NEW MEDIA'S ROLE IN HYBRID WARFARE: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF X (FORMERLY TWITTER) IN PAKISTANI MILIEU

Taj Muhammad[*1], Zubair Shafiq[2]

[*1]PhD Scholar, Islamia University of Bahawalpur,
[2]Associate Professor, Islamia University of Bahawalpur

Corresponding Author: *

ABSTRACT

With the expansion of digital media, the nature of warfare has transformed momentously. Old-fashioned battlefields have now become virtual battlegrounds, due to the accessibility of countless social media platforms, fighting the battle in a cognitive domain is an attempt to change the minds, perceptions, and opinions of the masses. Therefore, this research article discovers X's role as a hybrid warfare tool in the Pakistani milieu. Particularly, this study is an effort to identify how X users employ diverse approaches to spread fake news, disinformation & misinformation campaigns, and proliferate propaganda narratives offensively. In today's digital era, a variety of strategies are utilized on social media platforms to propagate false narratives to shape and influence public perceptions. From the plethora of trending hashtags on the X panel, in this study, only two prominent hashtags "#KashmirFiles" and "#SanctionPakistan" were chosen for analysis, intending to find out how hybrid warfare and its various propaganda strategies are reflected in tweets posted by users. Additionally, Ruth Wodak's Discourse-Historical Approach (DHA) to Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) approach was applied to examine a sample of randomly selected four hundred (400) tweets. Moreover, in this study, the researcher discovered that the live and engaging communication functionality of X offers an optimal atmosphere aimed at crafting relatively complex terms based on sentiments. However, in the process, it often makes use of emotional nodes to disrupt public opinion and create havoc in social cohesion. The argumentative and discursive tactics of discourse alongside the topos of numbers including humanitarian concern, extremism, justice, killings, and danger/threat are used to stretch and present reductionist perspectives. Furthermore, the ultimate aim of this research project is to provide recommendations for bureaucracy, policy and decision-makers, government institutions, and the general public as a whole to develop an understanding the Pakistan's security challenges posed by social media in the digital age. Finally, this research study also highlights the emerging threats from the employment of hybrid warfare tactics on X and facilitates the development of counter strategies at a national level.

Keywords: *Battlefield, Conflict, Diplomacy, Propaganda, X, Warfare.*

INTRODUCTION

Military scholars such as John Schmitt, Wilson Gray, Colonel Keith Nightingale, Joseph Sutton, and William S. Lind discussed the idea of modern warfare by categorizing it into different generations of warfare (Lind et al., 2001). Waseem Qureshi mentioned that from first-generation warfare (1GW) to the fifth generation of warfare (5GW) has remained purely within the state realm and its monopoly on violence, as well as gravely affected the society itself. Given the long-established and dominant sense of modern warfare, where national

sovereignty is now often violated due to the internet/cyberspace age (Qureshi, 2019).

Historically, 1GW began to be fought on line and column formations, smoothbore muskets, following linear tactics. Mostly soldiers who fought 1GW had no formal military training and very little battlefield experience, unlike today's modern armies, therefore were more susceptible to line and column maneuvers (Lehaci, 2015). Moreover, 1GW's smoothbore muskets due to short range structure, and slow rate of loading and reloading, work well in line or column formation (Lehaci, 2015). The major technological developments combined with progressions in military strategies in the late 19th and early 20th century led to the advent of second-generation warfare (2GW). These kinds of wars are well known due to immense causalities, long-range indirect firepower, employment of automatic machine guns, and trench warfare (Materiality & Gift, 2022). Subsequently, third-generation warfare (3GW) forces speed, surprise, and disruption of the enemy's psyche and morale. 3GW tactics include strategic intelligence about enemy positions and communication systems, and destroying mobility (Fridman et al., 2019). In addition, fourth-generation warfare (4GW) has been marked by the arrival of non-state actors like mercenary enterprises and corporations, that believe in the dominance of one particular group ready to impose upon others, uprisings, and their political wings. The 4GW tactics adopted narrative building and perception management to win public opinion in a variety of ways, such as political, economic, social, and cultural expressions (Qureshi, 2019). Moreover, according to Qureshi (2019), fifth-generation warfare (5GW) employs asymmetric warfare at multiple levels to influence national-level decisions and policy-making processes. This generation of warfare exploits the differences between the general population and government, opinions, and perception of reality to produce chaos at a state level through propaganda and disinformation campaigns.

