifices she faced raising their daughter alone, regardless of the affair he erroneously believes she committed. Reciprocating Khirad's actions earlier in the series, he pleads for her empathy, asking the same questions she once asked of him: "didn't you ever think of my love for one moment?" If she is resolute and implacable, he assumes a position of deference, humility and submission in persuading her of his worth – just as he had once compelled her to do as his wife. It is clear by the final scene of the series that the couple's relational parity has legitimately been established, and the desiring gaze is now mutual, evident in the closing frames of the show when Ashar steps into the rain with Khirad and their daughter as a symbolic gesture of emotional and sexual fulfillment.

If *Humsafar* lays bare fault lines within conventional patriarchy and middle class masculinity, replacing it with an idealized husband/father figure shaped by female identification, this is a theme that is repeated in *Zindagi Gulzar Hai,* and throughout Fawad's media projects. In the story, the protagonists are again positioned as belonging to different class and social spectrums. Kashaf (Sanam Saeed) comes from a middle class background, while Fawad's character, Zaroon, belongs to an affluent family. The story sets up a familiar axis of romantic desire and frustration that parallels *Humsafar's* plot momentum. After meeting at university, the two characters develop an uneasy relationship; from the outset Zaroon is established as irreverent and conceited, while Kashaf is pragmatic, strong-willed and outspoken. We are first introduced to Zaroon typing a diary entry on his laptop, where he comments that life is a beautiful, 'brilliant' package, but with one flaw: women. In his opinion, they represent "frailty, stupidity,

selfishness, stubbornness, and hypocrisy." Kashaf holds a similar opinion of men, viewing them with distrust and resentment, while she laments the burdens women face due to their subordinate social status.

These mutual suspicions, exacerbated by class prejudice, lead to repeated misapprehensions that culminate in a major altercation at college. Again, Zaroon's masculinity is portrayed as malicious and castigating in the first half of the series. His ego causes him to toy with Kahsaf's feelings, as he conspires to mislead her romantically in an effort to belittle her – in his words, "to break her arrogance." This stems once more from an unstable masculinity; throughout the series, Kashaf is projected as Zaroon's intellectual and moral superior, while her forceful nature is depicted as castrating. Not only does she place first in the college entrance exams, much to Zaroon's disappointment, but during their first meeting she even mocks him before the entire class, cutting him down to size when she says "you're not wasting your time, just mine. I don't give my time to guys like you…now will you go to your seat, or are you just going to stand here chewing my brains?" Their interactions quickly become competitive, with Zaroon struggling to outperform Kashaf academically and socially. Her acerbic wit and fierce independence are unrelenting; however, in true chauvinist fashion, Zaroon mistakes this defiant attitude merely as an attempt to gain his interest, and he believes he can easily sway her.

It is only during the second half of the series that Zaroon begins to respect Kashaf's strength of character, and it is this quality that he admires most in her. In a reversal of preceding events, Zaroon convinces Kashaf that he has changed his ways, apologizing for his callousness, self-absorption and flirtatious behavior. Disobeying the

wishes of his family, he pursues Kashaf against all odds, even though they are apparently mismatched – her steadfast dignity and sobriety at conflict with Zaroon's florid romanticism and cavalier outlook. This lack of balance is strongly communicated on their wedding night when Zaroon fumbles to impress Kashaf, seemingly defenseless before her silent and imperious presence. Not sure how to proceed, he first tries complimenting her, an effort that is met only with skepticism. Becoming candid about his own inferiority before her, he eventually admits that "I'm truly sorry…I've hurt you," to which Kashaf concedes mentally that "If he starts to think before he speaks, it can't be bad…he's not so much of an idiot as I thought him to be." Like in *Humsafar,* Zaroon assumes the deferred role in their relationship, yielding to Kashaf's will and demonstrating tenderness and sympathy in the face of her resolve – again dismantling gender expectations.

Also like *Humsafar*, the show sets up Zaroon as a remote object of romantic fantasy, one that is always 'just out of reach.' In both shows Ashar/Zaroon's good looks, popularity, and class supremacy position him above the realm of attainment for the comparatively more 'humble' female protagonists. His appeal is repeatedly exaggerated in each text; in *Humsafar* Ashar's best friend Sara is patently obsessed with him, refusing to relinquish her romantic ambitions even after Ashar has settled down with Khirad. Once she finally realizes her desire cannot be reciprocated, she commits suicide. This unrequited passion is also witnessed in *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* through Asmara, Zaroon's classmate and closest friend, whose romantic delusions are likewise shattered. Throughout the show Zaroon is subjectively framed from a perspective of female desire; Kashaf (albeit reluctantly) and her friend Mahira constantly admire him from afar, while Mahira enthuses about his 'dreamy' eyes and voice – "there isn't a single girl who isn't

interested in him," she claims. In a scene following this Kashaf muses about her ill fate, whereas girls like Asmara are "blessed" with everything – insinuating Kashaf's envy of her perceived intimacy with Zaroon. His desirability is fully imparted to the audience during a reflexive scene where he performs at a school party, accompanied by a cheering crowd of female fans in a tongue-in-cheek reference to Fawad's actual celebrity status as a musician/actor.

Fawad's onscreen projection in the above serials as an idealized but distant (if not outright impossible) object of love/desire is fully exploited in the Disney-produced film *Khoobsurat.* The fact that the film is a Disney product is significant for several reasons; first, it reflects powerful forces of corporate brand convergence within the Hindi film industry under shifting conditions of political economy. Again, the film's transnational production context illuminates how top-down avenues of media convergence present new opportunities to integrate and globalize Pakistani talent. Secondly, that the film bears Disney's hallmark brand ethos – as a romantic comedy with a 'prince charming' plot twist – points to a wider continuity in Fawad's image across media texts. Like the television drama serial, Disney-produced films are geared mainly towards youth and female viewers, and *Khoobsurat* optimizes this legacy with audiences, something visible, for example, in the film's official release poster. The poster features lead actors Sonam Kapoor and Fawad Khan in a partial embrace, as Kapoor gazes up at Fawad with a dreamy, wide-eyed expression suggestive of Disney's popular romance aesthetic. In addition, the DVD version of the film opens with a commentary by Kapoor, who states that she always wanted to feel like a Disney princess, something this role allowed her to

do.[18] Such brand elements sustain the film's overture to female audiences, a factor reinforced by Fawad's selection for the role of Prince Yuvraj that affirms his consummate image as a romantic icon branded and marketed by corporations like Hum TV, Zindagi TV, and Disney to a strategic, women-dominated fan base.

As with Fawad's other texts, the film depicts a familiar cycle of aloofness and restraint in middle class gentility, followed by the gradual undoing of social barriers and emotional/sexual catharsis encountered in each of the star's protagonists. Again, the 'return to origin' fantasy is played out through the influence and acceptance of feminine ideals and values, as his characters emerge from a conflicted, restrained or deceptive masculinity. Also like *Humsafar* and *Zindagi Gulzar Hai, Khoobsurat* is narrated primarily from a female perspective. In the story Mili (Sonam Kapoor), a physical therapist, is assigned to provide care to the ailing patriarch of an ancient royal estate, falling in love with his son, the prince, in the process. It is Mili we are introduced to first, and her characterization drives the story, while her dream of marrying "prince charming" is realized when she finally wins Yuvraj's (Fawad's) heart. Here again the couple's union is complicated by differences in class, culture and personality; in this case Mili's middle class Punjabi background, and Yuvraj's as an elite aristocrat from Rajasthan.

From the outset the viewer shares Mili's perspective as a tourist both removed from and bedazzled by Yuvraj's world. When she first arrives Mili takes selfies with the palace, servants and artifacts, and she is awed by the palace's museum-like interior, posing immediately with a 400-year old piece of armor. It becomes abundantly clear that she is out of place in this surreal and timeless setting, and her social distance is confirmed

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[18] *Khoobsurat,* directed by Shashanka Ghosh (Reliance Home Video, 2014), DVD.

by the condescending reception she encounters as a 'paid' employee of the household. Exacerbating these obstacles is Mili's clumsy, brash and socially awkward behavior, which, she bemoans, has caused romantic mishaps in the past. Her character is in stark contrast with Yuvraj, whose immaculate deportment and propriety make the distance between them both comical and seemingly insurmountable. That she could ever win a prince's heart, the narrative indicates, is indeed the ultimate wish fulfillment.

Yuvraj's placement as an idealized object of fantasy and desire is enacted from the protagonists' first meeting. This occurs when Mili accidentally mistakes Yuvraj's bedroom for her own in the middle of the night, and becomes caught in bed with him. As the lights go on, it is Yuvraj, not Mili, who is the object of the spectator's erotic voyeurism. Impressed by his shirtless appearance, Mili cannot help but mock her absurd luck – "a *good*-looking thief," she wonders aloud, no longer concerned for her safety. She rapidly gains control of the situation, breaching norms of intimacy – "so what do I call you, Yuvraj, Junior Majesty, Viku?" she asks. His privacy compromised, Yuvraj occupies a traditionally feminine role in this sequence as he struggles to defend his honor, insisting that Mili leave. This gender reversal – in which Yuvraj is sexualized for the viewer's gaze, and made to feel violated – forms the scene's comic subtext while setting up the film's distinctly feminine staging of desire.

This framing is evident throughout the film, with Mili acting as romantic aggressor and agent of narrative change while Yuvraj is inhibited from expressing his feelings, constrained by his social position and the rules of decorum dictating the Rathore family. Again, fortuitous 'accidents' present opportunities for Mili to enact her desire, and in a moment of drunken impulsiveness she kisses Yuvraj while they are alone at

night in the middle of the road. This transgression of barriers, and the metaphor of sexual release, reflects the film's primary dramatic impetus – namely Mili's role in reviving the Rathore household. Emotionally stultified following the death of their other son in a car accident, the Rathores' condition is symbolized by the king's disability. Wheelchair bound and figuratively impotent, he refuses to acknowledge his inner distress, while his wife manages the household according to a draconian schedule.

This rigidity and detachment likewise characterizes Yuvraj, whose strict professionalism leaves little room for sentiment or benevolence. Mili quickly becomes a rejuvenating force, whose passion, openness and bold encouragement shake the Rathores out of their psychological impasse, releasing them from temporal stasis into the present. Her positive influence re-kindles the king's willpower while inspiring Yuvraj to recognize his emotional instincts. His transformation is signaled by a new display of compassion; he embraces his sister's dreams of leaving home to work in Mumbai and even adopts a more ethical approach to business. In addition, whereas Yuvraj's emotions were previously accessible only through interior monologue, in which he contemplated his desire for Mili but did not have the courage to execute it, by the film's climax he finally actualizes these feelings. After it seems their differences are too great to overcome, Yuvraj travels to Delhi to propose, finding Mili in the middle of a paintball tournament. In a final erosion of his emotional and sexual restraint, she shoots Yuvraj with a paint gun, splattering his suit with color, after which he kneels before her and asks for her hand in marriage. If the protagonists' earlier interactions were mismatched, with little to no eye contact or engaging body language, here their desire is fully

consummated, and any constraints of social position or culture between them are neutralized once both their parents consent to the marriage.

Fawad's final starring Hindi film role before the ban on Pakistani artists was endorsed is the critically acclaimed *Kapoor and Sons*. If his persona in the above productions re-invents patriarchal masculinity, by *Kapoor and Sons* these themes are pushed to their limit as Fawad's character experiences the ultimate dynamic of melodramatic redemption/emergence: the concealment, admission and social acceptance of homosexual identity. Still a controversial subject in popular Hindi cinema, the film presents a masculinity open to multiple registers of desire and identification. This is consistent with the film's parallel de-construction of the traditional feudal family, whose symbolic meaning is similarly ruptured and amended by the end of the film.

In the narrative Fawad portrays Rahul, a successful author and the favored son in a rapidly disintegrating middle class family. Their dysfunctional nature is communicated immediately after the title credits, when the family's octogenarian grandfather feigns a heart attack to gain the attention of his squabbling son and daughter in law. What they mistake as a prank, however, turns out to be a genuine health scare, causing the family to temporarily reunite. It becomes evident that Rahul possesses the most social, economic and cultural capital of anyone in the family, especially compared to his brother Arjun (Sidharth Malhotra), who acts as his foil throughout the text. Again, Rahul is fetishized as an object of romantic and filial desire; his debonair lifestyle as a famous London-based author is our first entrance into the film's narrative universe, where his literary agent describes him as "hot property" with thousands of fans awaiting his next work, after which she asks him to autograph a book for an infatuated friend. It is also clear that he is

the "perfect" son; not only is he the first in the family to be notified about the grandfather's illness, he also takes the initiative to arrange flights for him and his brother, chiding Arjun for being stubborn and not letting him purchase the ticket.

Rahul's depiction as the perfect son is further consolidated by the reception he receives at home. While Arjun's childhood room has been converted, Rahul's is left intact, complete with toys and furnishings. He is greeted first by the beloved family dog, and is instantly coddled by his mother, always being the object of his parents' praise. Unlike Arjun, who is between jobs and hobbies, a habit his father angrily reprimands him for, it becomes clear that Rahul is quickly overshadowing his father as the family's preferred patriarch. He is frequently shown taking control of the family affairs, making arrangements for his grandfather's care and receiving instructions on his last wishes, while consistently demonstrating prudence, wisdom and responsibility. That he serves as the family's backbone is illustrated by his role as mediator, counseling and reassuring his parents as they face growing dissatisfaction in their marriage.

Rahul's allure is finalized when he attracts the romantic attentions of Arjun's crush, Tia (Alia Bhatt). Echoing Fawad's representation in *Humsafar, Zindagi Gulzar Hai,* and *Khoobsurat,* Rahul is likewise presented as an emblem of female sexual desire and fantasy; during their first meeting, Tia spontaneously gushes to him "you're hot," embarrassing them both. Again, he is placed at the receiving end of Tia's romantic advances; she asks him out to dinner and kisses him impulsively on what she mistakenly assumes is a first date. However, the uncertainty or impossibility of sexual fulfillment is unequivocally affirmed when we discover Rahul's sexual orientation at the film's climax, unlike the romantic closure achieved in each of the previous texts. It is at this point that

Rahul's masculinity is subverted, his internal torment and longing for self-expression revealed. His burdened conscience is conveyed when he confesses to Arjun "I'm tired of being perfect," while his illusive authority as ideal patriarch/son is discredited when we discover that he has been plagiarizing his brother's writing, with his mother's assistance.

Rahul's identity crisis and subsequent redemption occur when his mother discovers his secret unexpectedly. Their estrangement, and Rahul's struggle to regain her trust, is the emotional turning point of the film, reflected in the intense focus of their interactions. If redemption reflects a will to return "to the mother's body,"[19] this is represented by Rahul's acute desire for his mother's acceptance, and he kneels in supplication before her in tears. His fragility and self-doubt exposed, he confesses, "I hurt you and I apologize. But how do I apologize for who I really am?...I'm tired of running from myself, from you…I am what I am, Ma – and I just want you to love me for who I am." The transformative connotations of Fawad's persona attain full resonance in the text, embodied by a movement from incomplete, flawed masculinity to wholeness. In addition, Rahul's emergence in the story avows the sexual accessibility of Fawad's filmic image, enabled by a melodramatic engagement that accommodates an economy of both heterosexual and same-sex desire. While the potential for same-sex desire is inherent in the dubious masculinity characterizing each of Fawad's protagonists, including the unsatisfactory or deferred conjugation of the heterosexual couple in all of the media texts analyzed, this economy is less ambiguously activated in *Kapoor and Sons*. This is made possible through Rahul's framing as an object of female desire on the one hand, and by opening potential 'scenes' of homoerotic desire on the other that exceed the narrative

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[19] DeAngelis, "Gay Fandom," 6.

limits of the text. An optimal illustration is a scene where Rahul shares a bed with his brother Arjun; the tight close ups and relaxed affection in this scene lend themselves readily to a projection of same-sex fantasy, enhanced by Rahul's thwarted impulse to betray his secret to Arjun. This scene permits viewers to imagine the possibility of desire beyond the boundaries of the text, even if such validation is narratively improbable.

The representation of Fawad's masculinity in the above productions can be attributed to interlocking variables of political economy on the one hand, and audience reception on the other. The formative influence of Pakistani television drama is evident in the strong continuity of Fawad's persona across media texts and formats. In the context of Pakistani television drama, its female-oriented themes and organization of desire are made possible by a production framework dominated by women, and aimed at female audiences. For instance, Hum Network Limited – the first media company to be founded and managed by a woman in Pakistan – produced and aired both *Humsafar* and *Zindagi Gulzar Hai*. Its founder Sultana Siddiqi can be credited with formalizing the serial genre in Pakistan, having over fourteen directorial credits to her name, *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* included. The company's administration also has a large representation of female personnel, including mainstay scriptwriters like Umera Ahmed and senior producer Momina Duraid, the creative force behind *Humsafar*.[20] It is further significant that both serials were based on romance novels by celebrated female authors, Farhat Ishtiaq for *Humsafar* and Umera Ahmed for *Zindagi Gulzar Hai*, reflecting an integral connection

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[20] "Board of Directors," *Hum Network TV,*
http://www.humnetwork.tv/Board_of_Directors.html

between culture industries and genres developed by, and directed towards, women.[21] This gendered slant is likewise reflected in media consumption trends, with Gallup estimating that 67% of television entertainment viewers in Pakistan are female, representing a substantial majority.[22]

That Hum TV is a leader in television drama is also indicated by its placement among the top ten entertainment channels in Pakistan.[23] Along with ARY, it was one of two corporations responsible for resuscitating what was previously a flagging media format, and since 2009 has emerged as a trendsetter in the serial genre, a precedent that was confirmed with *Humsafar's* release in 2011. Its success in consolidating the format can be witnessed in the sheer amount of content produced, with at least 90% of its programming consisting of serial dramas.[24] Along with greater organization and investment, the re-selling of this content to foreign outlets – particularly in the Middle East and India – has doubled Pakistan's overall growth in television entertainment. This has placed Pakistani television content on a globalizing trajectory that dovetails with India's own growth in cable and satellite television programming, including an increasing overlap with film production.

This strong brand monopolization of the television drama industry in Pakistan, coupled with consistent and predominantly female authorship aimed primarily for women viewers, has permitted the exploration of revisionist masculinities like Fawad's onscreen.

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[21] Saadia Qamar, "Sultana Apa: The Return of the Director," *The Express Tribune,* September 24, 2012, https://tribune.com.pk/story/441687/sultana-apa-the-return-of-the-director/

[22] Gallup Pakistan, "Media Television Audience Viewership," January 13, 2017, www.gallup.com.pk

[23] Marilou Andrew, "The Business of Entertainment," *Aurora,* November-December 2014, http://aurora.dawn.com/news/1140730

[24] Ibid.

His star persona is thereby situated within the distinctive political and narrative economies of Pakistani television drama, while the circulation of Pakistani serials on a global scale has made their imprint visible in parallel industries, notably Hindi cinema. Besides corporate avenues of media exposure through licensing and franchise proliferation – like Zindagi TV – the role of audiences, and especially the development of fan communities, has accelerated the impact of Pakistani television dramas and their stars in global popular entertainment. This is certainly the case with Fawad's genteel masculinity, whose cult reception among television drama fans in India and Pakistan have helped re-imagine Muslim/Pakistani identity.

Fawad's commercial and critical potential as a crossover star was foreshadowed by the preliminary success of *Humsafar* and *Zindagi Gulzar Hai*. Upon release in Pakistan each serial achieved exceptional ratings, with *The Tribune Pakistan* calling *Humsafar* a phenomenon "that cut across all divides to become a striking symbol of the times,"[25] while the show was widely praised for its novel casting and superior scriptwriting, cinematography and characterization. Within weeks of its broadcast premiere the serial garnered an astonishing social media presence, with at least five fan pages on Facebook and over 100,000 followers.[26] It also rapidly achieved an international presence, with hundreds of fan uploads to YouTube in real time that attracted viewers in locations as far as Toronto, Canada – many of the uploads with English subtitles.[27]

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[25] Humna Zubair, "Woh Humsafar Tha…" *The Express Tribune,* March 3, 2012, https://tribune.com.pk/story/344534/woh-humsafar-tha/
[26] Quratulain Tejani, "Humsafar: Here's What the Noise is About," *The Express Tribune Blogs,* December 14, 2011, https://blogs.tribune.com.pk/story/9343/humsafar-heres-what-the-noise-is-about/
[27] Noor Javed, "Popular Pakistani Drama Humsafar Reaches Toronto Fans Via Web," *TheStar.com,* February 16, 2012,

In India, the serial was considered groundbreaking for its unanticipated popularity, despite the fact that it aired more than two years after its initial release in Pakistan. Critical reviews posited that it was "a breath of fresh air"[28] compared to Indian dramas and likewise developed an enthusiastic fan response on social media, including its own Indian fan page on Facebook and extensive Twitter feeds following each episode in detail, including the series' emotional finale that left fans in tears on one popular thread.[29] For its final episode on Zindagi TV, the channel even organized a competition on Twitter at hashtag #MadforMahira so that select fans could meet star Mahira Khan in Mumbai if they tweeted about the program throughout the finale on November 12, 2014.[30]

Zindagi Gulzar Hai experienced an equally rave reception on both sides of the border. Besides critical reviews that termed the series "a blockbuster hit,"[31] it was widely recognized for its inspiring message and social commentary "on chauvinism, sexism and even everyday problems faced by women, especially single mothers."[32] In India the show's "relatable" plot and psychological realism were again highlighted, features

https://www.thestar.com/life/2012/02/16/popular_pakistani_television_drama_humsafar_reaches_toronto_fans_via_web.html

[28] Kanika Ranjani, "Humsafar: Not Your Regular Romance," *The Indian Express,* October 31, 2014, http://indianexpress.com/article/entertainment/screen/humsafarnot-your-regular-romance/

[29] Web Desk, "Humsafar's Last Episode Left Indians Crying, *BrandSynario,* January 24, 2015, https://www.brandsynario.com/humsafars-last-episode-left-indians-crying-twitter-reviews/

[30] Ibid.

