

**ANALYZING PROPAGANDA STRATEGIES ON  
X BY INDIA AND PAKISTAN ON KASHMIR CONFLICT AND FALL OF  
KABUL**



**ABDUL WADOOD**

**01-285201-001**

**Department of Media Studies**

**BAHRIA UNIVERSITY ISLAMABAD CAMPUS (BUIC)**

\_\_\_\_\_ 2025



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ABDUL WADOOD

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the  
requirements for the award of the degree of  
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## Approval for Examination

Scholar's Name: Abdul Wadood, Registration No. 01-285201-001, Programme of Study: PhD Media Studies, Thesis Title: Analyzing Propaganda Strategies on X by India and Pakistan on Kashmir Conflict and Fall of Kabul. It is to certify that the above scholar's thesis has been completed to my satisfaction and, to my belief, its standard is appropriate for submission for examination. I have also conducted plagiarism test of this thesis using HEC prescribed software and found similarity index 11 % that is within the permissible limit set by the HEC for the PhD degree thesis.

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this dissertation to my family, with heartfelt gratitude to my late father, whose unwavering love for education has inspired me throughout my educational journey. His passion for learning has been a guiding force in my life. I would also like to express my deepest appreciation to my mother, wife, and daughters, who have been instrumental in motivating me every step of the way. Their support, encouragement, and belief in my abilities have made this achievement possible.

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## ABSTRACT

This study examines state-sponsored propaganda campaigns orchestrated by India and Pakistan on X (formerly Twitter) investigating two significant regional crises in parallel: the aftermath of the revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status and the Taliban's recapture of Kabul. The research analyzes official accounts of key Indian and Pakistani officials on X (formerly Twitter) to identify key propaganda strategies, utilizing two datasets comprising 34,055 English-language posts collected between August 15, 2021, and January 14, 2023. A robust hybrid methodological approach combines supervised computational content analysis—measuring the prevalence of techniques from existing literature—with unsupervised topic modeling to discover emergent themes. The study reveals two novel propaganda strategies: urgency and blaming. Findings reveals that both states dynamically adapt their messaging to geopolitical developments. The substantial engagement (reposts) generated by certain techniques, particularly India's people-centric approach, provides a valuable measure of their reach and resonance on the platform. Pakistani propaganda adopts an authoritative tone and elite driven narratives aimed at establishing credibility for official perspectives. While Pakistan emphasizes trust-building through authoritative claims, India officials adopted mass-oriented strategies, emphasizing populist appeals disseminated primarily through political and defense institutions. Temporal analysis indicates both countries effectively adapt their propaganda tactics in response to regional developments, demonstrating responsiveness to public sentiment, geopolitical contexts, and optimal timing. Study also explores the transferability of techniques across distinct contexts, while acknowledging that its scope invites future research into deeper qualitative analysis of audience reception to further refine understanding of persuasive effectiveness. Both countries employ contradictory themes wherein humanitarian concerns, security narratives, domestic political agendas, and geopolitical considerations interact in complex configurations to structure their propaganda campaigns while simultaneously exploiting regional geopolitical vulnerabilities.

**Keywords:** State-sponsored Propaganda; Computational Propaganda; India-Pakistan Relations; X (formerly Twitter); Supervised Computational Content Analysis; Unsupervised Topic Modelling; Propaganda Strategies; Kashmir Conflict; Taliban Recapture of Afghanistan

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

Propaganda is a complex and contested concept, often difficult to define due to its dependence on the viewer's perspective. Traditional scholarship classifies propaganda into three broad categories—black, gray, and white—though these distinctions remain subjective (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019). The advent of digital technology and social media has further complicated this landscape, enabling individuals and organizations to disseminate messages to vast audiences with unprecedented ease (Hobbs & McGee, 2014). Among these platforms, X (formerly Twitter) has emerged as a particularly influential space, where messages can be rapidly crafted and shared, often without clear attribution or accountability (Bradshaw & Howard, 2018). This stands in stark contrast to traditional propaganda, which typically originates from centralized sources—such as governments or institutions—and employs deliberate persuasive techniques (Bernays, 1928/2005).

In recent years, X (formerly Twitter) has played a pivotal role in amplifying social and political movements, empowering citizens to challenge authority and mobilize collective action (Tufekci, 2017). However, this democratization of communication has

also rendered the platform susceptible to manipulation, granting it significant influence over public opinion and political discourse (Woolley & Howard, 2019). Social media has revolutionized information dissemination, allowing for rapid, targeted messaging that shapes online narratives and public perceptions (Nyst & Monaco, 2018; Weedon et al., 2017). Digital propaganda employs various tactics—including automated bots, algorithmic amplification, and disinformation campaigns—to manipulate discourse, often fostering confusion and eroding trust (O'Hara, 2022). Consequently, propaganda has evolved into a potent instrument for governments and organizations seeking to control narratives and influence global public opinion.

This study empirically examines the digital propaganda strategies employed by Indian and Pakistani state officials on X (formerly Twitter), offering a comparative analysis of two critical regional crises: the Kashmir conflict and the Taliban takeover of Kabul. Propaganda, a complex form of strategic communication, is operationalized here as the state-sponsored use of platform-specific techniques to disseminate curated narratives, employing emotional appeals and persuasive tactics to shape public perception and advance geopolitical objectives in line with a defined typology adapted for digital contexts (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019; Woolley & Howard, 2019). The selection of these two events is analytically deliberate; they serve as contrasting case studies that allow for an examination of how propaganda techniques adapt to conflicts with differing temporalities (protracted vs. sudden) and strategic natures (territorial-integrity vs. regional-influence).

The humanitarian, political and security crises in Kashmir after revocation of its special status and Afghanistan especially after the Fall of Kabul serve as critical arenas for this digital propaganda contest. This comparative rationale is grounded in the historical entanglement of these issues, a dynamic famously described by William Dalrymple as a "deadly triangle" where tensions between any two corners inevitably implicate the third (Dalrymple, 2013). India positions itself as a counterterrorism force in Kashmir while accusing Pakistan of fomenting militancy (Awan, 2019). Meanwhile, Pakistan leverages social media to depict India as an oppressive occupier, highlighting alleged abuses (Maré et al., 2021). In Afghanistan, following the Taliban's 2021

resurgence, both nations have sought to shape narratives regarding regional stability. India portrays itself as a stabilizing actor while condemning Pakistan's historical ties to the Taliban. Pakistan, in turn, frames its involvement as crucial for regional peace, countering Indian claims by emphasizing its counterterrorism efforts (Iqbal & Hussain, 2022).

Over the past seventy-seven years, India and Pakistan have employed various strategies to shape public opinion in alignment with state interests. As both countries refine their propaganda efforts in response to evolving digital landscapes, analyzing these strategies and its adaptations becomes crucial for understanding contemporary information warfare. Also, investigating how new propaganda strategies are leveraged to disseminate conflict-promoting narratives could offer valuable insights for developing peace-oriented media frameworks in conflict zones. Given the increasing influence of X (formerly Twitter) on public opinion, media scholars, policymaking, and political discourse, further research is imperative to explore the platform's role in modern propaganda dissemination. This study contributes to the existing discourse by examining propaganda strategies, their adaptability to shifting geopolitical landscapes, and the continued relevance of traditional propaganda theories in the context of contemporary digital information warfare.

The following sections are streamlined to serve this core analytical framework. The historical contexts of Kashmir and Kabul are presented in detail to establish the stakes of the digital propaganda and narrative battle, while data on digital transformation is sharply focused on illustrating the infrastructure and scale that make modern propaganda campaigns feasible. Introduction chapter establishes a targeted prelude for a methodological, theoretical and analytical investigation into the mechanics of digital information warfare.

## 1.2 Kashmir Conflict

The Kashmir conflict is a territorial dispute between India and Pakistan, originating from the partition of British India in 1947. This partition allowed princely states, including Jammu and Kashmir, to choose their allegiance (Bose, 2003). The Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir, Hari Singh, initially sought to remain independent but ultimately acceded to India under pressure from tribal militias supported by Pakistan (Schofield, 2003, p. 45). The decision triggered the First Indo-Pakistani War (1947-1948), resulting in the division of the region into Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir and Pakistan-administered Azad Jammu and Kashmir, with both countries claiming sovereignty over the entire territory (BBC News, 2024). Following the Maharaja's accession, conflict erupted, leading to an UN-mediated ceasefire that established the Line of Control (LoC) but left the status of Kashmir unresolved (Khurshid, 2023). The rivalry has led to several subsequent wars, including those in 1965, 1971 and 1999 (Kargil War), as well as ongoing skirmishes along the LoC (BBC News, 2024). Since the late 1980s, an insurgency has emerged in Indian-administered Kashmir, fueled by local grievances and support from Pakistan-based militant groups (Human Rights Watch, 1999).

On February 14, 2019, a suicide bomber attacked an Indian paramilitary convoy in Pulwama, killing 40 soldiers, marking a significant escalation in hostilities (BBC News, 2019). In retaliation, India conducted airstrikes on an alleged JeM training camp in Balakot, Pakistan, representing a shift from India's historically restrained military posture to a more aggressive stance as it was the first time since 1971 that Indian fighter jets crossed the LoC for such operations (Pant, 2019). Following these strikes, Pakistan retaliated by shooting down an Indian fighter jet and capturing its pilot, who was later released amid rising international scrutiny (Siddiqi, 2019).

The events surrounding the Pulwama attack significantly deteriorated diplomatic relations between India and Pakistan (Ganguly, 2020). India sought to internationally

isolate Pakistan by revoking its Most Favored Nation (MFN) trade status and imposing economic sanctions (Khurshid, 2023). Pakistan denied involvement in the attack and accused India of political exploitation while emphasizing its narrative regarding human rights violations in Kashmir (Fair, 2019).

The Kashmir conflict remains a volatile issue with potential for broader military confrontation due to both countries nuclear capabilities (Ahmed,2021). The aftermath of the Pulwama attack illustrated how quickly tensions can escalate into violence (Joshi & O'Donnell, 2022). Both countries continue to engage in a propaganda war, each seeking to shape domestic and international perceptions regarding their positions on Kashmir (Ahmed, 2021; Chaturvedi, 2020).

### **1.3 Takeover of Afghanistan by Taliban**

In August 2021, the Taliban's rapid assumption of power in Afghanistan triggered significant geopolitical transformations in South Asia, particularly affecting the complex relationship between India and Pakistan. This shift has profound implications for both countries security concerns, strategic interests, and diplomatic ties, necessitating a reassessment of their priorities and approaches to regional cooperation and conflict (Sahgal, 2021).

The Taliban initially seized power in Afghanistan in 1996, enforcing strict adherence to Sharia law until their regime was ousted by the US-led invasion in 2001 (Hussain, 2021). After decades of conflict, the withdrawal of US and NATO troops in 2021 culminated in the swift collapse of the Afghan government and the Taliban's return to power, marking a full circle in Afghanistan's tumultuous history (Hussain, 2021). Over the past two decades, India has invested over \$3 billion in Afghanistan, focusing on infrastructure development and education to foster a friendly government in Kabul and

counterbalance Pakistani influence (Pant, 2019). However, the Taliban's resurgence has significantly undermined India's strategic interests, reducing its influence in the region and complicating its diplomatic position (Sahgal, 2021). Unlike Pakistan, India lacks direct communication channels with the Taliban, hindering its ability to safeguard its interests in Afghanistan (Hussain, 2021).

On the other hand, Pakistan views the Taliban's return as a strategic achievement. A Taliban-led government in Kabul offers Pakistan "strategic depth" against India by curbing the influence of rival regional powers and enhancing its regional standing. This dynamic allows Pakistan to leverage its longstanding ties with the Taliban to expand its influence and advance its interests (Hussain, 2021).

The Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan precipitated a coordinated propaganda offensive between India and Pakistan, each seeking to influence regional and international perceptions through competing narratives. India's discursive strategy framed the development as exacerbating transnational terrorism and regional instability, while Pakistan's narrative construction emphasized strategic gains and positioned the state as an indispensable mediator in Afghan reconciliation processes (Sahgal, 2021). This exemplifies the growing centrality of information warfare in contemporary geopolitical contestation, where narrative control has become as consequential as traditional diplomatic or military instruments.

## 1.4 The Digital Transformation of India and Pakistan

### 1.4.1 India

With over 700 million active internet users as of 2023, India has solidified its position as the world's second-largest digital market after China (Kantar, 2023). This exponential growth, representing a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 13% since 2015, stems from multiple converging factors: the proliferation of affordable smartphones, drastically reduced data costs (from 3.50/GB in 2014 to 0.17/GB in 2023), and strategic government initiatives like Digital India and BharatNet (TRAI, 2023; World Bank, 2022). The internet penetration rate has surged from just 15% in 2015 to 48% in 2023, fundamentally altering communication patterns, information ecosystems, and socio-political engagement across urban and rural India (IAMAI & Kantar, 2023).

India's smartphone user base reached 450 million in 2023, making it the fastest-growing mobile-first economy globally (Counterpoint Research, 2023). This mobile revolution has propelled India to become the largest market for several social media platforms. Facebook leads with 350 million Indian users, followed by YouTube (325 million), WhatsApp (400 million), Instagram (230 million) and X (formerly Twitter) 27.25 users (Statista, 2023). These platforms have evolved into powerful tools for political mobilization, as evidenced by their instrumental role in election campaigns since 2014 (Pal et al., 2021). The 2019 general election saw political parties spend over ₹5,000 crore on digital campaigns, underscoring social media's transformative impact on Indian democracy (ADIF, 2023).

The digital entertainment sector has undergone particularly dramatic transformation. OTT platforms have experienced 400% growth since 2018, with Disney+

Hotstar leading at 50 million paid subscribers, followed by Amazon Prime Video (22 million) and Netflix (6 million) (Media Partners Asia, 2023). This boom is fueled by India's unique "mobile-only" users who constitute 75% of streaming audiences (BCG, 2022). Simultaneously, digital news consumption has skyrocketed, with 72% of urban Indians now preferring online news sources over traditional media (Reuters Institute, 2023). Major newspapers like The Times of India and Hindustan Times have successfully transitioned to digital-first models, leveraging AI-powered personalization and vernacular content (FICCI-EY, 2023).

This digital revolution presents both opportunities and challenges. While it has fostered economic growth (the digital economy contributed \$175 billion to GDP in 2022), concerns persist about digital divides, with female internet users still trailing males by 30% (NITI Aayog, 2023). Additionally, the rapid digitization has outpaced regulatory frameworks, particularly in areas of data privacy and content moderation (MeitY, 2023).

#### **1.4.2 Pakistan**

Pakistan's digital transformation began in the late 1990s with the introduction of internet services, primarily driven by the state-owned Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL) and the rollout of dial-up connectivity (Ahmed & Khan, 2018). This foundational phase marked the beginning of a paradigm shift in communication and information dissemination. The subsequent proliferation of mobile telephony, particularly smartphones, further accelerated digital media adoption. A critical milestone was achieved in 2014 when telecom operators launched 3G/4G services, significantly enhancing mobile internet accessibility and enabling broader digital content consumption (Riaz & Malik, 2020). By 2023, Pakistan's digital landscape had expanded dramatically, with 111 million internet users (representing 49% penetration) and 72 million active social media users (PTA, 2023; DataReportal, 2023).

This digital expansion has profoundly reshaped media consumption, positioning Pakistan among the top 10 global markets for social media engagement (Kemp, 2023). Platforms such as Facebook (40 million users), YouTube (35 million), TikTok (25 million), WhatsApp (70 million) and X (formerly Twitter) (4.7 million) dominate user activity, fueling demand for localized digital content (Gallup Pakistan, 2023). The entertainment sector has undergone a major disruption, with YouTube and local OTT platforms (e.g., UrduFlix, TapMad) gaining traction (Mahmood & Hassan, 2022). Consequently, a new ecosystem of content creators, influencers, and digital entrepreneurs has emerged, producing diverse media formats, including vlogs, podcasts, and web dramas.

Furthermore, the digitization of news media has revolutionized journalism. Traditional newspapers have transitioned to digital-first models, with platforms like Dawn.com, Geo News, and Samaa TV etc offering real-time updates, multimedia storytelling, and interactive engagement (Naz & Iqbal, 2020). This shift has expanded journalists' reach while necessitating adaptation to algorithm-driven news distribution and short-form content trends.

Pakistan's digital media evolution is characterized by exponential growth, innovation, and adaptive consumer behavior (Lok Sujag, 2022). From rudimentary dial-up internet to today's 5G-ready infrastructure, this transformation has redefined information access, social connectivity, and economic participation (PTA, 2023). However, challenges persist, including:

**1.4.2.1** Digital inequality – Rural-urban disparities in internet access (World Bank, 2022).

**1.4.2.2** Regulatory gaps – Unclear policies on data privacy and content moderation (DRF, 2023).

**1.4.2.3** Monetization hurdles – Limited revenue models for independent creators (Aurat Foundation, 2023).

## **1.5 Why Study X (formerly Twitter) for Digital Propaganda in India and Pakistan?**

X (formerly Twitter) is analyzed not for its general use but for its specific affordances that make it a premier platform for real-time propaganda. Its role as a hub for journalists, policymakers, and activists renders it a primary arena for narrative shaping (Woolley & Howard, 2019). Its algorithmic architecture—trending topics, underlying mechanisms and coordinated network—is a core component of this study, as these features are systematically exploited to enhance message penetration and virality (Rogers, 2020). The platform's transnational reach allows these campaigns to influence global discourse on Kashmir and Afghanistan, making it the optimal site for this investigation.

Pakistan and India have become significant hubs for X (formerly Twitter) adoption, particularly among urban, educated, and politically active demographics, with a combined user base exceeding 30 million (Statista, 2023). The platform has evolved into a critical medium for real-time news dissemination, social activism, and political engagement, cementing its role as a central arena for public discourse in South Asia.

The platform X (formerly Twitter) is central to this contest. Its architectural affordances—particularly its algorithmic amplification of engaging content, real-time brevity, and transnational reach—are not merely contextual but are actively exploited by state actors to enhance message penetration and virality (Rogers, 2020; Bradshaw & Howard, 2021). This research moves beyond a general platform critique to specifically

analyze how these features are weaponized within the Indo-Pakistan propaganda campaigns. While this study's focus on English-language content provides crucial insights into official state-backed discourse, it also acknowledges a limitation: the potential omission of nuanced domestic narratives circulating in Urdu, Hindi, Pashtu and other regional languages.

## **1.6 Statement of the Problem**

X (formerly Twitter) has emerged as a pivotal platform for political discourse and social engagement, providing a novel medium for propaganda dissemination that differs significantly from traditional outlets. The India-Pakistan geopolitical rivalry has increasingly played out in the digital sphere, where both countries leverage social media to shape public opinion, influence narratives, and advance their strategic interests. This phenomenon is particularly evident in contentious issues such as the Kashmir conflict and the Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan, which have become focal points for state-sponsored propaganda campaigns. While the role of digital propaganda in contemporary conflicts has gained recognition, there remains a need to systematically examine the distinct propaganda strategies, dominant attributes, thematic patterns, temporal trends, and virality and resonance of propaganda strategies employed by Indian and Pakistani officials on X (formerly Twitter). This context is important owing to the volatile security environment in South Asia, where viral state-backed narratives can exacerbate tensions, fuel nationalism, and even incite conflict. As digital propaganda becomes an increasingly potent tool of hybrid warfare, understanding its mechanisms is essential.

## 1.7 Significance of Study

Though many researchers have investigated the prevalence of propaganda both in the traditional media and social media realms, these studies are mainly qualitative in nature and focus on just few aspects of propaganda. There is a need for an empirical approach to examine its forms and patterns in different contexts for a more nuance understanding of its manifestation in strategic communication. Moreover, there is a lack of studies on comparative analysis to know whether the security nature of a conflict determines the intensity of propaganda or not. In this study, the researcher has conducted a comparative analysis of Indian and Pakistani official propaganda on X relating to Kashmir conflict (a territorial conflict) and the fall of Kabul to Taliban (a strategic conflict) to analyze the patterns of propaganda.

Studies on propaganda suggest that officials usually focus on few perspectives while engaging in propaganda. In this study, the researcher contributes to the literature by testing all the key strategies of propaganda to examine its dimension—whether the Indian and Pakistani officials adopt a unidimensional approach or engage in multi-perspectival approach. For this purpose, in this study, the researcher applied both computational content analysis and topic modelling for a thorough analysis into the dominant attributes of state-backed propaganda efforts, examining how existing power dynamics are both reinforced and challenged through digital means.

The study contributes to the existing literature by investigating the Indo-Pak propaganda through a time series analysis for the identification of temporal dimensions in strategies - how techniques evolve across different phases of conflict duration and intensity.

## **1.8 Objectives of the Study**

- 1.8.1** To analyze the key propaganda strategies deployed by Indian and Pakistani officials concerning geopolitical events in Kashmir and Afghanistan.
  
- 1.8.2** To examine the dominant attributes and characteristics present in state-affiliated propaganda disseminated via X (formerly Twitter).
  
- 1.8.3** To examine which specific propaganda technique demonstrate highest engagement metrics and virality potential.
  
- 1.8.4** To highlight the discursive regimes of Indian and Pakistani digital propaganda while uncovering recurrent topics and themes.

## **1.9 Research Questions and Hypothesis**

- RQ1.** What are the key strategies of propaganda produced by Pakistan and India officials on X (formerly Twitter) relating to events in Kashmir and Afghanistan?
  
- RQ2:** What Attributes of propaganda are produced by the selected actors in India and Pakistan on X (formerly Twitter) posts relating to Kashmir conflict and recapture of Afghanistan by Taliban?

RQ3: How have the propaganda strategies produced by the two countries in the selected events vary with the passage of time?

RQ4: Which distinct strategies of propaganda get more virality among audiences produced by the officials in Pakistan and India?

RQ5. What are the key themes and topics in the posts on X (formerly Twitter) produced by the Pakistani and India official accounts relating to events happening in Kashmir and Afghanistan?

RH1a: The Pakistani propaganda campaign on Taliban victory in Afghanistan is more authority-oriented than other strategies.

RH1b: The Indian propaganda campaign on Taliban victory in Afghanistan is more people-oriented than other strategies.

RH2a: The Pakistani propaganda campaign on Kashmir conflict is mainly characterized by appeal to authority than other strategies.

RH2b: The Indian propaganda campaign on Kashmir conflict is mainly characterized by associative transfer than other strategies.

## **1.10 Key terms definitions**

### **1.10.1 Information Warfare**

Information warfare is an operation conducted in order to gain an information advantage over the opponent.

### **1.10.2 Social Media**

Social media refers to online platforms that facilitate the creation, sharing, and aggregation of content among virtual communities and networks.

### **1.10.3 X (formerly Twitter)**

X (formerly Twitter) is a social media and microblogging platform where users share short messages known as "posts" (previously tweets), up to 280 characters.

#### **1.10.4 Hashtag**

A hashtag (#) is the way of linking posts on “social media” to the other posts on the same subject or trending topic.

#### **1.10.5 Reach**

Reach is a social media metric that indicates that how many people have seen a post.

#### **1.10.6 Targeting**

Targeting is defined as a social media advertising term that refers to selecting the potential audience for ads.

#### **1.10.7 Trending topic**

A trending topic is a subject or event that has a sudden surge in popularity on social media. Promoted trends, display time-context-, and even sensitive trends promoted by our advertisers. These appear at the top of trending topics list on X (formerly Twitter) and elsewhere on the platform, and are clearly marked as “Promoted”.

### **1.10.8 Propaganda Strategy**

A method that uses different types of communication skills creating an emotional call to accept a particular opinion or belief, to adopt a certain behavior or to perform a specific action. A number of techniques based on social psychological research are used to generate propaganda.

### **1.10.9 Follow**

Follow means the result of someone following your X (formerly Twitter) account. You can have many followers from your X (formerly Twitter) profile.

### **1.10.10 Mention**

Mentioning other accounts in a post by including the @ sign directly followed by the username is called a “mention”.

### **1.10.11 Trends**

A trend is a topic or hashtag determined to be one of the most popular on X (formerly Twitter) at that moment. You can use to choose to tailor Trends based on your locations and who you follow.

### **1.10.12 Post (n.)**

A basic post length (up to 280 characters) may contain text, photos, GIFs, and videos.

### **1.10.13 Repost (n.)**

A post that you forward to your followers is known as Repost. Often used to pass along news or other valuable discoveries on X (formerly Twitter). Reposts always retain original attribution.

### **1.10.14 Topics**

Topics are a way to see more of your interests on X (formerly Twitter) without having to follow individual accounts. With Topics we can personalize your experience with relevant posts, events and ads.

### **1.10.15 Social Network Analysis (SNA)**

Social network analysis (SNA) also known as network science, is a field of data analytics that uses networks and graph theory to understand social structures.

### **1.10.16 Algorithms**

In computer science, an algorithm is a set of instructions used by a computer to solve a specific problem or perform a particular task. It involves computing, calculations, or logic, and is typically expressed in software.