Furthermore, the evolution in modern conflict reflects a shift where state and non-state actors exploit multiple vulnerabilities across economic, political, or information domains to create ambiguity and achieve strategic objectives (Qureshi, 2019). In 2002, W. Nemeth, first time coined the word "Hybrid Warfare" and defined it as a new form of threat with the involvement of non-state actors known as hybrid combatants, combining a wide variety of traditional, guerrilla, insurgency, and terrorist tactics for example Russia's military operations in Chechnya (Nemeth, 2002). Nübel (2020), points out that hybrid warfare aims at involving and influencing the opinions of the general public of a hostile state. Essentially, hybrid warfare is a kind of war waged by covert players and exhibits the multifaceted characteristics of a blended unconventional, irregular, and unpredictable form of conflict (Qureshi, 2020). Hybrid warfare also entails the use of regular military tactics by organized groups, information warfighters, networks, hacking, mass media, social media propaganda, terrorism, insurgency, ambiguity, and a range of other means designed to prevent being blamed or taking revenge in the war-mongering states (Hoffman, 2014). Nübel (2020) argued that as technology advances in global connectivity, hybrid warfare continues to become an increasingly sophisticated covert form of warfare.

Role of Digital Media in Hybrid Warfare

Hybrid warfare encompasses a wide range of tactics, such as propaganda, disinformation, subversive protests, cyber-attacks, lawfare, and economic pressure, with digital media playing a key component (Qureshi, 2020). The growth in digital technology has widely transformed political discourse and impacted the state's decision-making processes (Hussain et al., 2021). In hybrid wars, both state and non-state actors have used digital media platforms to deceive besides solidifying their positions, as evident from the portrayal of campaigns against Syrian President Assad's regime in United States media (Johnson et al., 2021).

In hybrid warfare, the adversaries use the information to influence the behaviors and perceptions of the population to achieve military or political objectives (Fridman et al., 2019). Social media platforms for a variety of reasons can circulate false information and amplify the dissemination of fake content (Johnson et al., 2021). Pakistan has been the victim of hateful X hashtags and undoubtedly hybrid warfare campaigns through digital media created confusion and manipulated public opinions within the state (Qureshi, 2019). X

campaigns, like #CivilWar during the Tehreek-e-Labaik Pakistan (TLP) protests, demonstrated the vulnerabilities of Pakistan to hybrid threats. Similarly, the Financial Action Task Force #FATF and #SanctionPakistan trends also exemplify how hybrid threats and propaganda campaigns through social media tools affect Pakistan's global reputation (Akhtar et al., 2021). Thus, social media is utilized for perception management while spreading disinformation and misinformation to shape public opinions and influence news narratives in targeted countries (Fridman et al., 2019).

Hybrid War and Pakistan

The concept of hybrid warfare is a relatively novel idea for fighting wars. According to ancient Indian philosopher Chanakya, in hybrid warfare, "the aggressor adopts methods other than direct military actions to resolve conflicts, such as deception, protests, proxies, conspiracies, and political negotiations" (Akhtar et al., 2021). Likewise, in hybrid warfare, various actors employ an integrated style of war that encompasses traditional military warfare tactics with unconventional warfare strategies to conduct influence and information operations (Hoffman, 2014).