[31] InPaper Magazine, "Zindagi's Winning Streak," *Dawn.com,* June 2, 2013, https://www.dawn.com/news/1027711

[32] "Zindagi Gulzar Hai: Why Everybody Seems to Be Loving It So Much?," *India Opines,* Retrieved September 28, 2017, http://indiaopines.com/zindagi-gulzar-hai-loving/

secondary only to the overwhelming appeal of its lead actors.[33] However, equally important is the digital community it generated, reflected in blog posts by critics like Fatima Awan on Reviewit.pak.[34] A fan-based site devoted to Pakistani television drama, Awan writes that the "best thing about this whole show was the discussions we all had here…a big thank you from the bottom of my heart, to all those who followed the reviews every week and took time out to comment."[35] Impressions like these reflect the unique pleasures of consuming drama serials for many fans, in which viewing the text is only part of its wider value in eliciting shared forums to articulate, criticize and debate its cultural meaning. While this process is an extension of the traditional roles that gossip and word of mouth discussion have historically played in the reception of female-oriented genres, the emergence of extensive fan communities around key 'organizer' texts is a powerful reflection of convergence culture.

The reception of both serials is an ideal illustration of how convergence culture initiates opportunities for crossover stardom. This occurs through a mutually reinforcing circuit of corporate brand integration on the one hand, and consumer-directed convergence on the other. An ideal example is Zindagi TV's targeted programming and marketing approach, which leverages the female-oriented content and appeal of drama serials in India for "English speaking, smart-phone owning women between the ages of

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[33] Rashmi Mishra, "Zindagi Gulzar Hai: Top 7 Reasons Why This Pakistani Serial is a Big Hit!" *India.com*, July 16, 2014, http://www.india.com/buzz/zindagi-gulzar-hai-top-7-reasons-why-this-pakistani-serial-is-a-big-hit-96695/

[34] Fatima Awan, "Zindagi Gulzar Hai: The Finale," *Reviewit.pak,* May 24, 2013, https://reviewit.pk/zindagi-gulzar-hai-the-finale/

[35] Ibid.

15 and 44, who live in big metros, and cities like Bangalore, Pune and Indore."[36] This target audience represents a "premium mass" of cable television viewers who have strong demographic similarities on both sides of the border, with Zindagi basing their Pakistani programming on its existing popularity with domestic audiences, namely middle class urban women.[37]

The channel's tagline, *Jodey Dilon Ko* ("Bringing Hearts Closer"), references this continuity. As writer Karanjeet Kaur acknowledges, it alludes not only to the "romantic dramas it airs" but is also "a sentimental nod to the cultural links between the two countries,"[38] a theme that is reinforced through the channel's content promotion. The channel's mission, therefore, is to sponsor texts and talent with commercial crossover appeal through strategic branding, evident in digital marketing campaigns like #MadforMahira and the network's 2016 Fawad Khan festival for fans, in which popular Fawad-starring serials were re-aired along with his recent Hindi-language films during a month long tribute. The event included the #FawadFestival contest, where the channel partnered with Twitter and WhatsApp so that fans could forward messages directly to the star.[39] This type of brand integration co-opts 'grassroots' convergence by encouraging and rewarding digital fan activity that supports the channel's corporate agenda.

It is clear that both bottom-up and top-down forces of convergence interacted to establish Fawad's crossover celebrity. His romantic screen persona and unorthodox masculinity, represented in both of the above serials, quickly became a cultural 'bridge'

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[36] Karanjeet Kaur, "Opening a Channel," *The Caravan,* November 1, 2014, http://www.caravanmagazine.in/reviews-and-essays/opening-channel/2
[37] Ibid.
[38] Ibid.
[39] Images Staff, "Do You Know? There's a Fawad Khan Festival Happening in India!" *Dawn.com,* July 5, 2016, https://images.dawn.com/news/1175753

for Pakistani and Indian drama fans, a crossover trajectory that was endorsed by

corporate media outlets in an effort to tap this common niche market. Fawad's cult appeal

is manifested in the number of digital fan forums that emerged in the wake of both

serials, affirming processes of identification and desire enacted in the melodramatic

address of these texts. Besides dramatic realism and acting caliber, the sexual chemistry

of both shows' lead stars was widely cited as a main attraction for audiences on both

sides of the border, with one Indian reviewer highlighting Fawad's "charisma" as the key

quotient to *Zindagi Gulzar Hai's* approbation with Indian audiences. This, she claims,

can be attributed to his "man of your dreams" image -- "suave, great looking, and with an

amazing voice! Pakistani actor Fawad Afzal Khan became a massive hit among girls

since the first look hit the telly world."[40] Also citing his persona as the formula for

Humsafar's success, another self-proclaimed 'fan girl' describes his character in the

series as "heartbreakingly lovable," capturing "millions of hearts both within and beyond

our borders" in her review of the show.[41]

      Comments like these affirm the star's textual representation as a fetishized object

of melodramatic fantasy, re-coding the Muslim/Pakistani male body as an emblem of

sexual desire rather than threat. If the Muslim male has typically personified 'terror'

through his potential for sexual or social assault, Fawad's body is associated here with

sublime romance, his voice and demeanor alone enough to captivate. Rather than

signifying myths of a brutal, oppressive, and archaic 'Islam,' his masculinity is

characterized as debonair and cosmopolitan, possessing an irresistible charm that echoes

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[40] Mishra, "Zindagi Gulzar Hai"

[41] Zukhruf Mehboob, "Why People in Pakistan Still Can't Get Over Humsafar," *MangoBaaz.com,* September 20, 2015, https://www.mangobaaz.com/10-reasons-humsafar-is-still-the-best-pakistani-love-story/

his 'genteel' image in television and film. His vulnerability onscreen is also recognized as a dimension of the star's attraction, coinciding with the progressive masculinity explored throughout his media texts. One commentary, for instance, points to Ashar's flawed masculinity as central to *Humsafar's* script, acknowledging the show's conscious de-construction of gendered social norms: "Asher may be educated and modern, but he is also insecure…while Khirad is exceptionally affectionate, dignified and independent. Unlike other Hindi shows which glorify the protagonists, *Humsafar* does none of that."[42]

Fawad's exalted romantic image is likewise expressed in numerous fan forums devoted to the star. Launched in June 2014, "Die Heart Fans of Fawad Khan" on Facebook now has around 193,000 followers.[43] Much of the fan commentary focuses on the star's sex appeal and talent, again 'fetishizing' his body as a target of passionate adulation; as one Indian fan posts: "His voice is most attracting thing which made me go mad and his sense of humour in #zgh (Zindagi Gulzar Hai) serial. I liked his eyes which will make everyone to believe him even when he does wrong thing. And I totally believe that husband should be like zaroon."[44] Posts like this not only underscore Fawad's fan reception as a romantic icon, but also respond to his melodramatic image as the ideal husband/father in popular media representations. His genteel masculinity and sophisticated manner are also frequently referenced, reinforcing his characterization as the 'ultimate' male fantasy figure; as another fan comments, "He is just so poised, calm, well spoken and well behaved plus he is "classy"...that's why we all go gaga over Fawad

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[42] Ranjani, "Humsafar"
[43] "Die Heart Fans of Fawad Khan," Retrieved October 10, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/Die.Heart.Fans.Of.FawadKhan/

[44] Ibid., July 21, 2017.

Khan..![45] In addition to Facebook, the star also has over 272,000 followers on his official

Twitter account, @_fawadakhan_,[46] as well as several fan-based Twitter accounts, the

largest of which are "Fawad Khan FC" and "Fawad Khan Fever."

The former has over 21,000 active followers worldwide, posting daily news and

facts related to the star, while the second hosts primarily fan art and related tributes.[47]

The nature of his popular reception is perhaps summed up best in a witty opinion piece

by celebrity journalist Shobhaa De, who proclaims that "Fawad Fever" has taken hold in

India precisely because of the star's unique suitability to female fantasy – "He's as

yummy as those irresistible Lahori kabobs, and desi ladies want him. Jaisey bhi! [Alas!]

Afsos ki baat yeh hai ki [The regrettable thing is] he is married and a father to

Ayaan…but, in our collective fantasy, we don't bother about such faltu, real life

details…fans have decided he is the yummiest, most sinful treat in town…forget

calories."[48] The potency of such fan-motivated discourse is evinced by the fact that fans

themselves suggested Fawad for his first starring Hindi film role, mentioning his name to

producer Rhea Kapoor during *Khoobsurat's* pre-production.[49] Critical responses to the

film accentuate its exploitation of female fantasy tied to Fawad's 'sex idol' image, with

many headlines jokingly referencing him as the source of the film's glamorous title. As

[45] Ibid., June 26, 2016.

[46] "Fawad Afzal Khan," Retrieved October 10, 2017,
https://twitter.com/_fawadakhan_?lang=en

[47] "Fawad Khan FC," Retrieved October 10, 2017,
https://twitter.com/TeamFawadAKhan?lang=en

[48] Shobaa De, "Pakistan's Fawad Khan: India's Heartthrob," *NDTV.com,* September 25,
2014, https://www.ndtv.com/opinion/pakistans-fawad-khan-indias-heartthrob-670680

[49] Isha Sharma, "7 Things Sonam Kapoor Said About Fawad Khan Which Proves That
She's a Bigger Fan of Him Than Us!" *India Times,* July 12, 2015,
https://www.indiatimes.com/entertainment/7-things-sonam-kapoor-said-about-fawad-
khan-which-proves-that-shes-a-bigger-fan-of-him-than-us-234668.html

Shobaa De humorously opines, "So, who is the real 'khoobsurat' (beauty) in the movie…Any guesses?"[50] The majority of the film's reviews invoke this 'fan girl' perspective, drawing on existing discourses about the star and his popular reception among TV drama audiences.[51]

The scope of this reception is further recycled in popular publicity surrounding the star. Rather than focusing on artistic agency, which occupies much of the discussion surrounding Zafar as a versatile musician and actor, Fawad's crossover stardom is depicted as a product of consumer demand, apparent in his frequent likening to a phenomenon, craze, or '"fever." This objectification is more than just sexual; he is most often discussed either in relation to audiences or through his effect on them, framing him within existing fan narratives. Like Zafar, Fawad's 'difference' as a crossover star is configured as novelty, the selling point for his commercial and critical potential. His intense fascination for female fans is accredited not only to "those eyes, that stare, that reluctant smile…and oof! - hair with a life of its own"[52] but to his *accessibility* as a locus of women's fantasy. Unlike prototypical Hindi film heroes "displaying their wretched, computer generated 6/8 pack bare bods in every second film,"[53] Fawad is set apart by his credibility as an actor and object of sexual interest. That he fits practical expectations of female desire is indicated by his characterization as "strikingly real and beautifully

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[50] De, "Pakistan's Fawad Khan"
[51] Zinnia Bukhari, "Movie Review: In Khoobsurat, Fawad is the Beauty, Sonam's Wardrobe is the Beast," *Dawn,* September 19, 2014, https://www.dawn.com/news/1132993
[52] Ibid.
[53] Ibid.

normal,"[54] encapsulated by his expressive subtlety "to admire a woman secretly from the

corner of his eye, in anger, to suggest a hint of a smile…and intensely enough to make

you go weak in the knees."[55] His candor, sensitivity and emotional/sexual restraint are

depicted as idiosyncratic qualities at odds with the crass commercialism and

homogenizing impetus of popular Hindi cinema, renown for its larger-than-life

personalities.[56]

These characteristics are easily rendered exotic. Unlike Zafar, whose celebrity

discourse synthesizes both difference and sameness, Fawad is fully constructed as

exceptional, his crossover status the source of his seductive appeal for fans. If Zafar's

identity emphasizes the possibility of achieving fame in the Hindi film industry based on

hard work, talent, and creative risk-taking – evident in the politically controversial

projects he chooses – Fawad's identity is more eroticized, aligning with his tender

'heartthrob' image onscreen and in popular fan address. His positioning as the sensual

"Other" finds expression throughout various media exclusives. Shobaa De compares him

to "Sucre de Terre – a limited edition artisanal ice cream with an unusual, exotic flavor"[57]

while another commentator avers that Indian housewives now find "themselves

wondering…where can I find a man/husband as hot as Fawad Khan? Answer: Across the

border."[58] One interview in Filmfare deploys Orientalist language to exemplify his allure,

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[54] Suhani Singh, "Why The Fawad Khan Fever Refuses to Die Down," *DailyO.in,*
October 13, 2014, http://www.dailyo.in/arts/fawad-fever-refuses-to-die-down/story/1/358.html.
[55] Ibid.
[56] Paromita Vohra, "Need a Reason to Watch Kapoor and Sons? This Fawad Khan Fan
From India Lists So Many," *Dawn,* March 18, 2016,
https://images.dawn.com/news/1175013
[57] De, "Pakistan's Fawad Khan"
[58] Singh, "Why the Fawad Fever"

calling him a "Cross Border Turk" and "enigmatic star…who's giving our heroes sleepless nights."[59]

Fawad's outsider status re-configures Muslim/Pakistani masculinity as not only desirable but idealized, transforming appraisals of the Muslim male "Other" from an object of threat to one of consumer desire. His star identity is negotiated through fan-motivated discourse on the one hand and popular journalism on the other, reflecting the influence of multiple forces of convergence on crossover texts – from serials like *Humsafar* and *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* to Fawad's own star text. This analysis thereby reveals how consumer-directed convergence can interact with industrial political economies to motivate crossover stardom; this process is apparent in how the enthusiastic fan reception of Fawad's early TV serials supported his wider branding as an icon of melodramatic romance both onscreen and off. Such a representation is strengthened by the narrative and thematic continuity throughout his texts, in which the dynamic of melodramatic redemption/emergence offers a sentimental, progressive masculinity fully at odds with historical depictions of the Muslim male in Hindi film. Fawad's hyper-signification as an emblem of female desire contradicts inverse tendencies to objectify the Muslim male body as a site of political, cultural and social violence; however, his de-construction of Muslim masculinity also makes him India's most controversial crossover star. This subject will be explored in more detail as the politics of the crossover ban are considered in Chapter 7.

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[59] Mayukh Majumdar, "The Fawad Khan We Know," *Filmfare,* November 29, 2015, https://www.filmfare.com/features/the-fawad-khan-we-know-11377-1.html.

GLOBALIZING PAKISTANI IDENTITY ACROSS THE BORDER: THE POLITICS

OF CROSSOVER STARDOM IN THE HINDI FILM INDUSTRY

I AM NOT YOUR FEMINIST: MAHIRA KHAN AND THE RE-SCRIPTING OF

PAKISTANI WOMANHOOD, ISLAM, AND GLOBALIZATION

Like Zafar and Fawad, Mahira's crossover celebrity reflects a coalescence of

global and local forces in a media convergence context. However, if conflicts

surrounding Muslim masculinity define the relevance of Fawad's crossover persona –

and to a lesser extent, Zafar's – then Muslim femininity indexes Mahira's potential as a

global star. Her dramatic identity on-screen and public image off-screen embodies a

version of Muslim womanhood that contravenes colonial and Western-origin discourses,

while appealing to shared cultural sentiments across regions like South Asia and the

Middle East. Mahira's "balanced" femininity is discernible in the strong, agency-oriented

roles she portrays in the female-centric serial genre, albeit within culturally acceptable

parameters; indeed, her crossover appeal is frequently ascribed to her chaste, modest and

socially rooted image. In India this persona is construed as a type of nostalgia for

'traditional' femininity even as the star fits existing standards of glamour and talent in the

popular Hindi film industry, credentials sustained by her previous work as a television

host for MTV Pakistan.

Scholars like Appadurai have characterized globalization as multi-directional,

uneven and disjunctive, hosting competing cultural flows within a contiguous framework

of neo-liberal capitalism that is both geo-spatially and temporally compressed.[1] Mahira's

crossover celebrity is an optimal example of these multiple ontologies, defying reductive

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[1] Arjun Appadurai, "Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*"*
(Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996),

theories about globalization as predominantly Westernizing, hegemonic, and imperialist. Her cultural intelligibility and appeal with audiences as distant as Saudi Arabia and Indonesia reveals how globalization permits subaltern flows along an axis of non-Western cultural influence, even as this process is driven by parallel factors of media convergence and transnational brand 'localization.' This process can be witnessed in Mahira's global exposure through corporate media franchising and integration into shared scaffolds of political economy, reflected in her brand engagements with MTV, Coke Studio, and Femina Magazine, to name only a few. In addition, her success with overseas audiences derives from the globalizing imperatives of Pakistani television.

Apprehending globalization as a contingent process again helps us interpret the potential contradictions of Mahira's media corpus, and their occasionally incongruous reception. Mahira's celebrity has been simultaneously exalted and criticized for reinforcing conservative cultural and religious values, even as she symbolizes global capitalist brands and transcends media industries. That her crossover stardom in India, and her global appeal more widely, interacts with the ostensible propriety of her image reflects several conflicting discourses. Firstly, it exposes the paradox of global discourses surrounding Islam as 'exceptionally' regressive and illiberal, a specious imaginary evident, for example, in the fact that Mahira's persona differs little from nationalist paragons of the 'good' Hindu/Indian wife, mother or daughter conventionally encountered in popular Indian media. Secondly, that her crossover celebrity possesses relevance for multinational audiences reveals that multiple versions of femininity can be globalized outside of the strictly liberal or secular feminist codes idealized in the West. Finally, her celebrity discourse reinforces how female stardom acts as a contested space

to debate public morality, socio-political freedom, and national/religious identity – an onus doubly exaggerated for Muslim stars.

In exploring the above dynamics this chapter considers Mahira's roles as an MTV television host and actor, focusing on the serial *Humsafar*[2] and her only starring Hindi film role in the production *Raees*[3] as demonstrative texts. While the star has done other work in Pakistani television and cinema, these texts laid the foundation for her crossover attention in India and on a global scale, and remain integral to discourses about her celebrity identity. Again, the star's popular reception is assessed through fan commentary in digital spaces, including forums on Facebook and Twitter as part of the #MadforMahira contest for fans that was hosted by Zindagi TV in India in 2014. The intersection of her screen persona with these digital fan narratives is analyzed alongside the star's representation in press journalism and brand endorsements.

Mahira's work in television and film refutes neo-imperialist ideas about the 'oppressed' and exploited Muslim woman, a discourse that has been used to justify American military and civic intervention in Islamic societies since 9/11.[4] However, this construct also has a substantial legacy in colonial regimes of knowledge and governance, as Muslim women have been envisioned as the passive victims of Muslim male barbarism.[5] This notion takes recourse to Orientalist tropes of the 'harem' that have origins in the discovery and travelogue reporting of early colonial historians, scholars and artists. Besides contributing to the exotic, 'temptress' image of the Muslim woman as

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[2] *Humsafar,* directed by Sarmad Sultan Khoosat (Moomal Productions, 2011-2012).
[3] *Raees,* directed by Rahul Dholakia (Red Chillies Entertainment, 2017).
[4] Amna Akbar and Rupal Oza, "'Muslim Fundamentalism' and Human Rights in an Age of Terror and Empire," in *Gender, National Security, and Counter-Terrorism,* eds. Margaret L. Satterthwaite and Jayne C. Huckerby (New York: Routledge, 2013).
[5] Ibid., 154-155.

"Other," the veiled Muslim female body has become a symbol of subjugation that, like Muslim male corporality, collapses culturally distributed beliefs about Islam.[6]

Mahira represents a globalized Muslim womanhood that disputes available examples in the West and India. Figures like Malala Yousafzai have been upheld as tokens of redemption and justice in the political rhetoric of what Deepa Kumar calls "liberal imperialism," a function of American empire in the global War on Terror.[7] Yousafzai, a Nobel Prize laureate, women's activist, and now celebrated author, has been lauded in the West for resisting misogynist violence under the Taliban regime in Pakistan. Surviving a near-fatal gunshot wound to the head after breaking the law to attend school, her provoking story seems to avow progressive feminist discourse in the West that Muslim women can and must be rescued from religious tyranny.