### **1.10.17 Natural Language Processing (NLPs)**

Natural Language Processing (NLP) is a subfield of artificial intelligence (AI) that focuses on enabling computers to understand, interpret, and generate human language. NLP combines insights from linguistics and computer science to develop algorithms that can analyze and generate human language.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### 2.1 History of Propaganda

The etymological and conceptual foundations of propaganda reveal its nature as an evolving but persistent instrument of organized persuasion. While its history, from the Catholic Church (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019) to its 20th-century secularization (Lasswell, 1927; Taylor, 1980), is instructive for showing how techniques adapt to new media, this study requires a precise definition tailored to its digital and geopolitical context. The conceptual shift from viewing propaganda as overtly manipulative (Ellul, 1965) to a more functionalist perspective (DeVito, 1986) is complicated in the digital age, where obfuscation is a primary tactic (Woolley & Howard, 2018).

To resolve the conceptual ambiguity and provide clarity for the empirical phase, this study operationally defines propaganda as: *the coordinated or state-aligned dissemination of strategically framed, often misleading, information through digital networks to shape public perception, advance a political agenda, and undermine adversaries*. This definition integrates the systematic nature of classical propaganda with the key affordances of digital platforms—coordination, obscuration, and targeted

dissemination—and is explicitly designed to guide the topic modelling and computational content analysis of data from X (formerly Twitter) in the subsequent empirical phase.

Contemporary scholarship has grappled with propaganda's persistent presence in modern societies despite concerted efforts to distance from its pejorative associations. McClung Lee's (1945) early observations about propaganda's infiltration into social and political institutions have been validated by subsequent research demonstrating its adaptation to new media environments (Benkler et al., 2018). The multidisciplinary nature of propaganda studies, as noted by Burnett (1989), has yielded rich insights into its role in historical framing, journalistic practice, and ideological formation. This cross-disciplinary engagement has been particularly valuable in unpacking how propaganda operates through complex media ecosystems to shape public discourse and social movements (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Zuboff, 2019).

The moral and definitional ambiguity surrounding propaganda constitutes a significant thread in academic discourse. While early 20th century scholarship often emphasized its manipulative and deceptive qualities (Ellul, 1965), more recent analyses have adopted a functionalist perspective that recognizes propaganda as value-neutral communication (DeVito, 1986). This conceptual shift has been accompanied by the proliferation of euphemistic terminology, with Kurtz (1998) documenting how terms like "spin" and "news management" serve to rebrand traditional propaganda techniques for contemporary audiences. The operationalization of propaganda in corporate and political spheres has further complicated its definition, as evidenced by research on public relations and strategic communication (Ewen, 1996; Moloney, 2006).

Methodologically, scholars have emphasized the importance of historicizing propaganda research to counteract presentist biases (Williams, 1977). Bauer (2018) and Nadler (2019) demonstrate how historical contextualization provides essential frameworks for analyzing modern propaganda, revealing both continuities and innovations in its application. This longitudinal perspective is particularly valuable for

understanding how propaganda techniques have adapted to technological changes while maintaining core principles of mass persuasion (Wu, 2016; Woolley & Howard, 2018).

The literature consistently underscores propaganda's dual nature as both a historical constant and an evolving phenomenon. Its transformation from religious tool to political instrument to digital-age information operation reflects broader societal changes in communication technologies and power structures (Benkler, 2006). Current research emphasizes the need for critical media literacy to navigate contemporary propaganda landscapes, with scholars advocating for educational approaches that equip citizens to recognize and resist manipulative information campaigns (Hobbs, 2020; Mihailidis & Viotty, 2017). This research work collectively demonstrates how propaganda remains a central concern for understanding power, communication, and society in the 21st century.

## **2.2 Definitions**

In recent years, propaganda has re-emerged as a critical subject of debate in both public discourse and academic scholarship, particularly in the context of modern propaganda warfare (Woolley & Howard, 2016; Wardle, 2018; Guess, Nagler, & Tucker, 2019). Efforts to refine its definition and operationalize its empirical manifestations have been central to contemporary research (Woolley & Howard, 2019). The *Oxford English Dictionary* frames propaganda as “the systematic communication of biased or misleading information to promote a political cause or viewpoint,” yet scholars acknowledge its conceptual complexity. Pratkanis and Aronson (2001) expand this understanding, characterizing propaganda as a communicative strategy that employs symbols, psychological mechanisms, and emotional appeals to shape public attitudes and behaviors.

Further delineating its functions, Coombs and Nimmo (1993) argue that propaganda operates dually—as an elite instrument for opinion manipulation and as a discursive mechanism in political, advertising, and marketing contexts. This duality underscores its adaptability across different sociopolitical environments. Szanto (1978) further categorizes propaganda into *agitative* forms, which incite action, and *integrative* forms, which reinforce ideological compliance. Such typologies highlight the multifaceted nature of propaganda, demonstrating its capacity to both mobilize and pacify audiences depending on strategic objectives.

The advent of digital technologies has transformed propaganda's dissemination mechanisms, giving rise to *digital propaganda*—defined as the strategic deployment of algorithms, automation, and human curation to propagate misleading information across social media platforms (Woolley & Howard, 2018). Unlike traditional propaganda, which often relied on overt messaging and state-controlled media, digital propaganda thrives within the decentralized and interactive nature of online communication. This evolution has enabled unprecedented scalability and micro-targeting, allowing malicious actors to exploit cognitive biases and filter bubbles (Guess et al., 2019).

The study of digital propaganda intersects with related concepts such as *influence operations*, *perception management*, and *information warfare*. Influence operations, for instance, employ propaganda techniques to manipulate the emotions and behaviors of target populations, as seen in the India-Pakistan social media clashes following the 2019 Pulwama attack (Kaur & Kaur, 2020). Similarly, *perception management*—a key component of information warfare—seeks to shape public attitudes in ways that advance strategic objectives (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019).

### 2.3 Theoretical and Conceptual Foundations of Propaganda

Propaganda has been variably conceptualized—as a sociological phenomenon (Ellul, 1965), a form of ideological persuasion (Althusser, 2014), or a strategic communication tool (Taylor, 2003). Ellul (1965, p. xv) emphasized propaganda's role in shaping societal beliefs, arguing that it thrives in modern, media-saturated environments. Meanwhile, Althusser (2014) revisited ideology as "the science of ideas," positioning propaganda as a mechanism for ideological dissemination.

A key challenge in contemporary propaganda research is source attribution, particularly in disguised or state-sponsored campaigns. Researchers must examine the "apparent ideology, purpose, and context of the propaganda message" while asking, *Who benefits most?* (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019). For instance, in India-Pakistan digital propaganda wars, while direct state involvement is often opaque, geopolitical tensions and reports like the EU DisinfoLab (2019) findings suggest strategic disinformation campaigns.

The study of propaganda has evolved significantly since its early 20th-century formulations, shaped by historical developments in media, politics, and technology. The foundational theories of propaganda emerged in response to the mass communication landscape of the time, emphasizing state-controlled messaging and psychological influence. Harold Lasswell's (1927) behaviorist approach framed propaganda as a unidirectional tool of elite persuasion, focusing on message effects rather than audience agency. This perspective was later refined by the Institute for Propaganda Analysis (1937), which identified seven core techniques—name-calling, glittering generalities, transfer, testimonial, plain folks, card-stacking, and bandwagon—that remain relevant in modern discourse (Goss, 2013).

The post-World War II era witnessed significant theoretical developments. Löwenthal and Guterman (1949) introduced psychological dimensions, analyzing how

propaganda exploited emotional predispositions shaped by social conditions. Jacques Ellul's (1965) sociological perspective marked a paradigm shift, framing propaganda not merely as discrete messages but as an essential feature of technological society that permeates all social institutions. This period also saw the emergence of critical approaches that examined propaganda's structural foundations, culminating in Herman and Chomsky's (1988) propaganda model. Their analysis of "five filters" (including media ownership and advertising) provided a political-economic framework for understanding systemic media biases (Pedro-Carañana et al., 2018).

As media environments evolved, scholars grappled with propaganda's conceptual boundaries. The late 20th century saw renewed interest in ideology's role, with Althusser's (2014) reinterpretation of Destutt de Tracy's "science of ideas" informing analyses of how propaganda disseminates ideological constructs. Simultaneously, researchers began questioning traditional transmission models, with Peters (1999) advocating for historical approaches that could "configure the past to find points of rendezvous" with contemporary phenomena.

The 21st century's digital revolution has necessitated a fundamental re-examination of propaganda to theory, particularly in the context of state-sponsored information warfare. Scholarship on digital propaganda emphasized technological affordances—such as algorithmic amplification (Woolley & Howard, 2018), bot networks (Ferrara et al., 2016), and microtargeting (Zuiderveen Borgesius et al., 2018)—often at the expense of analyzing communicative continuities with classical propaganda techniques (Zuboff, 2019). However, studies have demonstrated that while dissemination mechanisms have evolved, core propaganda strategies remain persistent.

State-sponsored digital propaganda has become a cornerstone of modern geopolitical strategy, with nations leveraging social media platforms to manipulate public opinion, sow discord, and assert ideological dominance. Studies reveal that Chinese state-backed accounts often mimic journalistic tones to lend credibility while disseminating pro-Beijing narratives (King et al., 2017). China's propaganda apparatus has shifted from

crude censorship sophisticated influence operations, employing coordinated inauthentic behavior (CIB) on Twitter/X, YouTube, and Facebook (Bradshaw & Howard, 2019). Similarly, states increasingly exploit encrypted messaging (WhatsApp, Telegram) and ephemeral content (Instagram Stories, Snapchat) to evade detection (Bradshaw et al., 2021). India's IT Cell, for instance, has been linked to WhatsApp rumor campaigns inciting violence (Banerjee, 2023). Studies also reveal that rather than direct state involvement, governments now outsource propaganda to third-party influencers, think tanks, and hacktivists (Chaturvedi, 2023). While early digital propaganda studies focused on computational propaganda (Woolley & Howard, 2018), recent scholarship calls for a return to ideological and rhetorical analysis (Marwick & Lewis, 2021). The India-Pakistan case illustrates that narrative consistency, emotional appeal, and identity polarization remain central—suggesting that propaganda theory must integrate both medium and message.

Theoretical foundations from Ellul (1965) on sociological permeation, Herman & Chomsky (1988) on political-economic filters, and recent computational research (Woolley & Howard, 2018) are not treated in parallel but are synthesized into a multi-layered analytical framework. This framework posits that digital propaganda is not a new phenomenon but the adaptation of enduring strategies to a new technological environment.

The 'propaganda strategies' concept is thus unified into a typology where classic techniques (e.g., the IPA's name-calling, card-stacking) are executed through modern digital affordances (coordinated human influencers and algorithms) and are framed within South Asian-specific narratives (e.g., territorial claims, accusations of terrorism). A key insight from global cases—such as Russian astroturfing (Tolz & Hutchings, 2023), Chinese coordinated inauthentic behavior (Bradshaw & Howard, 2019), and ISIS's cyber jihad (Mitts, 2017)—is one of the few examples that state-led campaigns leverage digital coordination to create an illusion of organic consensus, a technique directly applicable to and expected in the Indo-Pak context. This provides the necessary analytical bridge between global theory and the South Asian case.

Propaganda's conceptual and theoretical foundations remain vital for analyzing modern digital information warfare. By examining how core techniques persist—yet adapt—to new media ecologies, scholars can develop more nuanced frameworks for understanding state-sponsored campaigns, algorithmic manipulation, and networked persuasion. This study advocates for a dialectical approach, where historical theories inform contemporary analysis, ensuring both theoretical rigor and practical utility in combating digital propaganda.

## **2.4 Propaganda in South Asia**

The rivalry between India and Pakistan, rooted in the 1947 partition, has evolved into a multifaceted conflict encompassing military confrontations and propaganda warfare (Sumeera & Zafar, 2021). Advances in information and communication technologies have amplified this dynamic, enabling both nations to manipulate media narratives to undermine each other's international standing (Zafar, 2021). The media in both countries has played a critical role in exacerbating tensions, with scholars debating whether it introduces new conflict dimensions (Madiratta, 2014) or merely inflames existing hostilities (Khalid, 2014). The strategic use of media in conflict is further evidenced by the Taliban's successful propaganda campaigns in Afghanistan, which mobilized public support during their resurgence (Thomas, 2021).

A historical analysis of Indo-Pak wars (1948–1999) by Iqbal and Shabir Hussain highlights how Pakistani print media frequently prioritized nationalism over journalistic objectivity. Their study identifies shifting discourse patterns, particularly in portrayals of the United Nations and religious rhetoric post-1965, filling a gap in literature by tracing narrative evolution across conflicts. Similarly, Indian media has been implicated in propagating war hysteria, particularly through anti-Pakistan rhetoric that frames the country as a hub of militancy (Chandrashekhar, 2019; Khan, 2016). Following the 2019

Pulwama attack, Indian outlets disseminated unverified claims of military successes, later debunked by international agencies like Reuters (Scarr, 2019; Dawn, 2019). This trend extends to Kashmir, where Indian media promoted the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A as beneficial despite lacking credible evidence of normalized conditions (The Economic Times, 2019; Rajgarhia, 2020).

Amir Hamza's (2021) study on the fall of Kabul examines Pakistani (Geo News, PTV News) and Afghan (TOLO News) media coverage, revealing divergent framing strategies. While Pakistani channels emphasized elite perspectives, TOLO News incorporated grassroots voices, offering a more nuanced narrative. Notably, none addressed counterterrorism—a striking omission given Pakistan's history with extremism. This underscores media's power in shaping crisis perceptions and policy responses.

Research on the 2019 Pulwama attack demonstrates this shift, revealing the complex interplay of state-aligned actors, bots, and troll farms in manipulating public discourse (Hussain et al., 2021; Kaur & Kaur, 2020). This creates a "mirror conflict" (Shahzad & Saud, 2021) where both countries employ reciprocal, digitally supercharged framing strategies, leveraging global platforms like X (formerly Twitter) to internationalize their narratives and shape perception abroad, as seen in campaigns to portray the other as a state sponsor of militancy (Machado et al., 2020). This study now moves beyond reiterating this history to interrogate how digital affordances fundamentally alter these dynamics.

Collectively, these studies demonstrate how India and Pakistan weaponize propaganda to sway public opinion, particularly on Kashmir and Afghanistan. State-sponsored media campaigns reinforce adversarial narratives, necessitating critical analysis of propaganda warfare and its underlying mechanisms. Addressing research gaps in analyzing propaganda strategies is essential to mitigating their polarizing effects and fostering informed discourse.

## 2.5 Propaganda in Digital Platforms

Social media platforms—including Facebook, WhatsApp, Instagram, TikTok, and X (formerly Twitter)—have become central to information dissemination while simultaneously serving as instruments of fifth-generation warfare. Beyond facilitating communication, these platforms enable the rapid spread of disinformation, propaganda, and divisive narratives designed to incite societal chaos (Azad, 2020). This dual function necessitates an examination of social media not merely as communication tools but as battlegrounds for ideological influence and psychological manipulation.

The efficacy of digital propaganda often depends on centralized networks where key individuals act as ideological hubs, leveraging automated bots to amplify their messages (Guarino et al., 2020). On X (formerly Twitter), clustering behavior among like-minded users facilitates the viral spread of disinformation, allowing propaganda to gain traction rapidly (Caldarelli et al., 2020, p. 2). Notably, the influence of such networks extends beyond ideologically aligned audiences; even peripheral individuals can be affected without endorsing the underlying narratives (Prier, 2017, p. 58). A striking example is the "astroturfing" tactics employed by QAnon conspiracy theorists, who functioned as central nodes within a broader movement, demonstrating how propaganda can permeate wider audiences (Dilley, Welna, & Foster, 2022, p. 8).

Terrorist organizations have also exploited social media for propaganda. During the 2013 Westgate mall attack in Kenya, Al-Shabaab used X (formerly Twitter) to claim responsibility, provide real-time updates, and sustain public engagement throughout the siege (Mair, 2016). The platform facilitated interactions between attackers, officials, and civilians, highlighting its role in crisis communication (Simon et al., 2014). Sullivan (2014) observed that Al-Shabaab's performative messaging aimed to sway local sentiment, while Mair (2016) emphasized how the group-controlled narratives to amplify extremist rhetoric.

State and non-state actors alike employ propaganda to manipulate public opinion, with nations such as Russia, Iran, North Korea, and China leveraging social media for geopolitical influence (Ferrara, 2020, p. 11). Tolz and Hutchings (2023) analyzed Russian disinformation during the Ukraine invasion, revealing how distorted historical narratives were weaponized to delegitimize Ukrainian sovereignty. Similarly, Iran and China have deployed bot networks and coordinated campaigns—Iran to shape discourse on Saudi Arabia (Kießling et al., 2020) and China to assert dominance in the South China Sea (Nip & Sun, 2022). DiResta et al. (2021) further documented the diversification of influence operations in the MENA region, underscoring social media's role in advancing geopolitical agendas.

The rise of ISIS marked a turning point in digital propaganda, with its "cyber jihad" campaign radicalizing global youth through platforms like X (formerly Twitter) (Mitts, 2017). By disseminating graphic content and extremist ideology, ISIS competed with state narratives for dominance (Singer & Brooking, 2018). This phenomenon compelled states to recognize social media as a critical domain in modern warfare.

Contemporary propaganda adapts traditional techniques—exploiting emotions, symbols, and stereotypes—to the digital age, where algorithmic amplification and automation accelerate dissemination (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2018; Woolley & Howard, 2018). Hyena (2021) notes that modern influence operations integrate bots, big data, and targeted messaging to shape discourse subtly. Despite technological advancements, the core objective remains unchanged: manipulating perception for ideological ends (Woolley, 2022).

The internet's democratization allows virtually anyone to produce and circulate propaganda (Patrikarakos, 2017). X (formerly Twitter), in particular, remains a pivotal arena for shaping narratives around conflicts and political events, ensuring its continued use by states, interest groups, and adversarial entities—including India and Pakistan—in the struggle for narrative control.

## 2.6 Digital Propaganda in South Asia

Digital propaganda has emerged as a defining feature of contemporary conflict, with the South Asian digital landscape between India and Pakistan transforming into a critical arena for information warfare. Mearsheimer and Walt's (2006) framework of hybrid warfare elucidates how Pakistan has faced coordinated media campaigns, where India's strategic alliances with Western powers have facilitated global narrative manipulation. This phenomenon is particularly evident in India's systematic efforts to internationally portray Pakistan as a state sponsor of militancy through sophisticated media operations (Machado, Alaphilippe, & Adamczyk, 2020).

Theoretical perspectives from propaganda studies (Oh et al., 2011) provide critical lenses for understanding these dynamics, emphasizing how states weaponize narratives to achieve political objectives and manufacture consent. Within this framework, social media platforms have become indispensable tools for both state and non-state actors to amplify ideological messages and shape perceptual realities.

This study theorizes that the security context of a geopolitical event is a primary determinant of a state's digital propaganda strategy. It tests this proposition through a comparative case study of two pivotal events in the Indo-Pak rivalry: the protracted conflict in Kashmir and the sudden Fall of Kabul in August 2021.

The framework predicts divergent strategies based on the event's temporal nature. For a prolonged, simmering conflict like Kashmir, the theory anticipates the use of integrative propaganda (Szanto, 1978). This strategy is characterized by a sustained, low-tempo campaign designed to achieve long-term ideological compliance. Its objectives are to normalize territorial claims, reinforce national identity, and secure a baseline of domestic and international support through persistent historical narratives and

identity politics. The digital output is predicted to be a constant, steady stream of content aimed at gradual persuasion and normalization.

Conversely, for a sudden, high-impact event like the Fall of Kabul, the framework predicts agitative and reactive propaganda (Szanto, 1978). This strategy is bursty and highly coordinated, aimed at rapid opportunity-seizing in a volatile information environment. The primary objectives are to capitalize on chaos to establish a dominant narrative, shift blame, and manage the perception of a major strategic shift before counter-narratives can coalesce. Digitally, this would manifest as a massive, short-term surge in coordinated activity across platforms.

By moving beyond the mere identification of propaganda and toward a comparative analysis of its strategic variation, this study offers a more nuanced understanding of digital statecraft. It provides a structured framework for analyzing how rival countries like India and Pakistan tailor their information operations to specific geopolitical contexts, thereby contributing to the broader fields of propaganda's research and security studies.

By arguing that digital propaganda is the evolution—not the replacement—of traditional techniques and by applying a framework derived from global research to the specific empirical context of Indo-Pak rivalry, this study provides a cohesive and targeted foundation for analyzing state-led propaganda campaigns on X (formerly Twitter) surrounding the divergent events in Kashmir and Afghanistan.

While traditional media's role in Indo-Pak propaganda has been well-documented (Iqbal & Hussain, 2018; Seth, 2016), a significant research gap persists regarding social media's underlying mechanism and latent narratives on this decades-old information war. This lacuna calls for empirical comparative studies examining the evolving strategies, thematic patterns, and network dynamics of digital propaganda in the region, which would provide crucial insights into 21st century information warfare paradigms.

## CHAPTER 3

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 3.1 Theoretical Foundations of Propaganda: From Classical Theories to Digital Dynamics

The systematic study of propaganda emerged in the early 20th century, shaped by the aftermath of World War I and the rise of mass communication technologies. Harold Lasswell's (1927) seminal definition of propaganda as "*the management of collective attitudes by the manipulation of significant symbols*" established its theoretical foundation, framing it as a strategic tool for shaping public perception. His analysis of WWI propaganda identified key mechanisms—such as demonizing adversaries, reinforcing national unity, and controlling information flows—that remain relevant in modern discourse (Lasswell, 1927; 1951).

Building on Lasswell's work, Walter Lippmann (1922) introduced a psychological lens, arguing that public opinion is mediated through symbolic representations rather than direct experience. His concept of the "*manufacture of consent*" highlighted how elites and media institutions could engineer societal

perceptions—a precursor to Herman and Chomsky's (1988) later "*propaganda model*" of media control.

A pivotal contribution to propaganda analysis came from the Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA, 1937), which identified seven core techniques: name-calling (discrediting opponents with labels), glittering generalities (emotionally appealing but vague slogans), transfer (associating ideas with revered symbols), testimonial (endorsements by authority figures), plain folks (posing as relatable to gain trust), card stacking (selective presentation of facts), and bandwagon (urging conformity through peer pressure). Originally applied to print and radio propaganda, these techniques have demonstrated remarkable adaptability in the digital age, where they are amplified by algorithmic targeting and viral dissemination (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2018; Hussain et al., 2020).

The transition from traditional mass media to digital platforms has fundamentally transformed propaganda dissemination, creating what scholars' term "computational propaganda" (Woolley & Howard, 2018). This evolution is characterized by three key dimensions: the unprecedented speed of information diffusion, the global scale of potential reach, and the profound societal impacts enabled by algorithmic amplification (Bradshaw et al., 2020). Contemporary propaganda leverages sophisticated technological tools including automated bot networks, artificial intelligence systems, and microtargeting algorithms to manipulate public opinion with previously unimaginable precision (Howard et al., 2020).

Lasswell's early theoretical contributions remain particularly insightful for understanding these developments. His empirical analyses of propaganda content and effects pioneered the methodological approach of systematic content analysis (Rogers, 1994). Furthermore, his integration of behaviorist and Freudian psychological frameworks anticipated contemporary understandings of cognitive vulnerabilities in information processing (Lasswell, 1951). The theoretical tension between Lippmann's (1922) elite-driven "manufacture of consent" and Lasswell's more technologically

deterministic perspective continues to inform debates about agency and structure in digital propaganda research.

These developments necessitate updated theoretical frameworks that integrate classical propaganda theory with digital affordances. While Lasswell's and the IPA's principles remain relevant, modern propaganda operates within decentralized, participatory networks, where users unwittingly amplify state-sponsored narratives through shares and likes (Marwick & Lewis, 2017).

The ongoing information warfare between India and Pakistan on social media platforms, particularly X (formerly Twitter), constitutes a critical case study for examining the convergence of classical propaganda frameworks with digital computational tools. This geopolitical digital theater demonstrates how state-aligned actors systematically deploy hybridized strategies that integrate established propaganda techniques (Lasswell, 1927; IPA, 1937) with advanced digital manipulation methods, resulting in sophisticated, multi-platform influence operations.

This research situates contemporary propaganda within its historical lineage while addressing its evolved digital mechanisms. By synthesizing Lasswell's symbolic management, the IPA's taxonomy, and computational propaganda studies, it proposes a nuanced framework for analyzing propaganda strategies in the algorithmic age.

Two particularly distinct manifestations of this phenomenon emerge in: (1) the protracted Kashmir territorial dispute and (2) the 2021 Taliban resurgence in Afghanistan. These cases serve as empirical exemplars, illustrating both the enduring relevance of traditional persuasive strategies and their evolving digital iterations within contemporary information ecosystems. A systematic analysis reveals three critical dimensions of modern computational propaganda: the continued efficacy of classical techniques when amplified through algorithmic distribution; the emergence of platform-native tactics including AI-generated content and bot-driven trend manipulation; and the

development of complex feedback loops between orchestrated messaging and organic user engagement. This study interrogates the analytical utility of traditional propaganda theory—particularly its canonical techniques—in deciphering these hybridized, digitally mediated influence campaigns. By situating legacy frameworks within the computational propaganda paradigm, the research assesses the extent to which mid-20th-century models retain explanatory power amid the affordances of AI, big data, and platformized dissent.