Similarly, Pakistan faces multiple hybrid threats due to political instability, ongoing insurgencies, independent movements, religious extremism, and external involvement (Akhtar et al., 2021). The collapse of the Soviet Union in Asia resulted emergence of numerous intimidations in the region and dramatically shifted the geopolitical landscape of the continent both internally as well as externally. India's strategic partnership with the United States and Afghanistan again became in the Taliban's hands and the close relationships between India and Iran are the few happenings in the region (Ahmed & Bhatnagar, 2007). Additionally, India's strategic aims to dominate the region, ongoing border disputes, and undermining Pakistan further heighten these tensions and exacerbate hybrid pressures (Pervaiz, 2024). Moreover, Pakistan's geography, political instability, economic challenges, divisions within the society, and lack of resources to secure cyberspace are the stem vulnerabilities. Likewise, China's economic power continues to grow, and the rising China-Pakistan alliance has undermined

India's primary strategic position in Asia (Mengal et al., 2018).

The Problem Statement

The fall of the Soviet Union has shaped a global power imbalance in the region and has undergone far-reaching vagaries, especially in Asia. Pakistan because of its geographical position and geostrategic importance in the existing political prism, remained susceptible to numerous intimidations from different fronts (Nogee, 2022). The rise of China as a global economic superpower, alongside its opposition to the United States, situates Pakistan in a complex situation of concentration to both superpowers (Latif & Mengal, 2020). Moreover, at the same time, Pakistan has complicated and challenging relations with its neighboring countries, Afghanistan, and Iran, and has a diverse sphere of conflicting interests with India (Pervaiz, 2024). Thus, Pakistan is vulnerable to ideologically motivated propaganda campaigns, influence operations, dissemination of fake news, and misinformation/disinformation on social media platforms, particularly X.

Justification/Rationale of the Study

Pakistan and India gained independence from the British in 1947, and since then both countries have fought various battles, conventionally and unconventionally. The geographical location, geopolitical reputation, and political instability in Pakistan make it a prime target for a range of threats, including cyber warfare, insurgencies, terrorism, information operations, etc (Akhtar et al., 2021). The Kashmir dispute, the Balochistan independence movement, which has badly obstructed economic activity, China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Latif & Mengal, 2020), the security situation in Pak-Afghan bordering areas, illegal smuggling from the Pak-Iran border, and the rise of the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement (PTM) in the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province are considerable problems facilitating hybrid warfare (Mengal et al., 2018). Moreover, technological advancements and the popularity of social media applications have further enabled the dissemination of fake news, and mis/dis information, to publicize propaganda narratives (Hussain & Lynch, 2019). Today, even trusted news sources often utilize plagiarized false news stories

from social media (Fridman et al., 2019). Unfortunately, the available academic literature lacks a comprehensive overview regarding the use of X for hybrid warfare in the context of Pakistan nevertheless, this study is an attempt to fill this gap.

Research Study's Scope and Significance

This research article aims to develop an understanding of hybrid warfare tactics employed on social media, specifically the utilization of X as a weapon in hybrid warfare. It investigates the impact of propagandist activities on national security, forces, or military operations by providing suggestions for the general public and highlighting the importance of using social media tools more vigilantly. The results of the study will help policymakers and military strategists devise effective strategies for countering hybrid warfare on digital platforms.

Theoretical Framework and Research Methodology

Human psychology, linguistic practices, and behavior have changed as a result of unprecedented technological transformation in a global political and economic environment where some borders have disappeared; few are in the process of diminishing, and some boundaries are formed (Wodak, 2024). Yet new ideological boundaries are emerging in the complex political and social dimensions that were overlooked previously. Therefore, understanding such an empathetic dimension necessitates a research-oriented and problem-solving approach (Wodak, 2015a).

In this study, the term "discourse" describes what it does for people and their actions as an object of transformation, rather than just a way of thinking (Halabi & Krippendorff, 2020). According to Krippendorff and Halabi (2020), discourse is a socially constructed practice anchored in the actions and artifacts of communities that generate them. The communities are autonomous and self-organizing, but they are also influenced by external factors such as academic literature, etc.