As Charles Hirschkind and Saba Mahmood point out, little mention is made in such discourses of long-standing historical, political, and economic violence underpinning women's suffering in countries like Afghanistan and Pakistan, of which colonial and post-colonial imperialism have played a major part.[8] Rather than focusing on how ongoing "conditions of war, militarization, and starvation" disrupt women's lives in these regions, they decry these deprivations as "less injurious to women than the lack of education, employment, and, most notably, in the media campaign…Western dress styles." [9] Such discourses operate by 'filtering' out dissonant facts and voices concerning the regions in question, which are, as Saadia Toor notes, routinely "emptied of history,

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[6] Charles Hirschkind and Saba Mahmood, "Feminism, the Taliban, and Politics of Counter-Insurgency," *Anthropological Quarterly* 75.2 (2002): 351-353.
[7] Kumar, "Islamophobia," 193-200.
[8] Hirschkind and Mahmood, "Feminism," 339-354.
[9] Ibid., 345.

diversity, complexity, and dissent."[10] Instead, '"Third World" Islam is continually pitted against the rational modernity, social mobility, and putative gender equality available through Western capitalism.[11]

As a result, the alleged paucity of women's rights in the Islamic world is concomitant with a belief that countries like Pakistan are accordingly bereft of democracy, culture, or economic opportunity. Pakistan has been associated in popular Western and Indian media with military dictatorship and, more recently, as an instigator and oasis of terrorism, as the recent spectacle of Osama bin Laden's assassination in 2012 testifies. This version of events obviates crucial historical precedents, including early U.S. cooperation with Pakistan from Partition through the Cold War, in which American dollars and brands transformed Pakistan's consumer economy. Ironically, this intercession has also enabled Pakistan's political and social bankruptcy, as U.S. foreign policy endorsed Islamist militancy and cultural radicalization in the global struggle against communism – an objective that justified corrupt administrations and the funding, arming and training of the *mujahideen* since the 1970's.[12]

Such discourses seem to posit that there is little to globalize about Pakistan beyond mediating its humanitarian crises and political instability, placing it on the receiving end of Western economic/military patronage. Again, women's bodies are positioned as the terrain on which social conflicts and discursive scripts are negotiated, and stories like Yousafzai's are treated as metonymical of Pakistani and Muslim society more generally, despite the fact that her experience is locally contingent and highly

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[10] Toor, "Gender, Sexuality and Islam," 1.
[11] Hirschkind and Mahmood, "Feminism," 340.
[12] Toor, "Gender, Sexuality and Islam," 6.

marginalized – tied to existing rural and demographic inequalities in the Northwest Swat border she hails from. The crossover momentum of Pakistan's current global media assemblage undermines these flattening and unilateral discourses, reminding us that globalization does not emanate exclusively from locations of Western cultural privilege. Mahira's celebrity is a fitting case study of such processes at work, acting as a foil rather than corollary to existing Pakistani representations of womanhood and identity in transnational media. Rather than embodying the victimized "Other" divested of history, voice, and culture – which must be restored through Western political and cultural praxis – Mahira's persona discredits the fallacy that Muslim womanhood is incompatible with globalization or the "private pleasures" of consumer capitalism.[13] This can be seen initially in her popular role as an MTV television personality on the show *Most Wanted* (2006-2008) and subsequently through her stardom in the drama serial genre, as well as cinema.

The melodramatic engagement and globalizing impetus of the woman-dominated serial genre uphold this reality. As discussed previously, the themes and formal poetics of this genre support an economy of fantasy that enfranchises otherwise abjured desires and modes of identification for female audiences in Pakistan, along with a revisionist gender politics. While this empowerment is couched within socially proscribed norms and forms of narrative containment, it nonetheless opens imaginaries of romantic and social aspiration – if not outright transgression. *Humsafar* exemplifies this exploration of femininity and desire, demonstrating Mahira's inimitable brand of strong yet culturally anchored womanhood typifying her crossover appeal.

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[13] Hirschkind and Mahmood, "Feminism," 350.

From the outset the show presents two contrasting paradigms of femininity that nonetheless offer multiple points of identification and/or rejection. As was mentioned in the previous chapter, Khirad (Mahira Khan)'s moral fidelity to her husband Ashar (Fawad Khan) opposes the self-absorption and libidinal excess of Sara (Naveen Waqar), Ashar's best friend. While Khirad wears traditional attire and places filial duty before her own, Sara's unsanctioned desire lead her to despair and eventual ruin. This seemingly clichéd plot arc seems to allow little room for textual slippage; however, the nexus of emotions and desires activated by the narrative is far from unambiguous. Sara's glamorous lifestyle and social independence serve as voyeuristic attractions for the viewer that invite aspirational desire, while her confidence, conspicuous wealth and mobility in spaces of professional labor invoke a cosmopolitan femininity. In addition, her psychological motivation easily becomes a source of empathetic identification for the viewer, as her intense yet frustrated yearning for Ashar elicits an angst the viewer can readily share, considering his position as idealized romantic object in the diegetic address of the narrative. The text often portrays events from Sara's subjective perspective, with point of view editing highlighting Ashar's desirability, on the one hand, and physical/social distance, on the other. This experience is doubled by the viewer's own distance from text and star, wherein the desiring gaze is one-way and cannot be returned, obstructed by the screen as barrier. Again, the viewer is summoned to occupy Sara's psychic vantage as she fantasizes about Ashar, holding open possibilities for attainment and transgression that sustain the pleasure of 'working through' obstacles to romantic or sexual union—much as spectators engage with the star image (in this case Ashar/Fawad). Even if the narrative ultimately authorizes female desire only within the confines of

marriage, rewarding Khirad's integrity and rejecting Sara's extra-marital pursuit, her predicament inevitably mirrors the viewer's, reflecting the malleability and open-endedness of desire in a melodramatic arrangement.

The narrative likewise offers equal opportunity to identify with or reject Khirad's subject position in the story. Her apparently traditional attitude and spiritual piety are represented as a source of dignity; this is relayed to the viewer almost immediately during the introductory frames of the series. From the beginning Khirad is associated with deference and righteous conduct, as she is shown covering her head, engaging in *namaaz* (prayer) and observing predictable filial and community obligations, assisting neighborhood children with their homework and performing household chores for her elderly and ailing mother. However, this behavior is projected as a source of strength, independence and honor rather than submission, and the story opens with a portrait of female self-reliance, as Khirad and her mother depend solely on themselves and other female kin. Khirad even chastises her mother for pandering to her brother Baseerat, insisting they do not need the financial or emotional support of a wealthier male relative. This is the narrative's first instantiation of patriarchal critique, as traditional feudal networks and institutions – including arranged marriage – are interrogated. This occurs mutually for Khirad and Ashar, neither of whom wishes to marry under the given circumstances, as they question how they are expected to wed partners they do not know. Conjugal romance and extended family commitments are thus placed in conflict through distinctly melodramatic dichotomies of individual vs. collective, self vs. other, and sacrifice vs. self-will.

This representation fits the structural requisites of melodrama, with narrative tension deriving from the protagonists' subjection to circumstances beyond their control, where the characters endure trials through which they must prove their innocence. This crucible applies to both male and female characters, whose lack of choice is vindicated by personal fortitude; however, such a subject location resonates especially with women's concerns in patriarchal societies, as they bear the burden of maintaining national and cultural identity within class constraints – as negotiated through their bodies, sexuality, and conduct. In *Humsafar* Khirad is beholden, at least initially, to these gendered class and social demands; she confronts a dying mother, limited family resources, and imminent poverty that signify women's social precariousness along class lines. Her mother's anxieties, meanwhile, that she be 'settled' with a good name and home reflect foundational tenets of patriarchal society in which women and marriage hold value in "consolidating class power"[14] through kinship contracts and property rights. As Toor notes, this makes marriage "something too important to be left to the men and women concerned,"[15] while placing women in the contested position of preserving family/community/national honor.

Nonetheless, this melodramatic subject position offers room for resistance and ideological disjuncture. Khirad rejects the situation she finds herself in, questioning her mother's judgment and maintaining a sense of pride throughout her actions. Although she consents to the marriage at her mother's deathbed, she refuses to relinquish her intellectual principles and class identity, explaining to her uncle "she didn't want a rich and mighty husband, just respect." As a result, she makes little effort to ingratiate herself

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[14] Toor, "Gender, Sexuality, and Islam," 8.
[15] Ibid., 8.

into her husband's household, regarding her marriage as an "insulting" and demeaning form of "charity," while she only responds to Ashar once he acknowledges her point of view and proud, determined personality. Khirad thereby vocalizes her unjust disadvantage as a lower-class woman forced into marriage, expressing a desire to achieve social mobility by returning to school for an advanced degree. "So what if I'm married? I'm still young and can make my dreams come true," she declares to a friend.

This independence would seem to be compromised by Ashar's custodial patriarchy and Khirad's diligence as a loyal wife once they embrace their matrimony; however, this setup is again shown as misleading. The failures of traditional patriarchy, marked generationally through parental discretion and by Ashar's authority, are made clear by the narrative's driving crisis, while Khirad's positioning as obedient wife, daughter and mother are problematized through her unwarranted suffering in these customary roles. Ashar misinterprets Khirad's intentions with Khizir despite her selfless actions toward both husband and in-laws. His envy, suspicion and accusatory outlook reflect a crucial double standard; while Ashar maintains his relationship with Sara, coming to her aid in moments of personal tragedy, Ashar sets limits on Khirad's socialization, and her otherwise benign relationship with Khizir quickly becomes threatening – stemming again from patriarchy's insistence on women's incorruptibility as a reflection of *izzat* (honor). As a result, Khirad's faultless embodiment of virtue is a source of ambivalence, available to both identification and dissent. Even as her wrongful treatment conjures up pathos, the irony of Khirad's punishment contradicts the value of her traditionally 'feminine' comportment. The hostility, belittlement and repudiation she

receives effect a dissonance that is affirmed by the complete social and material penury she encounters despite her faithfulness.

Khirad makes this paradox explicit when she questions her own fate, proclaiming that "my husband abandoned me…forgot my love, loyalty and duty," while the series' complication of the ideal wife persona is further realized in her empowering transfiguration by the climax of the series. Whereas Ashar had praised Khirad for being able "to speak well" and "think" while remaining "innocent," demanding little if any material luxuries and serving him without question, her obsequies disposition is fully reversed as the narrative progresses. Khirad epitomizes self-sufficiency by pledging to care for herself and her daughter, becoming a math instructor while resisting her aunt's coaxing to make amends with Ashar, insisting that "she can survive anything now," and without a husband's beneficence. It is only due to her daughter's grave illness that she is compelled to approach Ashar – and she does so with defiance.

Her strength is illustrated in a pivotal scene where Khirad and Ashar reunite after their prolonged separation. Storming into Ashar's office without warning, she cuts him off immediately, asking him "Do I care what you have to say?" Stern, businesslike and articulate, she scarcely grants Ashar an opportunity to speak as she argues her case to him, demanding her daughter's "ethical and legal rights." Ignoring his furious protests that she leave, Khirad calmly presents Hareem's legal and medical documents, maintaining her composure as she edifies Ashar of his obligations under the law. Her forceful language and inflexible demeanor communicate her relative power, reinforced by the fact that she stands over Ashar, who remains seated and seemingly defenseless throughout their exchange. As discussed previously, this role reversal characterizes both

protagonists during the remainder of the series, establishing a new equilibrium in the couples' eventual reunion.

The centrality of Mahira's interaction with conventional female roles is likewise invoked in *Raees*, her only other project with major crossover relevance. The film is notable for several reasons; first, for having a Pakistani co-lead, and secondly for its exploration of Muslim identity outside of the classic courtesan, Muslim social, or more recent terrorist genres in Hindi cinema. Although stretching the boundaries of Muslim representation, the film continues to associate the Muslim male with criminality through its delineation of the eponymous hero's journey into underworld corruption and liquor racketeering. Regardless, the film openly addresses Muslim political and civic suffrage in India that points to the disenfranchised location of the Muslim citizen as minority. As a result, Raees (Shah Rukh Khan) as antihero performs a liminal subjectivity that educes identification and abhorrence, empathy and remorse in conjoint measure throughout the narrative.

Mahira, as Aasiya, actualizes these dualities through her supporting role as the protagonist's wife. She symbolizes both Raees' redemption and his tragic failure as husband, father and community leader, as she watches him be apprehended for execution at the film's conclusion. As with other filmic representations of Muslim womanhood, her portrayal as victim is cathartic. Regardless, like Raees himself, she mobilizes an equivocal representation of Muslim identity that bespeaks the film's conflicted orientation to place, history and ideology. Much of this has to do with the plot's superficial resemblance to the actual life story of Abdul Latif, a notorious smuggler in Gujarat during the 1980's and 90's who was implicated in the 1993 Bombay bombings,

an outcome of resurgent communal violence across India. While the filmmakers deny any comparison,[16] the text discreetly evokes this period and ambience, even using footage of the blasts in a telling scene from the film.

This uneasy mooring of the film in a contentious moment of India's political and social fabric justifies the narrative's historical whitewashing on the one hand, and ambivalent depiction of the Muslim community on the other. Throughout the film there is ample opportunity to embrace, dispute or catechize its vacillating placement of the Muslim as "Other." From the outset the narrator, Majmudar (Nawazuddin Siddiqui), forecasts Raees' demise, obliquely marking the film as an intra-psychic flashback of the police inspector and authority apparent in the story. However, although Majmudar is the voice of the film – allegorizing justice and the state – the narrative ultimately produces identification with Raees and Aasiya, both of whom emerge as martyr-like. However, this identification is similarly unstable as Raees is depicted as simultaneously murderous, benevolent, blasphemous, and secular, a contradiction that extends to the film's use of religious symbols and themes. On the one hand Raees is associated with subaltern labor and its struggle for visibility, evident in the Muslim community's illicit relationship to the economy and state. On the other hand he and Aasiya participate in an unforgiving reign of organized crime characterized by avarice, hypocrisy and gratuitous violence. He is positioned here as an 'Angry Young Man' exacting justice for the under-represented and exploited, a metaphor made real by his association with Amitabh Bachchan in this iconic role from the '70's.

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16 PTI, "Raees Work of Fiction, Not Based on Any Person: Shah Rukh Khan, *Indian Express,* December 12, 2016, http://indianexpress.com/article/entertainment/bollywood/raees-work-of-fiction-not-based-on-any-person-shah-rukh-khan-4423737/.

This comparison is granted further depth by Shah Rukh Khan's own status as a Muslim star with a historically ambivalent relationship to Muslim identity, having attained fame in overtly nationalist roles as a globalized, Hindu NRI. The star has portrayed few Muslim roles onscreen and has remained characteristically neutral on issues of religious discord, maintaining a strongly secular stance in public. However, this has not occluded controversy from erupting around the star, from incidents of religious profiling at U.S. airports[17] to his early targeting by Mumbai-based gangs on religious grounds, where he was a victim of extortion and even death threats.[18] The star's contradictory embodiment of Muslim experience, simultaneously repressed and underscored, thereby echoes the film's ambivalent portrayal of Islam.

Negative elements are intermittently associated with Islam visually and narratively in the film.   Raees' aggressiveness is cued by his bloody self-flagellation during the Shia festival of Muharram, and later during numerous ironic scenes where he swindles, fights and murders on this and other sacred religious holidays, against a blatantly Islamic mise-en-scene of mosques, shrines, and Urdu script. One such scene occurs at a meat market during Eid, where animal slaughter parallels the protagonist's visceral aptitude for violence in an apocryphal association of Islam and meat consumption with brutality. In addition, Raees is shown dominating Aasiya in a way that conflates Islam with 'controlling' men and 'submissive' women, while Aasiya is more looked at – rather than engaged – in the film. Her incidental status is indicated by her introduction forty minutes into the narrative, when Raees watches her dancing before the

[17] BBC News, "Bollywood Star Shah Rukh Khan Stopped at US Airport," *BBC.com*, August 12, 2016, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-37055993.
[18] Anupama Chopra, "King of Bollywood: Shah Rukh Khan and the Seductive World of Indian Cinema," (New York: Warner Books, 2007), 166-179.

mirror in a voyeuristic inscription of desire as she 'performs' an item song for his and the viewer's gaze. Pulling her towards him, he declaims his authority by stating that he will take her to "Our World," a place where "you will have a say, but my love will rule."

However, as with *Humsafar*, these interpretations are far from clear-cut. Aasiya's representation differs little from conventional female roles in Hindi film, which are scopophilic, iconize the wife/mother persona, and hold a sanctimonious view of marriage within patriarchy. In addition, Aasiya displays moments of assertiveness that refute the text's stereotypical message about Muslim femininity, such as when she leads a campaign to elect Raees and release him from jail. She is shown delivering speeches, felicitating crowds, and directing campaign propaganda that emphasize her public esteem, representing both Raees' aspirations and his competing drives for self-preservation and destruction. Their romance is a poignant contrast to his ruthless bloodshed and toxic masculinity, which obstructs him from realizing domestic fulfillment. Aasiya's announcement of pregnancy and their celebratory mood, for example, are interrupted by an ominous phone call from a colleague that highlights Raees' proximity to danger – and destined annihilation.

That Raees cannot achieve social or political legitimacy is the film's motivating pathos, made clear when he takes Aasiya to view the acres of land on which he plans to construct "Our World," an idyllic community with equal access to education, healthcare, and wealth that references the state's historical apartheid of Muslims. His assassination on this very spot at the end of the film again forbears the inclusion of the Muslim subject in the imaginative and material space of the nation. This nullification of the Muslim "Other," however, is incompletely mitigated by Raees' positioning as hero and the text's

facile allusion to secularism. Although the characters occupy Muslim spaces and are associated with religiosity through worship, custom and appearance, Raees proclaims repeatedly that "my only faith is business" and he is shown enacting secular ideals of communal harmony that salvage the state's official doctrine. He offers succor to both disadvantaged Muslims and Hindus in his community, waxing indignant when an associate suggests that he should stop giving free meals to Hindus during a relief effort; as he states, "no one should starve, Hindu or Muslim…they are our people." This perspective is again reinforced when he kills Musa, a rival smuggler and orchestrator of the bomb riots who ensnares Raees in the scheme without the protagonist's knowledge. Before stabbing Musa in vengeance, Raees reminds him that "I'm a businessman, but I don't trade in religion."

Perhaps the greatest source of ambivalence in the text, however, is its portrayal of corrupt governance and complicity, in which politicians, cops and ordinary citizens of both religions participate. In the end even Majmudar's lofty goals are questioned as merely a reciprocal form of greed and narcissism, and in the final moments of the film he echoes the state's dubious position when he expresses in voiceover that "I don't know if I was right or wrong, but Raees' words ring in my ears everyday…can you live with my blood on your hands?" The ending confirms Raees' figuration as martyr, albeit an ironic one – in which he represents larger forms of marginalization and structural violence against Muslims, including the state's obfuscation of provoked riots as a political strategy in Gujarat and elsewhere by Hindu nationalist parties.

Raees' contradictory representation of Islam and the resulting controversy surrounding the film condense overarching debates about Pakistani crossover stars and

their interaction with Muslim identity. As mentioned previously, female stars are often positioned at the crossroads of such debates, and Mahira's conflicted reception by both Pakistani and Indian audiences reflects this. This polemic can be encountered in responses to both of the above texts and in fan discourse surrounding the star – which evokes both her crossover appeal and symbolization of Islam, femininity, and identity politics.

As summarized in Chapter 5, *Humsafar* revolutionized the serial genre in Pakistan, receiving positive reviews on both sides of the border and obtaining global viewership within weeks of its release. Like Fawad, Mahira was cited as a key constituent of the show's success, with multiple reviews responding to her admirable performance. One review even placed her strong interpretation of womanhood as among the top five reasons for the show's appeal, stating "Firstly, it is great to see a woman standing on her own in defense of her honor, dignity and self-respect…It is about an issue of being accepted for who and how you are in your own right than what others want you to be."[19] The same review also praised the show's treatment of 'class differences.'

However, the program's depiction of womanhood did not go unchallenged. In a live discussion with the series' producer Momina Duraid, several comments questioned the show's alleged conformity to patriarchal norms: "The drama is a perfect example of patriarchal attitudes in our society. Till the very end the female lead spent time crying and asking for her husband's largess. It would have been better if you showed a female lead with spine and character (and by character I don't mean a 'satti sawatri' [perfect wife]).

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[19] Pakistani Ultimate Media, "5 Reasons That Make Humsafar Best Pakistani Drama Serial," *Pakistani Ultimate Media,* January 27, 2012, http://www.pakium.pk/2012/01/27/humsafar-best-pakistani-drama-serial

Do you think this affects how young women view themselves?"[20] In response, Duraid

emphasizes that Khirad "finally stands up for her rights and is a powerful mother,"

something that was not originally included in the novel.[21] However, the same

commentator extends their critique, asking "How is she a powerful mother? I am sure we

have lots of powerful mothers like this who think its okay to be treated badly by their

husbands and mother in laws…" to which Duraid replies "Well I feel she was a powerful

mother as she was not willing to apologize to her husband even when she got to know

that he will accept her if she does."[22]

   This exchange is just one of many that emerged around the issue of women's

rights in the text. While Duraid is evasive in the above responses, avoiding her

interlocutor's incisive probing, other commentators explore the show's gender politics in

more depth. A caustic review in *The Tribune Pakistan* condemns Khirad's "intelligence,"

questioning her choices as a wife and mother in the series, asking rhetorically of Khirad

"How stupid are you?"[23] The writer goes on to rail against gender relations in the series

more generally, pointing to "Khirad's hypocrisy" for changing her mind at the conclusion

while likewise disparaging Ashar for his "lack of a real apology to Khirad," saying "If

you call that contorted face, hitting your head against some random pole in the street an

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[20] Herald, "Live Discussion With Momina Duraid," *Dawn,* September 2, 2016,
https://herald.dawn.com/news/1152940.
[21] Ibid.
[22] Ibid.
[23] Saba Khalid, "10 Things I Hate About the Humsafar Finale," *The Express Tribune,*
March 11, 2012, https://tribune.com.pk/story/346242/10-things-i-hate-about-the-
humsafar-finale/.

apology, I don't buy that. Had I been Khirad, he could've bled to death and I'd still not take him back."[24]

That the series' portrayal of gender became a subject of heated passion is evident in the political attention it gained. The Shiv Sena, an extremist Hindu organization in India's state of Maharashtra, claims that the reason they banned Fawad and Mahira was due to *Humsafar's* problematic orientation to women.[25] A spokesperson comments that "it's about a man who sits by as his wife is thrown out, has his child, and returns to him for help with her health bills, only to find out that he's a misogynist jerk who could care less. The woman then forgives him in the end…If *Humsafar* had shown Mahira giving him the boot and moving on to make something of her life instead of playing the damsel in distress our reaction would have been different..."[26] While these comments deliberately over-simplify the series' plot and themes, such criticisms shed light on how popular images of women reify larger debates around identity. The above commentaries record liberal/secular feminist discourses that cast women as barometers of social freedom and progress; that Khirad's onscreen image is considered a reflection of the deficiencies of Pakistani society illustrates the pervasiveness of Western, neo-imperial epistemologies that nations like Pakistan are more patriarchal, less democratic, and incompatible with feminism.