Methodologically, this research employs a multi-level analytical framework that bridges macrostructural examination of information diffusion patterns (including propaganda cascades, thematic patterns) with micro-level investigation (propaganda strategies, social network analysis) of key official actors. The Kashmir conflict and the Taliban recapture of Afghanistan reveals competing narrative frameworks constructed to instrumentalize geopolitical developments for domestic and international opinion shaping.

This research bridges two critical gaps in propaganda studies - (1) It demonstrates how classical techniques like *name-calling*, plain folks, transfer, and *bandwagon etc.* persist in digital forms and (2) it advocates for mixed-method approaches—combining computational analysis with traditional propaganda studies—to detect evolving tactics.

These studies contribute significantly to theoretical understandings of computational propaganda by demonstrating: (1) the mutability of traditional propaganda frameworks in digital contexts, (2) the platform-dependent nature of contemporary influence operations, and (3) the emergent properties of participatory propaganda ecosystems. The study ultimately argues for an integrated analytical approach that accounts for both the psychological continuities of classical propaganda and the transformative effects of digital mediation on geopolitical communication strategies.

This examination contributes to ongoing scholarly conversations by bridging historical propaganda theory with contemporary digital media research. It demonstrates both the continuities in persuasive communication strategies across media epochs and the significant transformations brought about by digital technologies. The findings underscore the urgent need for interdisciplinary approaches to understanding and countering modern propaganda, combining insights from political communication, media studies, computer science, and cognitive psychology.

### **3.2 Propaganda in the New World Order: The Growing Significance of Formal Sources of Propaganda**

Academic interest in media as instruments of statecraft has grown substantially since the 1970s, particularly regarding wartime communication (Jowett & O'Donnell, 1992). Contemporary scholarship has moved beyond viewing media as mere information channels to recognizing their active role in constructing public perception in service of state objectives. This paradigm shift is exemplified by Cold War-era media systems, which served as ideological battlegrounds between capitalist and communist blocs (Galtung & Vincent, 1992). While numerous scholars have examined media's propagandistic functions (Ellul, 1965; Schechter, 2003), Herman and Chomsky's (1988) Propaganda Model remains the most comprehensive framework for analyzing institutionalized propaganda in democratic societies.

Recent theoretical refinements to the Propaganda Model (Goss, 2013; Pedro-Carañana et al., 2018) and emerging digital propaganda research (Zuboff, 2019) have yet to adequately address fundamental definitional questions about propaganda's communicative nature. The digital information ecosystem has introduced new complexities, from algorithmically-amplified disinformation to sophisticated influence campaigns, blurring traditional boundaries between propaganda and other communication forms. This conceptual ambiguity is compounded by the rise of

behavioral "nudging" techniques (Thaler & Sunstein, 2008) that prioritize direct behavioral modification over classical persuasion, creating theoretical overlaps requiring scholarly resolution.

Lasswell's (1927) foundational work established propaganda as the strategic manipulation of culturally significant symbols to shape perceptions and behaviors. This conceptualization highlights propaganda's intentional nature and its critical role in conflict situations (Scriver, 2015). However, contemporary discourse reveals problematic asymmetries in propaganda's application - typically reserved for adversarial communications while sympathetic messaging is framed as public relations or civic information (Hassan, 2020). This terminological bias obscures objective analysis of propaganda mechanisms across political systems.

Castells' (2000) concept of "information societies" provides crucial context for understanding propaganda's digital evolution. Twenty-first century propaganda increasingly employs propaganda strategies designed to foster epistemic uncertainty and social fragmentation (Hodges, 2018). Technological advancements have created globalized yet polarized communication ecosystems where digital propaganda thrives (Woolley & Howard, 2016). While computational tools like social media algorithms and autonomous bots have enhanced propaganda's precision and scalability (Bolsover & Howard, 2017), they represent evolutionary improvements to propaganda's core function: the strategic manipulation of public perception through symbolic communication.

The contemporary propaganda landscape is characterized by three key developments: the institutionalization of propaganda through formal state and corporate channels, the weaponization of digital platforms as propaganda distribution systems, and the normalization of propaganda techniques in everyday political communication. These transformations demand updated methodological and theoretical frameworks that account for both the democratization of propaganda tools and their increasing centralization among powerful institutional actors. The resulting "New World Order" of propaganda represents a paradox - while more actors can produce propaganda, formal sources enjoy unprecedented advantages in resources, reach, and legitimacy.

### 3.3 The Current Study

This study undertakes a systematic examination of digital propaganda through the dual lenses of strategic deployment and contextual adaptation. Moving beyond mere descriptive analysis, the study employs a theoretically-informed approach to: (1) identify dominant operational attributes and principal actors; (2) trace temporal patterns in propaganda dissemination; (3) assess the virality metrics and persuasive resonance of various techniques; and (4) map the thematic architecture of propaganda narratives. Recognizing that the cultural valence, security dimensions, and strategic implications of propaganda are contingent upon specific historical, political, diplomatic, and technological configurations, this research emphasizes the dialectical relationship between propagandistic strategies and their operational environments. Consequently, this research prioritizes empirical evaluation of *how* propaganda is operationalized and analyzed, and *what* themes or narratives content is propagated, moving beyond mere recognition of its existence.

To achieve these objectives, the study employs a mixed-method analytical framework, integrating supervised computational content analysis (for strategic categorization of already known propaganda techniques) and unsupervised topic modeling (for emergent theme detection). The focus centers on state-sponsored propaganda within the context of India-Pakistan information warfare, a contested arena where digital platforms amplify historical grievances and geopolitical tensions.

The theoretical framework synthesizes classical propaganda theory with contemporary digital communication scholarship. Grounded in the foundational works of Lasswell (1927), the Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA, 1937) and insights from Computational Propaganda theory (Woolley, S. C., & Howard, P. N. 2016), the study operationalizes ten key variables: the seven canonical propaganda techniques (name-

calling, glittering generalities, transfer, testimonial, plain folks, card stacking, and bandwagon) augmented with three additional techniques derived from empirical analysis of the data (fear appeal, loaded language, and appeal to authority). This synthesized typology of ten techniques forms the basis for the quantitative computational content analysis and qualitative topic modelling, allowing for the systematic classification of propaganda strategies and underlying themes.

However, for this study, the classical propaganda theories are not merely reviewed; they are integrated with computational propaganda scholarship (Woolley & Howard, 2018) to form a single, unified analytical lens specifically tailored to decode state-led propaganda campaigns on X (formerly Twitter) by India and Pakistan.

These techniques collectively align with Lasswell's model of communication as an instrument for opinion formation, providing an analytical lens to examine modern state-backed influence operations. Lasswell's model maps the propaganda ecosystem, while IPA techniques decode message mechanics and identifies how X (formerly Twitter) amplify IPA tactics and trending topics. By situating these historically rooted techniques within contemporary dynamics of algorithmic amplification and platform-mediated dissent, the framework effectively bridges mid-20th century theoretical constructs with current computational propaganda paradigms. This synthesis moves beyond a general history to argue that digital propaganda is a hybrid phenomenon: it executes enduring persuasive strategies through novel technological affordances. The explicit mapping of classical techniques to digital mechanism is crucial for the empirical coding of posts from the Kashmir conflict and fall of Kabul cases. Beyond formal state sources, it incorporates the concept of "participatory propaganda" (Marwick & Lewis, 2017), where organic users—whether willing ideologues or unwitting amplifiers—become critical nodes in the dissemination network, a factor particularly relevant to South Asia's highly engaged social media ecology. Furthermore, the study explicitly acknowledges its focus on English-language content on X (formerly Twitter), recognizing this frame the analysis around official, internationally-directed narratives rather than domestic, vernacular discourse—a deliberate methodological choice that

limits the scope but sharpens the focus on digital propaganda and international perception management.

In sum, this framework does not merely list theories. It constructs an integrate:

- 3.3.1** Fuses classical propaganda techniques with digital affordances.
- 3.3.2** Justifies the case comparison through the variable of security context.
- 3.3.3** Operationalizes these concepts for empirical coding on X (formerly Twitter).
- 3.3.4** Sets boundaries by focusing on state-aligned and English-language official discourse.

Harold Lasswell's propaganda theory and the Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA) techniques form a robust framework for analyzing digital propaganda when integrated. Lasswell's structural model identifies core components of communication, while IPA techniques dissect persuasive tactics, enabling a multi-layered analysis of modern digital campaigns. By maintaining rigorous methodological standards while adapting established theoretical constructs to novel communicative environments, this study aims to make three substantive contributions: (1) advancing scholarly understanding of how traditional propaganda techniques mutate in digital ecosystems; (2) developing an analytical and theoretical framework for detecting state-sponsored computational propaganda; and (3) informing evidence-based recommendations against information operations in contested geopolitical spaces. By maintaining rigorous methodological standards while applying an adapted theoretical construct, this study aims to contribute a nuanced understanding of how digital propaganda operates in one of the world's most volatile digital arenas, providing insights that are both academically robust and relevant for policy-oriented analysis.

## CHAPTER 4

### METHODOLOGY

**4.1** This study employed a computational approach using both supervised computational content analysis and unsupervised topic modeling to address the research questions. Computational content analysis is a method that utilized computer-based tools and algorithms to automate and enhance the analysis of various types of content such as text, images and audio. It integrates techniques from natural language processing (NLP), machine learning and text mining to extract meaning from large data sets (Barari & Eisend, 2024). This method was applied to analyze various attributes and characteristics of propaganda using a deductive approach. On the other hand, Unsupervised Topic modeling is a machine learning technique used to discover hidden thematic structures within a collection of documents, often referred to as "corpora" (Hong et al., 2011). This technique employs an inductive approach, allowing this researcher to extract and analyze the dominant themes and topics with datasets, such as those generated from X (formerly Twitter), in order to understand underlying narratives. It is particularly useful for examining millions of posts to track the progression of public discourse (Davison et al., 2011). This design was chosen to leverage the strengths of both deductive, theory-driven analysis (to identify predefined propaganda strategies) and inductive, data-driven exploration (to uncover emergent themes and narratives).

A critical and explicit limitation of this methodological scope is its focus on English-language, text-based propaganda from state-backed official X (formerly Twitter) accounts. This focus was a deliberate choice to analyze official and state-sponsored propaganda campaigns aimed at shaping global opinion, but it necessarily excludes domestic, vernacular-language discourse and multimodal content (e.g., images, memes), which are acknowledged as significant components of the broader information ecosystem.

## **4.2 Computational Content Analysis**

Computational content analysis (CCA) integrates various techniques by employing a natural language processing (NLP) approach. The programming language Python, along with libraries such as the Natural Language Toolkit (NLTK), offers robust tools for automating content analysis tasks (Bird et al., 2009). Through CCA, this study analyzes large volumes of textual data, enabling the extraction of meaningful insights from multiple accounts. This method not only enhances the efficiency of content analysis but also allows for the exploration of complex patterns and themes within the data, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of the strategies and underlying themes present in the corpus. CCA utilizes natural language processing (NLP) and machine learning to automate the analysis of large textual datasets, allowing for the systematic application of a predefined coding framework (Barari & Eisend, 2024). To mitigate the limitation of keyword reliance, the CCA was supplemented with manual validation and contextual analysis of sample posts. For the computational content analysis, this study adopted variables from existing propaganda literature.

The supervised CCA was designed to identify and quantify the use of specific propaganda strategies. The coding framework was built upon a synthesis of classical and modern propaganda theory, operationalizing ten distinct strategies (see section 4.9). The seven techniques defined by the Institute for Propaganda Analysis (1937) were translated

into modern digital contexts. These were augmented with three additional strategies prevalent in propaganda scholarship: Fear Appeal, Loaded Language, and Appeal to Authority.

Two datasets comprising English-language posts were compiled, totaling 34,055 posts collected over a period of one and a half years, from August 15, 2021, to January 14, 2023 relating to the Kashmir conflict and the recapturing of Afghanistan by Taliban (*see Appendix "A" for more information about the datasets*). This timeframe encapsulated critical developments in the region, including the deteriorating situation in Afghanistan following the Taliban's takeover and the escalation of incidents related to the Kashmir conflict. The geopolitical climate during this period, characterized by heightened tensions between India and Pakistan—two nuclear-armed countries—was influenced by various political, security, and domestic events, particularly in Kashmir and Afghanistan post-U.S. withdrawal. To secure their strategic objectives, governments of India and Pakistan engaged in intensive propaganda campaigns.

The study identified eight key government officials and media from both India and Pakistan as primary stakeholders. This included influential figures such as the *Prime Minister (PM), President, Foreign/External Affairs Minister, Defence Minister, Foreign Office /Ministry of External Affairs Spokesperson, High Commission(s) of India and Pakistan and Defence/Military Spokesperson*, as well as prominent news agencies such as *Asian News International (ANI)* and *the Associated Press of Pakistan (APP)* as significant stakeholders (*see Table 1 for more information*).

### **4.3 Data Collection**

The data collection for this study involved the systematic retrieval of social media posts from the platform X (formerly Twitter) using API calls. A total of thirty-

four thousand fifty-five (34,055) posts were collected from the official accounts of government officials and prominent news agencies in India and Pakistan. The data scraping process was conducted using Python, as outlined by Perktold et al. (2010), ensuring a robust and efficient method for data acquisition.

The study utilized both real-time and search APIs to compile a comprehensive dataset covering the period from August 15, 2021, to January 14, 2023. The selection criteria for data retrieval focused on posts that originated from official X (formerly Twitter) handles in India and Pakistan, specifically targeting content that included the keywords "Kashmir" and "Afghanistan." Additionally, the dataset was enriched by incorporating one or more of 49 popular hashtags related to the Taliban's recapture of Afghanistan and 80 hashtags concerning the Kashmir conflict (*see Appendix "A" for detailed information about keywords and hashtags*). Furthermore, the dataset included 250 user mentions pertaining to the Taliban's recapture of Afghanistan and 600 user mentions related to the Kashmir conflict (*see Appendices "B" and "C" for more information*). The use of hashtags and keywords is acknowledged as a limitation that may miss subtler, non-tagged propaganda; however, the census approach within these official accounts ensures the capture of all their overt, campaign-related messaging.

This comprehensive approach allowed for a nuanced understanding of the discourse surrounding these critical geopolitical issues. It is important to note that only posts in the English language were included in the analysis to maintain consistency and relevance within the context of the study. The rationale behind the chosen keywords, hashtags, and user mentions is elaborated in *Appendix D*, which also discusses the limitations encountered during the data collection process. This systematic collection of data from X (formerly Twitter) serves as a foundation for analyzing the key strategies, temporal trends, topics and themes expressed by officials and media in India and Pakistan regarding the significant issues of Kashmir and Afghanistan, contributing to a broader understanding of the regional dynamics at play.

#### 4.4 Data Processing

Different natural language processing (NLP) techniques were employed to preprocess the posts data and extract meaningful information (As shown in Table 2). In this regard, the first step was data cleansing, which involved removing elements that were not relevant to word frequency analysis. Common data cleansing steps performed in this study included removal of X (formerly Twitter) usernames (e.g., "@narendramodi") from the text because they often did not convey meaningful information for word frequency analysis. Similarly, URLs or web links (e.g., "https://twitter.com/narendramodi/status/1426774269376176128") were also eliminated from the text because they typically did not contribute to word frequency analysis and could be distracting.

After data cleansing, the scholar proceeded with text preprocessing to make the text more amenable for analysis. This involved several key steps. Firstly, this researcher tokenized the text in the 'Posts', which involved splitting the text into individual words or tokens. Tokenization was necessary to prepare the text for further processing and analysis. Afterwards the punctuation marks, special characters, and numbers from the tokens were removed. This step ensured that words could be counted accurately and that similar words with different punctuation marks were not counted as distinct words, which could skew the analysis.

In the next step, text was converted to lowercase. This ensured case insensitivity, so "India" and "india" were treated as the same word, preventing the analysis from considering them as separate entities. Finally, lemmatization, a linguistic process was employed by the researcher, to reduce words to their base or dictionary form, known as the lemma. For example, "running", "ran" and "runs" were transformed to "run." Lemmatization was useful because it helped group different inflections of the same word together. To lemmatize the tokens, this study utilized a lemmatization library or tool like

NLTK (Natural Language Toolkit) in Python. The lemmatized tokens were then used for counting word frequencies, providing a more accurate representation of the text's content. The data processing steps were essential for cleaning and standardizing the text, which were necessary for subsequent analysis.

#### **4.5 X (formerly Twitter) Posts Distribution based on Word Frequency**

The next step was to identify the already defined propaganda strategies available in the posts of selected hashtags and keywords. In this regard, word frequencies were used to identify the most common words or phrases used by a particular X (formerly Twitter) account, which in turn provided insight into respective propaganda strategies. The word frequency analysis step involves identifying and counting the occurrences of words in the posts to categorize posts based on the frequency of specific words. This analysis was crucial to manually label and gain insights into the prevalent propaganda strategies found in the dataset. *(For details on word frequency analysis and list of variables, refer to Appendix "E" and "F").*

Next, these words lists were assigned to Python algorithms. The algorithm assigns the most prevalent category to each respective post in the raw post data. In cases where multiple categories share the same frequency, the algorithm selects the first encountered category from among those tied for the highest frequency (For further details, please refer to Table 3). This allowed for the quantitative analysis of strategy prevalence across the two datasets.

In this way, a total of 10,662 posts from India and 1,048 posts from Pakistan regarding the Taliban's recapture of Afghanistan, as well as 19,662 posts from India and 2,683 posts from Pakistan regarding the Kashmir conflict, were identified on X (formerly Twitter). These posts signified one or more strategies of propaganda.

Finally, to examine the distribution and prevalence of various categories within the dataset, a comprehensive analysis of posts categories was conducted. The study utilized the 'value\_counts' function to quantify the occurrences of each propaganda strategy, as detailed in Table 4, which outlines the data pre-processing steps for category analysis. This quantitative methodology provides an overview of category distribution, highlighting which strategies are most prominent within a specific campaign. This structured approach is consistent with findings from the digital propaganda project, which emphasizes how social media platforms facilitate the dissemination of narratives that align with particular agendas (Woolley & Howard, 2016). By calculating the percentage of each category—achieved by dividing the counts by the total number of posts—researchers gain a nuanced understanding of the contribution of each propaganda technique.

#### **4.6 Topic Modeling Approach**

Topic modeling, a natural language processing technique, is employed to automate the categorization of posts into distinct topics and themes, aiding in the extraction of meaningful insights (Davison, Hargreaves, & Williams, 2011; Hong, Lee, & Kim, 2011). Given the focus on India-Pakistan propaganda campaigns and the corresponding themes, topic modeling is of special and peculiar significance to this study. Topic modeling provided insights into how digital propaganda warfare campaigns have been conducted between India and Pakistan, showing the systematic way various actors disseminate polarizing content to influence public opinion.

#### 4.6.1 Pre-Processing

Preprocessing involves tokenization, removal of stop words, and lemmatization to enhance the efficiency of subsequent analysis. The elbow method was then applied, involving the iterative execution of the KMeans clustering algorithm with different values of K. This technique involves determining the most suitable number of topics (K) by evaluating the within-cluster sum of squares (WCSS) across different values of K. The objective is to identify the 'elbow' point in the WCSS plot, representing a balance between model complexity and its ability to explain the data. The Python programming language is leveraged for its versatile libraries, such as scikit-learn and gensim, facilitating the implementation of the elbow method and subsequent topic modeling. This research studies focused on the KMeans clustering algorithm, known for its simplicity and efficiency, in the elbow method application. The Latent Dirichlet Allocation (LDA) algorithm is then applied for topic modeling. This probabilistic model assigns topics to each post and words to each topic based on their observed co-occurrences (Blei et al., 2003). The optimal number of topics (K) for each dataset was determined using the elbow method on the within-cluster sum of squares (WCSS), a quantitative approach to justify topic count selection rather than arbitrary choice. The resulting topics were then validated and labeled by human coders to ensure thematic coherence and relevance. This process helped identify broader narratives and "coded language" that may not have been captured by the supervised analysis. The resulting topic distributions was analyzed, and the most probable words for each topic are extracted for interpretation. Topic models were trained with a total number of 10, 12, 11, and 15 topics, respectively, and the top 5 words were listed simultaneously for subsequent analysis (*for further details, see Tables 5,6,7 & 8*).

The analysis chapter presents in detail the identified topics, their associated words, and the distribution of topics across the dataset. Providing insights into the underlying topics and themes within the data, interpretation involves a qualitative analysis of the most probable words for each topic. Sample posts from each identified topic were manually reviewed to validate the coherence and relevance of the assigned

topics. Some minor changes were introduced to ensure the themes were meaningfully categorized and interpreted.

#### **4.6.2 Identifiable Prevalent Themes and Topics**

The detailed analysis of the data revealed distinct themes and topics across the two selected social media campaigns. Upon calculating the model for the complete dataset, the study employed human validation to classify 48 different themes, without excluding any topics categorized as background themes. Notably, the theme "Humanitarian Crisis and Solidarity in Afghanistan and Pakistan" accounted for 25% of the topics in the corpus, reflecting the Taliban's recapture of Afghanistan from Pakistan's perspective, with a K-value of 5. In contrast, the theme "Counter terrorism Operations in Kashmir" represented 17% of the corpus from India's perspective, with a K-value of 3. This disparity in theme occurrences and K-values underscores the differing priorities and concerns of Pakistan and India following the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan.

Additionally, the theme "Regional Dynamics and Security Cooperation" prominently features in Pakistan's approach to the Kashmir conflict, with a K-value of 9 and an occurrence rate of 16% in the corpus. This suggests that Pakistan perceives the resolution of the Kashmir issue as intrinsically linked to broader regional stability, particularly concerning Afghanistan. Conversely, India's perspective on the Kashmir conflict is encapsulated in the theme "*The Strategic Use of Information*," which has a K-value of 1 and an occurrence rate of 16% in the corpus. This theme reflects India's emphasis on information warfare and narrative management as strategies to assert its sovereignty over Kashmir and counter Pakistan's claims. The high occurrence rate indicates that India prioritizes the strategic framing of the Kashmir issue within international discourse, emphasizing its historical and legal claims while portraying Pakistan as a destabilizing force in the region. India's approach to the Kashmir conflict is characterized by a robust utilization of media and diplomatic channels to shape

perceptions and divert international attention. The results of the topic modeling reveal significant differences in the politico-diplomatic maneuvers and official stances of India and Pakistan (*see Tables 24, 25, 26, and 27 in the Analysis Chapter for detail information*).

### **4.6.3 Posts Topics**

Upon the successful application of topic modelling to the X (formerly Twitter) posts dataset, the next crucial step involves utilizing the obtained results to assign topics to individual posts. The essence of this process lies in associating each post with the most relevant topic identified during the modelling phase. This involved automatically categorizing posts into different categories based on their content. This can help identify the most common types of propaganda strategies by different actors in both the campaigns (*For details on Topic Frequencies, refer to Tables 9,10,11&12*). The following steps elucidate how the topic modelling results are effectively employed for posts distribution.

#### **4.6.3.1 Threshold Determination**

- To streamline the topic assignment process, a threshold value (0.7) is established. Posts surpassing this threshold for a particular topic are considered to be sufficiently associated with that topic.

### 4.6.3.2 Topic Assignments

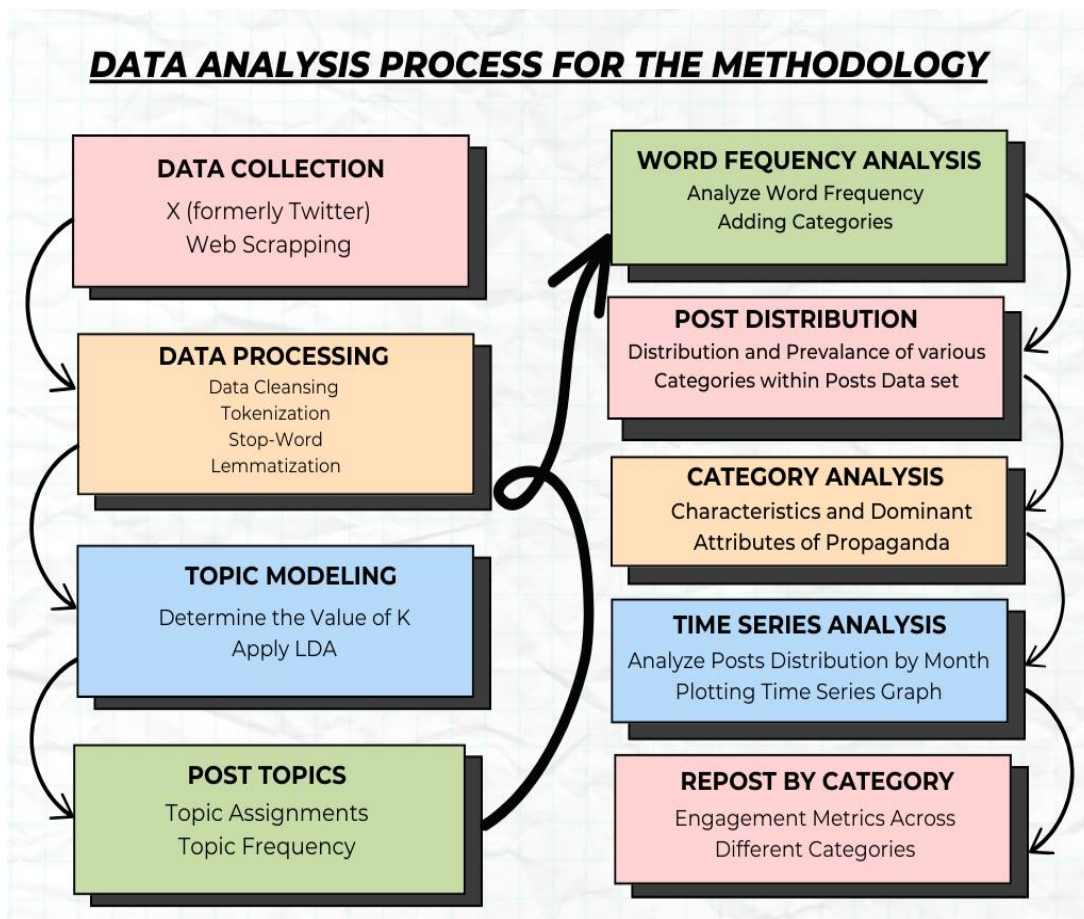
- The output of the topic modelling process yields a set of identified topics, each characterized by a distribution of words and their respective probabilities within that topic.
- For each post, the topic modelling algorithm assigns a probability distribution across the identified topics, signifying the likelihood of the posts belonging to each topic.
- With the threshold in place, posts are then categorized based on the highest probability topic surpassing the established threshold.
- The post is effectively assigned to the topic number corresponding to the topic with the highest probability.