In addition, this research study used CDA to look at discourses of propaganda on X in the context of Pakistan, which were spread under #SanctionPakistan and #KashmirFiles hashtags. Moreover, DHA uses language to explain power relations and is an attempt to understand ideological processes and social inequality (Wodak, 2015a). Therefore, this paper pursues to examine the relationships between power and ideological practices that support the dissemination of propaganda narratives on X, with special attention to the socio-political and historical context for each discursive discourse.

The present research study conducts CDA of tweets using two prominent hashtags #SanctionPakistan and #KashmirFiles trending on X, during March 2022, to examine the propaganda narratives on the platform in Pakistan's milieu. Tweets were gathered using Python programming language through X APIs and only 400 English language Tweets (200 per hashtag) were randomly chosen for further analysis. Initially, tweets were manually categorized by three independent reviewers and categorized as pro-Pakistan, anti-Pakistan, and neutral sentiment class based on their content. The randomly selected dataset represents the entire population and provides comprehensive views of the precise topics and narratives propagated on the platform. The dataset was refined using CDA and DHA to analyze the content of each tweet, focusing on contextualization, lexical choices, intertextuality, and discursive strategies to expose underlying ideologies, power relations, and propaganda narratives (Wodak, 2015a).

Discussion and Analysis

Since gaining independence in 1947, India and Pakistan have always struggled to maintain normalcy in relations, primarily due to the unresolved and ongoing confrontation over the Kashmir issue (Hussain, 2017). The history of the conflicts between both countries is marked by the 1948 Kashmir war, the 1965 and 1971 wars, and the 1999 skirmishes, since then tensions have persisted and there has been no peace on the borders (Hussain, 2017). The Kashmir problem is causing violence in the form of widespread uprisings, innocent people displacement from their homes, and other unresolved battles. Moreover, at the same time, both nations continue to blame each other for sponsoring terrorism and insurgent movements through media drives (Hussain & Lynch, 2019). The 2019 Pulwama attack further intensified tensions, with Indian nationalists constantly invoking the threat of

nuclear war. In contrast, India's involvement in Pakistan's Balochistan province has also strained relations among the two nations (Nogee, 2022). Traditionally, despite the growing influence of social media, academic research remains peripheral for authors in the humanities and social sciences. Political leaders in both countries manipulate public opinion using troll accounts and bots on social media platforms. During the Pulwama attack, bot accounts had a major influence on social media trends (Hussain et al., 2021). In a report prepared by a European organization, over 265 media networks were identified as spreading disinformation against Pakistan and China, with many directed operated from India (Khan, 2023). In March 2022, #KashmirFiles became an intense debate on X about its historical accuracy and its use as a propaganda narrative. At the same time, #SanctionsPakistan also starts trending on X reflecting the complex dynamics of social media discourse blaming Pakistan's role in the rise of Taliban's rule in Afghanistan.