In their appraisals of Mahira/Khirad, each of the cited examples co-opts hallmark impressions of "Third World Women"[27] as captive, abused and misguided, while

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[24] Ibid..
[25] Hana Wali, "We Banned Fawad, Mahira Because of Humsafar: Shiv Sena," *Dawn,* October 22, 2015, https://www.dawn.com/news/1214627.
[26] Ibid.
[27] Hirschkind and Mahmood, "Feminism," 340.

ignoring *Humsafar's* complex mode of address and exploration of female desire through melodrama. These comments seem to suggest that the only acceptable femininity is one that adheres to Western cultural, social and political expectations. As Hirschkind and Mahmood contend, such a discourse "points to the degree to which the normative subject of feminism remains a liberatory one: one who contests social norms …but not one who finds purpose, value, and pride in the struggle to live in accord with certain traditional sanctioned virtues. Women's voluntary adoption of what are considered to be patriarchal practices are often explained by feminists in terms of false consciousness, or an internalization of patriarchal social values by those who live within the asphyxiating confines of traditional societies."[28]

Shifting hegemonic frames of reference helps illuminate how Pakistani drama serials like *Humsafar* can be authored by and embraced by women across the globe despite their apparently 'objectionable' reprisals of Muslim femininity, which critics maintain should be amended to fit liberal feminist norms. Adopting this perspective justifies how Mahira's inscription of strong yet traditional female roles, and religious and culturally devout values, possess realistic crossover appeal for fans – an image enhanced by her off-screen reputation as an actor who refuses to kiss onscreen or accept sexually immodest projects.[29] Efforts to identify and procure this crossover fan base are visible in Zindagi TV's strategic marketing across television, print and social media platforms for the serial, including its 2014 #MadforMahira contest. The contest leveraged fan

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[28] Ibid., 352.
[29] Raisa Vayani, "Interview: Mahira Khan," *Newsline,* July 2015, http://newslinemagazine.com/magazine/interview-mahira-khan/.

impressions on the channel's Twitter feed to promote *Humsafar's* contemporaneous

telecast and the crossover image of the channel's content more widely.

Most relevant to this discussion is the channel's depiction of Mahira as a

crossover star whose brand of femininity has a distinctive appeal appropriate for its

viewer segment; in the words of Priyanka Dutta, the Business Head for Zindagi TV, "Our

aim is to cater to the new age women with progressive mind-sets whose primary concern

is to create a perfect work-life balance. Whether it is Kashaf of 'Zindagi Gulzar

Hai'….or Khirad of 'Humsafar,' all of the leading ladies in our shows are the reflection

of today's women with progressive mind-sets. As a representative of Pakistani

entertainment industry, Mahira sets the perfect example for Zindagi's target audience."[30]

Here Mahira's 'balanced' femininity in the serial – self-sufficient, yet morally

circumspect – is considered an exportable model of womanhood to be consumed and

emulated by Indian fans.

That fans responded to Mahira's articulation of femininity in the serial is echoed

in commentary surrounding the star, with *Humsafar* immediately captivating the attention

of its target female audience. As one Indian fan notes about the show, "Mahira was

exceptional as a women who was betrayed…The way she handles herself so elegant even

in times of distress…Mahira is really talented actress someone who can bring strength

and vulnerability at once n [sic] a character."[31] This comment effaces any division

between Mahira the actor and Khirad the protagonist, marking both star and character as

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[30] Saud, "India is #MadforMahira!!!," *Reviewit.pak,* November 12, 2014,
https://reviewit.pk/india-is-madformahira/.
[31]Dhanya Mg, "What Indians Think of Recently Aired Pakistani Drama Humsafar,"
Quora.com, March 16, 2016, https://www.quora.com/What-Indians-think-of-recently-aired-Pakistani-drama-Humsafar.

combining traits of an idealized femininity; one that is reformist, demure, and

conventionally feminine through Mahira/Khirad's 'vulnerability.'

This theme is repeated throughout fan reactions to the star, with Mahira's

dramatic persona as humble, virtuous and culturally faithful predominating fan insights

regarding her attraction. Amruta, one of several Indian fans who won the #MadforMahira

contest, posted on Twitter "Fr [sic] me she is only Khirad…Love n [sic] innocence

personified. I am totally enchanted with her beauty n [sic] presence![32] Another fan,

Aashish, posts on the same thread: "A common girl who tell us every girl has its own

fairy tale story & her voice makes me hear her again & her eyes are so pretty."[33]

Significantly, the adjectives these fans choose recycle language used in the serial to

characterize Khirad's girl-next-door purity. Juvi notes "Just watched the interview of

@TheMahiraKhan on @ZeeNews. This lady can actually kill with looks and her

innocence!!!,[34] while Himani states "coz [sic] she is the prettiest lady who dance

beautiful in rain. Her simplicity is her power…Luv her dressing style."[35]

The above comments indicate how viewers identify with Mahira's culturally

bounded version of femininity in the serial that likewise resonates with traditional Indian

values surrounding marriage, family, and socially sanctioned behavior. As another Indian

fan remarks, "The role played by you [Mahira] in humsafar was just amazing one should

really watch this serial after getting married…it have the tendency to motivate the

couples to love each other and how to compromise our little life for our parents who

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[32] "#MadforMahira," Posted November 11, 2014, *Twitter,*
https://twitter.com/search?q=%23madformahira, Retrieved November 6, 2017.
[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] "#MadforMahira," Posted November 10, 2014.

actually are the reason to brought up in this evil world."[36] This fan affirms the centrality

of family and melodramatic ideals of sacrifice and personal compromise considered in

the serial, upholding Khirad's behavior as a practical template for navigating the

challenges of marriage and filial obligations.

That Mahira's iteration of womanhood in popular media holds crossover appeal is

seen in her global reception more widely. The star has multiple Facebook pages in

Arabic, while *Humsafar* achieved phenomenal ratings and critical popularity in the

Middle East when it was translated into Arabic as *Rafeeq-Al-Rooh* (Soulmate) and

screened on MBC; fans responded widely to the serial on the channel's Twitter page,

describing it as "a successful series to the core."[37] The extent of Mahira's transnational

popularity is testified by other forms of official recognition, through awards like the

'Unstoppable Emerging Talent from Pakistan' trophy at the Femina Middle East Women

Awards in Dubai in 2016.[38] The star also appeared at the 2017 Beirut International

Awards Festival, where she won accolades in the "International Recognition" and "Best

Dressed Category," thanking her Arabic fans and expressing pride in representing

Pakistani culture on a global stage.[39] These mentions are significant in revoking Western-

centric assumptions about Pakistani identity – and in particular, Muslim womanhood – as

[36] "Mahira.Khan.Actress," *Facebook,* Retrieved November 5, 2017, https://www.facebook.com/Mahira.Khan.Actress/photos/a.356759141010922.81146.205809799439191/820565131296985/.

[37] Admin, "Pakistani Dramas Take the Arab World By Storm – ZGH to Be Dubbed in Arabic Now!," *Reviewit.pak,* January 10, 2014, https://reviewit.pk/pak-dramas-take-the-arab-world-by-storm-zgh-to-be-dubbed-in-arabic-now/.

[38] Entertainment Desk, "Unstoppable Mahira Khan Bags Yet Another Honor in Dubai," *The Express Tribune,* May 26, 2016, https://tribune.com.pk/story/1110852/unstoppable-mahira-khan-bags-yet-another-honour-dubai/.

[39] Web Desk, "Mahira Khan Dedicates International Award to Pakistan," *Geo TV,* July 10, 2017, https://www.geo.tv/latest/148789-mahira-khan-dedicates-international-award-to-pakistan.

ghettoized and discordant with neo-liberalism, while positioning Mahira as a visible representative of Pakistani/Muslim femininity within globalized benchmarks of glamour, talent and brand synthesis across media industries.

This is further signaled by Mahira's integration within the Hindi film industry as both a consequence of her crossover fame, and as a medium for the continued global exposure of Pakistani stars and media artifacts. As discussed previously, the Hindi film industry has a globalizing itinerary borne out by corporate brand convergence, media franchising, and transnational distribution that increasingly target overseas markets. Mahira's celebrity prestige in Pakistan and international crossover success was one of several decisive factors in her selection for *Raees,* along with the fact that she "looked" the part, fitting the film's backdrop in a Gujarat Muslim ghetto during the 1980's.[40] The film's marketing indicates this perceived synergy between the lead stars' images, the film's thematic by-line, and its overseas potential. Banking on both Shah Rukh Khan and Mahira's existing fan following in Pakistan, the filmmakers anticipated an explosive premiere at the box office there – until the Uri attack forestalled the film's release, leading to a rotating succession of bans and retractions. Further evidence of the film's global orientation can be witnessed in its aggressive promotion in Dubai, featuring a gala reception during which an Arabic version of one of the film's title tracks, *Zaalima*, was unveiled.[41] This type of promotion illustrates attempts to cater commercially and

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[40] DNA Web Team, "Revealed: Why Mahira Khan Was Selected as The Leading Lady Opposite Shah Rukh Khan in Raees," *DNAIndia,* December 16, 2014, http://www.dnaindia.com/entertainment/report-revealed-why-mahira-khan-was-selected-as-the-leading-lady-opposite-shah-rukh-khan-in-raees-2044534.
[41] Arti Dani, "Dubai is My Home and These Are My Guests," *City Times,* January 22, 2017, https://www.khaleejtimes.com/citytimes/bollywood/dubai-is-my-home-and-these-are-my-guests-shah-rukh-khan.

culturally to regional sensibilities that are discernible in the film's unorthodox creative profile – from subject matter and aesthetics to its conscious incorporation of religious themes. The film's publicity, assisted in large part by Shah Rukh (who is also conveniently the ambassador for Dubai Tourism) was overwhelmingly successful, as the film garnered over 25% of its global box office earnings in the UAE market alone.[42]

Regardless, Mahira's public image and the esteem of her media projects have not elapsed without debate. The star's independent yet culturally tactful persona has been carefully cultivated in popular journalism, corroborating her onscreen inflection of femininity. The star affirms this compromise in her off-screen persona, acknowledging her anomaly as an influential media personality and divorced single mother in Pakistan on the one hand,[43] while prioritizing her children and accountability as role model on the other.[44] In an interview about *Humsafar* Mahira openly identifies with Khirad, appropriating her modest and culturally reserved attributes that reverberate with fan discourse about the star's appeal. She acknowledges, "I identified with Khirad's *sharm* (shyness) and *jhijak* (reserved nature) and her quiet resilience," while pointing to the fact that she prefers to be "a hands-on mother…and I also don't want to miss out on my son's growing up years," expressing a desire to not over-extend her career prospects.[45]

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[42] Box Office Mojo, "Raees," http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=raees.htm&sort=country&order=ASC&p=.htm.

[43] Puja Talwar, "Mahira Khan Explains Why Raees Was Like School," *NDTV Movies,* February 10, 2017, http://movies.ndtv.com/bollywood/mahira-khan-explains-why-raees-was-like-school-almost-1658139.

[44] Zahir Janmohamed, "Pakistan's Girl Friday," *Newsweek Middle East,* December 23, 2015, http://newsweekme.com/pakistans-girl-friday/.

[45] Harneet Singh, "In Conversation with 'Humsafar' Couple – Fawad Khan, Mahira Khan," *The Indian Express,* October 10, 2014, http://indianexpress.com/article/entertainment/play/big-hit-2/.

That the star epitomizes conventional feminine virtues, placing motherhood ahead of her career and extolling personal humility, is emphasized in another editorial piece that eclipses the actor's filmography to focus on her reputation as "a loving wife but also a sweet and caring mother of two children. Extremely close to her kids, she keeps writing journals for them in case something happens to her…now that is cute…the adorable actress maintains a low profile and wishes to have meaningful career graph and balance it well with her happy personal space."[46]

While such impressions are readily adjoined to female stardom in the Hindi film industry, Mahira is deliberate in circumscribing the social or political annotations of her public image. The rebellious and outspoken paradigms of female agency vaunted by liberal feminists, upheld by activists like Yousafzai and applauded in the West as emancipating for Muslim women, are eschewed by Mahira, who instead credits her fame to a subtle balancing act aimed at preserving cultural and religious attitudes. In one interview, Mahira defers calling herself a feminist "despite the strong women she has played," what Zahir Janmohamed describes as "calculating the height of the tightrope she walks between pushing boundaries and retaining her popularity…especially since both conservatives and liberals in Pakistan try to claim her as one of their 'own.'"[47]

Such characterization marks the star as a global totem of Pakistani national pride – if for competing reasons. The conflict suggests in the first place that her crossover sojourn is motivated by nationalist concerns, a globalizing trend that both interacts with and undercuts hegemonic cultural flows originating in the West, of which liberal

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[46] Rashmi Mishra, "Mahira Khan: 7 Things to Know About Humsafar's Pretty Khirad Hussain," *India.com,* October 15, 2014, http://www.india.com/buzz/mahira-khan-7-things-to-know-about-humsafars-pretty-khirad-hussain-172850/.
[47] Janmohamed, "Pakistan's Girl Friday"

feminism is a part. In the second place, the star's conflicted reception reveals the amount

of public investment staked on women's bodies and sexuality as standard bearers of

national identity, stakes that are inexorably higher for Muslim stars in the global sphere.

Mahira's dually sacrosanct/disdained status as a source of national, religious and cultural

identification lays bare debates around *how* Pakistani/Muslim identity should be

represented and globalized, and for whom.

This conflict is apparent in several controversies that will be discussed more in

the next chapter. *Raees* was temporarily banned in Pakistan for its censorious depiction of

Muslims as "criminals, wanted persons, and terrorists"[48] – despite a majority Muslim cast

and much crossover hype. This move, however, was more a politically reactionary

display of nationalism against India in the wake of the Uri attack rather than a targeted

abnegation of the film. Nonetheless, like the film itself, it sheds light on arguments over

who has the right to 'claim' Muslim identity and in what contexts. The second

controversy involves a recent uproar over a photo in which Mahira is pictured wearing a

short backless dress and sharing a cigarette with notable Hindi film star Ranbir Kapoor.

Mahira was equally defended and rebuked in popular media,[49] reflecting a schism in

debates over how Pakistani/Muslim womanhood should imbricate national pride – as a

liberal-progressive victory or degradation of inviolable rights to female modesty, both of

which utilize rhetoric about women's prerogatives and are tied to the body. These jarring

viewpoints reflect fissures in Mahira's celebrity discourse of culturally 'balanced'

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[48] IANS, "Shah Rukh Khan's Raees Banned in Pakistan for Showing Muslims in 'Negative Light,' *The Indian Express,* February 9, 2017, http://indianexpress.com/article/entertainment/bollywood/raees-shah-rukh-khan-film-banned-in-pakistan-4510811/.

[49] BBC Trending, "The Smoking Actress and a 'Sexist Double Standard,'" October 8, 2017, http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-41527890.

femininity, leaving it open to ideological usurpation. The incident reveals the politically

volatile dimensions of globalizing Pakistani identity and 'crossing over' for female stars,

with the scandal being widely interpreted within nationalist politics of the ban on both

sides of the border.

Such controversies once again illuminate globalization's multifarious character,

which juxtaposes nationalism and identity politics within transnational consumer

capitalism. Mahira's celebrity is in dialogue with those of Zafar and Fawad, each of

which appraises the role of national identity within the affective potencies and

aspirational desires of global capital. Mahira's celebrity averts Western-centric dogmas

about Muslim womanhood, and by extension Pakistani identity, as anathema to the

purported freedoms of neo-liberal consumerism. Her attachment to global commodity

brands and media circuits, and her participation in the melodramatic serial genre critically

interrogate these conjectures. While not without debate, the denunciation of shows like

Humsafar – and Mahira's celebrity image more widely – fail to take into account their

crossover identification for global audiences. *Humsafar's* melodramatic format suits

complex gendered experiences within feudal-patriarchal society that articulate realistic

pressures, emotional conflicts and competing commitments to family, self-fulfillment,

and religious ideals. In this narrative arrangement there is room for heterogeneous subject

positions, subversive desires, and coded social critiques, evident in the narrative's

sophisticated de-construction of patriarchy. Rather than framing feminism as a singular

conscription in the liberatory/rebellious mold, these shows adopt a revisionist gender

politics within culturally familiar frameworks and modes of address that have mainstream

legitimacy – effectively lending voice to women's desires and needs in a public sphere

where few such outlets exist. As Hirschkind and Mahmood remind us, those who view Islam and traditional cultural values as "important to their lives, their politics, and their forms of public expression…are *not* destined to live within authoritarian, intolerant, and misogynist societies,"[50] as popular Western ideology would have us believe.

Mahira's image marks a departure with predictable representations of Muslim female celebrity in Hindi cinema, in which stars were historically shunted into a bifurcating route of either hyper-signifying the nation, as with stars like Nargis, or cast firmly within the victim-temptress pattern, becoming arcane figures of seduction, tragedy and mythical legend that were ultimately "Other." This latter scenario was the case for stars like Suraiyaa, Nadira, Madhubala, and Meena Kumari, and of course the subsequent spate of fleeting crossover performers during the 1980's of which Zeba Bakhtiar and Salma Agha are salient examples. That Mahira maintains her Pakistani/Muslim identity across media projects and within her self-representation – indeed, that this image is central to her crossover appeal – reveals the transformative agency of global media convergence. However, as the next chapter demonstrates, 'crossing over' continues to incite political friction, bringing to light dialectical concerns over religious and national identity in a de-territorial cultural landscape.

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[50] Hirschkind and Mahmood, "Feminism," 350.

GLOBALIZING PAKISTANI IDENTITY ACROSS THE BORDER: THE

POLITICS OF CROSSOVER STARDOM IN THE HINDI FILM INDUSTRY

A FRAGILE UNION: MOVING FORWARD, FACING BACKWARD

The preceding chapters have situated Pakistani crossover stars within a historical

context while examining their emergence within mutating frameworks of political

economy, narrative, and culture – an outcome of global media convergence. Such

transfigurations justify how Pakistani crossover stars can be accommodated in the

industrial and imaginary apparatus of Hindi cinema. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 have also

examined the star personas of three of the most eminent crossover artists, and how their

celebrity texts interact with Pakistani and Muslim identity on a global scale. In each case

the star images of Zafar, Mahira and Fawad – as negotiated through their media artifacts

and public representation – de-construct prevalent apothegms about Pakistani culture as

ghettoized, illiberal, and discordant with the aesthetic and consumer hedonisms of global

capital, including its routine association with radical Islam and terror in Western-origin

discourse. In addition, the crossover discourse surrounding these stars indicates that their

'difference' as Pakistani is instrumental to their crossover appeal, whether as an

inscription of consumer novelty or outlet for identification and aspirational desire within

the vicarious pleasures of popular culture. Finally, the analysis of these star personas

reveals how the representation of national and religious identities in commercial Hindi

cinema has shifted over time to include subject positions outside of the strictly Hindu,

secular or hetero-normative variations historically encountered, a transition supported by

the globalizing imperatives of India and Pakistan-based media industries.

In concluding this study the present chapter examines how Pakistani crossover stars, while operating as totems of global capital, simultaneously problematize and render acute conflicts over national and religious belonging. These conflicts are patently visible in ongoing efforts to ban Pakistani media and performers, with the most recent exclusion serving as an optimal example of the politically and socially fractious implications of 'crossing over.' What sets apart the 2016 ban from prior attempts is the totality of its precepts, level of political extremism, and amount of public deliberation it generated, reflecting the collision of multiple global forces. The ban exemplifies an intensifying conflict between the ideoscapes/ethnoscapes of political nationalism in India, embodied by the state, government and ethno-civic institutional engagement, and the technoscapes/financescapes/mediascapes of neo-liberal capital, visible in the industrial and consumer economies of media production, dissemination and reception. The latter includes the effects of global media convergence as a top-down and bottom-up cultural phenomenon, ranging from corporate brand integration and media franchising to the active foraging, sharing and collective intelligence of popular media enthusiasts.