## 4.7 Time Series Analysis

The time series analysis focuses on examining the frequency distribution of each post category across different months to identify trends and variations in their usage over time. While initially descriptive, this analysis explores and identifies key moments for further qualitative investigation and hypothesis generation about catalyst events. To facilitate this research study, the post data is organized into a time series format by grouping entries according to months and categories. Each category is plotted using a unique colour, enhancing visual distinction. The graph encapsulates the dynamic nature of post category frequencies, showcasing patterns, spikes, or declines over the temporal dimension. Specifically, the 'date' column is transformed into a 'month' format, with each entry representing a distinct month. Subsequently, the 'category' column is employed to

group the posts accordingly. This grouping allows for a granular examination of how post distributions evolve over time, providing insights into temporal trends. This methodical grouping enables a detailed examination of how posts categories evolve over time, thereby providing valuable insights into temporal trends. To visually represent the distribution of posts categories across different months, a time series graph is generated. These graphs serve as an effective tool for identifying trends and patterns in the data. For further details on the time series analysis, please refer to Tables 13, 14, 15, and 16.

The visual representation of the time series graph, where each category is plotted using a unique color, allows for the easy identification of trends, spikes, and declines in the usage of specific propaganda techniques. This granular examination of temporal patterns helps researcher to better comprehend the strategic shifts in propaganda tactics. Furthermore, the time series analysis can shed light on the relationship between external events, and the corresponding changes in the content and narratives of the deployed propaganda items (Geissler et al., 2023). By considering the contextual factors that may influence the evolution of propaganda strategies, researchers can gain a more nuanced understanding of the wider sociopolitical dynamics at play (Beers et al., 2023).



**Figure 1.** *Data Analysis Process for the Methodology*

#### 4.8 CENSUS SAMPLING

The researcher applied census sampling by collecting all the posts on the X (formerly Twitter) accounts of the selected government officials and media from India and Pakistan for a period of August 15, 2021, to January 14, 2023. During this timeframe, the researcher gathered a total of 22,345 (twenty-two thousand three-hundred forty-five) posts related to the Kashmir conflict and 11,710 (eleven thousand seven hundred-ten) posts concerning the Taliban's recapture of Afghanistan. This comprehensive collection of posts was subjected to supervised computational content

analysis and unsupervised topic modeling techniques, aimed at addressing the research questions outlined in the study.

#### **4.9 Conceptual and Operational Definitions of Variables**

Different researchers have applied various strategies to measure propaganda from Laswell to Chomsky and to recent studies in 2023 where scholars applied various indicators for the analysis of propaganda. An approach taken by this study to analyze propaganda strategies used by those (state-sponsored) attempting to persuade or to propagate messages will be applied in the context of India-Pakistan information warfare. Drawing on theoretical concepts from propaganda studies, this research put forward a conceptual framework which utilize the relevant indicators to come up with a scheme for the study. After the extensive review of literature and critical analysis of the theories of propaganda, the strategies linked with the current study are identified, and applied as a variable for this study. As the study aims to analyze propaganda warfare strategies, with a focus on social media platforms particularly X (formerly Twitter). The study investigates ten propaganda strategies as its core variables. Each variable is conceptually defined based on propaganda theory and operationalized for computational identification. From the broader taxonomy of 18 documented techniques (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2018), researcher selected the 10 most prevalent strategies in digital campaigns. The remaining techniques were excluded from the analysis due to their low frequency. The seven propaganda techniques—name-calling, glittering generalities, transfer, testimonial, plain folks, card stacking, and bandwagon appeals—were identified and categorized by the Institute for Propaganda Analysis (IPA), which was established in 1937 by Edward Filene and others to educate the public on recognizing propaganda. The IPA's identification of these techniques can be seen as practical applications of Lasswell's theoretical framework, which provides a structure for analyzing how these techniques function within the broader communication process. Many other researchers have developed additional strategies of propaganda (Jowett 2019). In this study, researcher also included these strategies. Overall, based on the literature and the research objectives,

this study empirically investigates the prevalence of 10 strategies. The aim is to analyze which strategies of propaganda are most frequently utilized by the officials of the two countries. Further, to corroborate the existing of these strategies and identify additional propaganda strategies, the researcher has conducted topic modelling.

In the context of modern political communication, traditional propaganda techniques can be adapted and applied to various platforms, as discussed by researchers such as Bennett and Segerberg (2013). This research utilizes both computational techniques and a manual identification process to analyze propaganda strategies in selected posts from X (formerly Twitter). The operationalization of variables establishes a conceptual foundation for this study, ensuring that abstract concepts are transformed into measurable entities. By defining and standardizing these variables, the research aims to enhance the clarity and precision of its findings.

This study employs computational content analysis to apply conceptual constructs and reveal the strategies that influence public discourse in the political, security, and diplomatic contexts of India and Pakistan. The primary objective of this research is to enhance the understanding of propaganda as a complex and evolving phenomenon in the digital age. Specifically, it aims to elucidate the mechanisms through which propaganda operates in political communication on social media platforms. The following section provides a detailed description of the variables used in the analysis: -

**4.9.1 NAME CALLING or STEREOTYPING:** Name-calling and stereotyping are propaganda techniques that involve giving a person or idea a negative label or characterization. The goal is to discredit the target by associating them with something undesirable, without providing evidence to support the claim. These techniques appeal to emotions like fear and anger rather than reason.

#### **Examples from the Posts**

*“#WATCH | "...I blame Pakistan. Over the yrs, we've seen videos & evidence that Pak is behind empowering Taliban. Every time our govt would catch a Talib, they'd see identification & it'd be a Pakistani, it's very obvious that it's them," says Afghan pop star Aryana Sayeed to ANI <https://t.co/eIBAGXvaCP>”.*

*“#UPDATE | Top LeT/TRF (The Resistance Front) commander Abbas Sheikh and his aide Saqib Manzoor have been killed by Jammu and Kashmir Police in Srinagar city: IGP Kashmir Vijay Kumar”*

In the first statement, the Afghan pop star Aryana Sayeed directly blames Pakistan for "empowering Taliban", labeling them as the culprit without providing concrete evidence to support this claim. The second statement refers to the "Top LeT/TRF (The Resistance Front) commander Abbas Sheikh and his aide Saqib Manzoor" as being killed by the Jammu and Kashmir Police. This implies a stereotypical association between the individuals and the militant groups, without providing context or details about their specific roles or involvement.

Sample of keywords and variables are given below;

**Name Calling:** Terrorists, Miscreants, Cowardly, Extremists, Insurgents, Militants, Criminals, Traitors, Fidayeen, Aggressors, Radicals, Terror Outfit, Infiltrators, Fanatics, Conspirators, Accused, Proscribed, agitator, fundamentalist, terrorist, aggressor, dictator, crook, illegitimate, puppet, traitor, hostile, communist, Barbaric, Outlawed, Impotent, Heartless, Uncivilized, Killersquadron, Misogynist, Dissident, Gunner, Unethical, Madman, IndiaFakeRepublic, Malicious, Discriminatory.

**4.9.2 GLITTERING GENERALITY or VIRTUE WORDS:** Glittering generalities or virtue words are propaganda techniques that use vague, positive-sounding language to promote an idea or product without providing concrete evidence or details. The goal is to make something seem desirable or virtuous by associating it

with highly-valued concepts, while avoiding specific claims that could be scrutinized. These techniques rely on the audience filling in the blanks with their own assumptions.

### **Examples from the Posts**

*“The Taliban have made commitments on safe passage and the world will hold them to their commitments. It will include ongoing diplomacy in Afghanistan...coordination with partners to reopen the airport for continued departure for those who want to leave Afghanistan: US President”.*

*“NSA Doval said that there is a need for all present at the Dialogue to enhance the capability of Afghanistan to counter-terrorism and terrorist groups which pose a threat to regional peace and security: Sources”.*

*“OIC CFM extraordinary session has been successful in focusing attention on the need for immediate humanitarian and economic assistance for Afghanistan. It has demonstrated Pakistan’s continued commitment to the well-being of our Afghan brothers and sisters. #OIC4Afg”.*

These techniques are used to promote the idea that the US, India, and Pakistan are working to help Afghanistan, without providing specifics that could be scrutinized. The vague language allows the audience to fill in the gaps with their own assumptions about what is being done.

Sample of keywords and variables are given below;

**Glittering Generalities:** Peacekeepers, Patriotism, Freedom, Democracy, Justice, Integrity, Bravery, Sacrifice, National pride, Empowerment, Honesty, Resilience, Solidarity, #HumanRights1, #Unity, Diversity, Hope, Strength, #Brave, Heroes, braveheart, freedom fighter, justice, honor, peace, nationalism, integrity, humanrightsforall, ResilientPakistan, StrongerTogether, liberation, independence, peacekeeping, #gallantry, #PositivityRate, #culturaldiplomacy, #EconomicDiplomacy, #interfaith, #ClimateAction, #humanitarian,

#nationalunityday, PakistanZindabad, KashmirAwaitsJustice, RealPakistan, Gallant, Indomitable.

- 4.9.3 TRANSFER:** Transfer is a propaganda technique that involves associating a person, group, or idea with a symbol, image, or value that carries strong positive or negative connotations. The goal is to transfer the emotional reactions and attitudes towards the symbol onto the target, in order to influence perceptions and opinions. Transfer works by tapping into pre-existing beliefs, biases and emotional responses, rather than presenting a rational case.

#### **Examples from the Posts**

*“It is Pakistan that has once again acted responsibly to avoid any escalation. This is exactly how we acted in 2019 when we shot down intruding Indian fighter planes after India tried to bomb us. We even voluntarily returned their downed pilot to avoid escalation”.*

*“Pakistan kept warning that the military-dominated strategy in Afghanistan was doomed to fail. And we are constantly warning that Modi’s India is a risk for the entire world.”*

The goal is to make Pakistan's actions seem more virtuous and justified by linking them to widely-shared ideals like responsibility, restraint, and being right. The emotional appeal taps into the audience's existing beliefs rather than presenting a logical argument.

Sample of keywords and variables are given below;

**Transfer:** Courage of a lion, Strength of the Indian Armed Forces, Values of the Constitution, Spirit of Nari Shakti, women empowerment, Legacy of Shaheed, martyrs, Salute to Veterans, Commitment to peacekeeping, Resilience of the people, Dedication of the Armed Forces, Sacrifice of brave heroes, Trust in

military, Azaadi, national pride, heritage, India Independence, National War Memorial, ManKiBaat, #IronBrothers, #KashmirLivesMatter, #MartyrsOfKashmir, #PakChinaIronBrothers, #LongLivePakistan, freedom, #nationalflag, Strength of the military, Spirit of solidarity, Trust in our armed forces, Values of self-determination, Hope for a better future, Power of unity, NuclearPower, DefenceAndMartyrsDay, KashmirAccessiontoPakistan, Youm\_e\_Takbeer, KashmiriLivesMatter.

- 4.9.4 TESTIMONIAL:** Testimonial is a propaganda technique that involves using the endorsement or approval of a respected, famous, or authoritative figure to promote an idea, product, or person. The goal is to lend credibility and influence to the target by associating it with someone the audience is likely to trust or admire. Testimonials work by tapping into the audience's tendency to trust and be influenced by authoritative or famous figures, rather than evaluating the claims on their own merits.

#### **Example from the Posts**

*"#WATCH | "...I blame Pakistan. Over the yrs, we've seen videos & evidence that Pak is behind empowering Taliban. Every time our govt would catch a Talib, they'd see identification & it'd be a Pakistani, it's very obvious that it's them," says Afghan pop star Aryana Sayeed to ANI <https://t.co/eIBAGXvaCP>".*

The statement features a quote from Afghan pop star Aryana Sayeed, who is presented as an authoritative figure on the topic of Pakistan's involvement with the Taliban. By including Sayeed's testimony, the statement aims to lend credibility and influence to the claim that "Pakistan is behind empowering Taliban." As a prominent Afghan public figure, Sayeed's endorsement is meant to carry weight and persuade the audience to accept this assertion. It aims to influence the audience's views through association with an authoritative figure, rather than presenting a rational, evidence-based argument.

Sample of keywords and variables are given below;

**Testimonial:** CDS General Bipin Rawat on national security, Joe Biden endorsing cooperation, Veterans sharing their experiences, Influential leaders advocating for peace, Statements from military officials on operations, Community leaders discussing unity initiatives, Endorsements from NGOs, Quotes from families of martyrs, Insights from experts on conflict resolution, Testimonials from citizens on national pride, Statements from US Diplomats about India-US relations, Comments from Elon Musk on technological advancements, Public figures supporting Make in India, Leaders discussing the importance of democracy, Testimonials from refugees about humanitarian assistance, endorsements from military leaders or politicians, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Afghan refugees, violence affected families, victims of war crimes, human rights organizations, political leaders, PM Imran Khan At UNGA.

- 4.9.5 PLAIN FOLKS:** Plain Folks is a propaganda technique that involves a speaker or writer presenting themselves as ordinary, common people in order to appear relatable and trustworthy. The goal is to build a connection with the audience by portraying themselves as "one of them", sharing their values and experiences. Plain Folks works by making the speaker seem more accessible and likable, rather than focusing on their actual qualifications or the merits of their argument.

**Example from the Posts**

*“Had a memorable visit to Jammu and Kashmir in which I was able to interact with those at the forefront of Panchayats across India. Here are highlights from yesterday <https://t.co/3uLXJk0VZN>”*

In the statement, the speaker (likely a political figure) describes having a "memorable visit to Jammu and Kashmir" where they were able to interact with those at the forefront of Panchayats across India.

By framing the visit in this way, the speaker is attempting to present themselves as an ordinary person engaging with other common people, rather than as a high-level political figure. The use of relatable language like "memorable visit" and "interact with" aims to make the speaker seem more down-to-earth and approachable, rather than distant or elite.

The goal of this "Plain Folks" approach is to build a sense of connection and trust between the speaker and the audience. By portraying themselves as someone who directly engages with local communities and leaders, the speaker is trying to appear more relatable and in touch with the common experiences of the people. This technique is designed to make the speaker seem more trustworthy and likable, regardless of their actual qualifications or the substance of their actions. The focus is on creating an emotional bond through a sense of shared identity and values.

Sample of keywords and variables are given below;

**Plain folks:** citizens, people, masses, Local heroes, Families, Students, Farmers, Holi celebrations for unity (#Holi), Community, local communities, Neighbors, cultural events, Local businesses, Everyday people, Kashmiri, Local events, NariShakti, community support, local issues, Everyday citizens, Veterans, Neighbours, solidarity events, Everyday people supporting human rights, Local events celebrating cultural diversity, Community members, MangoDiplomacy, PublicDiplomacy.

- 4.9.6 BAND WAGON:** The bandwagon effect is the psychological phenomenon where people conform to the behaviors or attitudes of a group, often ignoring their own beliefs, in order to fit in or be on the "winning side." The bandwagon effect works through a self-reinforcing cycle. As more people adopt a belief or behavior, it appears increasingly popular and "correct", leading even more people to join in, further perpetuating the trend. The bandwagon technique exploits our human tendency to conform and go along with the crowd, rather than relying on our own judgment.

### Examples from the Posts

*“Kashmir's Accession to Pakistan Day is a reflection of Kashmiris' pledge to continue their struggle till the idea of accession becomes a reality. Indian oppressive state apparatus has failed to stop this journey of resistance, sacrifice & defiance. We salute Kashmiris' courage”.*

*“Pakistan based groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi have some presence in #Afghanistan, they have built check posts in some villages and parts of Kabul, along with Taliban: Sources”.*

Both statements exploited the psychological tendency of the bandwagon effect. They aim to make the audience feel that the beliefs and actions being described are popular, widespread, and the "winning side" to be on. The lack of evidence or nuance is intentional. The goal is to create a self-reinforcing cycle where the statements seem increasingly true and correct, the more they are repeated without challenge. This plays on our human tendency to conform and go along with the crowd. These statements use the bandwagon propaganda technique by portraying certain beliefs and actions as popular and widespread, even in the absence of evidence. The aim is to create the impression that joining these causes is the correct and popular thing to do, in order to influence the audience's perceptions and behaviors.

Sample of keywords and variables are given below;

**Bandwagon:** join for freedom, Make India, International Day of Yoga, Veterans Day Everyday, Rally behind Operation Ganga, Embrace the spirit of nationalism, Main Bharat Hoon, Join hands for Kashmir, Solidarity, Fight Against Terrorism, Celebrate, national pride, Support our troops, Salute Veterans, Participate, Join, call for democracy, Get involved, Be part, Stop Terrorism, welcome, together, sympathy, #KashmirWantsFreedom, #KashmirSolidarityDay, Stand with victims of war crimes and violence, #Islamophobia\_in\_india, #UnityGovernment, Get involved with community service projects, #PakistanDay,

#FightCorruption4HumanRights, Support initiatives, Participate in protests, Rally behind the call, fighting against discrimination and marginalization, Join campaigns, Pakistan4HumanRights, KashmirBleeds, BehindYouSkipper.

**4.9.7 CARD STACKING:** The propaganda technique of **Distortion of Data**, also known as **Out of Context, Card Stacking**, or **Cherry Picking**, involves selectively presenting data or information in a misleading way to support a particular argument or conclusion. This technique is used to convince the audience by using selected information and not presenting the complete story.

This technique allows the propagandist to create an illusion of evidence supporting their position. However, it is a logical fallacy that ignores the full picture and can lead to false conclusions. Recognizing distortion of data is crucial to avoid being misled by propaganda that exploits people's tendency to believe statistics and facts.

#### **Example from the Posts**

*“Pakistan based groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba and Lashkar-e-Jhangvi have some presence in #Afghanistan, they have built check posts in some villages and parts of Kabul, along with Taliban: Sources”.*

The post selectively presents information about the presence of Pakistan-based groups in Afghanistan, without providing the full context or scale of their activities. By stating that these groups "have some presence" and "have built check posts in some villages and parts of Kabul," the statement implies a significant or widespread influence. However, it does not quantify or substantiate the extent of their presence or activities.

It also fails to provide broader context about the security situation in Afghanistan, the role of the Taliban, or the overall dynamics at play. This omission of relevant information creates a misleading impression. Without this fuller picture, the

audience is left to draw conclusions based only on the limited and potentially skewed data presented in the statement.

Additionally, the post cited unnamed "Sources" as the basis for these claims, without providing any further details or verification. This lack of transparency makes it difficult to assess the reliability and accuracy of the information.

By selectively presenting information in this way, the statement creates the potential for false conclusions. The audience may be led to believe the Pakistan-based groups have a more significant and problematic presence in Afghanistan than the full context would actually support. This statement appeared to be an example of the Distortion of Data or Cherry-Picking propaganda technique. It selectively presents information without providing the necessary context or transparency, potentially misleading the audience and leading to inaccurate conclusions.

Sample of keywords and variables are given below;

**Card Stacking:** Successful operation, achievements, Showcasing, positive outcomes, statistics, peacekeeping missions, veterans' contributions, narratives, stories, economic growth, progress, partnerships, events, actions, security measures, military operations, successful cultural diplomacy, international support, unity during events, humanitarian efforts, sloganeering, DossierIIOJK, IllicitFinancialFlows, FATF.

- 4.9.8 FEAR Mongering or Fear Appeal:** Fear-mongering is a propaganda technique that deliberately spreads exaggerated or false information to instill fear or anxiety in the audience. The goal is to sway public opinion and influence behavior by creating a sense of urgency or danger about a particular issue.

#### **Example from the Posts**

*“Taliban is a terrorist organization & is supported by Pakistan. China is also helping them. Taliban may support terrorist activities in Kashmir & provoke Khalistan supporters. I feel we should adopt Israel's counter-terrorism strategy: BJP General Secretary CT Ravi <https://t.co/QerkB0Hrsn>”.*

This post appears to be using fear-mongering tactics to demonize the Taliban, Pakistan and China, rather than presenting a balanced, fact-based analysis.

*“As I stated in my address at UNGA, terrorism continues to threaten not just Afghanistan & Pakistan but also the world. The international community should not let its guard down. Strengthening global cooperation against changing threat matrix of terrorism is need of the hour”.*

*“We have given the world ample evidence of Indian sponsorship of terrorist groups including TTP and we expect the world to hold India to account for its destabilizing and rogue policies in the region”.*

The statements lack concrete evidence to back up their claims. They rely on loaded language like "terrorist", "destabilizing", and "rogue" to stoke fears, rather than presenting facts. This selective use of information is a hallmark of fear-mongering propaganda. The goal is to shape perceptions and opinions through emotional appeals, not rational analysis. These statements appear to be using fear-mongering tactics to exaggerate threats, demonize groups, and justify extreme measures, without providing sufficient evidence or context. The aim is to influence the audience's views and behavior through fear, rather than presenting a balanced assessment of the situation.

Sample of keywords and variables are given below;

**Fear Appeal:** Terror Threats, National Security Risk, dangers, crisis, Radicalization, Public Order, Misinformation, foreign influence, challenges, dire, consequences, Mumbai Attacks, terrorist attack, insecurity, invasion, escalation, intimidation, hostage, threatening, lawlessness, insecurity, #NationalSecurityPolicy, violence and instability, failing to support armed

forces, geopolitical conflicts, regional security and safety, illegal immigration, border security, #radicalising, #ViolenceAgainstWomen, #SaveAfghanLives, #disinformation, #diplomacy, Extrajudicial, Worsening, Horrific.

**4.9.9 Loaded Language:** This is a hallmark of the propaganda technique of loaded language - using emotive words and phrases to persuade the audience, rather than presenting a fair and impartial analysis supported by facts.

#### **Example from the Posts**

*“We have given the world ample evidence of Indian sponsorship of terrorist groups including TTP and we expect the world to hold India to account for its destabilizing and rogue policies in the region”.*

*“The fake news industry, set up and patronized by Govt of India, was one critical reason for the world being duped into blaming Pakistan rather than looking at internal failures in Afghanistan and India’s role in perpetrating terrorism in Pakistan”.*

The statements make extensive use of loaded language - words and phrases that are highly emotive and carry strong positive or negative connotations beyond their literal meaning. For example, describing India's policies as "destabilizing and rogue" and referring to the "fake news industry" set up by the Indian government are loaded terms intended to demonize and discredit India. Similarly, claiming India "sponsors terrorist groups" and "perpetrates terrorism in Pakistan" are loaded accusations that evoke strong negative reactions, without providing concrete evidence.

These statements exhibit a clear pattern of loaded language that is intended to demonize India, shape perceptions, and elicit emotional responses from the audience, rather than provide a balanced, evidence-based assessment.

Sample of keywords and variables are given below;

**Loaded Language:** Infiltrating terrorists, Unbridled violence, Indiscriminate attacks, Humanitarian catastrophe, Draconian measures, Collateral damage, Appalling conditions, Hostile takeover, Ghastly acts, behavior of insurgents, Explosive situations, Prejudicial policies, Intimidating tactics, Inhumane treatment, Radical ideologies, aggressor assailant, Islamic mujahideen, victimhood, corruption, mismanagement, bloodbath, casualty, Barbaric behavior, Discrimination against minorities, surgical strike, devastating, gruesome.

**4.9.10 Appeal to Authority:** This technique involves citing an authoritative or respected figure to lend credibility to a claim, rather than relying on evidence or logical reasoning. In this case, the statement is attributed to the ex-Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan, who is presented as an authoritative source on intelligence agencies and Pakistan's relationship with the Taliban.