Application of the Discourse Model

In this research article, the discourse model has been developed based on actions, genres, discourses, and topics for discussion that shaped the trending hashtags, using a sample of four hundred tweets from two X discourses. The Field of actions shown in Figure 1 illustrates several aspects of social realism, serving as a pathway for forming the discourse, however, genres are the different ways in which an entire society uses language for a specific discourse (Wodak, 2015a).
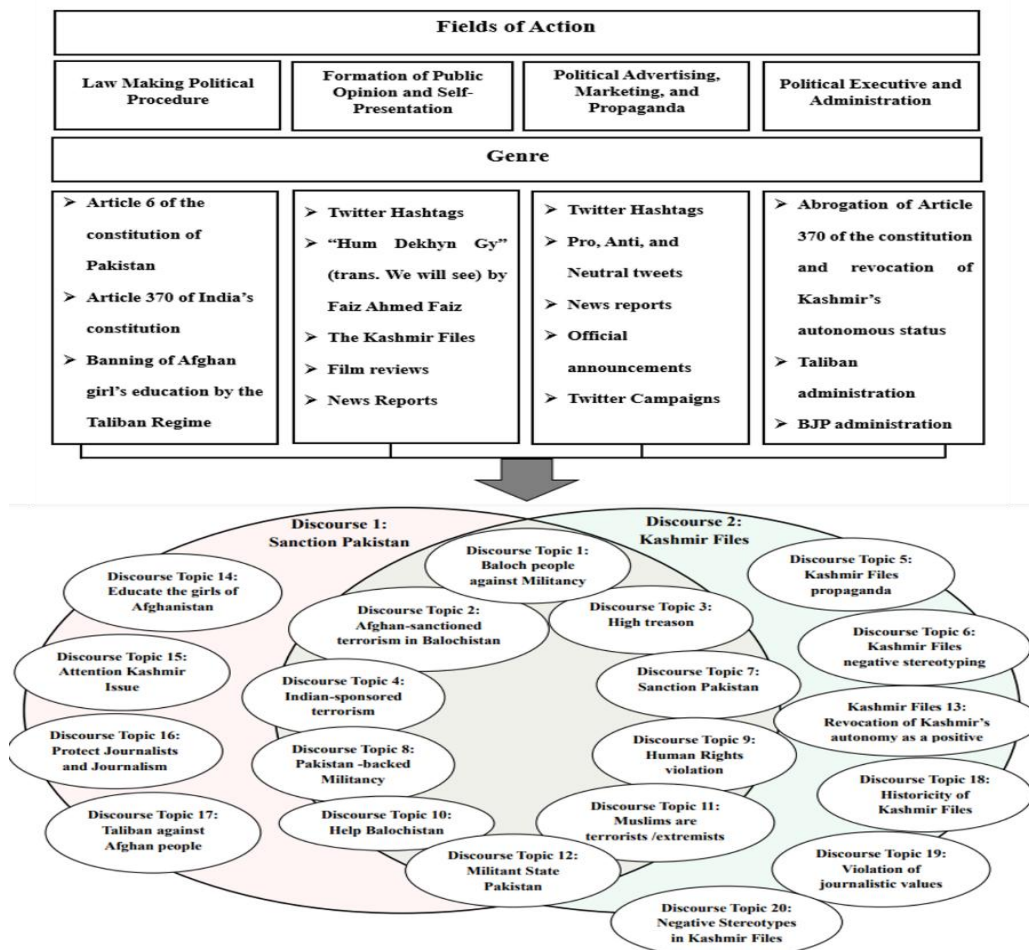

Figure 1: The Field of Action and Genre in Discourses

The film Kashmir Files was released soon after the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government formally revoked Article 370 by eliminating Jammu & Kashmir's right to self-rule and autonomous status. The film has a strong alignment with the BJP government's stance, propagating justification

regarding removal of the Article 370. The movie portrays Muslims as terrorists and insurgents responsible for the genocide of Kashmiri Hindu Pandits, thus legitimizing the deployment of the Indian Army in Jammu & Kashmir by the BJP government.

In the present study, these discourses spread across numerous features of social life and played a very influential role. Discourses in digital media widely shape public opinion and influence community behavior, with #KashmirFiles and #SanctionPakistani hashtags the researcher identified a very high degree of intertextuality and interdiscursivity as presented in Figure 2. The content of the tweets in these hashtags reflects the tense sentiments of the public and their impact on the political discourse and lawmaking process. Moreover, the intertextuality and interdiscursivity connections between the selected two discourses are deeply interrelated with reinforcing arguments of each other.
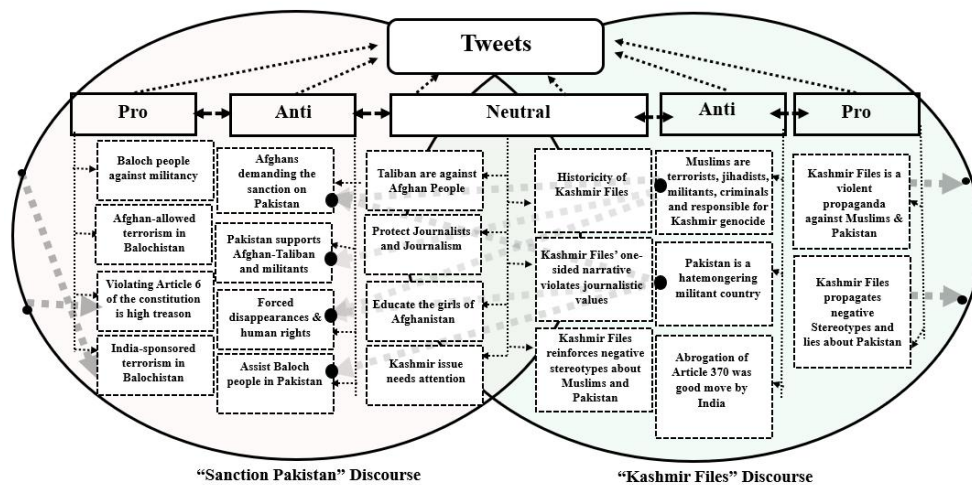