These forces, however, although in conflict are not mutually exclusive; as the below analysis demonstrates, political nationalism is inextricably bound with globalized pathways of consumer capital, evident in the transnational reverberation and consequences of the ban on the one hand, and the conflict between and within consumer mediascapes/technoscapes on the other. The formalization of the ban by the film industry incorporates hyper-nationalist discourse that reveals how ideoscapes/mediascapes can collaborate, evincing a contiguity between identity politics and globalization where ethnic/religious nationalisms become consumable 'brand' entities infiltrating politics,

news, entertainment and commodity culture more widely. Mankekar explores this reality

in her discussion of Hindu nationalism, politics and commercial television in the 1980's,

in which popular serials like *The Mahabharata*[1] and *Ramayana*[2] corroborated a

burgeoning movement towards identity radicalization in mainstream culture that

reinforced political ideologies about Hindu supremacy, historical privilege, and majority

enfranchisement in the national sphere.[3] Talbot likewise points to this synthesis in his

discussion of the Kargil war, in which nationalism incorporated popular cinema,

television and a range of consumer products.[4] As alluded in Chapter Two, perhaps the

most telling example of this collusion is the role of the NRI genre in 1990's and early

2000's Hindi cinema as an instrument of political and national branding, marketing a

North Indian, Hindu identity to global diaspora audiences. This inclination reflected

political attempts to endorse and validate the capitalist gentrification of "India Shining"

under Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) political doctrine.

Regardless, a primary argument of this dissertation is that Pakistani crossover

stars hold the potential to 'unfix' national, religious, and cultural boundaries. They

accomplish this in several ways; firstly, by straddling territorial, political, religious, and

industrial boundaries they interrogate enshrined benchmarks of identity that are

reinforced by the cultural habitus of global consumer capital. The 'in-between' status of

crossover stars evokes the ambiguities of colonial and post-colonial discourse about

national identity that can produce ideological dissonance. This effect is apparent in

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[1] *The Mahabharata,* directed by Ravi Chopra (B.R. Chopra, 1988-1990).

[2] *Ramayana*, directed by Ramanand Sagar (Sagar Art Enterprises, 1987-1988).

[3] Purnima Mankekar, *Screening Culture, Viewing Politics: An Ethnography of Television, Womanhood and Nation in Postcolonial India* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1999), 264-282.

[4] Talbot, "India and Pakistan," 262.

popular commentary around the ban in India, with multiple viewpoints claiming Pakistani stars as 'natives' that resuscitate the porous cultural environment and ideological slant of the early Progressive movement by denying the integrity of political borders. Meanwhile, strong administrative retaliation to the ban suggests reciprocal attempts to vindicate nationalist discourse by 'fixing' crossover stars with intransigent definitions of religious and national identity that suit political exigencies, but resist otherwise inconvenient cultural realities of globalization.

Secondly, crossover stars disrupt hegemonic identities through the imaginative agency of popular media consumption. The heterogeneous subject positions available to audiences through the narrative structures of popular cinema and television accommodate ideological transgression, whether through the subjective detachment of satire, as in *Tere Bin Laden*,[5] or through the formal poetics of melodrama in serials like *Humsafar*,[6] which induce a complex emotional engagement of identification, empathy or rejection – as well as desire. That desire has the potential to un-suture identity is visible in the controversies surrounding Fawad's and Mahira's reception in light of the ban, in which both stars' desirability as global celebrities was attacked, provoking protectionist attitudes from loyal nationalists. As mentioned earlier, the fact that crossover stars also serve as lifestyle attractions comparably elicits affective pleasures and aspirational desires affiliated with consumer capitalism, positioning stars as arbiters of cultural identity that can exceed or disqualify other modes of identity. This places consumer capitalism as an alternate locus for apprehending identity on a global scale, something realized in the brand attachments and modes of commodification linked to the star image.

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[5] *Tere Bin Laden,* directed by Abhishek Sharma (Walkwater Media, 2010).
[6] *Humsafar,* directed by Sarmad Sultan Khoosat (Moomal Productions, 2011-2012).

As summarized in Chapter 1, media censorship and import restrictions across the border have a complicated legacy. While the earliest bans were industry motivated – an effort to reduce competition and boost production in the nascent Urdu-language film industry – subsequent bans acquired a nationalist flavor in response to acrimonious India-Pakistan ties. These bans affected cinema more than television, which as the earliest Pakistani crossover artists demonstrate, continued to exert a more flexible influence. The cultural impasse escalated after the 1965 war over Kashmir and reached its height during Zia ul-Haq's dictatorship in Pakistan during the 1980's, including the widespread closure of cinema halls that rendered mainstream film production at a commercial standstill.[7] These draconian measures only served to fuel piracy, and media smuggling was a mainstay for Pakistani audiences until an important breakthrough in India-Pakistan rapprochement occurred in 2005. For the first time, Indian films were allowed to release in Pakistan so long as they were shot in third-party locations, and not entirely in India. In 2008 this caveat was relaxed to include the release of up to 12 Hindi films per year in Pakistan, a boon for local exhibitors.[8] The step represented opportunities for both industries to globalize amidst expanding economic growth, bureaucratic partnership, and social exchange between the two countries, evident in a slate of executive agreements from joint military exercises to increased trade and commercial passenger flights across

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[7] Ahmad, "Cinema and Society," in *Cinema and Society: Film and Social Change in Pakistan,* 3-19.
[8] Simon Robinson, "The India-Pakistan Thaw Continues," *Time,* March 10, 2008, http://content.time.com/time/world/article/0,8599,1720814,00.html

the border. The measures were a sustained effort to stimulate "people to people contact, business and trade activities."[9]

If cricket, cinema and popular culture more widely were once potent symbols of nationalism and undeclared war across the border that must be carefully adjudicated to contain seditious effects, the objective of achieving a more lasting peace between both states was progressively conceived as occurring on the cultural front. Ironically, as suggested by the above comments, neo-liberal capitalism and consumer culture were widely apprehended as an outlet for reducing bi-lateral tension and fostering mutual development. This orientation is embodied in official discourse and through organizations like *Aman ki Asha* (Hope for Peace), a joint cooperative of the Times of India Group and the Jang Group in Pakistan.[10] The initiative aims to improve cross-border solidarity in commerce and culture through public relations campaigns, focused journalism, seminars, and fundraising. Other initiatives have likewise emphasized cultural exchange as a key peace-supporting device, evident in projects like *ZEAL for Unity,* a project spearheaded by the Zee Entertainment Group in India. Announced in March 2016, the initiative brought together 12 filmmakers on both sides of the border to co-produce and direct a series of films about freedom and harmony.[11] The program's stated objective bears strong resemblance to Zee's other franchise subsidiary, Zindagi TV, which similarly aims to consolidate cross-border viewership through corporate convergence and the emotional poignancy of peace as a marketable concept. Ironically,

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[9] Ibid.

[10] "About," *Aman ki Asha,* http://amankiasha.com/?page_id=619.

[11] DNA Correspondent, "ZEAL for Unity Brings India, Pakistan Directors Together at Wagah Border," *DNAIndia,* March 16, 2016, http://www.dnaindia.com/india/report-zeal-for-unity-brings-india-pakistan-directors-together-at-wagah-border-2189845.

Zindagi TV's subsequent boycott of Pakistani content following the Uri attack points to how consumer culture can be deployed equally as a tool to re-enforce ideological and geographic borders.[12] In this case, fluctuations in popular zeitgeist and consumer demand meant that selling peace was no longer profitable.

That globalization can simultaneously fragment and re-assemble 'imagined communities,' to use Benedict Anderson's term,[13] is thereby evident in the patchwork implementation of these conciliatory initiatives, a peace process disposed to capricious political interruptions of which the 2016 ban is the latest incarnation. This prevaricating commitment is indicated by ongoing controversies that continue to punctuate an otherwise recent era of diplomatic optimism post-2008. Precedents to the Uri attack ban can be detected as early as 2013, when Indian and Pakistani governments flirted with another wholesale ban on cross-border media. This cat and mouse game, like its 2016 culmination, likewise activated frictions between commercial and political interests. In November 2013 the Lahore High Court (LHC) decreed that Indian films smuggled across the border and exhibited in Pakistani cinemas were illegal and could not be screened, condemning the Pakistan Censor Board for issuing false licenses to contraband media.[14] The petition for ruling was filed by the host of a private TV channel; however, official

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[12] Isha Sharma, "Pakistani Artists Refused to Condemn Uri Attacks When Asked, Claims Zee Chairman," *India Times,* September 29, 2016, https://www.indiatimes.com/entertainment/celebs/pakistani-artists-refused-to-condemn-uri-attacks-when-asked-claims-zee-chairman-262618.html.

[13] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* (London and New York: Verso, 2006).

[14] Our Correspondent, "Illegal: Indian Films Smuggled into Pakistan Cannot Be Screened," *The Express Tribune,* November 20, 2013, https://tribune.com.pk/story/633981/illegal-indian-films-smuggled-into-pakistan-cannot-be-screened-says-lhc/.

justification for the verdict hinged on vaunted nationalist discourse, citing the fact that "some Indian films promoted terrorism and lawlessness in Pakistan,"[15] while the petitioner recommended that film smugglers be tried under the state's Anti-Terrorism Act.[16]

The proclamation raised backlash both from vested parties within the Pakistani entertainment industry as well as the Indian government. This preliminary ban stages multiple conflicts; on the one hand, rhetoric about the necessity of the ban appeals to state-based discourses around national defense and cultural protectionism, a vestige of Partition that revives mutual, time-honored concerns about 'perceived aggression.' In this version of events, political nationalism is pitted against laissez-faire commerce as the sale and profit of Indian films is considered hostile to the national interest and state intervention. Here the ideoscapes of the political establishment confront the financescapes and mediascapes of globalized capital; indeed, this argument was widely presented by film distributors in protest to the ban. In filing an appeal against the edict, representatives of Pakistan's exhibition guild contended that executing the ban would hinder Pakistan's global advancement, claiming "the people of Pakistan were starved of entertainment and appreciated the revival of the 'cinema culture' which also presented a soft image of Pakistan to the rest of the world."[17]

The above quote assimilates the privileges of consumer demand with economic liberty, growth and the global circulation of culture. In this case the freedom to screen

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[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Our Correspondent, "Indian Films: High Court Issues Notice to Censor Board, Media," *The Express Tribune,* December 13, 2013, https://tribune.com.pk/story/644728/indian-films-high-court-issues-notice-to-censor-board-media/.

Indian and foreign films is linked with incentives to gentrify and globalize Pakistan's own domestic industry, which "had seen a resurgence of quality films."[18] Likewise, India's Information and Broadcast Minister Manish Tewari insisted that "films and serials were ideas that couldn't be stopped,"[19] pointing rather ironically to the futility of the state's legislation while highlighting the interconnectedness of a transnational media environment. On the other hand, the ban also reveals a conflict *between* financescapes/mediascapes. By appealing to national sensibilities, the ruling provided a convenient ideological cloak for commercial abrasions in Pakistan's compact entertainment market. The fact that the banning of Indian films and serials was promulgated by a private television station reveals an embattled media terrain among industries, formats and audience access; in this scenario protecting Pakistan's more dominant television industry from the incursion of multiplex cinema, whether domestic or international, and competition from Indian programming content. The conflict makes it clear that globalized mediascapes collide not only with national borders and policies, but also each other. It further points to globalization's contingent effects by revealing how hegemonic ideologies can be co-opted to meet the agendas of neo-liberal capitalism, in this case those of a privatized media actor – television.

These same dynamics can be witnessed in the ban under discussion. As with previous bans, its ideological discourse continues colonial and post-colonial regimes of knowledge in the wake of Partition. The ban was more than popular outcry to a sobering event of national interest; rather, it was an extension of state authority in the name of internal security that reignited familiar rhetorical and political antagonisms. The specific

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[18] Ibid.
[19] Ibid.

circumstances leading up to the ban began on September 18, 2016 when four armed

terrorists detonated multiple grenades along the Line of Control (LOC) between the two

nations at Uri, in the Indian-controlled state of Jammu-Kashmir. At least 17 Indian army

personnel were killed in the initial attack, with more casualties during the ensuing

skirmish.[20] While the Kashmir conflict (over 50 years in the making) is profoundly

nuanced, the attack was cited as an act of terrorism against India and was countered with

a military response, including 'pre-emptive' surgical strikes on Pakistan-controlled

territory that killed soldiers on both sides.[21]

Within weeks of the attack, the Indian Motion Picture Producers Association

(IMPPA) affirmed the state's war response by announcing that Pakistani actors,

technicians and related artists were banned from working in India "until normalcy

returns."[22] However, TP Aggarwal, the IMPPA president, beseeched the government to

take immediate action against Pakistani entertainers, claiming that they would be banned

"forever."[23] Immediately an alignment between the ideoscapes and ethnoscapes of

nationalist identity politics could be detected in the reinforcement among

political/military agendas, institutional industry policy, and Hindu nationalist ideals that

served as the ban's mouthpiece and most visible proponent. The coalescence between

these levels of organizational agency is reflected by overlapping discourses and actions,

with right-wing Hindu groups like the Maharashtra Navnirman Sena, or MNS, issuing a

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[20] TNN & Agencies, "Uri Terror Attack: 17 Soldiers Killed, 19 Injured in Strike on Army Camp," *The Times of India,* September 30, 2016, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Uri-terror-attack-Indian-Army-camp-attacked-in-Jammu-and-Kashmir-17-killed-19-injured/articleshow/54389451.cms.
[21] Safi, "Indian Films Banned."
[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.

48-hour ultimatum for Pakistani artists to exit the country, or else be "pushed out," using language identical to that of the IMPPA and affiliate media bodies.[24]

That the ban's institutionalization was inextricably bound with, and a direct response to, the pressures of religious and ethnic nationalism can be seen in cooperation among the government, the Film and Television Producers Guild of India, and leaders of groups like the MNS in negotiating the ban, acting as intermediaries for the film industry. Both the MNS and Shiv Sena, a cognate Hindu nationalist party in Mumbai, had threatened to attack cinemas that consented to screen films with Pakistani artists, while Raj Thackeray, the MNS leader, insisted that all film-makers who had worked with Pakistani actors in the past "pay a penance" to the Indian army as material and symbolic restitution.[25] His statement contains several discursive resonances. By associating state-level public affairs and remote acts of war/terror with culture and commerce, Thackeray grafts ideological discourses about national security, loyalty, and service onto the everyday transactions of consumer capitalism, inscribing the production and consumption of popular media as an act of citizenship within a radicalized civic politics of identity and patriotism. This can be seen in Thackeray's absurd attribution of causality, suggesting that cultural exchange with Pakistani artists is *itself* an act of terror and disloyalty that has a direct bearing on national political events; in this case jeopardizing internal security, state operations, and the lives of Indian soldiers. His proclamation also reinforces Partition-origin discourses about identity as unilateral, homogenous and exclusionary –

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[24] HT Correspondent, "Bollywood Ban on Pakistani Artists: The Causes and Effects," *Hindustan Times,* September 30, 2016, http://www.hindustantimes.com/bollywood/bollywood-bites-the-bullet-bans-pakistani-artistes/story-kelRzJlYDWd1B87moHK3sK.html

[25] Safi, "Indian Films Banned."

hence the requirement that impacted filmmakers and Pakistani crossover stars "prove" their loyalty to the nation, a theme that will be re-visited later in the chapter. In this way the Hindi film industry becomes absorbed by the ideological and bureaucratic apparatuses of the state in an unequivocal association of popular culture with political nationalism.

The state's claim to cultural ownership was sealed when Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis "brokered" a pact with Thackeray, the Film and Television Producers Guild, and vested filmmakers to prohibit future engagements with Pakistani artists.[26] In the words of Mukesh Bhatt, the Guild's president, "In the larger interest of the sentiments of the people and the soldiers and the entire country, we will not work with any Pakistani artist in the future."[27] Phrased almost as an act of legislation, Bhatt's announcement makes it nakedly transparent that the Hindi culture industry represents the national sphere – one heavily contoured by Hindutva discourse and local identity politics. In granting MNS concessions, the deal successfully compelled filmmaker Karan Johar, the producer of *Kapoor and Sons*[28] and producer/director of *Ae Dil Hai Mushkil* (This Heart is Complicated)[29] to donate 50 million rupees ($747,220) to the Indian army and "run a tribute to the soldiers who were killed,"[30] avowing Thackeray's extremist philosophy on the interchangeability of national sovereignty and culture at the expense of democratic civil liberties. Although Johar had committed no crime, and no government

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[26] Agence France-Presse, "Bollywood Film Set to Open in India After Pakistani Actor Ban," *The Guardian,* October 23, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/film/2016/oct/23/bollywood-film-set-to-open-in-india-after-pakistani-actor-ban.

[27] Ibid.

[28] *Kapoor and Sons,* directed by Shakun Batra (Dharma Productions, 2016).

[29] *Ae Dil Hai Mushkil*, directed by Karan Johar (Dharma Productions, 2016).

[30] Ibid.

regulations or travel advisories had been imposed on Pakistani nationals within India either before or after the ban,[31] the industry's compliance reveals the extra-judicial power of political interests to set limits on economic, cultural, and personal autonomy. As a government spokesperson notes, "Notwithstanding the current debate on allowing Pakistani artistes to work in Indian films…the government of India has not revised its policy of issuing work visas to Pakistani artistes. Nor is there any proposal yet to revoke the work visas already issued to them."[32]

The weight of these political forces produced tangible outcomes that forestalled the production, distribution and consumption of Hindi films featuring Pakistani performers, leading to creative and fiscal losses for the industry that had a global chain effect – with film releases being delayed internationally while facing a complete embargo in Pakistan, as was the case with *Dear Zindagi* (Dear Life),[33] *Ae Dil Hai Mushkil, Raees* and virtually every major film release from India over the next several months.[34] The consequences of this reciprocal ban for Pakistan's exhibition sector, and for the Hindi film industry as a key target market, have already been discussed. The scenario is an ideal illustration of the contravening actions of political ideoscapes within global flows of media, commodities and capital. It also illustrates intrinsic tensions within the mediascapes/financescapes of global Hindi cinema that are apparent in the top-down

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[31] Bharti Jain, "The Indian Government Has Clarified That It Has 'Not' Banned Pakistani Artists," *Times of India,* October 16, 2016, https://www.indiatimes.com/news/india/the-indian-government-has-clarified-that-it-has-not-banned-pak-artists-263646.html.

[32] Ibid.
[33] *Dear Zindagi,* directed by Gauri Shinde (Red Chillies Entertainment, 2016).
[34] Al-Jazeera News, "Pakistani Cinemas End Ban on Bollywood Films," *Al-Jazeera,* December 18, 2016, http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/12/pakistani-cinemas-bollywood-films-161218092530145.html.

implementation of the ban by organizations like the IMPPA – which nonetheless provoked substantial backlash and generated concrete economic interruptions within the industry.

So how was a ban of this scale possible, and why now? While nationalism and Hindi cinema have been co-implicated historically, espousing Partition-era frameworks of Pakistan as "Other" and reflecting a convergence between global ideoscapes/mediascapes as recently as the Kargil conflict, this particular ban reveals, perhaps more than any other, the incongruities of nationalist discourse. This is visible in the peculiarly vituperative nature of the ban's rhetoric that exceeds incarnations of nationalism during situations of war or immanent peril. As one international relations pundit observes, the Kashmir conflict had ceased to be "the biggest internal security issue facing India" in recent decades, with challenges like the Maoist insurgency, communal violence and other forms of civilian terror posing a greater threat to domestic safety.[35] While devastating, the events at Uri could not be more distant spatially or politically from the Mumbai-based film industry, its Pakistani crossover stars, or the majority of Indian citizens.

The exceptional political tenor of the ban is highlighted by the fact that such polarized measures were not enacted even in the wake of the 2008 attacks in Mumbai – a similarly traumatic event of civilian terror that occurred on Indian soil in the heart of the nation's economic and cultural capital. The incident exposed the fragility of urban spaces as soft targets for terrorism, resulting in the deaths of at least 170 Indian and foreign victims, while assaulting important icons of India's globalized economy – such as the Taj

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[35] Robinson, "The India-Pakistan Thaw"

Hotel.[36] Attributed to Pakistan-origin terrorists of the Lashkar-e-Taliba group, the 26/11

violence was widely compared to 9/11 politically and in the media, borrowing shared

modes of representation regarding Islam, terror, and the global security state encountered

in the West. Regardless of the attack's extent, its high-profile target, and links to global

circuits of capital – threatening ordinary citizens in the process – the incident failed to

spark the same cultural ire as the Uri attack. While firebrand retaliation from groups like

the Shiv Sena was predictable, there were no wholesale efforts to ban India-Pakistan

cultural accord, which only increased over the next several years. Award-winning

Pakistani musician Rahat Fateh Ali Khan, now banned, would record chart-topping hits

for five Hindi films that year, while two years later Ali Zafar marked his industry debut

with a politically trenchant satire about the War on Terror that was debarred in Pakistan

but critically praised in India.[37]

The fact that the Hindi culture industry was specifically targeted following the Uri

attack reveals that the ban controversy was more an ideological/discursive debate about

identity rather than a strictly nationalist response to a political state of war. Pakistan

denied involvement in the Uri attack, and although the Indian government escalated

military aggression, neither country actively declared combat.[38] That the incident was not

considered a major threat to homeland security is also indicated by India's reluctance to

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[36] Thomas L. Friedman, "No Way, No How, Not Here," *The New York Times,* February 17, 2009, http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/18/opinion/18friedman.html.