#### **Example from the Posts**

*"It is the job of the Intelligence agencies to have connections with everyone. US CIA would also be speaking to the Talibans. War-torn Pakistan was not in a position to take military action against Afghan Talibans." Prime Minister @ImranKhanPTI, interview to @BeckyCNN #APPNews*

This statement appears to be an example of the propaganda technique of appealing to authority. It cites the ex-Prime Minister of Pakistan as an authoritative source to justify the CIA's connections with the Taliban and excuse Pakistan's inaction, without providing substantive evidence to support these claims. The lack of factual data and the potential for bias undermine the objectivity of the statement.

Sample of keywords and variables are given below;

**Appeal to Authority:** General Bipin Rawat, Joe Biden, UN, military officer, prime minister, present, chief, head, higher ups, elite, respected, COAS, White House, police, defence forces, Indian Armed Forces, Indian Army, Marine Infantry Regiment, Defence, New Delhi, Islamabad, Kabul, Imran Khan, UN resolutions, military experts, respected journalists, think tanks, academics, international observers, international world, ISPR.

#### **4.10 Reliability Tests**

To ensure coding reliability, an iterative process was used. Based on the conceptual and operational definitions of propaganda variables, the researcher developed a comprehensive list of words to capture all the nuances of the selected variables. For this purpose, the researcher utilized the word clouds and topics produced by the LDA. Moreover, 1000 randomly selected X (formerly Twitter) posts were consulted to make the dictionary more comprehensive. First a reliability test of Krippendorff's alpha was conducted between this researcher and an independent MS media studies student. Data for this purpose came from 3400 randomly selected X (formerly Twitter) posts. The alpha value was above .70 for all the variables. In the second phase, based on the developed list of words, a reliability test was conducted between the researcher categorization and the computerized categorization. The alpha value was .60. The dictionary was further improved and in the third attempt, the alpha value was above .80 for all the variables of propaganda.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **ANALYSIS**

In this chapter, the research hypotheses and research questions are addressed.

#### **5.1 Characteristics of Pakistani and India Propaganda on Taliban Recapture of Afghanistan**

RH1a: The Pakistani propaganda campaign on Taliban victory in Afghanistan is more authority-oriented than other strategies.

RH1b: The Indian propaganda campaign on Taliban victory in Afghanistan is more people-oriented than other strategies.

**Table 17.** Results from characteristics of Pakistani and India propaganda “Taliban recapture of Afghanistan”

<b>CHARACTERISTICS OF PROPAGANDA – TALIBAN RECAPTURE OF AFGHANISTAN</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>Pakistan<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>India<sup>2</sup></b>
Authority	597 (46%)	1941 (18%)
Transfer	268 (21%)	539 (5%)
Plain Folks	255 (20%)	6822 (64%)
Glittering Generalities	76 (6%)	319 (4%)
Bandwagon	56 (5%)	853 (8%)
Others	29 (2%)	97 (1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1281 (100%)</b>	<b>10571 (100%)</b>

$X^2 (5=N = 1281) = 86.12, P = .03$

$X^2 (5=N = 10571) = 98.09, P = .02$

As shown in the above table Pakistan's propaganda is predominantly characterized by a strong reliance on authority, with 46% of its appeals leveraging this strategy to enhance credibility. This approach aims to position Pakistan as a legitimate authority on Afghan affairs, thereby seeking to gain international support for its foreign policy initiatives and actions in the region. By asserting its authority, Pakistan attempts to legitimize the Taliban's governance in Afghanistan, framing its narrative as one of stability and regional cooperation. The second most prevalent tactic in Pakistan's campaign is the "transfer" strategy, which constitutes 21% of its appeals. This method involves linking positive attributes from one entity to another to bolster acceptability or discredit rivals. Pakistan may associate its own stability with the Taliban's governance to foster a narrative that promotes regional security and counteracts India's portrayal of instability. The significant of test value suggests that hypothesis is supported.

In contrast, India's propaganda heavily emphasizes relatability, with 64% of its appeals categorized as "plain folks." This strategy seeks to be people centric and portray Indian officials as ordinary individuals, fostering a sense of commonality with the audience. By humanizing its leaders, India aims to build trust and resonate with both

domestic and international audiences. Following relatability, the second most common attribute in India's propaganda is authority, accounting for 18% of appeals. This indicates a moderate reliance on authoritative figures to lend credibility to its narratives. Additionally, the employment of "bandwagon" strategy by Pakistan and India, representing 8% and 5% of their respective data, encourages conformity based on popular beliefs or trends. This tactic aims to create a sense of collective identity among supporters while marginalizing dissenting voices (*For details please refer to Table 17*). The significant of test value suggests that hypothesis is supported.

## **5.2 Characteristics of Pakistani and India Propaganda on Kashmir Conflict**

RH2a: The Pakistani propaganda campaign on Kashmir conflict is more authority-oriented than other strategies.

RH2b: The Indian propaganda campaign on Kashmir conflict is mainly characterized by transfer strategy than other strategies.

**Table 18.** Results from characteristics of Pakistani and India propaganda “Kashmir Conflict”

<b>CHARACTERISTICS OF PROPAGANDA – KASHMIR CONFLICT</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>Pakistan<sup>1</sup></b>	<b>India<sup>2</sup></b>
Authority	1150 (39%)	4438 (22%)
Plain Folks	798 (27%)	2683 (14%)
Transfer	338 (12%)	9268 (48%)
Virtue Words	262 (10%)	474 (3%)
Bandwagon	239 (9%)	1208 (6%)
Others	62 (3%)	1404 (7%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>2849 (100%)</b>	<b>19475 (100%)</b>

$X^2 (5=N = 2849) = 112.05, P = .02$

$X^2 (5=N = 19475) = 96.44, P = .00$

The table shows that most frequently employed propaganda attribute by Pakistan is Authority, which constitutes 39% of their messaging. This significant reliance on appeals to authority figures underscores an effort to enhance credibility and legitimize their stance on the Kashmir issue. By invoking authoritative voices, Pakistan aims to bolster its narrative and reinforce its claims regarding Kashmir. The second most common technique is Plain Folks, representing 27% of appeals. This strategy suggests a substantial effort to portray relatability, presenting the speaker as an ordinary individual or the voice of the common Kashmiri. By adopting this approach, Pakistan seeks to foster a connection with its audience, emphasizing shared experiences and perspectives. Another notable attribute is Transfer, occurring 12% of the time. This indicates a significant use of associating positive attributes or symbols with the Kashmir cause, aiming to create favorable associations that enhance the legitimacy of their claims.

Additionally, Virtue Words appear with a frequency of 10%, reflecting a notable reliance on terms associated with moral values. This strategy serves to frame the Kashmir

issue in ethical terms, appealing to the audience's sense of justice and righteousness. Bandwagon strategies, which encourage conformity based on popular beliefs, account for 9% of messaging. The low p value suggests the hypothesis is supported.

On the other hand, India's propaganda reveals a different pattern, with Transfer constituting 48% of their messaging. This suggests a significant reliance on associating emotional and negative attributes with the Kashmir issue, aimed at discrediting Pakistani claims. By framing Pakistan negatively, India seeks to strengthen its own narrative while undermining its rival's credibility. The second most common characteristic in India's messaging is Authority, accounting for 22% of appeals. This indicates a moderate use of authoritative figures to enhance credibility, similar to Pakistan's strategy but with a lesser emphasis. The use of Plain Folks occurs at 14%, indicating a moderate application of relatable narratives. While India does employ relatable strategies, they are not as central to its messaging as they are in Pakistan's approach. India also employs Virtue words at a frequency of 3%, suggesting a significant use of emotionally appealing statements that resonate with audiences on an emotional level. Meanwhile, Bandwagon strategies account for 6%, indicating an effort to promote conformity based on popular sentiment (*For details please refer to Table 18*). The low p value suggests the hypothesis is supported.

### **5.3 Dominant attributes of Propaganda from India – Taliban Recapture of Afghanistan and Kashmir Conflict**

**RQ1. What are the key strategies of propaganda produced by Pakistan and India officials on X (formerly Twitter) relating to events in Kashmir and Afghanistan?**

**Table 19.** Results from dominant propaganda attributes of propaganda from India and Pakistan “Taliban recapture of Afghanistan and Kashmir Conflict”

**DOMINANT ATTRIBUTES OF PROPAGANDA – INDIA AND PAKISTAN**

Category	Frequency	
	India	Pakistan
Transfer	9807 (32%)	606 (15%)
Plain Folks	9505 (31%)	1053 (25%)
Authority	6379 (21%)	1747 (41%)
Bandwagon	2061 (8%)	295 (8%)
Glittering Generalities	1501 (5%)	120 (4%)
Others	508 (3%)	264 (7%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>29761 (100%)</b>	<b>4085 (100%)</b>

As shown in the above table, the associative transfer technique emerges as the most prevalent form of propaganda in the analyzed English-language Indian campaigns, constituting 32% of the campaigns analyzed, with a total of 9,807 instances noted. This method involves associating a person, group, or idea with something that is positively or negatively perceived, thereby shaping public attitudes (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019). The effectiveness of transfer is amplified in digital contexts, where visual imagery and emotional resonance can significantly influence audience beliefs (Rahman et al., 2023). Its application, however, is often context-specific; in the Kashmir conflict, it is frequently used to associate dissenting voices with terrorism, whereas in discussions about Afghanistan, it is employed to link the Taliban's resurgence with regional instability that requires a strong Indian response.

Following closely is the plain folks appeal, which accounts for 31% of occurrences with 9,505 instances. This strategy seeks to foster relatability by presenting the propagandist as an average individual, thereby enhancing trust among audiences (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019). Recent research indicates that this approach is increasingly leveraged in digital propaganda to humanize political leaders and make them more

accessible through platforms such as social media (Chaudhari & Pawar, 2021). It is crucial to note that this finding is derived from English-language data; the deployment and reception of "plain folks" appeals in regional languages may differ significantly and could alter the perceived dominance of this strategy for domestic audiences.

The third notable attribute is Authority, which appears 21% of the time, totaling 6,397 instances. This technique relies on endorsements from authoritative figures to enhance the credibility of the message. The presence of respected figures in digital propaganda has been shown to significantly bolster perceived legitimacy and influence public opinion (Rahman et al., 2023). By aligning messages with authority figures, propagandists can effectively sway audience perceptions and reinforce their narratives.

The Bandwagon tactic is employed in 8% of cases, reflecting its appeal to individuals' desires for conformity. With 2,061 instances recorded, this technique capitalizes on social proof to encourage acceptance of ideas and narratives (Freelon & Wells, 2020). The Bandwagon effect is particularly potent in online environments where rapid dissemination of information can lead to widespread acceptance or rejection of concepts based solely on perceived popularity.

Glittering Generalities account for 5% of messaging with a frequency of 1501 instances. This technique employs vague yet emotionally charged statements designed to evoke positive feelings without providing substantive information (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019). The strategic use of emotionally appealing language can effectively sway public opinion by creating an atmosphere conducive to acceptance without critical scrutiny.

The findings align with broader studies examining propaganda within the context of the Kashmir conflict and Afghanistan crisis. However, it is important to distinguish the distinct narrative drivers for each issue. The Kashmir conflict generates nationalistic, internally-focused propaganda aimed at consolidating domestic opinion and countering international criticism. In contrast, propaganda surrounding the Fall of Kabul is more

geostrategic, aimed at positioning India regionally and discrediting Pakistan's role. For instance, narratives propagated by the Indian government often demonize dissenting voices while promoting a narrative of normalcy despite ongoing human rights violations (Chaudhari & Pawar, 2021). This aligns with research indicating systematic efforts to control narratives through reality distortion and suppression of dissenting opinions (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019). Moreover, the rise of social media as a platform for counter-narratives has been emphasized in recent literature. Citizen journalism challenges state-controlled narratives by empowering ordinary individuals to share their experiences and perspectives (Rahman et al., 2023). This dynamic is crucial for understanding contemporary information warfare where traditional propaganda methods face increasing resistance from grassroots movements.

#### **5.4 Dominant attributes of Propaganda from Pakistan – Taliban Recapture of Afghanistan and Kashmir Conflict**

The table 19 indicates that the Authority technique is recognized as the most significant attribute in both campaigns in Pakistan, accounting for 41% with 1,747 instances. This method effectively utilizes endorsements from credible figures or institutions to enhance the perceived legitimacy of the message (Jowett & O'Donnell, 2019). The reliance on authoritative voices is consistent with recent findings that illustrate how political entities strategically employ trusted figures to shape public perceptions and reinforce their narratives (Rahman et al., 2023). This reliance underscores the critical role that perceived credibility plays in influencing audience attitudes, suggesting that messages backed by authoritative endorsements are more likely to be accepted.

Following Authority, the Plain Folks strategy accounts for 25% of the total instances, with 1,053 occurrences. This technique aims to foster relatability by suggesting that the propagandist shares common values and experiences with the audience, thereby

enhancing trust and acceptance. Recent research indicates that this approach is increasingly utilized to bridge the gap between leaders and the populace, making messages more palatable (Chaudhari & Pawar, 2021). By presenting themselves as "one of the people," propagandists can effectively cultivate an emotional connection with their audience, thereby increasing the likelihood of message acceptance.

The transfer technique is noted for its occurrence in 15% of cases, with 606 instances recorded. This strategy involves associating a person, group, or idea with something positively or negatively perceived to influence public perception. Studies indicate that emotional associations created through Transfer can significantly impact audience reception and engagement (Aro, 2016). The effectiveness of this technique lies in its ability to evoke strong emotional responses that can either bolster or undermine a message's credibility based on the associations made.

The Bandwagon tactic is utilized in 8% of instances, reflecting its appeal to individuals' desires for conformity with popular opinion. With 295 occurrences, this strategy suggests that individuals should align with the majority view. The Bandwagon effect is particularly pronounced in social media environments where visible metrics such as likes and shares can create an illusion of consensus (Freelon & Wells, 2020). This technique capitalizes on social dynamics, leveraging the human inclination toward belongingness to encourage acceptance of ideas or actions.

This examination highlights how traditional propaganda methods are increasingly integrated with new technologies and platforms. Recent studies emphasize that social media has transformed both the dissemination and consumption of propaganda, complicating existing theoretical frameworks regarding propaganda's relationship with mass media and public perception (Auerbach & Castronovo, 2013). The rapid spread of information through digital channels enables both state and non-state actors to engage in sophisticated campaigns capable of manipulating public opinion on a large scale (Baym, 2015).

The analysis specifically contextualizes these propaganda attributes both within India's and Pakistan's campaigns concerning Afghanistan and Kashmir. The findings underscore the necessity for ongoing research into digital propaganda mechanisms as they relate to emerging technologies and shifting societal dynamics. It elucidates the strategic use of various propaganda techniques within digital campaigns. The dominance of transfer, authority and plain folks' techniques highlights their effectiveness in shaping public perception through credibility, associating negative or positive associations and relatability. As digital landscapes continue to evolve, understanding these dynamics will be essential for navigating the complexities inherent in modern propaganda practices.

### **5.5 Attributes of Propaganda Produced by Actors on Taliban Recapture of Afghanistan and Kashmir Conflict – India and Pakistan**

**RQ2: What Attributes of propaganda are produced by the selected actors in India and Pakistan on X (formerly Twitter) posts relating to Kashmir conflict and recapture of Afghanistan by Taliban?**

**Table 20.** Distribution of Posts on Taliban Recapture of Afghanistan and Kashmir Conflict – India

Categories	President	Prime Minister	Foreign Minister	Defence Spox	Foreign Office Spox	Media
	India	India	India	India	India	India
<b>Plain Folks</b>	121 (28%)	414 (29%)	300 (34%)	175 (16%)	147 (25%)	8250 (32%)
<b>Bandwagon</b>	19 (5%)	143 (10%)	87 (10%)	75 (7%)	50 (8%)	1663 (7%)
<b>Authority</b>	52 (12%)	123 (9%)	136 (16%)	160 (15%)	169 (28%)	5701 (22%)
<b>Glittering Generalities</b>	36 (9%)	235 (17%)	70 (8%)	53 (5%)	22 (4%)	1043 (4%)
<b>Transfer</b>	174 (41%)	370 (27%)	221 (25%)	558 (52%)	190 (32%)	8172 (32%)
<b>Virtue Words</b>	23 (5%)	100 (7%)	54 (6%)	40 (3%)	17 (3%)	227 (1%)
<b>Others</b>	1 (0)	8 (1%)	8 (1%)	13 (2%)	2 (0)	464 (2%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>427</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>1395</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>876</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>1074</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>597</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>25520</b> <b>(100%)</b>

**Table 21.** Distribution of Posts on Taliban Recapture of Afghanistan and Kashmir Conflict – Pakistan

Categories	President	Prime Minister	Foreign Minister	Military Spox	Foreign Office Spox	Media
	Pakistan	Pakistan	Pakistan	Pakistan	Pakistan	Pakistan
<b>Plain Folks</b>	50 (38%)	198 (45%)	275 (38%)	33 (34%)	311 (17%)	28 (8%)
<b>Bandwagon</b>	12 (9%)	29 (7%)	87 (12%)	3 (3%)	84 (5%)	15 (4%)
<b>Authority</b>	10 (8%)	95 (22%)	208 (29%)	40 (42%)	1087 (59%)	183 (52%)
<b>Glittering Generalities</b>	20 (15%)	16 (4%)	21 (3%)	-	20 (1%)	10 (3%)
<b>Transfer</b>	26 (20%)	44 (10%)	75 (10%)	11 (12%)	201 (11%)	99 (28%)
<b>Virtue Words</b>	14 (10%)	41 (9%)	48 (7%)	4 (4%)	116 (6%)	7 (2%)
<b>Others</b>	-	13 (3%)	9 (1%)	5 (5%)	28 (1%)	10 (3%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>132</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>436</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>723</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>96</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>1847</b> <b>(100%)</b>	<b>352</b> <b>(100%)</b>

### 5.5.1 President

India's President predominantly employed the "Transfer" strategy (41%), likely to associate negative connotations with the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan and the Kashmir conflict. This heavy emphasis on "Transfer" indicates that Indian narratives are crafted to elicit strong emotional reactions, framing messages in a way that resonates deeply with the audience's sentiments. Additionally, India utilized the "Plain Folks" strategy (28%) and the "Authority" strategy (12%), albeit to a lesser extent, suggesting a more targeted use of relatable and authoritative appeals in official communications. This approach focuses on portraying a people-centric, relatable image while associating certain ideas or entities with positive or negative connotations. The "Plain Folks" strategy aligns with findings that effective propaganda often seeks to humanize political figures, making them more relatable to the general population. By presenting government officials as ordinary citizens in touch with the populace, these posts aim to foster trust and connection. The use of the "Authority" strategy reflects an effort to bolster credibility by referencing respected institutions or figures.

In contrast, Pakistan's President adopted a more varied approach, with posts utilizing "Transfer" strategies accounting for 20% of the total posts. This tactic aims to associate positive emotions and values with their messaging, supported by recent research on manipulating public perception through emotive appeals (Akber, 2022). The "Transfer" strategy indicates an effort to evoke emotional responses by linking ideas or policies to positively valued symbols. This allows Pakistani narratives to resonate emotionally while maintaining a relatable image. The "Plain Folks" strategy comprised a majority (38%) of Pakistan's posts, suggesting an attempt to communicate in relatable language and present President as a voice for the Afghan and Kashmiri people. The "Glittering Generalities" strategy represented 15% of the posts, likely aimed at creating a sense of collective support for the Taliban and the people of Kashmir.

### 5.5.2 Prime Minister

The distribution of posts from the Prime Ministers of Pakistan and India reveals distinct strategies employed in their digital propaganda efforts. A heavy emphasis on the "Plain Folks" propaganda strategy by the Prime Minister of Pakistan suggests a concerted effort to present a relatable image to the audience. By portraying himself as an ordinary citizen, the Pakistani Prime Minister aims to foster a sense of trust and connection with supporters both domestically and internationally. The Prime Minister of Pakistan demonstrated a balanced approach, with the "Plain Folks" strategy comprising 45% of their posts, the "Authority" strategy accounting for 22%, and the "Transfer" strategy representing 10% of the total posts. This blend indicates an effort to combine official credibility with relatable messaging, aiming to resonate with a broader audience. Research suggests that such a dual strategy can effectively enhance public trust and engagement, as it allows political figures to present themselves as both authoritative and approachable (Rahman, Hussain, & Asif, 2023). The use of the "Transfer" strategy to associate positive symbols with the Taliban and the Kashmir conflict reflects a calculated attempt to shape public perception favorably. The relatively low usage of other strategies, such as "Bandwagon" and "Virtue Words," indicates a less overt reliance on moral appeals. This strategic choice suggests a focus on relatability over moralistic messaging.

In contrast, the Indian Prime Minister demonstrates a more diverse approach. The Prime Minister of India predominantly utilized the "Plain Folks" strategy (29%), suggesting an effort to appear relatable and concerned about the situations in Afghanistan and Kashmir. This strategy effectively fosters a connection with the audience, positioning the Prime Minister as grounded and empathetic. The use of "Plain Folks" indicates an effort to combine relatability with aspirational messaging, potentially appealing to a broader spectrum of the electorate. Additionally, the use of the "Transfer" strategy (27%) and the "Glittering Generalities" strategy (17%) indicates a supplementary approach to reinforce the legitimacy of their claims through associating negative symbols and create a sense of consensus around India's position on Afghanistan and Kashmir. This reveals the importance of consensus-building in political communication, particularly in contexts where public sentiment is critical. The findings suggest that while the Prime Minister of

Pakistan seeks to balance relatability and authority, the Indian Prime Minister emphasizes relatability, firmness, and universality to strengthen its narrative as a concerned regional stakeholder. This strategic differentiation reflects broader trends in digital propaganda, where the ability to connect with the audience can significantly influence public opinion and political outcomes (Golovchenko et al., 2018). The heavy emphasis on "Plain Folks" suggests that Indian political narratives are designed to elicit strong emotional reactions, framing their policies in a manner that seeks to resonate deeply with audience sentiments.

### **5.5.3 Foreign Minister**

India's External Minister (MEA) predominantly employed the "Plain Folks" strategy (34%), likely to appear more relatable and concerned, particularly regarding the situation in Afghanistan and Kashmir. This tactic aligns with findings that highlight the effectiveness of relatable messaging in building trust and engagement among audiences (Muzaffar et al., 2019). India also utilized the "Authority" strategy (16%) and the "Bandwagon" strategy (10%), indicating an effort to leverage its position and garnering support around its messaging. The impact of India's propaganda strategies on public opinion can be seen in the country's efforts to position itself as a regional power while being concerned about the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. By appearing relatable and engaged with developments in Afghanistan and Kashmir, India has sought to garner support from both its domestic audience and the international community, positioning itself as a responsible and engaged stakeholder in the region.

Conversely, Pakistan's Foreign Minister employed a balanced approach in their posts, with the "Authority" strategy comprising 29% of their posts, the "Plain Folks" strategy accounting for 38%, and the "Transfer" strategy representing 10% of the overall posts across both campaigns. This approach suggests an attempt to leverage both official sources and relatable language to convey their messaging, aligning with recent research on the effectiveness of combining credibility and relatability in political communication

(Rahman, Hussain, & Asif, 2023). The Foreign Minister of Pakistan's strong emphasis on "Plain Folks" and "Authority" propaganda strategies indicates a deliberate attempt to present a relatable and credible image while tapping into perceived popular support regarding Kashmir and Afghanistan. The use of "Plain Folks" reflects an effort to connect with ordinary citizens, portraying the Foreign Minister as grounded and as like the common populace. This strategy aligns with findings suggesting that effective propaganda often seeks to humanize political figures and make them more relatable to the public.

Additionally, the notable use of "Bandwagon" (12%) and "Virtue Words" (7%) strategies in Pakistan further reinforces this approach, aiming to create a sense of collective endorsement and moral high ground. By invoking popular support and appealing to shared values, the Pakistani Foreign Minister's posts seek to foster a unified narrative that resonates with both domestic and international audiences. By striking a balance between these strategies, Pakistan's Foreign Minister aimed to enhance the legitimacy of his claims while also fostering a connection with the audience.

#### **5.5.4 Defence / Military Spokesperson**

The Indian Defence Spokesperson utilized the "Transfer" strategy (52%) and the "Plain Folks" strategy (16%), likely aiming to connect with the general populace and the world to portray India as a relatable and genuine stakeholder in the region. In contrast, an analysis of posts from the Director General of Inter Services Public Relations (DG ISPR), the military spokesperson for the Pakistan Army, reveals a significant reliance on the "Authority" strategy, which accounted for 42% of their posts. The emphasis on authority in these posts reflects a strategic effort to enhance legitimacy and credibility in a highly contested information environment. The spokesperson for the Pakistan Army also employed the "Plain Folks" strategy, which constituted 34% of its posts. This suggests an intention to appear more relatable in communications directed at both domestic and

international audiences. Such a strategy is particularly effective in building rapport and trust, as noted in recent research on the effectiveness of relatable messaging in political discourse (Golovchenko et al., 2018). This tactic indicates that relatable messaging can foster trust and engagement among audiences. By appealing to authority on Taliban and Kashmir issue, the military spokesperson may be attempting to mitigate negative perceptions about them.