Figure 2: Intertextuality and Interdiscursivity in Discourses

The Kashmir Files Hashtag

The release of the Kashmir Files movie in the year 2022, has led to widespread discourse on X, engaging users with the #KashmirFiles hashtag by sharing their views, and generally, the responses on the platform expressed polarized gratified. Amongst the participants, some people argued that the movie distorted historical facts to support a biased argument, whereas other users defending the film, claimed that the Kashmir Files is a true depiction of actual events especially the forced exodus of Kashmiri Hindus and the genocide of Hindu Pandits in the 1990s. The analysis of the tweet's content explores various discursive strategies and themes around the hashtags analyzed, presenting both pro-Pakistan and anti-Pakistan sentiments.

The recurring themes expressing anti-Pakistani sentiment, portray Pakistan as terrorist sponsored state and Muslims as extremists. Tweets in this category employed rhetorical topoi and often used the terms jihadists, specialists in forced conversions, slavery, and experts in the destruction of institutions to project Pakistan in a negative context. In this sentiment class, Pakistan and Muslims are associated with extremist ideologies, while on the other hand, Kashmiri Hindu Pandits were presented as victims of genocide. For instance, few tweets relate Pakistanis and Muslims as synonymous with extremism and terrorism, while others declare the Kashmir Files as truth and term Kashmiri Pandits as equal to genocide. Moreover, many tweets frame Vivek Agnihotri, director of the Kashmir Files as a hero who exposed the historical facts courageously. The anti-Pakistan sentiment further intensified the discussion on X, once certain users practice expressively charged language towards Muslims and referring them as Jihadi cockroaches. Some tweets show exaggerated statistical data such as numbers and dates as evidence, claiming that 500,000 Kashmiri Hindus were displaced and forced to leave their homes while thousands were murdered by inhumane Jihadi terrorists of the valley in 1989, however, both date "1989" and the figure "500,000" are false and misleading claims. The use

of misleading statistics as evidence in campaigns was used to offer trustworthiness to the argument that the Kashmiri Hindus were fatalities of genocide at the hands of Muslims.

Conversely, tweets expressing pro-Pakistan sentiments consistently sought doubt on the film's legitimacy and questioned its narratives. Such tweets exposed the film as fictitious, propagandist, and scam, responsible for spreading hatred and fostering Islamophobia. The inclusion of the poem "Hum Dekhyn Gy" by Muslim poet Faiz Ahmed Faiz in the film, was seen as a thoughtful propaganda attempt against Muslims. Several tweets allege that religious prejudice within the Hindu community prevents them from accurately portraying the truth, thereby undermining the credibility of Hindus. Many pro-Pakistan tweets argued that the purpose behind the release of the movie was to justify the revocation of Article 370 and legalize the act of the Indian government in Jammu & Kashmir. Moreover, pro-Pakistan tweets employed various themes of humanitarianism by asserting the suffering of Muslims in Kashmir at the hands of the Indian Army. A significant number of tweets highlighted that children, men, and women have been and continue to be killed in Kashmir by the Indian Army, with an indeterminable number of people enduring lifelong injuries and others being blinded by pellet guns. Pro-Pakistan tweets use statistical facts to substantiate a certain line of reasoning, using the rhetorical strategy of appealing to numerical evidence of the ongoing human rights violations and questioning the creditability of the film.