[37] Nikhat Kazmi, "Tere Bin Laden Movie Review," *The Times of India,* May 4, 2016, https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/entertainment/hindi/movie-reviews/tere-bin-laden/movie-review/6172412.cms.

[38] Imtiaz Ahmed, "Pakistan Rejects Role in Uri Attack, Sharif Rakes Up Kashmir Unrest," *Hindustan Times,* September 19, 2016, http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/uri-attack-pakistan-ups-ante-rejects-india-s-baseless-allegations/story-K3KP2Oiq5Y3CqSGOcrnUKP.html.

legalize the expulsion of Pakistani nationals more widely. Rather, the ban coincides with the ideoscapes/ethnoscapes of Hindu nationalism under ruling BJP doctrine, fitting imperatives to re-instate national and religious identity in a de-territorialized cultural landscape evocatively symbolized by popular media. The potency of crossover stars to sharpen these conflicts around identity and belonging made them convenient targets at a volatile, and politically conducive, moment.

That the ban was more a symbolic contest over culture and power rather than an expedient for national security is evident in numerous protests questioning its legitimacy. Members of the film industry pointed to its unwarranted and contradictory character; blockbuster heavyweight Salman Khan noted "his Pakistani colleagues had been cleared for entry by the Indian government, and in any case, were 'artistes not terrorists.'"[39] Veteran actor Rishi Kapoor likewise highlighted the ban's absurdity, referring to the political establishment by stating, "Sometimes some skirmish happens in the border and your whole thinking goes wrong. Sometimes you shake hands and say go ahead. You're confusing your country, people."[40] Johar expressed his regret over the attacks by stating, "his heart bleeds for the lost lives," but reiterated that banning Pakistani stars "is not a solution."[41]

The divided reactions to the ban again engage conflicts between the ideoscapes/ ethnoscapes of political nationalism and the mediascapes/technoscapes/financescapes represented by the global Hindi film industry. On one hand, arguments were presented

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[39] Safi, "Indian Films Banned."

[40] IANS, "Sudden Ban on Pakistani Artists Unfair: Rishi Kapoor," *Indian Express,* February 1, 2017, http://indianexpress.com/article/entertainment/bollywood/sudden-ban-on-pakistani-artists-unfair-rishi-kapoor-4502276/.

[41] Safi, "Indian Films Banned."

supporting the usurpation of mediascapes for identity politics, relying on time-honored

nationalist constructs hearkening back to Partition. On the other hand, claims about the

unfair and detrimental effects of the ban pointed to its inconsistency with neo-liberal

ideals and the realities of cultural globalization. Besides public statements like those

above underscoring the ban's unsubstantiated purpose, there was also overt support for

the ban both within and outside the film industry that validated its precepts within the

ideoscapes/ethnoscapes of hegemonic nationalism. Nana Patekar, another esteemed actor

known for his conservative politics, urged his associates in the film industry not to

interfere with the ban, as "Artistes are small insects in front of the nation, we are nothing

compared to the country. I don't want to know what Bollywood says."[42]

This viewpoint was likewise echoed in popular commentary that exploded around

the issue over the following weeks and months. Filmmaker and writer Vivek Agnihotri,

reprising assertions made by the MNS and IMPPA to justify the ban, conflates privatized

culture with the government, nationalism and civic duty: "Since the barbaric Uri

attack…our government has been trying to isolate Pakistan in the world – politically,

militarily, economically. When such efforts are on, then it is an undeclared state of war.

In such a situation, how can the citizens of Pakistan be allowed to work in India?"[43] He

concludes his piece with a politicized call to action, writing somewhat ironically,

"Terrorism isn't a political point. It's a moral issue. A human issue. It's time we take a

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[42] Ibid.
[43] Vivek Agnihotri, "Ban on Pakistani Artists: Vivek Agnihotri on Why You Cannot Separate Art from Politics," *Firstpost.com,* October 14, 2016, http://www.firstpost.com/entertainment/ban-on-pakistani-artists-vivek-agnihotri-on-why-you-cannot-separate-art-from-politics-3051152.html.

stand! Speak. Discuss. Act. It's high time now!"[44] His plea to fellow artists illuminates how the technoscapes/mediascapes of consumer culture can be re-deployed to fulfill political objectives, privatizing the national public sphere and institutionalized definitions of identity. His surmises nonetheless convey some crucial contradictions – he argues that the media "attaches too much importance to what some of our artists and Pakistani artists are saying,"[45] yet he advocates the union of art with political education, while claiming that Pakistani artists are a threat precisely because they mobilize nationalist agendas, in this case state-sponsored terrorism.

However, contrary perspectives were also offered presenting popular media as a 'neutral' terrain exemplifying neo-liberal capitalist principles of individualism, free speech, entrepreneurship, and the detachment of culture from religion and politics. Some opinions directly acknowledged the incommensurability of the ban with these goals; besides questioning the ban's logic, Rishi Kapoor said it was "unfair to suddenly ban artists from Pakistan…Films are not planned in one or three days. It takes time. You can't say that you're going to ban a picture…These are unfair rulings and bullying tactics."[46] Here Kapoor endorses the independence of film commerce and industry more generally from political influence, a view strongly embraced by stars like Priyanka Chopra, who states "For an artist, their work is their religion…One cannot hold an artist responsible for their religion. Why are we not picking on someone who has actively done something wrong? ...This is entertainment. This is business. People buy a ticket, watch a movie for

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[44] Ibid.
[45] Ibid.
[46] IANS, "Sudden Ban on Pakistani Artists."

three hours and come away. Done."[47] Chopra's comments reference consumer capitalism,

including the right to free enterprise through "business," a basic democratic priority for

individuals, whether in producing marketable commodities like cinema or through

ordinary acts of consumption (e.g. buying a movie ticket). According to her, everyone

regardless of 'religion' (an oblique jab at the ban's anti-Muslim subtext) should have

access to this individual right, holding politics aloof from capitalism and its connotations

of equal opportunity, upward mobility, and success.

The controversy over individual rights and the mutual imbrication of democracy,

globalization and neo-liberal capital can be seen in arguments defending the entitlement

of stars like Zafar, Fawad and Mahira to remain politically unpartisan, rather than operate

as symbols of national *realpolitik*. The fact that, for many industry insiders and the

general public, conditions for their continued acceptance (specious as such claims might

be considering the prompt application of the ban) centered on acknowledging and

condemning the Uri attack reveals several key points. First, it surfaces the continued

viability of Partition-origin discourses on nationalism, and the efforts of ban sympathizers

to impose rigid constructions of identity and belonging along these lines. This perspective

responds to the boundary-crossing momentum of crossover stars and the time-space

compression of global cultural movements, symbolized by the fluidity of consumer

brands, lifestyles and shared capitalist values. Secondly, it points to how crossover stars

de-stabilize nationalist discourses by rendering the "Other" familiar, if not outright

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[47] The Hindu, "Unfair to Target Artists: Priyanka on Ban on Pakistani Actors," December 1, 2016, *TheHindu.com,* http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/Unfair-to-target-artistes-Priyanka-on-ban-on-Pakistani-actors/article16072960.ece.

desirable – as Fawad's stardom, for example, reveals. Crossover stars are a reminder of historical continuities rather than the abrupt temporal rupture inflicted by Partition – whether in terms of geo-spatial memory linked to place or in realms like language, fashion, music, dance and visual aesthetics.

Such continuities can be seen in claims by left-leaning supporters that Pakistani stars hold an indigenous place in the Hindi film industry. Recycling discourse once exercised by their Progressive predecessors, these denouncers resist the designation of physical and ideological borders between India and Pakistan. Famed actor Saif Ali Khan says, "The world is open to our film industry and our film industry is open to the world especially cross border. We are artists who talk about love and peace."[48] His comment suggests that Pakistani stars have an especial cultural and creative claim of belonging in the Hindi film industry. Singer Lata Mangeshkar takes this attitude a step further by stating about Pakistan, "I know the people there are just like us. They want peace; only some elements don't want peace."[49] Here Mangeshkar refuses to acknowledge artificial differences between both populations, which she envisions as sharing a united identity.

Extending his reflections on the uproar, Johar says, "I believe there are larger forces that need to come together to sort this situation out and it cannot involve banning talent or art…my intent was always to put out a creative product out of love and nothing else. Sometimes, you just want to fold your hands and say, 'We are a creative industry.

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[48] Images Staff, "Here's How Bollywood Stars Feel About Banning Pakistani Actors," *Dawn,* September 28, 2016, https://images.dawn.com/news/1176323.
[49] Ibid.

Please leave us alone. We make movies, we spread love.'"[50] Besides another allusion to

creative license and free speech as democracy, Johar's concomitant belief that cinema

and television can "spread love" refers to the affective power of commodities to incite

desire, longing, and tolerance – in this case defusing sociopolitical boundaries and

identity conflicts. Dissolving ideological differences through emotional agency is an

ambition similarly voiced by singer Kailash Kher, who says "Banning or sending artistes

back to Pakistan won't serve any purpose, unless they are provoking any unpleasant

emotions. Nobody belonging to the field of art is spreading hatred. People in Pakistan are

equally kind, art-loving, and full of humanity…"[51] Kher positions sentient reality against

ideological and ethnographic hierarchies of identity, suggesting a united cultural-affective

landscape between Indian and Pakistan through global mediascapes.

Comments like this clash with divergent views alienating Pakistani stars

culturally, psychologically, and emotionally from India. The ensuing tumult surrounding

Fawad's initial lack of response to the attacks is a prime example; the star issued an

evasive response to the Uri attacks over a month after they occurred, reiterating his hope

"that together we can build and live in a more peaceful world."[52] However, his

preliminary reticence and failure to openly censure the attacks as an act of terror was

perceived as tacit acknowledgment of Pakistan's alleged culpability in the incident,

revealing how Partition's legacies continue to mediate nationalism. Legendary lyricist

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[50] Sweta Kaushal, "Why Should Pakistani Actors and Singers Leave India"?, *Hindustan Times,* October 14, 2016, http://www.hindustantimes.com/bollywood/why-should-pakistani-actors-and-singers-leave-india/story-Q77doGl1v7qqhgD0zUV6DM.html.
[51] Ibid.
[52] Devarsi Ghosh, "Fawad Khan Issues Official Statement on Uri Attacks, Hopes for a Peaceful World," *India Today,* October 7, 2016, http://indiatoday.intoday.in/story/fawad-khan-pakistani-actor-official-statement-uri-attacks-adhm/1/782754.html.

and actor Javed Akhtar announced that, "Their silence is a kind of confession from Pakistani actors that Pakistan is responsible for it…If Pakistan says that 'we are not responsible for it (the Uri attack), I don't see any reason why Pakistani artistes or any Pakistani citizen should not condemn Uri and these kinds of terrorist attacks.'"[53] Similarly, star Anupam Kher felt that "It is really important to say that 'I condemn the unfortunate massacre of Indian soldiers.' They (Pakistani actors) need to do that."[54]

  Comments like these exhume enduring trepidations over national loyalty and choice, highlighting the awkward placement of crossover stars as between borders/nations. Such demands contain the implicit inquiry 'whose side are you on?,' coercing Pakistani stars to operate within a binding nationalist dichotomy. By obliging them to take a stand on a politically contentious issue of mutual concern to both countries, they ask crossover stars to declare nationalist sensibilities in a fraught bi-lateral relationship of historical enmity. As Kher's statement suggests, some ban supporters requested that Pakistani stars demonstrate loyalty by commiserating with India's military presence in Kashmir – a challenging issue that is hardly accepted universally in India itself. The situation sheds light, again, on the fragile 'tightrope' crossover stars tread; in this case, avoiding domestic dissent in Pakistan (and its potential repercussions) or staking conditional claims to Indian belonging within recognizable demarcations of

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[53] Sweta Parande, "Javed Akhtar on Fawad Khan: Silence of Pakistani actors on Uri Attack is a Confession That They Feel Pakistan is Responsible for it," *India.com,* October 4, 2016, http://www.india.com/showbiz/javed-akhtar-on-fawad-khan-silence-of-pakistani-actors-on-uri-attack-is-a-confession-that-they-feel-pakistan-is-responsible-for-it-1534644/.

[54] Images Staff, "Here's How Bollywood Stars Feel About Banning Pakistani Actors."

identity. That most crossover artists did not adequately pledge allegiance according to this framework marked them immediately as "Other."

The above arguments also align with post-Partition and post-9/11 discourses about Pakistan's metonymy with Islamic terror and violence by requiring Pakistani stars to hyper-signify the nation as a source of global liability. In a tit-for-tat, 'open' letter to a virulent rejoinder from an Indian commentator, Pakistani blogger Asif Nawaz disputes the requirement that Pakistani/Muslim stars must repeatedly speak against terrorism. "You know how many Pakistanis have been killed due to terrorism? More than 50,000…Our civil society, our community, our media, our children, and lately, even our establishment is trying extremely hard to get rid of the scourge of terrorism," he states, pointing out that "Fawad Khan doesn't have to carry the baggage of his nationality this way, just as you don't hold your celebrities accountable for the actions of your state [referring to India]."[55] Nawaz points to the unusual burden that Pakistani/Muslim citizens and stars bear in overstating fidelity to liberal democracy on one hand, and in apologizing for and thwarting terrorism on the other – framing Pakistani nationalism as illegitimate, hazardous and therefore stigmatized.

This one to one correlation of crossover stars with the Uri attack reiterates how Pakistani/Muslim bodies operate as transferrable, inert 'signs' for global Islam and its reputed corroboration with terrorist violence, irrespective of location, history or causality. The eviction of Pakistani crossover stars as a result of the ban is thus a re-enactment of Partition's originating geographic and ideological endowments, invoking familiar

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[55] Asif Nawaz, "Dear India: Pakistani Actors Don't Need Bollywood to Become Stars," *The Express Tribune,* September 26, 2016, https://blogs.tribune.com.pk/story/40902/dear-soumyadipta-banerjee-our-actors-dont-need-india-to-become-stars/.

phobias of cross-border aggression, duplicity and sabotage against Indian freedom and democracy. At the same time it validates political, military, and diplomatic coordination in the ongoing global War on Terror. This is evident in the ban's reactionary logic that reprises state-level agendas on terrorism, including the forced migration, detention or high-security vetting of 'suspect' populations throughout global immigration policy. The ban is another auxiliary in this wider criminalization of Muslim identity, which proposes that Muslims are 'ticking time bombs' for terrorist violence wherever they migrate.

Fawad's celebrity image makes the above concerns especially palpable, with his popularity facing the most public heat in the controversy. The debate is best encapsulated in an open letter to the star from Indian culture journalist Soumadiptya Banerjee – the same letter protested by Asif Nawaz and referenced above. Matching point for point with the ban's nationalist discourse, she connects stars like Fawad directly with Pakistan's political administration, including proxy terrorism and insurrection against India through the state's illicit designs on Kashmir, as she rallies for Fawad's immediate deportation. Like other popular voices in the industry, she reproaches the star for not making the right "choice" with his nationalism: "Let's part as friends, Fawad. It doesn't matter if you have failed to respond to the favours we have done to you and your colleagues from Pakistan…We wish that someday you will stand with us because you earned your bread on our soil."[56]

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[56] Entertainment Desk, "Indian Journalist Calls for Bollywood to Boycott Fawad Khan," *The Express Tribune,* September 21, 2016, https://tribune.com.pk/story/1185751/indian-journalist-calls-bollywood-boycott-fawad-khan/.

In her letter Banerjee explains that she is targeting Fawad because "he is the most famous Pakistani import to Bollywood;"[57] however, her diatribe insinuates submerged disquiets about the transgressions of desiring the "Other" – made relevant by Fawad's hyper-sexualized image as a symbol of romantic attraction. Banerjee suggests that, just as employing Pakistani stars is an act of terror, *desiring* them is equally a threat to national integrity, one which ultimately made India vulnerable to the Uri attack. Again there is an unproblematic association between encouraging cultural intimacy, relaxing affective/psychological borders, and placing Indian territory at risk. The objections she vocalizes resurrect Partition-origin ideas about mistrust in cross-border ties, popularly interpreted through actual or metaphorical relationships. Her theatrical prose pretends Fawad's seduction and consequent betrayal of the Indian public in much the same manner as a jilted lover confronts a deceptive trap. "We have watched in pain how you have chosen to look away when your country is inflicting pain on us. We are letting you laugh all the way to your bank account in Karachi while our soldiers are bleeding in Uri, Kashmir…in the hands of your Mujahideen army. While we have given you only love, you have given us silence and that cute, dimpled smile of yours."[58] Banerjee's words rework predictable themes regarding the historical representation of Pakistanis/Muslims as "Other" – associating them with exploitation, treachery and social vitiation, whose chameleon-like ability to integrate disguises ulterior political motives and capacities for violence. The hoodwinking quality of Fawad's charm, and its 'deadly' outcome, Banerjee seems to suggest, entail that the libidinal energies of Indian audiences are best directed elsewhere.

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[57] Ibid.
[58] Ibid.

Banerjee's arguments highlight the potent agency of desire as a cultural force, in this case operating to disrupt hegemonic classifications of identity that Banerjee nonetheless endeavors to re-erect through her propagandist address. Its relative lack of success is indicated by the innumerable negative reactions to her post, with many respondents undermining her vitriolic attack on Fawad as irrational and baseless. One Indian Twitter user posts "This makes no sense. You are only spreading hate from #India and I do not agree with this."[59] Another states, "how will it solve the problem? [banning Fawad]. Can't blame people for their govt."[60] Yet another retorts sarcastically, "how does banning Fawad Khan solve anything? Will the terrorists go, "Oh they banned our actor..? Chal let's not attack jawans [Come let's not attack soldiers]."[61] In the end Banerjee conceded defeat, writing "Enough backlash for a day for the blog on Fawad Khan. Those who understood that it is a form of protest. Thank you."[62]

If Fawad signifies a problematic and potentially de-stabilizing cross-border desire, then female stars possess an exaggerated responsibility in arbitrating national identity. As discussed in Chapter 1, desiring the male "Other" versus the female "Other" unearths a crucial double standard – as women, and female stars in particular, have been historically recruited as icons of territorial nationalism and identity. In contrast, male stars have historically emblematized the "hard' bureaucratic and political functions of states, from justice to national defense. These gendered nationalisms have long been articulated in popular Hindi cinema and culture to characterize Indo-Pak relations, where the normative Indian/Hindu male's possession of the Pakistani/Muslim female "Other" onscreen

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[59] Ibid.
[60] Ibid.
[61] Ibid.
[62] Ibid.

reflected a figurative entitlement to territory now located in Pakistan. This inherited

imaginary offers yet another explanation why Fawad's stardom was more aggressively

repudiated by staunch patriots in India than Mahira's, as 'desiring' Fawad holds stronger

ideological valence within patriarchal nationalism. Desiring Fawad connotes a

proscribed recognition of Pakistan's political legitimacy and threat as a contender for

Indian land rights and cultural/spiritual influence. Banerjee's unwavering indictment of

Fawad's 'responsibility' for the Uri attack bears out this angst, as do her efforts to

emasculate Fawad's image under the beneficence of Indian cultural, economic and

political superiority.

Within this imaginative domain the stakes for displaying and acting on desire are

also much higher for female stars. Mahira's photo controversy in September 2017 is a

key case in point. The conflicted response to the series of images, which showed Mahira

sharing a cigarette with Hindi film industry peer Ranbir Kapoor on a New York city

street (fig. 1) ignited nationalist furor in Pakistan on par with the jingoist defamation over

Fawad in India. As argued in Chapter 6, women's bodies often become battlegrounds for

identity, and while the photos would likely have courted debate regardless of when they

released, popular reaction was widely situated in the politics of the recent industry ban.

Part of the indignation stemmed from reciprocal anxieties over Pakistan's cultural

contamination, condensing larger debates over the 'corrupting' influence of the

globalized Hindi film industry and its liberal/Westernizing trajectory. The fact that ardent

loyalists in Pakistan viewed the star's actions as an indiscretion and national betrayal

unveils barely coded concerns over cross-border miscegenation. "Is she even Muslim

anymore?" one Twitter commentator asks, while another states "this is what u [sic] always say as ur [sic] high values…no more fan of u [sic]." [63]

One journalist highlighted crucial hypocrisies of the post-ban cultural environment: "This is a double standard. They go to cinemas, they watch her movies, they admire her and love to see her naked in movies but can't stand to see a photo of her with a naked back and smoking with an Indian actor."[64] Her comment points to the reality that much of the uproar centered on speculation about the star's relationship with an Indian actor at an irascible cultural moment, evoking time honored prejudices surrounding the forbidden consummation of Hindu-Muslim desire. Mahira's intimacy in the photos with Kapoor was enough to attract licentious observation and outrage, again underscoring the powerful and transgressive pressures of desire in public consciousness. Another journalist blogs, "Apparently, Mahira's *izzat* (honor) lies in her clothes?"[65] alluding to how Mahira's sexuality is an equally contested platform for patriarchal nationalism in Pakistan. Tellingly, the photos stirred little anger with Indian fans, bearing out the role of gendered nationalisms in contests of culture and power between the two nations and their identity politics.