The findings reveal the divergent propaganda strategies employed by the military and defense spokespersons of Pakistan and India. While Pakistan focuses on establishing relatability and credibility through a combination of "Plain Folks" and "Authority" strategies, India's emphasis on emotional resonance through "Transfer" and "Plain Folks" strategies indicates a more sophisticated attempt to sway public opinion. This divergence reflects broader trends in state-sponsored propaganda, where governments leverage social media to craft narratives that align with their geopolitical objectives (Cotelo et al., 2016; Demirsoz & Ozcan, 2017).

#### **5.5.5 Foreign Office Spokesperson**

The Foreign Office spokespersons of Pakistan and India adopted nuanced approaches to information warfare in the context of the Taliban's recapture of Afghanistan and the Kashmir conflict. The spokesperson for the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in India predominantly utilized the "Plain Folks" strategy, which accounted for 25% of their posts. This approach reflects an effort to present a relatable and trustworthy image to both domestic and international audiences. The use of the "Authority" strategy (28%) further underscores a commitment to establishing credibility in messaging. The adoption of this dual strategy highlights the importance of relatability and authority in effective communication, particularly in a politically sensitive context. Interestingly, India's Foreign Office spokesperson predominantly employs "Plain Folks" and "Authority" strategies to authenticate and evoke emotional responses regarding his

country policies on Afghanistan and Kashmir, thereby presenting himself as credible stakeholder. This combination of emotional appeal, credibility, and relatability positions Indian narratives to resonate with a wide range of audiences.

In contrast, the analysis of posts from the Foreign Office spokesperson in Pakistan reveals a significant preference for the "Authority" strategy, which comprised 59% of the total posts. This finding suggests an effort to leverage the perceived credibility of official sources to validate claims—a tactic supported by recent research emphasizing the role of authoritative voices in shaping public perception and reinforcing narratives. Additionally, 17% of the posts by Pakistan employed the "Plain Folks" strategy, seemingly aimed at linking the Taliban's recapture of Afghanistan and the Kashmir conflict to its own advantage, thereby attempting to disseminate relatable messaging to its audience. This reliance on authoritative claims allows Pakistani narratives to appear more legitimate and trustworthy, effectively influencing public perception. However, the Pakistani Foreign Office spokesperson also makes significant use of the "Transfer" (11%) strategy, indicating an attempt to associate positive symbols, morally upright image (Smith & Jones, 2022). The relatively low usage of "Name Calling" (1%) and other strategies suggests a more measured approach compared to other strategies, potentially maintaining a balance between credibility and emotional appeal. The reliance on "Authority" and "Plain Folks" strategies by the Pakistani Foreign Office spokesperson suggests a deliberate attempt to enhance credibility through official sources while presenting relatable narratives.

### **5.5.6 Media**

Indian media employed the "Authority" strategy (22%) and the "Transfer" strategy (32%), likely to lend credibility to their narratives and associate negative connotations with the Taliban and the Kashmir conflict. Asian News International (ANI) also utilized the "Plain Folks" strategy, which constituted 32% of its posts. This strategy

aims to present the media as relatable and down-to-earth, fostering a connection with the audience. Such an approach is supported by findings from Muzaffar et al. (2019), who noted that media often seeks to resonate with the everyday experiences of the public to enhance engagement. This dual strategy positions Indian narratives to resonate emotionally with the audience while maintaining a semblance of factual support through authoritative references.

In contrast, 52% of APP's posts employed the "Authority" strategy, indicating an effort to strengthen claims by citing influential sources. This approach aligns with findings that underscore the importance of credibility in media narratives, particularly in politically charged contexts (Rahman, Hussain, & Asif, 2023). The Associated Press of Pakistan (APP) demonstrated a significant reliance on the "Transfer" propaganda strategy, which constituted 28% of its posts. This strategy involves linking the Taliban and the Kashmir conflict with positive symbols to enhance its legitimacy. Pakistani media heavily relies on "Authority" and "Transfer" strategies, suggesting a deliberate attempt to enhance credibility through authoritative sources while associating specific ideas with positive connotations (Rahman, Hussain, & Asif, 2023). This reliance on authority allows Pakistani narratives to appear more legitimate and trustworthy. Moreover, the relatively low usage of overtly persuasive tactics, such as "Bandwagon" and "Virtue Words," in Pakistani media indicates a more restrained approach to propaganda, which may be strategic in maintaining credibility while avoiding the pitfalls of overt manipulation (Smith & Jones, 2022).

The findings underscore the strategic differences in how both countries engage in digital propaganda. While Pakistani media tends to focus on establishing credibility through authority strategies, Indian media's emphasis on emotional resonance through symbolic associations suggests a more appealing attempt to sway public opinion. This divergence reflects broader trends in state-sponsored propaganda, where governments leverage social media to craft narratives that align with their geopolitical objectives (Cotelo et al., 2016; Demirsoz & Ozcan, 2017).

### 5.5.7 Comparative Analysis

The comparative analysis of propaganda strategies employed by India and Pakistan reveals significant differences in their approaches, particularly concerning the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan and the Kashmir conflict. Recent research underscores the necessity for a nuanced understanding of digital propaganda within the context of information warfare.

India's propaganda strategies have primarily centered around the "Plain Folks" approach, which seeks to present Indian actors as relatable and people-centric. This strategy is designed to position India as a humanitarian leader in the Afghan crisis and the Kashmir issue, thereby garnering public and international support for its diplomatic efforts. However, the limited use of other strategies, such as "Authority," "Glittering Generalities," and "Bandwagon," may have restricted India's ability to lend credibility to its narratives, resulting in a less effective counter to those propagated by Pakistan (for additional information, please refer to Tables 20 and 21).

In contrast, Pakistan's actors have predominantly utilized the "Authority" strategy in their propaganda efforts. The strategy aims to enhance legitimacy regarding the Taliban and the Kashmir conflict, thereby bolstering Pakistan's geopolitical standing. By leveraging authoritative claims and fostering positive associations with both the Taliban and the Kashmir freedom struggle, Pakistani narratives seek to garner favorable public support for the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan and Kashmir issue. This approach aligns with findings that suggest Pakistan has engaged in systematic information campaigns to counteract narratives from India and assert its position in the region (Saud & Kazim, 2021).

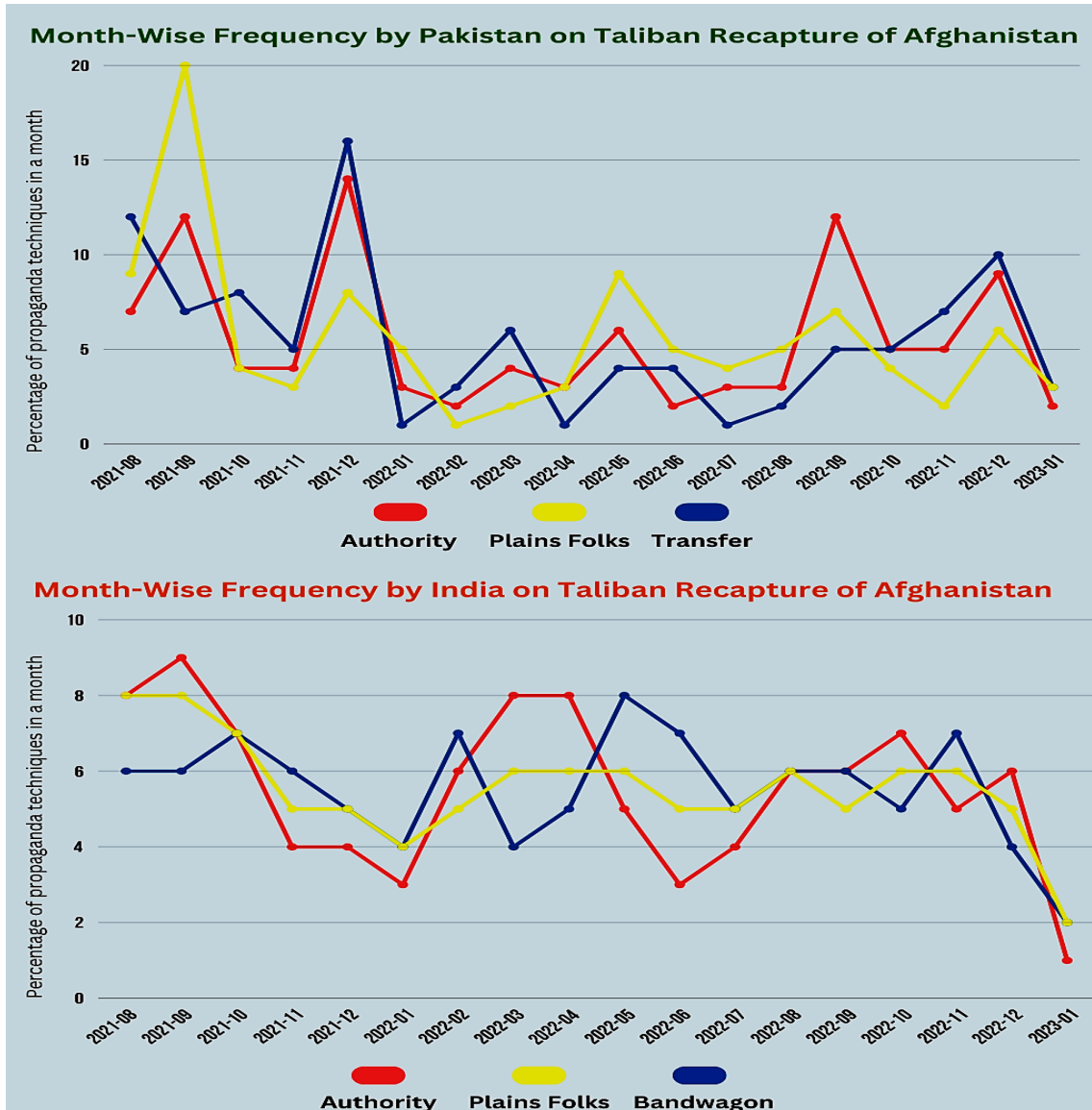
The strategic differences may reflect each country's broader geopolitical, diplomatic, and security objectives, as well as their understanding of the role of social

media in modern warfare. Moreover, India's extensive use of a people-centric approach in its narratives may serve to strengthen its stance on both regional and international stages. The impact of these divergent strategies is evident in varying public perceptions regarding the Taliban's resurgence to power and the Kashmir conflict. In Pakistan, the emphasis on authoritative claims likely aims to garner credibility, while India's focus on relatability committed to a people-centric approach.

The findings regarding the propaganda strategies employed by Pakistan and India underscore the intricate dynamics of state-sponsored digital propaganda warfare in South Asia. Understanding these strategies is crucial for researchers, policymakers, and academics as they navigate the complexities of digital propaganda and its implications for public discourse and regional stability. As both countries continue to engage in this digital battle, the effectiveness of their strategies will significantly impact perceptions and policy decisions related to the Afghan crisis, Kashmir conflict and beyond.

## **5.6 Time Series Analysis on Taliban Recapture of Afghanistan – India and Pakistan**

**RQ3: How have the propaganda strategies produced by the two countries in the selected events vary with the passage of time?**



**Figure 2.** Monthly frequency of Taliban recapture of Afghanistan social media coverage from 2021–2023 (N = 10,736).

The temporal trends of propaganda strategies employed by Pakistan and India reveal significant variations, particularly concerning the time frames during which different techniques are utilized. These variations not only reflect the strategic objectives of each country but also highlight how contextual factors influence the timing and frequency of specific propaganda tactics.

The data indicates that Pakistan places a strong emphasis on the "Authority" strategy, with notable spikes observed during the months of September and December

2021 and September 2022. These periods correspond with critical geopolitical events, suggesting that Pakistan strategically aligns its messaging with moments when it seeks to bolster its credibility and legitimacy. The timing of these spikes invites debate regarding their effectiveness; for instance, the peak observed in August-September 2021 coincides with the Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan, a moment when Pakistan aimed to position itself as a stabilizing force in the region (BBC News, 2021).

In contrast, India's "Plain Folks" strategy exhibits high frequency and notable peaks in August and September 2021. India's implementation of the "Plain Folks" strategy highlights a significant approach to disseminating people-centric propaganda. India's reliance on the "Authority" strategy during the months of August and September 2021 underscores its efforts to assert its geopolitical position and enhance its influence on the international stage. This strategy is characterized by leveraging credible figures and institutions to convey messages that reinforce India's leadership role in global affairs, particularly in the context of evolving regional dynamics. These temporal variations suggest that India was responsive to public sentiment and sought to create relatability during periods of heightened nationalistic fervor or social unrest in the region. The consistent application of these various strategies over time indicates a deliberate effort by India to maintain a connection with its populace during times of heightened crisis.

Both countries' employment of propaganda strategies is intricately linked to geopolitical events. For instance, India's emphasis on depicting the Taliban as a destabilizing force aligns with its broader narrative regarding security threats emanating from Afghanistan. This narrative has been particularly pronounced during periods of escalating regional tensions or significant developments concerning the Taliban's governance (Saud & Kazim, 2021). In contrast, Pakistan's portrayal of the Taliban's resurgence as a victory for Afghan sovereignty reflects its strategic interest in countering Indian influence in Afghanistan. The timing of this narrative is critical; it becomes more pronounced when Pakistan aims to assert its role as a key player in regional stability (BBC News, 2021).

The rise of social media as a platform for propaganda has also influenced the timing of these strategies. For example, Pakistan employed a "Transfer" strategy in August 2021, with notable spikes in December 2021 following the Taliban's takeover of Afghanistan three months earlier. These variations suggest differing responses to social media dynamics and public sentiment at various times.

The findings of this study reveal that both countries have adapted their propaganda techniques over time, responding to shifting political landscapes and public perceptions. For instance, while Pakistan's use of the "Plain Folks" strategy peaked in September 2021, India experienced similar peaks during August and September 2021. This longitudinal variation indicates that each nation tailors its tactics based on immediate political contexts and long-term strategic goals.

As geopolitical tensions evolve, so too do the propaganda strategies employed by both countries. The historical context plays a crucial role; for instance, India's ongoing efforts to portray Pakistan as a supporter of terrorism have intensified following specific incidents that garnered international attention (BBC News, 2021). Similarly, Pakistan's narratives have evolved in response to India's actions and rhetoric (Al Jazeera, 2023).

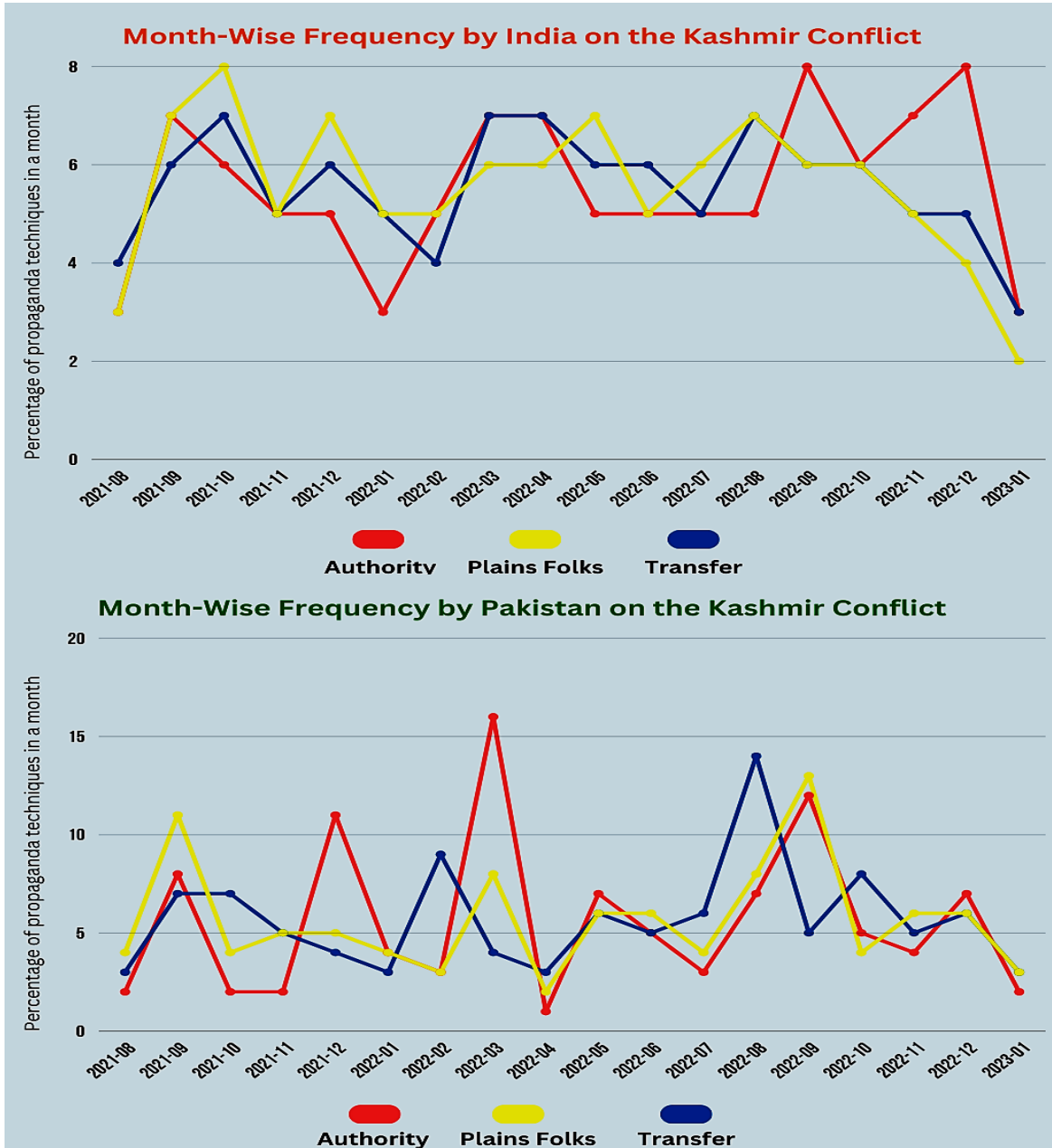
The interplay between propaganda strategies and geopolitical events highlights how both India and Pakistan navigate their narratives in response to evolving circumstances. The adaptation of these strategies over time underscores the importance of understanding the broader political landscape in which they operate.

The variations in propaganda strategies between Pakistan and India are significantly influenced by temporal factors, including geopolitical events and social media dynamics. Each nation's approach reflects not only its strategic objectives but also its responsiveness to changing political contexts over time. Understanding these temporal variations provides valuable insights into how propaganda functions as a tool for shaping public perception and influencing international narratives within the complex landscape

of South Asian geopolitics (*For additional information, please refer to Tables 13 and 14*).

### **5.7 Time Series Analysis on the Kashmir Conflict – India and Pakistan**

**RQ3: How have the propaganda strategies produced on Kashmir conflict by the two countries in the selected events vary with the passage of time?**



**Figure 3.** Monthly frequency of the Kashmir conflict social media coverage from 2021–2023 (N = 18,605).

The findings of temporal trends in propaganda strategies employed by Pakistan and India reveals intricate dynamics within the realm of information warfare. Both countries adapt their propaganda techniques over time, responding to changing geopolitical contexts and domestic pressures. This examination highlights the variations in the timing and frequency of specific strategies, which reflect each country's strategic objectives and situational responses.

On the Pakistani side, the "Authority" strategy was consistently evident, with notable peaks observed in March 2022 and September 2022. These peaks may correlate with significant geopolitical events, suggesting that Pakistan strategically aligns its messaging during periods when it seeks to enhance its credibility (Ishfaq, 2024). In contrast, the "Plain Folks" strategy displayed a steady presence throughout the analyzed months, with significant peaks in September 2021 and September 2022. This consistent presence indicates a deliberate effort to maintain relatability with the populace during times of heightened national sentiment (Podder, 2012).

Meanwhile, the "Transfer" strategy showed minimal fluctuations, with significant peaks occurring in February and August 2022. The low presence of emotional associations suggests that Pakistan is seemingly less responsive to immediate political contexts when reinforcing its narratives. Additionally, other strategies such as "Virtue Words" exhibited varied occurrences, peaking in March 2022 and January 2023. The "Bandwagon" strategy exhibited variability but was less prevalent compared to other techniques. The timing of these peaks may indicate an attempt to frame narratives positively during periods of potential crisis or scrutiny.

On the Indian side, the "Transfer" strategy employed predominantly, with peaks in October 2021, March, April, and August 2022. India's consistent application of a transfer strategy to evoke emotional associations around the Kashmir issue illustrates the profound impact of emotions in shaping political narratives. By leveraging emotional transfer mechanisms, India effectively constructs a narrative that resonates with its populace, thereby influencing both domestic discourse and international perceptions regarding the Kashmir conflict. The "Authority" strategy was also present throughout the analyzed time frame consistently, peaking in September and December 2022. This indicates India's focus on leveraging authoritative voices to bolster its narratives during this period.

The "*Plain Folks*" strategy was evident throughout the data in both countries, with a notable peak in September 2022 and October 2021 respectively. The findings indicate that both countries have adapted their propaganda techniques over time in response to shifting political landscapes and public perceptions regarding the Kashmir issue. For instance, while Pakistan's use of "*Transfer*" strategy peaked in August 2022, India's peaks were noted during October 2021 and March-April 2022. This longitudinal variation suggests that each nation tailors its tactics based on immediate political contexts and long-term strategic goals. The others strategies observed was "*Bandwagon*" strategy notable for its peaks in October 2021, and September 2022. These spikes suggest a tactical response aimed at capitalizing on perceived popular support during critical moments (Abbas, 2023). Additionally, the "*Glittering Generalities*" strategy was consistently utilized with peaks in May and November 2022. This reflects India's efforts to evoke emotional resonance through aspirational messaging during significant political events (Podder, 2012).

As geopolitical tensions evolve, so too do the propaganda strategies employed by both countries. The historical context plays a crucial role; for instance, India's ongoing efforts to portray Pakistan as a supporter of terrorism have intensified following specific incidents that garnered international attention (Ishfaq, 2024). Similarly, Pakistan's narratives have evolved in response to India's actions and rhetoric (*For additional information, please refer to Tables 15 and 16*).

The variations in propaganda strategies between Pakistan and India are significantly influenced by temporal factors such as geopolitical events, time frame and social media dynamics. Each nation's approach reflects not only its strategic objectives but also its responsiveness to changing political contexts over time. Understanding these temporal variations provides valuable insights into how propaganda functions as a tool for shaping public perception and influencing international narratives within the complex landscape of South Asian geopolitics.

### 5.8 Identifying the Most Effective Propaganda Strategies

RQ4: Which distinct strategies of propaganda get more virality among audiences produced by the officials in India and Pakistan?