Furthermore, tweets with a neutral sentiment, though fewer in number, mostly critique the film's historical accuracy by raising doubts about the legitimacy of the events, signifying that it overgeneralized a multifaceted issue for just political gains. Tweets in this category were observed questioning whether the movie portrayed a balanced view of the historical conflict or not.

Overall, the analysis of the #KashmirFiles hashtag on X reflects entrenched divisions and polarization in public opinions regarding the Kashmir conflict while highlighting the role of Pakistan. The public discourse on X not only presents persistent tensions between Pakistan and India while emphasizes the role of digital media in shaping public perceptions on an argumentative political issue in the region.

The Sanction Pakistan Hashtag

The #SanctionPakistan hashtag primarily emerged in the context of allegations against Pakistan for supporting the Taliban's uprising and forming government in Afghanistan during the withdrawal of US/NATO forces. The sanction Pakistan discourse on X produces a unique narrative to propagate Pakistan's involvement in regional conflicts and proxy wars while projecting human rights violations as a core theme to justify the imposition of sanctions against Pakistan.

In the #SanctionPakistan trend, tweets categorized as anti-Pakistan sentiment portray Pakistan as the occupier of Kashmir and Balochistan, violator of human rights, supporter of terrorism, a country that exhibits hypocrisy, produces terrorists, highlighting its alleged relations with Taliban and involvement in acts of genocide including the Hazara genocide and the persecution of women in Afghanistan. The concept of humanitarianism is used as a central theme in anti-Pakistan tweets to support the idea of sanctioning Pakistan. For instance, a few tweets in this trend criticized Pakistan for supporting the Taliban's unfair attitude towards women, and other calls for sanctions highlighting Pakistan's actions in Balochistan involvement in crimes against humanity, enforced disappearances, and extra-judicial killings. The terms dogs and terrorists are often used to refer to Pakistani authorities and Inter-Services Intelligence representatives. In addition, some tweets label the Taliban as "Pakistan's death squad" and "proxy militia", referring to the idea that Pakistan is using these terrorist organizations to achieve regional and political objectives. Many tweets characterize Pakistan's existence as a distortion of both Islam and humanity. Undoubtedly, the concept of humanitarianism is consistently emphasized in anti-Pakistani discourse and sanctions are advocated as a means to hold Pakistan accountable for human rights violations. The discourse also mentions legality, responsibility, and the potential dangers caused by Pakistan's financial challenges.

The tweets align with Pakistani perspectives and take a defensive stance to discredit the anti-Pakistan discourse and highlight the narratives as an

extension of the Indian geopolitical agenda to dominate the region and destabilize Pakistan. Tweets in this sentiment class frequently refer to the Baloch insurgent groups operating in Balochistan are an anti-state and terrorist organization, with India being its sponsor. The involvement of India in sponsoring terrorism and committing acts of violence is often portrayed as an effort to destabilize Pakistan through its proxies and they are referred to as "Indian puppets" or "mercenaries." In addition, several pro-Pakistan tweets project India's hypocrisy and occupier of Kashmir, highlighting the BJP for suppressing the Kashmiri Muslims and supporting terrorism in Pakistan. Moreover, some tweets express goodwill and acknowledge the courage of the Security Forces deployed in Balochistan for the well-being of the locals and the development of the province. Additionally, the pro-Pakistan discourse also uses a legal and constitutional tone while featuring tweets that condemn the violation of Article 6 of the Constitution of Pakistan and outline the criteria for committing the offense of high treason against the state. Furthermore, the interdiscursivity between #SanctionPakistan and #KashmirFiles hashtags project Pakistan's efforts in the global war on terror, while portraying Kashmiri fighters as Mujaheddins and freedom fighters.