Many writers sided with liberal feminist discourses that emphasize women's rights to exercise independent lifestyles, focusing on how the star opted to present, use, and indulge her body as a badge of cultural and national progress. The situation points to the internal conflicts of global mediscapes – in this case, Mahira's celebrity image as a

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[63] Sajeer Shaikh, "The Cigarette Mahira Khan Shared With Ranbir Kapoor Has Set Fire to the Desi Ghairat Brigade," *Mangobaaz.com,* September 22, 2017. https://www.mangobaaz.com/mahira-khan-and-ranbir-kapoor-vs-ghairat-brigade/.
[64] BBC Trending, "The Smoking Actress and a 'Sexist Double Standard'," *BBC.com,* October 8, 2017, http://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-trending-41527890.
[65] Shaikh, "The Cigarette Mahira Khan Shared."

source of identification/dis-identification for differing nationalist locations in Pakistan. On the side of progressive feminism, her agency was extolled as evidence that Pakistan was entering globalized, Western norms of feminist maturity. Others viewed Mahira's impression in the photos as a 'sellout' of Pakistan's own claims to cultural globalization embodied in the wholesome, traditional values the star normally embodies. The conflict over Mahira's sexual modesty thereby invoked concerns over how Pakistani/Muslim identity should best be represented and globalized. The same controversy became attached to her debut Hindi film *Raees.* The film's ambivalent portrayal of Islam and Muslims, outlined in Chapter 6, likewise instigated rows over who has the right to 'speak' for and claim Muslim identity, and was also heavily colored by the ban's politics. The film was universally rejected in Pakistan despite Mahira's co-starring presence and much pre-release fanfare. In addition, while censor board members acknowledged the text's complex ideological address, allowing for diverse readings, the film was taken as detrimental to Pakistan's national security in light of the ban and experienced a much delayed release in theatres.[66] The irony of what was once touted as an outlet of national solidarity was quickly impugned as a product of cultural and national "Othering," revealing how mediascapes can have dissonant effects within the technoscapes/financescapes of global capital.

Despite the seemingly regressive, and permanent, implications of the ban, crossover stars continue to open new ways of imagining identity that exceed the ideoscapes/ethnoscapes of political nationalism. The movement of Pakistani stars

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[66] Rafay Mahmood, "Why Raees Was Banned in Pakistan," *The Express Tribune,* February 25, 2017, https://tribune.com.pk/story/1338410/raees-banned-pakistan/.

between transnational points of global consumer capital, from London to Dubai to New York, reveals how they transcend strictly nationalist spaces and borders. A corresponding lateral movement across consumer brands and products accompanies this sojourn, affording its own ideoscapes for cultural identity and communion. These ideoscapes include shared consumer capitalist regimes of knowledge, behavior, and values that incorporate discourses like self-sufficiency, individual destiny, enterprise, ingenuity, persistence and upward mobility, to list only a few of the images and ideals marketed in consumer products across rapidly globalizing societies. While recognizing that capitalism is socially and historically contingent, the potential for commodities like cinema or cosmetics, fashion, and music to provide a shared imaginary for projecting aspirational desire and pleasure cannot be sidelined. Stars assist in this process by acting as lifestyle paradigms, conveying idealized traits like sex appeal, sophistication, intelligence and talent that are points of comparison, offering templates for aspirational selves that can be purchased through goods and emulated, materializing otherwise abstract ways of living in the world. This dimension has been widely explored in celebrity scholarship, and has been discussed by scholars like Dyer,[67] DeAngelis[68] and Jackie Stacey.[69]

Moreover, the 'commodity affect' of popular consumer artifacts that Mankekar highlights produces united terrains of feeling that are linked to the emotional excesses of popular, cinema, television and advertising. Whether through the multifarious narrative contracts of popular entertainment, which present opportunities to enact desire through identification and fantasy in relation to character/star personas, to transgressive

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[67] Dyer, "Stars."
[68] DeAngelis, "Gay Fandom."
[69] Jackie Stacey, *Star Gazing: Hollywood Cinema and Female Spectatorship"* (London and New York: Routledge, 1994).

economies of erotic desire, the ideoscapes of consumer capitalism offer an alternate

platform to organize identity around shared pleasures, motives, and competencies of

consumer capital. These examples include the collective intelligence of intensive fan

communities that concentrate expertise, resourcefulness and agency in engaging the

everyday relevance of popular media to personal goals and realities. The digital fan

spaces for stars like Fawad and Mahira, previously considered, are optimal examples, as

are user-directed websites like Reviewit.pak that provide news, gossip, media reviews

and group discussion forums from 'amateur' writers.

       Pakistani crossover stars participate in these ideoscapes of global consumer

capitalism through corporate brand assimilation. From Mahira's roles on MTV to Zafar

and Fawad's numerous appearances on *Coke Studio Pakistan*, crossover stars evoke

recognizable emotions and ethics attached to transnational brands. *Coke Studio*, for

example, an international TV franchise now available from South America to Africa, is a

popular live-performance music program with a consciously global ethos aimed at

"bridging barriers by fueling optimism and 'Opening Happiness' – which is what Coca-

Cola stands for."[70] On the soft drink company's website *Coke Studio* is described as a

"boundary-blending combination of traditional and modern" that "gives both well-known

and up-and-coming artists a platform to share their music with national and international

audiences."[71] Zafar has been integrally involved with the show since its first season,

debuting multiple hit songs like "Rockstar", while Fawad has made several notable

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[70] Jay Moye, "'Music Transcends Everything:' Coke Studio Fuses Genres and Cultures, Creates International Franchise." *Coca-Cola Company,* November 1, 2013, http://www.coca-colacompany.com/coca-cola-music/music-transcends-everything-coke-studio-fuses-genres-and-cultures-creates-international-franchise.

[71] Ibid.

appearances with his alternative rock band *Entity Paradigm* since the show's third season. Describing the format's success in Pakistan, the article notes how the show has become a cultural institution, "broadening Coke Studio's appeal across age groups, geographic regions and socioeconomic groups…you hear Coke Studio music coming from restaurants, homes, cars…everywhere,"[72] pointing to how the show infuses collective consciousness and everyday life. The show and its artists profile global consumer capitalism through Coca-Cola's evocative brand affect – which capitalizes on youth culture and feelings like social connectedness, drive, confidence, and of course, 'happiness.' The effectiveness of the program in evoking these shared cultural sentiments and identities can be witnessed in fan comments on a YouTube upload from *Coke Studio Pakistan* Season 10, where one Indian fan writes "Pakistani coke studio is so good! Divided by borders united by coke studio :D ;)"[73] The above fan makes it clear that *Coke Studio* and its music has given her a new way of imagining identity not restricted by conventional political categories – an imaginary process that is active, deliberate and even rebellious.

Stars also become 'signs' for global consumer capital through their bodies, communicating brands and their affective meaning to consumers. Zafar, Fawad and Mahira have each become attached to transnational products; Fawad, for example, was named Vogue magazine's Most Beautiful Man of the Year at their 2014 Beauty

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[72] Ibid.

[73] Coke Studio, "Danyal Zafar & Momina Mustehsan, Coke Studio Season 10, Episode 1," *YouTube,* August 11, 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cs9ORHI8o38.

Awards,[74] while he is the face of luxury Italian brand Giovani in Pakistan, in addition to representing Samsung and Pepsi. Mahira also has brand affiliations with the cosmetics firm Lux, Loreal and Q Mobile, to name only a few. This commodification of the star image is an extension of the star's persona across media texts as well as his or her off-screen reputation in "real" life. The convergence between these points of access means that stars always function as consumable 'lifestyle' brands who sell movie tickets, songs, and material commodities that are taken to inscribe the star's personality. This positions stars as outlets of identification, desire, and aspiration for audiences within standardized consumer ideoscapes that possess global currency and shape self-consciousness.

Brand endorsements in particular exploit the desirability of stars by opening scenes of fantasy and 'wish fulfillment,' inviting spectators to either 'imagine' themselves as the star (via purchasing the product) or possessing him/her. Ads offer compelling imaginaries in this regard by selling images that fuel desire and condense multiple capitalist ideologies. An optimal example is Fawad's Fall 2015 photo shoot for fashion retailer Giovani; in one image he is shown wearing a classic tuxedo and leaning against a grand piano, with a stately parlor as backdrop (fig. 2).[75] The image conjures up several capitalist ideoscapes that are also foundational to the star's persona, in this case wealth, glamour, cosmopolitanism, and success. The aristocratic gentility and sophistication of Fawad's celebrity image is signaled by the tuxedo, piano and luxury

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[74] Entertainment Desk, "Vogue Beauty Awards: Fawad Wins 'Most Beautiful Man,' while Anushka Bags 'Beauty of the Year," *The Express Tribune,* July 22, 2015, https://tribune.com.pk/story/924339/vogue-beauty-awards-fawad-wins-most-beautiful-man-while-anushka-bags-beauty-of-the-year/.

[75] HASNAmoon, "Making of Fawad Khan's Photoshoot for Giovani," *YouTube,* September 28, 2015, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cS0xbckTt3o.

décor in the photo. Staring straight ahead with calm assurance in a relaxed but upright posture, Fawad represents the ideal self-actualized subject, an aspirational principle that has been universalized through the mediascapes, technoscapes, and financescapes of global consumer capitalism.

The 2016 ban on Pakistani crossover stars continues an emergent politicization of India's cultural sphere that reflects the centralization of hardliner identity doctrines once relegated to the margins. Nandini Ramnath aptly summarizes the ban's context: "Over the years, Pakistani actors and singers have managed to escape the ultra-nationalist heat that has inevitably followed major terrorist strikes. They would lie low, ride out the calls for retribution and be back on the screen in a matter of weeks. That was before the rise of the Bharatiya Janata Party government at the Centre, the proliferation of troll armies on social networking sites, the war-mongering on TV channels like Times Now and CNN News 18, and the polarisation of the movie industry into liberals, centrists, and proud ultra-rightwingers…"[76] Her statement reveals how political nationalism can co-implicate globalization and neo-liberal capital, technology and media in privatizing the civic sphere. This fragmentary cultural landscape permits conflict between global commodity flows and electoral identity battles, just as it permits disjuncture within transnational media currents. The Uri attack ban illustrates a struggle over who has the right to define and set limits on 'identity' – and which identities are worth globalizing. The ban's co-optation of state policy is one of multiple attempts to imagine Indian identity firmly within a Hindu nationalist mold, as an act of cultural 'muscle flexing.' The Hindi culture industry was thereby targeted for its representative authority as an engine of economic

[76]Ramnath, "A Brief History of India-Pakistan Cultural Ties."

and cultural soft power, making it an ideal agent for re-imagining the globalized Indian nation.

This can be seen in the ban's ancillary consequences – as Hindi cinema redoubles its efforts to globalize, with stars like Priyanka Chopra and Deepika Padukone crossing over to Hollywood in 2017, Pakistani stars remain locked out of this hegemonic cultural confluence. Their expulsion is an ironic inverse to the growing approbation of Indian media, talent and achievement in fields like fine art, science and business. The ban reflects how Pakistani/Muslim identities remain ghettoized across transnational flows of labor, administrative justice, finance, and culture, possessing subordinate value within the gentrified imaginaries of advanced, 'First World' capitalism. Regardless, the realities of convergence culture continue to globalize Pakistani identity through overlapping flows and counter-flows of mediascapes, technoscapes and financescapes, connecting global audiences within affective terrains of consumer capital. These new opportunities for convergence, as discussed above, hold the potential to transcend political debates around nation, religion and culture, one of many ways in which identity can be imagined, and negotiated, in a globalized world.
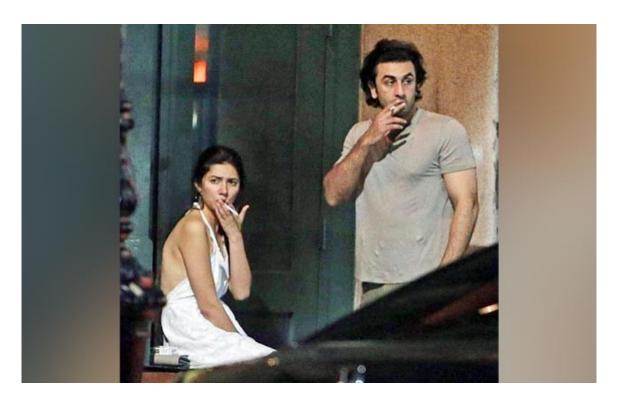
ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 1

Mahira Khan with Ranbir Kapoor.

https://www.indiatoday.in/movies/celebrities/story/mahira-khan-ranbir-kapoor-smoking-affair-trolled-ali-zafar-1050336-2017-09-22 (accessed November 25, 2017).

Fig. 2

Fawad Khan in a 2015 photoshoot for fashion retailer Giovani.

http://modelsfashionpk.com/pakistani-Male-model/Fawad-Afzal-Khan/127 (accessed

November 25, 2017.).

future film projects, Pakistani stars were abruptly ousted from India's entertainment scene. Acclaimed producer-director Karan Johar was pressured by key political groups to publicly apologize for employing Pakistani artists, even paying reparatory compensation to the military as a result of the controversy.[4] Meanwhile, the release of films featuring Pakistani actors was promptly stalled and a complete ban on media imports implemented on both sides of the border.[5]

This study is both a response to and an attempt at exploring the complex politics of crossover stardom in India, focusing on the careers of Pakistani stars as a revealing case study. Richard Dyer, in his discussion of African American star Paul Robeson, has previously defined a crossover star as a performer who appeals to multiple audiences; while the term was originally used in the music industry to describe artists who gained mainstream popularity beyond a particular genre or subculture, Dyer deploys the term to characterize Robeson's movement across racial barriers in the 1920's and 30's. His interest lies in interrogating how America's "first major black star"[6] achieved unanimous success with both black and white audiences, albeit for different reasons and within a hierarchy of cultural discourses on blackness. Dyer asks "What was the fit between the parameters of what black images the society could tolerate and the particular qualities Robeson could be taken to embody? Where was the give in the ideological system?"[7]

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[4] Geeta Anand and Ayesha Venkataraman, "Bollywood Becomes India and Pakistan's Latest Battleground," *New York Times,* October 19, 2016, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/20/world/asia/bollywood-becomes-india-and-pakistans-latest-battleground.html?_r=1
[5] Anand and Venkataraman, "Bollywood."
[6] Richard Dyer, *Heavenly Bodies: Film Stars and Society* (London and New York: Routledge, 1986), 65.
[7] Ibid, 65.

A similar set of questions can readily be applied to Pakistani stars in India, who are "crossover" in any literal and figurative sense of the term. They not only cross a highly contested geographic/military border between India and Pakistan, a construct which figures powerfully in the national imaginary of both countries, but also media industries and platforms, having migrated primarily from Pakistani television screens to Hindi-language cinema, music, and ancillary entertainment products produced in India. Besides these more material passages between borders, Pakistani stars also cross religious, cultural, and linguistic boundaries. This is all the more remarkable considering India's immense diversity, encompassing multiple faiths, languages, and regional and class identities. This fragmentary cultural landscape is evinced by the fact that India boasts at least seven significant regional entertainment industries, each possessing discrete audiences and aesthetic sensibilities. Becoming a household name throughout India is an impressive, if daunting, accomplishment, and 'crossing over' can imply a host of contradictory meanings. In the case of Pakistani stars, crossing over connotes a dynamic of assimilation and "Otherness" that is constantly in tension.

Exploring the representation and reception of Pakistani crossover stars is significant for several reasons. In the first place it reflects the increasingly global orientation of the popular Hindi film industry within the past two decades, as indicated by a variety of co-productions with transnational media industries and an expanding audience base outside India. Hindi cinema continues to be India's dominant locus of cultural production; it remains a pivotal medium for national and social consciousness and is the most visible representative of Indian soft power. Secondly, the emergence of Pakistani talent in India engages a historical legacy of national and religious conflict that

has had significant cultural consequences – for example, the import of Indian films was banned in Pakistan for 43 years until the lifting of economic sanctions in 1998.[8] The two countries have fought three armed conflicts since World War II, share a tenuous geographical border marked by ongoing confrontation, and have national origins characterized by a violent partition founded on religious difference, with the result that India is now predominantly Hindu and Pakistan almost exclusively Muslim. The discursive outcomes of this conflict include long-term processes of religious and cultural "Othering" and static, homogenizing portrayals of each nation across both sides of the border in popular media.[9] In addition, a growing Hindu nationalist movement and rhetoric surrounding the global War on Terror has exacerbated both real and ideological contention between the two nations, making the recent phenomenon of Pakistani crossover stars especially salient and worthy of inquiry.

Finally, and more importantly, studying crossover stardom in the Hindi film industry is valuable in understanding how identity politics, representation and cultural conflict are increasingly interceded by globalization, resonating across media industries and discourses on a transnational scale. It is no coincidence that the controversy surrounding migrant Pakistani stars in India echoes a broader atmosphere of Islamophobia and populism – responses to a global refugee and immigration crisis, violent civilian crime, ISIS, and a prevailing tide of conservative political sentiment

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[8] Michael Safi, "Indian films banned, Pakistani actors ejected – how the Kashmir crisis is hitting Bollywood," *TheGuardian.com,* October 9, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/09/indian-films-banned-pakistani-actors-ejected-how-the-kashmir-crisis-is-hitting-bollywood

[9] Kalyani Chadha and Anandam P. Kavoori, "Exoticized, Marginalized, Demonized: The Muslim 'Other' in Indian Cinema," in *Global Bollywood,* eds. Anandam P. Kavoori and Aswin Punathambekar, (New York and London: New York University Press, 2008), 131-145.

among influential democracies throughout the globe. Investigating Pakistani crossover stardom is thereby an important step in understanding and resisting derogatory conflations of Muslim societies with "terrorism" on the one hand, while taking a closer look at the operation of hegemonic global narratives and counter-narratives on the other.

Considering such historical and contemporary circumstances, how can Pakistani crossover stardom be interpreted? This study approaches that question from several analytical angles; first by exploring the industrial, narrative and cultural forces motivating Pakistani stardom in the Hindi film industry, and second by questioning what it means to be a Pakistani star in India. Which 'identity' takes precedence in celebrity discourse on Pakistani stars – national or religious, if any such distinction is made? Finally, how does crossover stardom negotiate the representation of national and religious identities through popular media, and how has this representation changed over time? While in past decades crossover attempts by Pakistani actors have been brief and unsuccessful, the sustained popularity of stars Ali Zafar and Fawad Khan, and the continuing entry of new talent like debut actor Mahira Khan, stand in notable contrast. I argue that these stars embody a new global imaginary for Pakistan that challenges its ghettoized depiction as a culturally impoverished "terrorist state" historically prevalent in popular discourse. The work of these artists across media platforms blurs audiovisual boundaries between India, Pakistan and the West that are mediated by globalization, problematizing questions of identity and belonging on multiple levels.

This larger crossover impetus can be attributed to the Hindi film industry's increasing efforts at globalization, including shifting circumstances for cultural production and reception and new systems of financing, producing and distributing media

products on a global scale. The reality of overseas markets as a primary source of profit[10] and the role of convergence culture in shaping media integration and consumer engagement have been crucial factors in the crossover appeal of Pakistani stars in India. Each of the above stars had existing reputations in satellite industries before being launched in Hindi films, having already achieved commercial success in television and music, in addition to solid cross-border fan bases. This career trajectory points to an evolving model of media and talent franchising in the Hindi film industry that is linked to growing corporatization on the one hand, and a media convergence environment driven by consumer participation on the other.

In terms of celebrity discourse, Pakistani crossover stars are positioned as figures of vicarious identification and fantasy that are tied to the aspirational lifestyle values intrinsic to consumer capitalism. However, rather than occurring *in spite* of these stars' marked national and religious identities as Muslim/Pakistani, this process is an outcome of transnational shifts in the political economy of culture in India. The alleged "difference" of these stars is frequently framed as the source of their commercial appeal and is consciously inscribed through celebrity marketing techniques influenced by other global industries, including Hollywood. As a result, celebrity discourse evokes their national and religious backgrounds as much as emphasizing their integration into global standards of celebrity. This contradictory representation serves to preserve the brand 'mystique' of crossover stars even as it exposes their celebrity personas to identity

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[10] Tejaswini Ganti, *Bollywood: A Guidebook to Popular Hindi Cinema* (New York: Routledge, 2004).

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transcendence through their performance in popular media on the one hand, and operations of fantasy and desire via global commodity culture on the other.

Finally, the diverse bodies of work these stars produce both directly and indirectly confront homogenizing stereotypes regarding Islamic and Pakistani identity and its association with terrorist violence, while positioning consumer capitalism as an alternative framework for accessing identity where religious, national and social boundaries are often fluid and ambiguous. While a film like *Tere Bin Laden* (Without You Bin Laden),[11] starring Ali Zafar, boldly attacks Islamophobia with a satirical critique of the War on Terror, *Khoobsurat* (Beautiful)[12] is a romantic comedy that highlights the genteel charisma and sex appeal of its star, Fawad Khan, in a way that re-frames the Pakistani/Muslim male body as an object of erotic desire rather than violence. These representations are reinforced by the off-screen personas of crossover stars as consumer brand and lifestyle icons. Popular media thereby becomes an important locus for consuming identity organized around shared values of hedonism, vicarious identification, and aspirational desire that can dispel bounded identity categories.