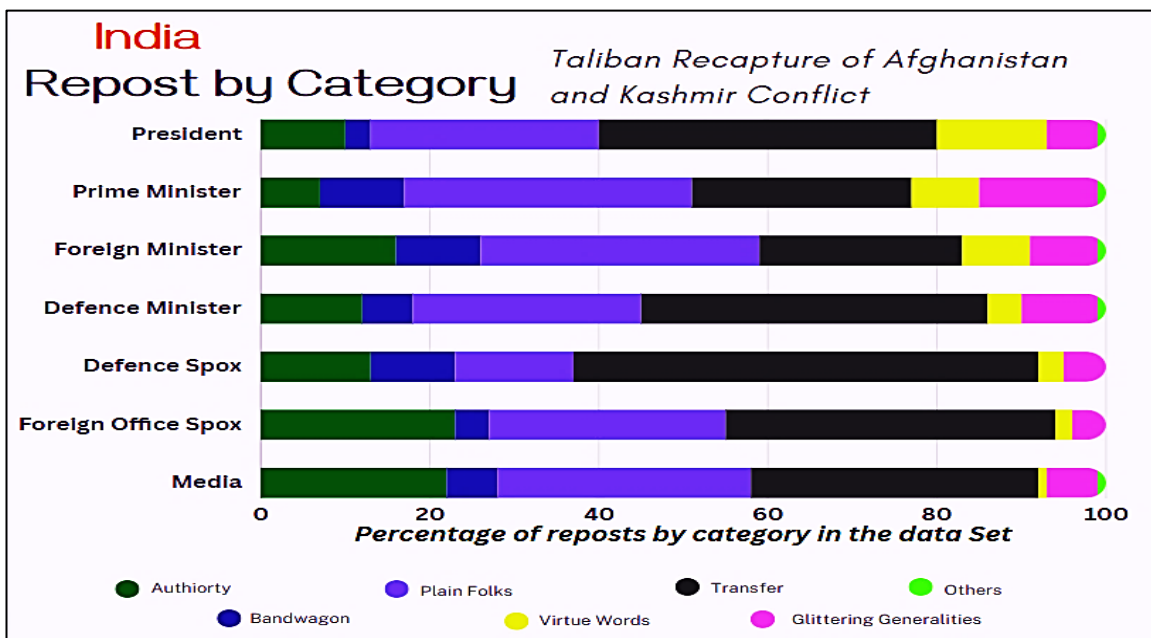


Figure 4. Viral Strategies on Taliban Recapture of Afghanistan and Kashmir Conflict – India

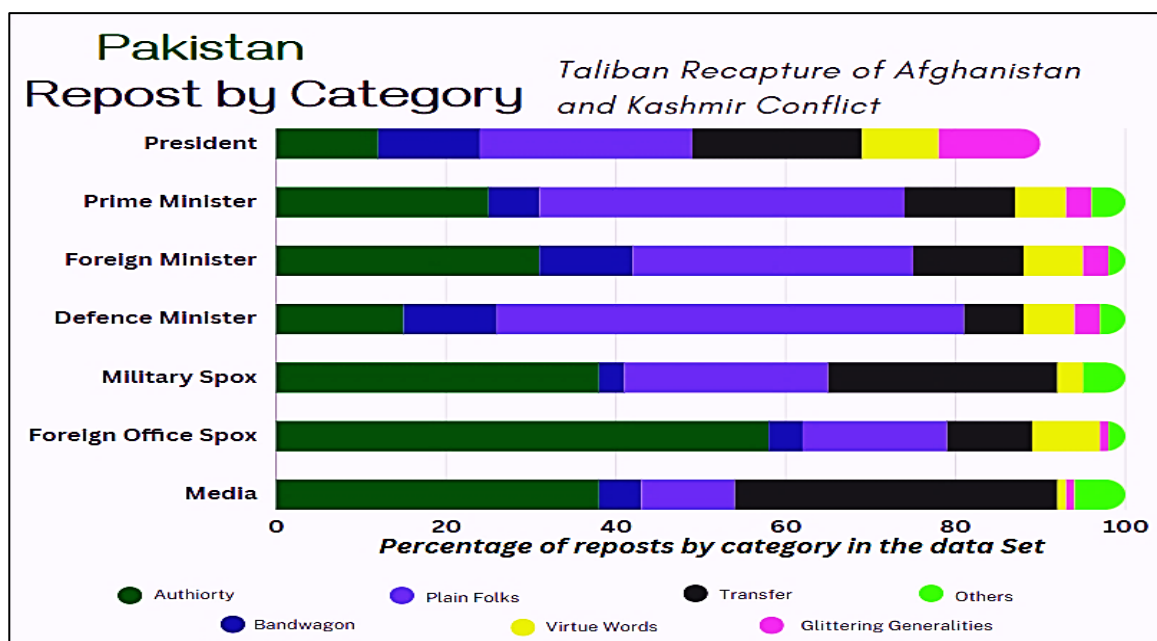


Figure 5. Viral Strategies on a Taliban Recapture of Afghanistan and Kashmir Conflict – Pakistan

The comparative analysis of viral strategies between the Prime Minister(s) and President(s) of India and Pakistan reveals significant disparities in engagement metrics. While these metrics offer a valuable measure of reach and audience interaction, they require further detailed investigations; a high repost count does not automatically equate to persuasion or attitudinal change, a limitation that should be acknowledged. India's Prime Minister garnered a total of 1,560,092 reposts through the Plain Folks strategy, while Pakistan's Prime Minister received only 353,362 reposts. This suggests a wider dissemination of content framed as relatable to the general populace, though the actual persuasive effect remains speculative without data on audience reception. In terms of the Bandwagon strategy, India's Prime Minister achieved 472,688 reposts, compared to Pakistan's 48,816, indicating a greater success in creating the perception of a popular movement. Conversely, in the Transfer strategy category, Pakistan's Prime Minister received 109,362 reposts, while India's Prime Minister significantly outperformed with 1,225,878 reposts, pointing to a more effective—though not necessarily more persuasive—deployment of positive or negative symbols.

Similarly, India's President outperformed his Pakistani counterpart across most categories. He received 63,819 reposts via the Plain Folks strategy, in contrast to Pakistan's President, who garnered only 14,747 reposts. This disparity highlights a strategic emphasis on crafting an "ordinary" persona. Additionally, India's President achieved 7,974 reposts through the Bandwagon strategy compared to Pakistan's President's 7,214, indicating comparable efforts in rallying public support. However, India's President excelled in the Glittering Generalities category with 148,618 reposts, compared to Pakistan's 7,027, highlighting India's President's active use of vague messaging.

In terms of foreign policy representation, India's Foreign Minister also outperformed his Pakistani counterpart within the Plain Folks category, receiving 98,290 reposts against Pakistan's 41,202 reposts, suggesting a more active performance of a "common voice. However, Pakistan's Foreign Minister received more reposts in the Authority category with 130,942, compared to India's 46,492 reposts, indicating a

strategic choice to leverage a position of authority or power, which appears to have generated significant engagement on specific issues.

When examining the Defence Ministers' performance in social media engagement, it is notable that India's Defence Minister received fewer reposts in the Plain Folks category (5,769) than Pakistan's Defence Minister (5,914), revealing a minor but interesting exception to the broader trend of Pakistani leaders dominating this strategy. Furthermore, Pakistan's military spokesperson (DG ISPR) demonstrated greater engagement across most categories. He received 74,086 reposts through the Authority strategy compared to India's Defence Spokesperson mere 2,729 reposts, underscoring the Pakistani military's effective projection of institutional credibility and command on social media, particularly on security issues. Additionally, DG ISPR achieved 53,189 reposts via the Transfer strategy against India's 40,006 reposts, indicating a successful effort to associate the military's narrative with potent symbols related to the Taliban recapture of Afghanistan and the Kashmir conflict.

The analysis of social media engagement among the Foreign Office spokespersons of India and Pakistan reveals notable differences in their effectiveness across various communication strategies. Pakistan's Foreign Office spokesperson received 84,674 reposts in the Authority category, significantly surpassing India's 23,494 reposts. This suggests the Pakistani spokesperson's authoritative framing on contentious issues like Afghanistan and Kashmir resonated strongly within his audience ecosystem. Conversely, India's Foreign Office spokesperson achieved 29,535 reposts through the Plain Folks strategy, compared to Pakistan's 24,988 reposts, pointing to a divergent, more populist communication style.

In terms of media engagement, Indian media generated significantly more reposts than their Pakistani counterparts across most categories. Indian media received 917,469 reposts through the Plain Folks strategy, while Pakistani media garnered only 75 reposts. This stark contrast could indicate either a more aggressive adoption of people-centric framing by Indian media or a reflection of the vastly different sizes and structures of the two countries' digital news markets. Additionally, India's media secured 190,436 reposts

through the Bandwagon strategy compared to Pakistan's mere 33 reposts, further highlighting this disparity in scale and strategy. Furthermore, Indian media amassed an impressive 1,053,497 reposts under the Transfer strategy, while Pakistan's media only received 250 reposts, showcasing a highly effective, coordinated effort to emotionally charge and symbolically link critical issues. Huang and Lu (2017) discuss how governments can utilize social media for both hard and soft propaganda, with the latter focusing on creating emotional connections with the public. The Indian media's performance aligns with a model of soft propaganda, though its ultimate effectiveness in shaping beliefs, rather than just generating clicks, requires further study.

The findings suggest that Indian leaders—including the Prime Minister, President, media, and to some extent, the Foreign Office spokesperson—were generally more successful in generating engagement and sharing content within their networks through propaganda strategies such as Plain Folks and Transfer. For instance, India's Prime Minister achieved 1,560,092 reposts through the Plain Folks strategy compared to Pakistan's 353,362, indicating a tactical focus on portraying himself as an ordinary individual and adopting a people-centric approach. Similarly, India's media's effectiveness is underscored by its 917,469 reposts through Plain Folks versus Pakistan's limited engagement.

In contrast, certain representatives from Pakistan—including the Prime Minister, military spokesperson, and Foreign Office spokesperson—demonstrated greater activeness in gaining reposts using Authority and Transfer strategies. Notably, Pakistan's Foreign Minister received 130,942 reposts in the Authority category compared to India's 46,492, suggesting that he was active in promoting himself as an authoritative figure. Additionally, Pakistan's military spokesperson garnered 74,086 reposts through Authority against India's 2,729, while the Foreign Office spokesperson's performance further highlighted this trend with his 84,674 reposts, emphasizing effective engagement through authority appeals regarding issues such as the Taliban's recapture of Afghanistan and the Kashmir conflict.

Digital propaganda has emerged as a crucial instrument for both state and non-state actors seeking to influence public opinion and shape narratives. The recapture of Afghanistan by the Taliban and the ongoing Kashmir conflict have provided fertile ground for both Pakistan and India to leverage social media for strategic communication. Research indicates that digital propaganda encompasses manipulative uses of digital technology aimed at achieving specific military, diplomatic, and political goals, often through the dissemination of misleading or emotionally charged information (Rahman, Hussain, & Asif, 2023). The total number of reposts serves as a metric for assessing the virality of different propaganda strategies (see Figures 4 and 5 for further details).

The analysis of the most effective viral propaganda strategies reveals that emotional appeals and relatable language dominate engagement metrics. This trend underscores the effectiveness of Transfer and Plain Folks strategies in digital propaganda, where rapid dissemination and engagement are critical. The ability of both countries particularly India to craft narratives that resonate emotionally with the respective audiences highlights the evolving nature of information warfare. Findings indicate that India's Prime Minister, Foreign Minister, and media were more successful in generating engagement and sharing within their networks by utilizing propaganda strategies such as Plain Folks and Transfer.

The propaganda warfare between India and Pakistan, particularly following the Taliban's recapture of Afghanistan and the Kashmir conflict, illustrates the significant role of digital propaganda in shaping public perceptions. As digital platforms continue to evolve, understanding the dynamics of digital propaganda will be crucial for both policymakers and scholars. This analysis also highlights the need for further research on the long-term impact of these propaganda strategies on public opinion and decision-making in both countries. Future studies should examine the role of social media platforms in regulating and mitigating the spread of propaganda during conflicts between countries. As Aro (2016) notes, "Propaganda and trolling as warfare tools" have become increasingly prevalent in cyberspace.

One important finding of this study is the significance of a well-coordinated, multi-pronged propaganda strategy in driving engagement and amplifying narratives on social media. India's ability to generate high volumes of reposts across various strategies suggests a more sophisticated, centralized approach compared to Pakistan's efforts. Analyzing the virality of posts by propaganda strategy provides valuable insights into the intricacies involved in propaganda maneuvers.

Overall, the data on reposts paints a picture of divergent strategic emphases: Indian actors predominantly leveraged relatable (Plain Folks) and symbolic (Transfer) strategies to achieve broad-based engagement, while Pakistani officials, particularly in military and foreign policy roles, found more success with Authority-based appeals. However, these engagement metrics represent only the first layer of analysis. The critical limitation remains that virality is not synonymous with persuasion. Without triangulating this platform data with audience reception studies—such as surveys, sentiment analysis, or in-depth interviews—any claims about the strategic success or persuasive power would require further detail investigations. The link between high repost counts and actual attitude change is complex and should be a central consideration for future research.

## **5.9 Main topics and themes of Taliban recapture of Afghanistan – Pakistan**

**RQ5. What are the key themes and topics in the posts on X (formerly Twitter) produced by the Indian and Pakistani official accounts relating to events happening in Kashmir and Afghanistan?**

**Table 24.** Main themes of Taliban recapture of Afghanistan state-sponsored campaign by Pakistan ( $N = 1,048$ )

k	Label	Occurrence (% of topics in corpus)	Top five terms
<b>Taliban Recapture of Afghanistan - Pakistan</b>			
5	Humanitarian Crisis and Solidarity in Afghanistan and Pakistan	328 (25%)	Pakistan, Afghan, Situation, Support, Humanitarian
2	Islamic World Cooperation on Afghanistan	205 (16%)	OIC4Afg, Session, Extraordinary, 17 <sup>th</sup> , Islamabad
4	Terrorist Threats and Enhancing National Security	141 (11%)	Attack, Terrorist, People, Force, Security
3	International Support for Afghanistan	114 (9%)	Pakistan, Khan, UN, World, Afghanistan
6	Global solidarity for humanitarian support	97 (7%)	FM, UN, People, visit, US
1	Peace Building Efforts in South Asia	96 (7%)	Afghanistan, Pakistan, APP News, UN, Peace
7	Urgent Response and International Cooperation for Afghanistan	87 (7%)	Afghan, Crisis, Issue, OIC, Must
10	Multilateral forums for security and sustainable development in Afghanistan	85 (6%)	FM, US, UN, UNGA, Meeting
9	Firm stance against Terrorism	78 (6%)	Condolence, Family, Loss, Attack, Terrorism

8	Humanitarian and Security protection through UN Engagement	76 (6%)	UN, FM, security, Pakistan, protection
<b>Total</b>		<b>1048 (100%)</b>	

### 5.10 Main topics and themes of Taliban recapture of Afghanistan – India

**RQ5. What are the key themes and topics in the posts on X (formerly Twitter) produced by the Indian and Pakistani official accounts relating to events happening in Kashmir and Afghanistan?**

**Table 25.** Main themes of Taliban recapture of Afghanistan state-sponsored campaign by India ( $N = 10,662$ )

k	Label	Occurrence (% of topics in corpus)	Top five terms
<b>Taliban Recapture of Afghanistan – India</b>			
3	Counter terrorism Operations in Kashmir	1870 (17%)	Terrorist, Kashmir, security, killed, encounter
9	Domestic politics	1833 (17%)	CM, people, Congress, Modi, India
11	Geopolitical rivalries and Security Concerns	1802 (17%)	US, Meeting, Biden, Ukraine, Russia, PM
7	Diplomatic initiatives	1275 (12%)	India, Afghanistan, Terrorism, UNSC, Security,

			Jaishankar,
1	Counter terrorism Collaboration and Regional Security	1106 (10%)	US, India, Watch, Afghanistan, Blinken
6	International relations and geopolitical influence	630 (6%)	Report, News, AFP, Afghanistan, Agency
10	Border security and tensions	564 (5%)	Drone, BSF, Punjab, border, fired
2	Propaganda and narrative control	564 (5%)	Case, Mumbai, Delhi, arrested Accused, Pakistan
8	Political Power Struggles in Indian States	502 (5%)	BJP, Governor, Delhi, CM, Bengal, Congress
5	Public health	399 (4%)	People, Amritsar, Break, vaccine, India
4	India`s Foreign Policy and National Security	282 (3%)	Minister, Affairs, Defence, Modi, External
<b>Total</b>		<b>10662 (100%)</b>	

As shown in Tables 24 and 25, the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan in August 2021 has significantly altered the strategic dynamics in the region. Concurrently, the evolving security situation and humanitarian crisis have created a fertile environment for intensified propaganda warfare between India and Pakistan. Both countries have accelerated their efforts to shape narratives and influence public opinion in the wake of the Taliban's takeover and the rapid withdrawal of U.S. forces from Afghanistan.

Following the Taliban's recapture of Afghanistan, India was compelled to reassess its policy towards its western neighbor (Shivam, 2023).

The six primary themes regarding the Taliban's recapture of Afghanistan, as discussed in the official debates by India and Pakistan, include: “Counter terrorism Operations in Kashmir,” “Domestic Politics,” and “Geopolitical rivalries and Security Concerns” from the Indian perspective (see Table 25 for further details). In contrast, Pakistan predominantly focused on “Humanitarian Crisis and Solidarity in Afghanistan and Pakistan,” “Islamic World Cooperation on Afghanistan,” and “Counter Terrorism and Public Safety” (see Table 24 for further details).

These findings regarding the Taliban's recapture of Afghanistan reveal intriguing insights into the social media campaigns employed. The emphasis on Humanitarian Crisis and Solidarity in Afghanistan and Pakistan (25%) following the deadly earthquake exemplifies a form of soft power diplomacy amid the information warfare waged by Pakistan. This aid delivery not only serves as a humanitarian gesture but also influences the narrative and perceptions of the involved countries. Research on the state of digital information warfare between India and Pakistan highlights how such actions can be strategically utilized to shape public opinion and international image (Hussain et al., 2021). Simultaneously, India has concentrated on Counter terrorism Operations in Kashmir (17%) as a significant aspect of the debate on social media platforms. By exploiting the security situation in Afghanistan to its advantage, India has accused Pakistan of supporting terrorism in Kashmir, thereby justifying its counterterrorism efforts in the region. The Indian media has faced accusations of disseminating disinformation regarding Pakistan's involvement in terrorism, further straining bilateral relations (Khan, 2019). For India, the new regime and its associated risks—particularly the threat of terrorism—have quickly positioned it to frame terrorism as a regional issue. Consequently, India's initiatives to counter this threat have centered on fostering partnerships and cooperating on counterterrorism efforts (Shivam, 2023).

Both states employ various strategies, including economic reforms, diplomatic alliances, strengthening ties, military upgrades, and technological advancements, to vie for regional supremacy (Saner & Yiu, 2002). The Islamic World Cooperation on Afghanistan (16%) showcased during the OIC4Afg session in Islamabad, amidst the Taliban's recapture of Afghanistan, underscore the intricate interplay of geopolitical interests and alliances (Ahmed, 2020). This diplomatic engagement can be interpreted as a response to the evolving situation in Afghanistan and broader diplomatic initiatives by Pakistan. Understanding the nuances of these diplomatic maneuvers is essential for deciphering the ongoing propaganda warfare between both countries, particularly Pakistan.

Interestingly, the official discourse on domestic politics (17%) has shifted the direction of discussions from the Indian side. The Indian government, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has faced accusations of using propaganda to advance its political and diplomatic agenda. While promoting Hindu nationalism, the Indian media has also been criticized for depicting Pakistan as an adversarial state (Yousuf Zai, 2020). Similarly, Pakistan's domestic politics have been influenced by developments in India, with the Pakistani media accused of fostering anti-India sentiments and sponsoring campaigns regarding India's involvement in Kashmir (Mohan, C. R., 2022).

The focus on terrorist threats and enhancing national security (11%) from Pakistan, in the context of the Taliban's recapture of Afghanistan, highlights heightened security concerns. Findings from a study by Geiß and Lahmann (2021) indicate that the strategic use of social media can significantly influence public opinion and, consequently, impact diplomatic and military outcomes between the two countries. Additionally, Geopolitical rivalries and security concerns (17%) have become central themes in India's official discourse, particularly in the context of its relationships with major powers like the United States, Russia and China. The historical backdrop of these rivalries is crucial for understanding the contemporary dynamics that have sparked considerable debate among diplomatic, military, and media circles in both countries. Pakistan has accused the U.S. of supporting India's stance on Kashmir, while India has

countered by accusing Pakistan of using the U.S. as a scapegoat for its failures in the region (Khan, 2019).

The emphasis on International Support for Afghanistan (9%), particularly involving Pakistan, underscores the interconnected nature of information warfare and diplomacy. A study on the impact of Indian information warfare on Pakistan highlighted the role of propaganda in shaping narratives and perceptions, especially concerning humanitarian efforts and international partnerships (Ahmed, A., 2011). Concurrently, the official discourse in India addressed themes related to diplomatic initiatives (12%) on social media during the Taliban's recapture of Afghanistan. India sought to engage with various global capitals, including the US, UK, France, Russia, Gulf countries, and international forums like the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and G20, to establish itself as a relevant diplomatic stakeholder.

The theme of global solidarity for humanitarian support (7%), as discussed by the Pakistani side, including the involvement of the UN and the US, adds another layer to the existing discussions. This solidarity can be leveraged to project influence, shape narratives, and advance strategic interests amidst the evolving geopolitical landscape. Understanding the role of global actors in humanitarian efforts is essential for analyzing the broader information warfare strategies at play. Research by Geiß & Lahmann and Rodenhäuser & D'Cunha suggests that Pakistan should articulate a response strategy with clear objectives, powered by algorithms, and include news actors while utilizing the void created by Modi's ideological populism in India (Geiß & Lahmann, 2021; Rodenhäuser & D'Cunha, 2023). Diplomatic initiatives (12%) have also been a significant theme in India's official discourse. India has employed diplomacy to advance its interests and remain relevant in the developing situation in Afghanistan. At the G20 Extraordinary Summit on Afghanistan in October 2021, Prime Minister Modi urged G20 countries to seek accountability from the Taliban based on Resolution 2593 (Dipanjan Roy, 2021). India has repeatedly voiced its stance at the UNSC to highlight Pakistan's alleged involvement in terrorism, while Pakistan has utilized diplomatic channels such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), South Asian Association for Regional

Cooperation (SAARC), and the UN to promote its narrative regarding the Taliban's de facto government in Afghanistan.

Themes such as Peace Building Efforts in South Asia (7%) and Counter terrorism Collaboration and Regional Security (10%) were significantly covered during discussions between Pakistan and India. The US-India relationship has been a subject of debate from Pakistan, which accuses the US of supporting India's position on Kashmir. Conversely, India has accused Pakistan of using China as a proxy to further its interests in the region (Ahmed, A., 2011). A study by Rahman examined Pakistan's existing response strategies to Indian digital propaganda (Rahman et al., 2023). By analyzing selected hashtags over the past five years, media reports, policy matters, and academic scholarship, the researcher identified several deficiencies in the current approach and offered policy recommendations for improvement.

Moreover, discussions on themes such as Urgent Response and International Cooperation for Afghanistan (7%), Multilateral Forums for the Advancement of Peace, Security, and Sustainable Development in Afghanistan (6%), Firm Stance Against Terrorism (6%), and Humanitarian and Security protection through UN Engagement (6%) are interconnected and pertinent to understanding propaganda warfare from Pakistan's perspective. Simultaneously, India highlighted multilateral themes related to border security and tensions (5%), propaganda and narrative control (5%), public health (4%), India's Foreign Policy and National Security (3%) in its official communications.

The propaganda warfare between India and Pakistan regarding the Taliban's recapture of Afghanistan involved distinct themes and topics for discussion. Both countries employed various themes to further their respective agendas, further straining the already fragile relationship between the two neighboring countries. The findings suggest that the Pakistani narrative on the Taliban's recapture of Afghanistan underscores the intricate interplay between humanitarian support, regional cooperation, terrorist threats, global partnerships, and solidarity in the realm of propaganda warfare. These themes highlight the multifaceted nature of information warfare strategies and the

strategic implications of humanitarian actions and diplomatic engagements in shaping perceptions and narratives in the digital domain. While India resorts to diplomatic engagements and reaches out to international capitals regarding the severity of the security situation, it also attempts to link the security situation in Afghanistan with terrorism in Kashmir, emphasizing its potential role in counter-terrorism efforts in Afghanistan.

### 5.11 Main topics and themes of Kashmir conflict – Pakistan

**RQ5. What are the key themes and topics in the posts on X (formerly Twitter) produced by the Indian and Pakistani official accounts relating to events happening in Kashmir and Afghanistan?**

**Table 26.** Main themes of Kashmir conflict state-sponsored campaign by Pakistan ( $N=2,683$ )

k	Label	Occurrence (% of topics in corpus)	Top five terms
	<b>Kashmir Conflict – Pakistan</b>		
9	Regional Dynamics and Security Cooperation	482 (16%)	Afghanistan, Pakistan, relation, support, bilateral
8	International cooperation and diplomacy	467 (15%)	OICInPakistan, OIC48CFM, Secretary, welcome
7	Upholding Human Rights and Self-determination in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK)	338 (11%)	IIOJK, right, Kashmiris, India, KashmiriLivesMatter

6	Climate change and international support	248 (8%)	Pakistan, flood, climate, resilient, support
3	Human cost of Terrorism	238 (8%)	Attack, Terrorist, Life, Loss, Condemns
4	Humanitarian crisis and building peace	237 (8%)	OIC4Afg, Extraordinary, OICinPakistan, CFM, Sikh, India
11	Diplomatic engagements	229 (8%)	Engagement, Diplomatic, Diplomacy, Team, Outreach
10	Pakistan`s Support for Kashmiri self-determination	199 (7%)	UNGA, PakAtUN77, High, Commission OIC, Meeting
12	Regional security challenges due to Kashmir dispute	156 (5%)	India, Security, KashmirBlackDay, Border, security, threat
5	Kashmir Solidarity Day and struggle for Self-Determination	125 (4%)	Kashmir Day, Kashmiri, struggle, Syed Ali, Black
1	Honoring the legacy of Syed Ali Geelani	120 (4%)	Islamabad, Ali, leader, Syed, Information
2	National pride, historical milestones, patriotic celebrations and remembrance of freedom fighters	109 (4%)	Celebration, Indian, National, Anniversary, Raise
<b>Total</b>		<b>2683 (100%)</b>	

## 5.12 Main topics and themes of Kashmir Conflict – India

**RQ5. What are the key themes and topics in the posts on X (formerly Twitter) produced by the Indian and Pakistani official accounts relating to events happening in Kashmir and Afghanistan?**

**Table 27.** Main themes of Kashmir conflict state-sponsored campaign by India ( $N = 19,662$ )

k	Label	Occurrence (% of topics in corpus)	Top five terms
	<b>Kashmir Conflict – India</b>		
1	Rising India	3407 (16%)	India, Defence, Minister, Economy, world
9	Counterinsurgency Operations and Security Forces	2977 (14%)	Kashmir, terrorist, Police, force, Army
11	Strategic bilateral relationship between India and US	2723 (13%)	India, US, cooperation, partnership, bilateral
2	Manipulation of narratives, propaganda dissemination and use of social media to influence public opinion	2165 (10%)	India, Modi, World, people, tweet, Active
3	Cricket diplomacy	1334 (6%)	Woman, World, Win, Cup, BCCI,
7	Security challenges, counter	1246 (7%)	Security, terrorism,

	terrorism efforts in Afghanistan		Afghanistan, Situation, UNSC
5	Geopolitical dynamics, regional tensions and international relations	1155 (6%)	India, G20, Pakistan, border, Punjab
15	Domestic politics between BJP and Congress	1027 (5%)	Delhi, Congress, BJP, Chief, Rahul
12	Patriotism	996 (5%)	President, Indian, Delhi, huge, Independence
14	Historical events and regional conflicts	713 (3%)	Bangladesh, India, War, started, new
10	Security challenges, state sponsored terrorism and regional dynamics in South Asia	662 (3%)	Pakistan, ANI, Jaishankar, incident, Asia
6	Impact of Covid19 pandemic on India	648 (3%)	India, Report, COVID19, recovery, death
13	Public health initiatives	635 (3%)	India, Ministry, High, Health, Government
8	Advocating for reform and permanent membership of UNSC	570 (3%)	India, Security, Council, UN, Permanent
4	Public health, regional identity and social issues	391 (2%)	Police, vaccine, Kashmiri, Yadav, people

**Total****19662 (100%)**

State-sponsored campaigns surrounding the Kashmir conflict have highlighted the divergent narratives disseminated by India and Pakistan. The Pakistani campaign emphasized themes such as Regional Dynamics and Security Cooperation (16%), international cooperation and diplomacy (15%), and the upholding of human rights and self-determination in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) (11%) (see Table 26 for further details). In contrast, the Indian campaign focused on the strategic use of information (16%), Counterinsurgency Operations and Security Forces (14%), and the strategic bilateral relationship between India and the United States (13%) as central topics during the analyzed period (see Table 27 for further details).