Neutral tweets under the #SanctionPakistan hashtag generally support journalistic standards, Kashmiri Muslim rights, Afghan women's rights, and geopolitical analysis of the region without any clear stance of being pro or anti-Pakistan. Neutral tweets often tend to force the importance of unbiased reporting on Balochistan and Kashmir, while also advocating the rights of Afghan women in the Taliban government.

Overall, the #SanctionPakistan hashtag on X reflects a complex interplay of regional geopolitical challenges, political objectives, and human rights concerns around Pakistan. This trend also underscores the polarized discourse regarding Pakistan's domestic as well as foreign policies with rhetorical strategies. Finally, the role of social media particularly X is shaping public opinion while influencing policy decisions as part of hybrid warfare.

Conclusion

Hybrid warfare is a sophisticated contemporary strategy that emerged from the combination of conventional and unconventional wars (Qureshi, 2020). These conflicts are intricate and often conducted systematically and strategically by state and non-state actors. Such wars, employ information and influence operations, dissemination of propaganda narratives, and other mis/dis information campaigns through various social media applications or mass media to muddle the boundary between combatant and non-combatant, military force and civilian power, war and peace to create discord and cohesion among the society (Hussain & Lynch, 2019). Social media platforms like X have played a pivotal role in facilitating hybrid warfare worldwide, as many nations around the world are using X to spread misleading or false/fake information on a full scale thereby influencing public opinion, decision, and policymaking (Khan, 2023). Moreover, the real-time interaction, communication, and limited character capability on X, compel the user to write precise content, engage in political dialogue, or spread propaganda narratives and contribute towards polarization of society's perception. The other features available on the platform include reposting, quote reposting, mentioning other users, liking, and use of specific hashtags, which in turn enables the creation of echo chambers or confluence of various discourses of intertextuality and interdiscursivity on any specific dialogue (Prier, 2020). As a result, specific ideologies or themes are amplified, and accordingly, the opinions of the public are differentiated successfully. This study analyzed the relationship between intertextuality and interdiscursivity of the contents (Wodak, 2015b) discussed internationally in two popular hashtags #KashmirFiles and #SanctionPakistan on X as a case study in the context of Pakistan. In both hashtags, it has been found that discursive strategies were attempted to impact public opinion and mold perceptions.

Moreover, a systematic disintegration of various communities is affected through the labeling of in-groups and out-groups, fostering discord and rendering communities more vulnerable to manipulation. In the selected hashtag it has been found that the tweets content within pro-Pakistan and anti-Pakistan sentiment classes propagate

emotional tones. The emotional messages in tweets, often based on identity factors such as religion, national identity, and ethnicity, are used to engage stronger emotional responses to push the debates even farther away from rationality. In the hybrid warfare phenomenon, these emotional triggers are used to achieve the goal of influence operations by influencing the general population's sentiments and destroying social cohesion in society (Hussain et al., 2021). Additionally, the research concludes that through the manipulation of emotions and opinions false statistics and distorted historical events are propagated in both hashtags #KashmirFiles and #SanctionPakistan, thereby intensifying rifts and strengthening persuasion. Tweets in such sentiment classes have often no historical evidence to support them and lack trustworthiness and historical correctness, thus fostering separatism and assisting as an instrument for polarization. Furthermore, this research study suggests certain recommendations for state institutions, policymakers, research scholars, political parties and leaders, and the general population especially the youth of Pakistan to address the adverse effects of X use as a hybrid warfare tool in the information domain. As such, the study proposes the importance of embedding media literacy and critical thinking in Pakistan's education system to confer the usage of social media applications and also counter the negative influences on the platforms effectively. The government should also enhance the digital literacy initiative at the community level to educate the citizens about monitoring the negative content on these forums. Finally, social media service providers have to hold themselves accountable for the transparency and moderation of content practices for the national interest.

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