Nonetheless, the elements of globalization that enable crossover stardom also constitute a struggle to re-define borders and identities in a de-territorialized cultural landscape contoured by neo-liberal capitalism, as nationalist resistance to the crossover movement suggests. As a result, globalization makes possible the commercial and cultural conditions for crossover stardom on the one hand, even as it lends credence to political discourses and power relations obstructing these forces on the other. The

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[11] *Tere Bin Laden,* directed by Abhishek Sharma (Walkwater Media, 2010).
[12] *Khoobsurat,* directed by Shashanka Ghosh (Disney World Studios and UTV Motion Pictures, 2014).

transnational rise of Hindutva and the use of global discourses on terrorism by the Indian state and communalist organizations, adopted to justify the recent ban on Pakistani performers, highlight the paradoxical and contingent effects that globalization can produce.

While substantial research exists exploring Muslim subjectivities onscreen and India-Pakistan relations through cinema, few analyses have considered how celebrity discourse shapes the onscreen representation and audience reception of Pakistani and Muslim stars. By using globalization as a guiding framework, this research interrogates how shifting political economies and sites of cultural reception generate opportunities for Pakistani crossover stars that were not available before. Globalization is thereby approached as a commercial agenda and an industrial and cultural practice that can have provisional and dissonant effects, offering a groundbreaking and comprehensive model in studying crossover celebrity as a wider media occurrence. In applying this theoretical lens, I explore an intensifying relationship between industrial infrastructures, audience imaginaries, and media convergence in shaping Pakistani crossover celebrity. The outcome includes new narrative and thematic iterations in Hindi cinema that challenge pre-existing ideas about Pakistani identity and its representation onscreen. Such transitions accommodate the material and imaginative boundary-crossings encountered in the performances and creative authorship of crossover stars, even as they remain subject to the uneven effects of globalization.

By exploring globalization as a mediating force, this research takes a different approach than the contemporary work of scholars who have examined identity politics

and representation in popular Hindi cinema. Scholars like Fazia Hirji[13], Claudia Richter[14], and Shahnaz Khan[15] argue that the construction of the Muslim "Other" remains an immutable fixture in Hindi cinema, but fail to consider how the industry's globalizing imperatives over the past decade have opened new avenues for exploring national and religious identities onscreen, a result of vast structural changes and efforts to access transnational markets.[16] They assert that the representation of the Muslim "Other" either continues a historical legacy of narrative marginalization, or is counteracted by the affective logics of melodrama, in which religious difference is subverted by moral and social harmony.[17] While the latter argument is certainly valuable, it suggests that narratives must continue to pass through the Muslim "Other" as terrorist or social pariah before restoring ethical parity and psychological catharsis for the spectator. Most importantly, Richter does not consider how popular film narrative is itself in dynamic flux, being transformed by genre-based storytelling aimed at global audiences that renders the style of melodramatic engagement she describes increasingly obsolescent. This suggests that processes of narrative identification for Hindi film viewers are more heterogeneous than before, as are the consequences for subjectivity formation.

      In addition, while the above discussions focus primarily on narrative texts, they pay little attention to the reading practices of audiences and their role in meaning making.

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[13] Fazia Hirji, "Change of Pace? Islam and Tradition in Popular Indian Cinema," *South Asian Popular Culture* 6.1 (2008): 57-69

[14] Claudia Richter, "The Ethics of Coexistence: Bollywood's Different Take on Terrorism," *Crosscurrents* (December 2009): 484-499

[15] Shahnaz Khan, "Nationalism and Hindi Cinema: Narrative Strategies in *Fanaa*." *Studies in South Asian Film and Media* 1.1 (2009): 85-99

[16] Tejaswini Ganti, *Producing Bollywood: Inside the Contemporary Hindi Film Industry* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2012).

[17] Richter, "The Ethics of Coexistance," 484-499

How do these reading practices determine how textual meanings are negotiated? This area of research has been investigated by scholars like Rajinder Dudrah[18] and Shakuntala Banaji,[19] who demonstrate how audiences engage in complex meaning-making practices that can produce "compelling 'reactionary' ideological positions and equally compelling 'anti-authoritarian' personal ones," while recognizing that textual identification is scarcely unitary in the complicity or rejection of ideological messages.[20] I draw on these theories of spectator engagement as multifarious and contingent, while using Purnima Mankekar's framework for transnational public cultures as a theoretical tool to interrogate how global media flows intervene in the formation of cultural identities. Mankekar looks at how the circulation of transnational media products, including cinema and television but also material commodities, mediates notions of cultural identity and affective belonging/unsettlement for Indians in both domestic and diasporic settings.[21] Mankekar evaluates how transnational public cultures "constitute India as an archive of affect and temporality," but rather than producing static notions of India – and thus totalizing frameworks for cultural identity – Mankekar shows how media cultures can elicit disjunctive relationships to national and cultural discourses.[22] This is made possible

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[18]Rajinder Dudrah, "Borders and Border Crossings in *Main Hoon Na* and *Veer-Zaara*," in *Filming the Line of Control: The Indo-Pak Relationship Through the Cinematic Lens,* eds. Meenakshi Bharat and Nirmal Kumar (New Delhi: Routledge), 40-58.
[19] Shakuntala Banaji, "Fascist Imaginaries and Clandestine Critiques: Young Hindi Film Viewers Respond to Violence, Xenophobia and Love in Cross-Border Romances," in *Filming the Line of Control: The Indo-Pak Relationship Through the Cinematic Lens,* eds. Meenakshi Bharat and Nirmal Kumar (New Delhi: Routledge), 157-175.

[21] Purnima Mankekar, *Unsettling India: Affect, Temporality, Transnationality* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015).
[22] Ibid., 7.

by the affective and temporal dynamics of global commodities, and their circuits of transnational migration. Most relevant to this study is Mankekar's elaboration of the nexus between global commodity culture and the imbrication of what she calls "affective/sensorial ecologies."[23] In showing how media products can embody regimes of feeling, for example, by locating Indian culture in the "hearts and bodies" of Non-Resident Indians (NRIs) rather than the territorial nation state, Mankekar contends that identity is constantly in flux, "inherently unsettled" and engaged by global processes.[24]

This research similarly reflects on the role of global media artifacts in 'unfixing' national, religious and cultural identities. In each of the media forms analyzed, from cinema to television to music, identity is a contested and fluid category that is receptive to multiple subject positions. Most importantly, Mankekar's deployment of affect as a theoretical apparatus is useful in excavating how the aspirational desires of consumer capitalism function as structures of feeling that can exceed identity signifiers – such as the stereotyped "sign" of the Pakistani Muslim male body and its co-implication with terrorist violence. This invocation of aspirational desire is articulated across the media texts and celebrity personas of Pakistani crossover stars. This research thereby builds on previous scholarship while aiming to illustrate how global conditions for the production and circulation of culture make possible complex material and subjective boundary crossings.

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[23] Ibid., 6.
[24] Ibid., 57.

This theoretical grounding is supported by Henry Jenkins' insights on convergence culture.[25] Jenkins defines convergence as both a technological and cultural process; it entails the integration of media outlets, technologies, and industries as well as the participatory behavior of media consumers in the digital age,[26] "who will go almost anywhere in search of the kinds of entertainment experiences they want."[27] According to Jenkins, this increased engagement not only transforms how culture is produced and circulated, but also influences how media industries design and promote their products to audiences. The ongoing shift towards reality TV, serialized narratives, and multi-media franchises are indicative of this new cultural orientation towards the active consumer.[28] It also means that the grass roots activity of savvy consumers and their demands can exert pressure on media industries to make innovative, diversified content available to target markets. Most importantly, developments in digital technology allow spectators to access this content from almost anywhere in the globe.

Jenkins' observations are formative in demonstrating that Pakistani crossover stardom is driven by corporate and technological convergence on the one hand, and interactive consumer culture on the other. The fact that the Hindi film industry produces a multitude of content aimed at global audiences reveals how films are no longer destined primarily for the domestic box office; rather, it is expected that they will earn lucrative profits abroad and have an extended distribution cycle in a media convergence environment. In addition, corporate brand integration and the acquisition of multiple

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[25] Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York and London: New York University Press, 2006).
[26] Ibid., 1-24.
[27] Ibid., 2.
[28] Ibid., 25-240.

media franchises have catalyzed the exposure of Pakistani music and television in India, making the emergence of crossover stars and their transition to cinema a logical progression based on their prevailing commercial vitality in analogous formats. Combined with the accelerated movement of media products across linked venues – for example, the ability to download a star's television serials and films on the same streaming service – these changes have created crucial conditions for the ascendance of Pakistani stars in India. This new convergence context relies on the sundry consumption habits and pop culture awareness of media consumers, whose interaction with multiple entertainment modes is a powerful stimulus in the cultivation of crossover celebrity brands.

Convergence culture can be seen at work not only in the use of ancillary media to launch Pakistani stars into the Hindi entertainment business, and the continuity between these various outlets in eliciting shared points of reception for audiences on both sides of the border, but also in the media foraging habits and 'collective intelligence'[29] of enthusiastic fans, whose prior familiarity with the celebrity image, brand endorsements, and filmography of Pakistani stars has been instrumental in exposing and validating their crossover status from the outset. However, these forces are also compounded by the convergence between a star's various media texts and his or her celebrity identity in popular journalism, such that in consuming the media artifact the spectator also consumes the star as a celebrity text that is ongoing and multi-faceted. This perspective on stardom is situated in the scholarly heritage of Dyer and other major antecedents in star studies. In particular, Dyer's notion of star images as complex, inter-textual and open to

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[29] Jenkins, "Convergence Culture," 25-59.

interpretation is a core theoretical praxis in excavating the contradictory discourses

surrounding Pakistani crossover stars and their reception.[30] On the one hand, this

ideological 'slippage' is a function of media convergence, part of the means by which

star images are manipulated and branded by industry sources to satisfy diverse audiences;

on the other, audiences play a crucial role in interpreting the relationship between a star's

media texts and celebrity persona, generating fan discourses while consolidating the

social relevance of stars across spectrums of race, class, gender, as well as religious and

national contexts.

        Approaching Dyer's arguments from a convergence vantage are also useful in

understanding the political and cultural ambiguities of Pakistani crossover stardom. Dyer

argues that stars "articulate aspects of living in contemporary society." [31] As a result, they

project social conflicts and act as objects of popular identification/dis-identification. For

Pakistani crossover stars – who transcend borders, industries and identities – this

positions them at the intersection of conflicting cultural, social and political movements

in a globalized world. In the first place stars idealize the values and experience of

transnational consumer capital; as lifestyle icons, they characterize ethics of

entrepreneurship, individualism and success, while also holding the potential to reveal the

incongruities of capitalism and its commodification of bodies, labor and social existence.

In this sense they embody tensions regarding the nature of labor and individuality that

Dyer has previously identified. However, by exploring what it means to be an individual

in a global capitalist society, stars also symbolize reciprocal conflicts over social

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[30] Dyer, "Heavenly Bodies," 1-16.
[31] Ibid, 7.

community and identity – ways of defining ourselves in relation to others through shared origins, beliefs, experiences and locations.

If Hindi cinema and its stars have historically played an iconic role in circumscribing and maintaining national identity, including discourses of cultural dominance and marginality, Pakistani crossover stars make the instability of these constructs visible through an ambiguous sense of place and belonging. By being in-between borders and identities, as simultaneously familiar, desirable, yet markedly foreign and "Other," their ambivalence highlights the disjunctive cultural effects of globalization, which de-stabilizes national and religious boundaries while throwing political conflicts over identity into stark relief.

Arjun Appadurai has already posited the diminishing centrality of the nation state in fomenting social change; similar to Mankekar's argument regarding global public cultures, he contends that electronic media and migration are the most potent forces shaping everyday life under globalization.[32] By influencing both individual and collective acts of imagination, media enable a "community of sentiment"[33] that can include, but frequently exceed, the confines of the nation state. This is certainly the case with Hindutva and discourses on global terrorism, for example, but it is also equally true of the shared competencies and emotional pleasures that consumer media cultures produce.

A core argument of this study is that media texts support new ways of imagining identity through common affects and epistemologies of consumer capitalism – a form of

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[32] Arjun Appadurai, "Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*"* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 3.
[33] Ibid, 8.

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global citizenship that entails particular ways of knowing, experiencing and acting in the world. This force is increasingly compelling in a de-territorialized and post-national society, as Appadurai acknowledges.[34] This is not to suggest that consumer capitalism is liberating, homogenous or democratizing as a global force, nor does this study directly address debates regarding consumer empowerment. What is of interest here is the imaginative potential of media artifacts, images and systems (what Appadurai calls mediascapes)[35] to produce cultural alliances and heterogeneous subjectivities beyond national or political identity constructs. The physical and textual boundary crossings of Pakistani crossover stars reflect this imaginative agency while exposing the "fundamental disjuncture between economy, culture, and politics"[36] that Appadurai identifies in his treatise on global cultural flows.

In exploring the issues articulated above, this study takes a multi-disciplinary theoretical and methodological approach. Chapter 1 provides a historical perspective on crossover stardom in the Hindi film industry, situating Pakistani stars within a broader economic and cultural legacy of India-Pakistan relations, and the role of ancillary formats like television and music in influencing trans-industry collaboration. I examine how preceding crossover attempts by Pakistani actors were characterized in popular media through a process of stigmatization and "Othering," corroborating prevailing nationalist rhetoric about Pakistani and Islamic identity. This analysis sets the stage for a discussion of how globalization is currently transforming the crossover horizon for Pakistani stars.

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[34] Ibid, 22-23.
[35] Ibid, 35.
[36] Ibid, 33.

This discussion is the focus of Chapter 2, which assesses how the political economy of culture in both nations has shifted in response to globalization, creating new commercial and cultural opportunities for crossover stardom. This includes a detailed examination of infrastructural trends in the Hindi film industry, notably an ongoing movement towards media corporatization and its consequences for multi-platform convergence – conditions that have enabled Pakistani actors to transcend media genres and borders. An industrial approach also includes looking at new strategies of funding, producing and distributing media products in the Hindi film industry, as multi-media conglomerates increasingly have the financing and diverse revenue streams necessary to tackle alternative subject matter, introduce new talent, and support 'niche' products that are narratively and thematically innovative.[37] These conditions have allowed Pakistani television stars to gain a foothold in the Indian media landscape, circumstances that previously posed considerable fiscal and critical risk. Combined with the fact that intended audiences and markets for Hindi films are increasingly located overseas, including in the home entertainment market, the incentive to promote crossover stardom and reach new viewers in countries across Asia and the Middle East is ever expanding.

These industrial and commercial transitions indicate that the way religious and national identities are represented onscreen is likewise changing to meet new audience demands fueled by growing media exposure and industry collaboration. Outside of historical and industrial analysis, textual analysis is a critical technique in exploring how Muslim and Pakistani subjectivities are negotiated in popular media. Chapters 3, 4 and 5

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[37] Dina Khdair, "Piecing Together the Puzzle: *Kahaani, Talaash* and the Complex Narrative in Popular Hindi Cinema," *Studies in South Asian Film and Media* 5.2 (2013): 179-194.

present a close textual reading of select films, music albums, and television serials for

three of the most successful Pakistani crossover stars: Ali Zafar, Fawad Khan, and

Mahira Khan. Zafar, the first genuinely successful crossover star, is both a musician and

actor and continues to participate in multiple media formats and industries. By looking at

his performance in films like *Tere Bin Laden*, *London, Paris, New York*,[38] and *Total*

Siyapaa (Total Chaos),[39] as well as two of his recent musical albums, *Masty*[40] and

Jhoom,[41] Chapter 3 investigates how Zafar's projects consistently challenge stereotypes

about Pakistani and Muslim identity while engaging the politics of 'border crossing' –

whether geographical, religious, or cultural. While two of the above films directly

confront national and religious prejudice towards Pakistan in their narratives, each

emphasizes the potential of transnational mobility, both economic and cultural, to

overcome literal and figurative 'borders.' By integrating Pakistani cultural references,

imagery and musical traditions within this larger globalized framework, Zafar's work in

cinema and music imagines India, Pakistan and the West as a culturally continuous

ontology.

Chapter 4 broadens this analysis with an in-depth exploration of Fawad Khan's

work in television and cinema, including his performance in the popular soap serials

Humsafar (Beloved)[42] and *Zindagi Gulzar Hai* (Life is Fruitful),[43] both of which emerged

as sleeper hits with television audiences in India, acting as precursors to the star's debut

in Hindi films. Fawad's dramatic image in these texts as the consummate aristocratic

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[38] *London, Paris, New York,* directed by Anu Menon (Fox Star Studios, 2012).
[39] *Total Siyaapa*, directed by Eshvar Niwas (Reliance Entertainment, 2014).
[40] *Masty,* performed by Ali Zafar (Fire Records, 2006).
[41] *Jhoom,* performed by Ali Zafar (Yash Raj Music, 2011).
[42] *Humsafar,* directed by Sarmad Sultan Khoosat (Moomal Productions, 2011-2012).
[43] *Zindagi Gulzar Hai,* directed by Sultana Siddiqi (Moomal Productions, 2012-2013).

'gentleman' position him as a fetishized object of romantic identification and fantasy that is heavily structured by female desire, an image that is evoked both onscreen and off in his association with the Hindi film industry. Fawad's genteel persona counteracts metonymical associations of Pakistani/Muslim masculinity with physical and social violence. In addition to his role as a sophisticated (and seemingly unattainable) prince in *Khoobsurat*, his performance as a closeted homosexual author in the family drama *Kapoor and Sons*[44] depicts a cosmopolitan maleness that is both tormented and gentrified. Unlike the regressive and threatening images of the Muslim male historically encountered in Hindi cinema, Fawad's onscreen demeanor is vulnerable, sexually restrained, and defined by a melodramatic sensibility of yearning, suffering, and loss.

Finally, Chapter 5 considers the onscreen work of Mahira Khan, whose roles as a television host for MTV Pakistan and her co-starring performance with Fawad in the blockbuster serial *Humsafar* similarly paved the way for her debut in the Hindi film *Raees*.[45] Mahira's affiliation with global and local popular culture through her work in MTV places Pakistani identity on a visibly transnational platform. In addition, her repertoire of honest and assertive female roles in the primarily women-centric serial genre contradicts stereotypes about Pakistani/Muslim womanhood as effaced, victimized and exploited. Besides embodying shared ideals of femininity and star appeal in the Hindi film industry, Mahira holds global market potential due to her successful track record with audiences of Pakistani television, which is frequently broadcast throughout Asia and the Middle East. Her transnational bankability is indicated by the fact that *Raees* placed her opposite one of India's biggest stars, Shah Rukh Khan, while the film's extensive

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[44] *Kapoor and Sons,* directed by Shakun Batra (Dharma Productions, 2016).
[45] *Raees,* directed by Rahul Dholakia (Red Chillies Entertainment, 2017).

portrayal of Islamic cultural and religious themes (an overall rare occurrence in Hindi film) suggests an overture to audiences not only in Pakistan, but in countries like the United Arab Emirates (UAE), where the film grossed nearly 25% of its global box office collections, coming in second only to the Unites States, and more than double its earnings in the United Kingdom.[46] Such shifts reveal a growing incentive to target emerging overseas audiences and offer non-traditional content featuring stars with realistic crossover appeal and cultural accessibility.

This study's methodology would be incomplete without an analysis of the popular reception and celebrity identity of each crossover star under consideration. This is achieved throughout Chapters 3, 4 and 5 by examining press interviews and commentaries about each star in popular journalism, including their participation in brand sponsorship and public affairs, as well as by evaluating audience reception through fan websites and social media pages devoted to each star in India and Pakistan. This perspective is vital in determining what it means to be a Pakistani star in India, and in considering how celebrity discourse is constructed through commercial media outlets on the one hand, and consumer-driven activity on the other. Most importantly, it reveals how religious and national identities are negotiated through the crossover star text, and the consequences of this process for identity representation across media narratives.

Finally, exploring the popular reception of these stars and their media texts underscores the contradictory forces shaping Pakistani crossover stardom. The recent banning of Pakistani artists in India for political reasons, and the resulting suspension of

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[46] "Raees," *BoxOfficeMojo.com,* February 5, 2017, http://www.boxofficemojo.com/movies/?page=intl&id=raees.htm.

bilateral relations, reveals a conflict between national and global imperatives. The cessation of formal cooperation – due to an isolated act of aggression in a disputed territory outside of either country – illustrates nationalist and institutional resistance to a growing commercial and cultural engagement fueled by globalization. This engagement is top-down and bottom-up, motivated by neo-liberal capitalism and industry agendas on the one hand, and the realities of labor migration, shared cultural landscapes, and technological convergence on the other. The controversy reflects a collision, in Appadurai's terms, between the technoscapes/financescapes/mediascapes of global capitalism and the ideoscapes/ethnoscapes of local and global political communities.[47] As a result, and in concluding this study, Chapter 6 investigates the various global flows underlying the ban while discussing how consumer capitalism affords an alternative reality to the experience of nationalism and communalism in a global age, one of multiple cultural regimes available to Indians in a transnational society. The unifying potential of aspirational desire and the shared pleasures and practices of consuming popular culture hold the potential to 'unfix' national and religious discourses, as the work of Mankekar, Appadurai, and my extensive analysis of crossover stardom indicate.

The disjuncture between capitalist consumer culture and discourses of national sovereignty and patriotism, propagated by the Indian state and right-wing religious groups, is best illustrated by the highly conflicted responses to the ban among industry professionals and the general public in both nations. The significance and ramifications of its reception are explored by reviewing media coverage of the ban, its policies, and the

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[47] Appadurai, "Modernity at Large," 33.

various local and global responses to it. In the process, the immediate and potential long-term consequences for Pakistani crossover stardom are considered.