The analysis of themes in social media campaigns related to the Kashmir conflict reveals several critical issues. The theme of " Regional Dynamics and Security Cooperation " (16%) underscores Pakistan's emphasis on regional cooperation and diplomacy to address the broader security landscape in South Asia, including the protracted Kashmir issue. Conversely, the Indian perspective prominently featured "The Strategic use of Information," which accounted for 16% of the discussions. Saud and Kazim (2021) highlight India's engagement in information warfare against Pakistan, characterized by the manipulation of narratives, dissemination of propaganda, and the strategic use of social media to shape public opinion.

Additionally, Pakistan's discourse on "International cooperation and diplomacy" (16%) stresses the role of international organizations, such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), in addressing humanitarian crises and security challenges in Afghanistan. Notably, India's focus on " Counterinsurgency Operations and Security Forces " accounted for 14% of the topics covered. The Kashmir conflict has become a significant arena for propaganda and disinformation, with both countries employing various strategies to influence public sentiment. Payne (2017) examined the impact of blogs on peace and conflict journalism between India and Pakistan during heightened tensions in 2019-2020, particularly following the Pulwama attack. The study employed a content analysis methodology, utilizing a coding sheet from December 2019 to 2020 to assess the potential influence of blogs on narratives surrounding war and peace in the

India-Pakistan relationship. The findings indicate a predominance of war journalism over peace journalism among bloggers, framing bilateral relations through lenses of trade, security, propaganda, border issues, and nuclear conflict.

The third most discussed theme by Pakistan pertains to "Upholding Human Rights and Self-determination in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir" (11%), reflecting ongoing human rights concerns and calls for self-determination in the region. Both India and Pakistan have faced accusations of human rights violations and the denial of self-determination for the Kashmiri population (Bose, 2020; Ganguly, 2019). Meanwhile, India emphasized "the strategic bilateral relationship between India and the US," which accounted for 13% of total discussions. This relationship remains a contentious aspect of the India-Pakistan conflict, with the United States attempting to mediate tensions between the two countries, albeit with limited success due to its dual relationships with both countries (Khan, 2019).

The Kashmir conflict is a complex and multifaceted issue, encompassing not only territorial disputes and self-determination but also broader concerns related to regional security, human rights, climate change, and terrorism (Malik, 2022; Sharma, 2021). Discussions on "Climate change and international support" (8%) by Pakistan highlight the environmental challenges facing the region, including the impact of climate change on stability and security (Haider, 2021; Joshi, 2020). The region's susceptibility to natural disasters, such as floods, exacerbates existing tensions and conflicts (Haider, 2021; Joshi, 2020). Furthermore, the "manipulation of narratives, propaganda dissemination, and social media's role in shaping public opinion" (10%) provide insights into India's preemptive measures regarding the ongoing Kashmir campaign, including the spread of disinformation and cyber-attacks to portray Pakistan negatively. The Indian Army's establishment of the Director General of Information Warfare position aims to monitor propaganda from China and Pakistan (Jawad, 2022).

The theme "Human cost of Terrorism" (8%) addressed by Pakistan reflects ongoing violence and instability in the region, including the threat of terrorism and its

impact on civilians. Both countries have accused each other of supporting terrorist groups and utilizing them as proxies in the conflict (Khan, 2019). Concurrently, India discussed "Cricket Diplomacy," which accounted for 6% of total topics, illustrating how cricket has historically served as a diplomatic tool for India to enhance relations, particularly with Pakistan. The scheduling or cancellation of cricket matches often mirrors the political climate between the two countries (Martand Jha, 2017).

The findings suggest that the South Asian neighbors, Pakistan and India, have employed strategic themes and topics that align with the evolving phases of the conflict and regional dynamics. This has resulted in a cycle of accusations and counter-accusations, as well as propaganda warfare between the two rivals. These strategies are evident in the selective amplification of themes by pro-India and pro-Pakistan state-backed officials and media, including humanitarian concerns in Afghanistan, historical grievances in Kashmir, diplomatic maneuvers to shape international narratives, exploitation of terrorism for political gain, and the use of nationalistic sentiments and cricket diplomacy to influence public opinion, thereby fostering a polarized digital environment.

### **5.13 Support for Existing Propaganda Strategies**

Following topic modeling and thematic analysis, this study examines how Indian and Pakistani official themes employ 10 classical propaganda strategies—including *plain folks*, *bandwagon*, *card stacking*, *fear mongering*, *loaded language*, *appeal to authority*, *testimonial*, *glittering generalities*, *transfer*, and *name-calling*—while also identifying emerging tactics in their discourse on the Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan and the Kashmir conflict. By systematically analyzing these strategies within dominant themes, the research highlights patterns of narrative manipulation and their implications for perception management. The findings contribute to a critical debate on the efficacy and evolution of state-sponsored propaganda in shaping South Asia's geopolitical discourse.

### **5.13.1 Propaganda Strategies in Indian and Pakistani Official Discourse on the Taliban's Recapture of Afghanistan**

Pakistan positions itself as a compassionate neighbor (Plain Folks) by emphasizing "humanitarian support" for Afghans. Topics like "solidarity" (Glittering Generalities) create a virtuous image while diverting attention from Pakistan's role in Taliban support. By highlighting OIC meetings (Appeal to Authority) and "Islamic unity" (Bandwagon), Pakistan suggests a Muslim consensus backing the Taliban. Pakistan amplifies "terrorist attacks" (Fear Mongering) to justify its security policies while "blaming" external actors (e.g., India, TTP) for instability. References to UN involvement (Transfer) and Imran Khan's statements (Testimonial) lend credibility to Pakistan's stance, portraying it as a key player in Afghan stability.

On the other hand, India's discourse surrounding the Taliban's return to power in Afghanistan also employs well-established propaganda strategies across multiple thematic areas. The dominant theme employs "fear mongering" through terms like "terrorist," "security," and "killed" to amplify threat perceptions. Concurrently, it engages in "blaming" by attributing all instability to cross-border terrorism while omitting local grievances. This dual strategy justifies hardline policies by creating a binary narrative of Indian security forces versus foreign-backed terrorists.

Topics in Pakistani campaign like "global solidarity" (Loaded Language) evoke moral duty, while highlighting visits by foreign officials (Plain Folks) suggests international endorsement. Vague calls for "peace" (Glittering Generalities) ignore Taliban violence, while omitting Pakistan's role in Afghan conflict (Card Stacking) crafts a sanitized image. Phrases like "crisis" and "must act" (Urgency) pressure quick

recognition of the Taliban, while citing OIC meetings (Appeal to Authority) suggests multilateral backing.

While references to "people," "CM," and political figures like Modi utilize the "plain folks" strategy to create relatability in Indian campaign. Vague, positive terms about governance constitute "glittering generalities", offering feel-good rhetoric without substantive policy details. This combination serves electoral narratives more than analytical discourse. Name-dropping global leaders ("Biden" and "PM") constitutes "appeal to authority", while implying international consensus through terms like "meeting" and "Ukraine" suggests a "bandwagon" effect. This positions India's stance as part of a larger, legitimate geopolitical alignment.

Simultaneously in Pakistani official campaign, mentions of UNGA and US meetings (Transfer) imply global consensus (Bandwagon), though no such unanimity exists on de-facto Taliban government recognition. Condemning terrorism (Card Stacking) while "blaming" India or the TTP avoids accountability for its own actions. Quoting UN officials (Testimonial) and terms like "security protection" (Glittering Generalities) portray Pakistan as a responsible actor, despite its alleged links with Taliban.

External Affairs Minister Jaishankar's statements serve as "testimonials", while linking Afghanistan policy to UNSC discussions employs "transfer" to borrow institutional credibility. This elevates India's regional role despite limited ground influence post-Taliban takeover. Phrases like "terror watch" and "Blinken" use "loaded language", while the recurrent emphasis on immediate threats creates a "urgency". This justifies enhanced security cooperation with the US beyond what the situation may warrant.

Citing news agencies (appeal to authority) lends superficial objectivity, while selective reporting (card stacking) presents a curated version of India's global influence.

This omits contradictory evidence about India's limited leverage in Afghanistan. "Drone" sightings and "BSF" alerts exaggerate threats (fear mongering), while humanizing border forces (plain folks) builds emotional support for security policies. This combination effectively militarizes civilian discourse.

References to "Mumbai attacks" employ "loaded language", while exclusively "blaming" Pakistan avoids complex historical context. This reductionist framing simplifies terrorism as solely Pakistan-sponsored rather than a multifaceted issue. Political party references create "bandwagon" effects, while empty phrases about "good governance" (glittering generalities) mask partisan agendas. This substitutes substantive policy debate with personality-driven politics. Linking Modi's leadership to diplomatic achievements (transfer) and quoting defense officials (appeal to authority) projects an image of strategic competence that may not match ground realities in Afghanistan policy.

#### **5.13.1.1 New Strategies**

Pakistan frames Afghanistan's crisis as requiring immediate action (Theme 7), pressuring quick Taliban recognition without addressing governance flaws. While in India's campaign the artificial inflation of immediate threats (especially in themes 1,7) creates crisis conditions justifying extraordinary measures.

Consistently attributing instability to India/TTP (Themes 4, 9) deflects Pakistan from its own role in Afghan crisis. The consistent attribution of all security challenges to external actors (especially Pakistan) by India in themes 2,3 simplifies complex issues and avoids accountability.

Pakistan's propaganda blends "classic techniques" with "emerging strategies" (Urgency and Blaming) to legitimize the Taliban and deflect criticism. While humanitarian and Islamic solidarity themes dominate (41% combined), the "omission of Taliban abuses" and "scapegoating of external actors" reveal a calculated narrative. Deliberately excluding discussions on Taliban human rights violations while focusing on "humanitarian aid" manipulates the narrative. Conversely, India's propaganda ecosystem skillfully utilizes traditional techniques with the new potent, digitally-supercharged tools of urgency-creation and systematic blaming. This analysis reveals how 17% of discourse focuses on Kashmir (using fear/blaming), another 17% on domestic image-polishing, and significant portions on manufacturing geopolitical legitimacy. The emergence of these new novel classical strategies - urgency and blaming - particularly warrant scrutiny, as they risk distorting policy responses through manufactured crises and reductive causality. Should India's narrative be seen as legitimate security framing or manipulative diversion from domestic challenges? Recognizing these patterns is essential for both domestic and international observers seeking to parse India's complex position on Afghanistan and regional security.

### **5.13.2 Propaganda Strategies in Indian and Pakistani Official Discourse on the Kashmir Conflict**

The Kashmir conflict illustrates the evolution of propaganda, where this study has revealed and operationalized new classical techniques. This approach is now supercharged by the real-time, viral nature of social media platforms. In the Kashmir context, both India and Pakistan deploy urgency frames and blaming attribution, albeit with distinct thematic emphases. Pakistan's official discourse prominently features the theme of "Regional Dynamics and Security Cooperation", strategically employing terminology such as *Afghanistan*, *bilateral relations*, and *regional support* to construct a narrative of collective security concerns. More significantly, the "Bandwagon" technique is evident in Pakistan's "International Cooperation and Diplomacy" theme, where frequent references to engagements with the OIC and UN General Assembly create a

perception of multilateral consensus against India's Kashmir policy. This approach capitalizes on institutional legitimacy to pressure audiences into aligning with Pakistan's stance, fostering the illusion of widespread international support.

In contrast, India's propaganda apparatus heavily relies on "Card Stacking" within its "Counterinsurgency Operations and Security Forces" narrative. The deliberate emphasis on terms like *terrorist* and *Army*, while systematically omitting discussions of human rights violations, exemplifies selective framing designed to simplify the conflict. This strategy positions India as a victim of cross-border terrorism, effectively diverting attention from allegations of state excesses. Such binary portrayals serve to legitimize India's security measures while delegitimizing Kashmiri resistance movements.

The "Plain Folks" technique is prominently employed in Pakistan's "Upholding Human Rights and Self-Determination in IIOJK" discourse. Through emotionally charged hashtags like *KashmiriLivesMatter* and the consistent use of *IIOJK* (Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir), Pakistan reframes the geopolitical conflict as a humanitarian crisis. This strategy resonates with global human rights discourses, positioning Pakistan as a moral advocate for Kashmiris. Concurrently, the use of "Loaded Language"—particularly the term *IIOJK*—serves to delegitimize India's territorial claims while evoking strong emotional reactions devoid of substantive legal or historical engagement.

India employs a parallel "Bandwagon" strategy in its "Strategic Bilateral Relationship Between India and the US" theme, emphasizing *cooperation* and *partnership* to project an image of Western endorsement. By highlighting alliances with major powers, India reinforces its international legitimacy while downplaying criticisms from human rights organizations. This narrative construction exerts pressure on audiences to perceive India's policies as globally sanctioned, despite nuanced international positions on Kashmir.

Thematic analysis reveals distinct yet parallel emerging propaganda strategies employed by Pakistan and India regarding the Kashmir conflict. Pakistan's discourse prominently features urgency frames through themes such as "Humanitarian Crises and Building Peace" and "Regional Security Challenges Due to Kashmir Dispute", which construct temporal imperatives for international intervention.

Conversely, India's strategic communication deploys urgency through different thematic lenses. The "Security Challenges and Counterterrorism Efforts in Afghanistan" theme extends the Kashmir issue into broader regional security paradigms, while "Educating for Reforms and Permanent UNSC Membership" positions India's global institutional integration as a prerequisite for conflict resolution.

Notably, India's "Security Challenges: State-Sponsored Terrorism and Regional Dynamics in South Asia" theme exemplifies systematic blame attribution. This blame attribution strategy serves to externalize conflict causation while legitimizing India's security posture.

The parallel urgency constructs reveal competing temporal frameworks in the conflict narrative ecology. Pakistan emphasizes humanitarian immediacy through civilian victimization frames, while India focuses on security temporalities through regional threat diffusion. Both approaches employ threat inflation but differ fundamentally in their referent objects (civilian populations versus state security).

Both states utilize "Fear Mongering" to justify their positions. Pakistan's "Regional Security Challenges Due to Kashmir Dispute" and "Kashmir Solidarity Day and Struggle for Self-Determination" themes employ terms like *KashmirBlackDay* and *security threat* to amplify perceptions of Indian aggression. Similarly, India's "State-Sponsored Terrorism and Regional Dynamics in South Asia" narrative leverages phrases like *Pakistan-sponsored terrorism* to foster nationalist

sentiment and justify militarized responses. These mutually reinforcing fear narratives risk escalating tensions rather than fostering dialogue.

India's "Cricket Diplomacy" exemplifies "Testimonial" propaganda, wherein sporting achievements are instrumentalized to cultivate nationalist unity and divert attention from political controversies. Pakistan's counterpart emerges in the "Honoring the Legacy of Syed Ali Geelani" theme, where the late separatist leader is memorialized as a martyr to strengthen emotional appeals among Kashmiri and Pakistani audiences. These strategies highlight the role of cultural symbols in reinforcing state-sanctioned narratives.

India's "Plain Folks" approach is evident in themes like "Public Health Initiatives" and "Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on India", where terms such as *recovery* and *vaccine* project an image of benevolent governance. This strategy diverts attention from contentious political issues, fostering domestic solidarity through welfare narratives. Critics argue that such tactics obscure human rights concerns in Kashmir while reinforcing the state's legitimacy.

This comparative analysis reveals that India and Pakistan employ structurally similar propaganda architectures despite their opposing positions on Kashmir. Both states deploy classical techniques (Plain folks, *Bandwagon*, *Card Stacking* etc) alongside novel strategies (*Urgency and Blaming*), creating mutually exclusive but functionally analogous narrative ecosystems. These propaganda systems prioritize nationalist framing over conflict resolution, perpetuating a cycle of discursive antagonism.

### 5.13.2.1 New Strategies

The Kashmir conflict has become a testing ground for evolving propaganda strategies, with both India and Pakistan employing urgency framing and blame attribution as key instruments of narrative warfare. These emerging techniques complement classical propaganda methods while adapting to contemporary information ecosystems, demonstrating how states manipulate temporal and causal narratives to shape perceptions.

Urgency propaganda operates through the construction of temporal imperatives, compelling audiences to perceive immediate action as necessary. In the Kashmir context, both India and Pakistan deploy urgency frames, albeit with distinct thematic emphases.

Pakistan's discourse emphasizes themes like "Humanitarian Crises and Building Peace" and "Regional Security Challenges Due to Kashmir Dispute" (Themes 4 and 11), framing the conflict as an escalating emergency requiring international intervention. By amplifying civilian suffering metrics (e.g., *KashmiriLivesMatter*) and projecting imminent regional destabilization, Pakistan leverages crisis narratives pressure third-party actors to align with its stance. This strategy resonates with global human rights discourses, positioning Pakistan as a moral arbiter while isolating India as violator.

India, conversely, employs urgency through "Security Challenges and Counterterrorism Efforts in Afghanistan" and "Educating for Reforms and Permanent UNSC Membership" (Themes 7 and 8), expanding the Kashmir issue into broader geopolitical threat paradigms. This approach not only justifies India's security policies but also positions it as an indispensable regional stabilizer, demanding expedited global support.

The dichotomy in urgency framing—humanitarian vs. securitized—reveals how both states digitally manipulate temporality to legitimize their positions while precluding dialogue.

Blame propaganda externalizes conflict causation, deflecting responsibility while reinforcing victimhood narratives. This strategy is an evolution of the propaganda mechanism, a contribution to classical propaganda theory, deployed through coordinated campaigns and algorithmic amplification. India's "State-Sponsored Terrorism and Regional Dynamics in South Asia" (Theme 10) exemplifies this, systematically attributing Kashmir's instability to Pakistan through portraying India's militarization as reactive rather than proactive, Institutionalized blame (e.g., *Pakistan-sponsored terrorism*), and Geopolitical scaling (linking local unrest to state actors). This strategy simplifies complex conflict dynamics into binary culpability, legitimizing India's counterinsurgency measures while marginalizing Kashmiri political grievances.

These emerging strategies—urgency and blame—function as force multipliers for classical propaganda strategies. While Pakistan's urgency frames appeal to moral imperatives, India's securitized urgency and blame attribution cater to geopolitical audiences. Both, however, share a common outcome: escalatory discursive lock-in, where competing temporal and causal narratives perpetuate conflict intractability.

The weaponization of urgency and blame in Kashmir underscores how modern propaganda transcends mere misinformation, evolving into sophisticated narrative engineering.

## CHAPTER 6

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

**6.1** This research has provided a comprehensive analysis of the complexities surrounding digital propaganda warfare, with a particular emphasis on the strategies utilized on social media platforms, notably X (formerly Twitter). In the contemporary digital landscape, propaganda has emerged as a significant concern, as nation-states increasingly exploit these platforms to craft narratives that serve their geopolitical objectives (Jowett, 2012). The focus of this study has been on state-sponsored propaganda campaigns between India and Pakistan, specifically in the context of the distinct but often intertwined Kashmir conflict and the Taliban's resurgence in Afghanistan. Utilizing a robust dataset comprising 35,911 posts from August 15, 2021, to January 14, 2024, the research employed a methodological framework that combined computational content analysis with topic modeling techniques. It is critical to note that this linguistic scope necessarily limits claims about 'dominant' national strategies, as it excludes vast swathes of domestic-facing propaganda in Hindi, Urdu, and other regional languages which may employ different tactical emphases.

The findings discovered that Pakistan's approach, characterized by a pronounced reliance on authoritative claims, is consistent with existing literature regarding credibility and trust-building within digital discourse. By strategically leveraging authoritative voices, Pakistan aims to bolster its legitimacy and counteract negative portrayals,

particularly concerning critical issues such as the Taliban's recapture of Afghanistan and the Kashmir conflict. This strategy is corroborated by previous research that highlights the efficacy of appeals to authority in reinforcing narratives and fostering trust (Bradshaw & Howard, 2017; Zollmann, 2019).

Conversely, India's propaganda predominantly employs transfer and plain folks' techniques, emphasizing emotional engagement and relatability. These strategies are designed to establish a connection with both domestic and international audiences by evoking emotional responses and disseminating relatable narratives. The findings align with existing research on the significance of emotional appeal and relatability in propaganda, which suggests that such strategies can effectively enhance message reception and garner support (Affi, 2023; Zollmann, 2019). This strategy relies heavily on symbolism to evoke feelings that influence the perceptions and decisions of the targeted audience. By utilizing symbols that resonate with audience experiences, India seeks to create a sense of belonging and identity among the audience. However, the high engagement metrics (e.g., reposts) for these strategies, while indicative of broad dissemination and resonance, should not be conflated with definitive persuasive influence or attitude change without further audience reception studies. The moderate incorporation of additional strategies indicates a preference by both India and Pakistan for fostering popular support and encouraging conformity, rather than relying solely on deceptive tactics. This balanced approach suggests an understanding of the complexities involved in effective communication, where emotional resonance is coupled with authenticity to build trust and credibility.

The findings of the study indicate that both countries employ propaganda strategies imbued with emotional resonance, relatability, authoritative claims and moral superiority. This underscores the prevalence of emotionally charged and virtue-laden rhetoric in their communicative practices. It also highlights the critical role of emotional appeals in propaganda warfare, aligning with broader trends in information warfare where emotional resonance is leveraged to influence public sentiment and reinforce nationalistic fervor (Bradshaw & Howard, 2017). The strategic deployment of these

techniques by both countries illustrates the sophisticated nature of modern digital propaganda and its profound impact on shaping public perceptions.

Pakistan's emphasis on authoritative validation, in contrast to India's focus on symbolism and adoption of a people-centric approach, reveals the nuanced strategies both countries employ in order to advance their strategic objectives. As social media continues to evolve and play a significant role in shaping politico-diplomatic narratives, it is imperative to develop a comprehensive framework for analyzing digital propaganda that account for the multifaceted nature of information warfare. By providing a detailed analysis of propaganda strategies, this study contributes essential insights into the complexities of digital propaganda warfare. The examination of these distinct approaches highlights how each country seeks to influence public perception and narrative construction through targeted messaging and emotional engagement.

The findings also explore the dominant attributes of propaganda employed by India and Pakistan, highlighting how each country strategically utilizes social media platforms, such as X (formerly Twitter). Pakistan's predominant reliance on "Authority" and "Plain folks" techniques underscores its strategy to promote a credible stance regarding regional conflicts while simultaneously appealing to audience through relatable claims. By leveraging authoritative claims and relatable messaging, Pakistan seeks to validate its diplomatic endeavors on Kashmir and project the Taliban's credibility. This approach aligns with historical patterns wherein authoritative figures and positive imagery are employed to bolster credibility and influence public opinion (Knightly, 2004; Carruthers, 2011). The emphasis on these strategies, which constitute a significant portion of Pakistan's digital propaganda, reflects a concerted effort to consolidate support and present a favorable image of the Taliban and keep highlighting Kashmir issue both locally and Internationally (Zafar, 2021; Inam, 2023).

On the other hand, India's strategic engagement in Afghanistan and Kashmir, particularly in countering Pakistan's narratives, is characterized primarily by the use of the "Plain Folks" and "Transfer" strategy. This people-centric approach aims to reinforce

claims on Taliban's credibility and influencing public perception on the issue of Kashmir, positioning India as a concerned global actor in the region. By framing its role and involvement in Afghanistan within the context of regional security and humanitarian crisis—particularly in relation to the situation in Kashmir—India aims to garner domestic and international support to counteract Pakistan's claims (Hussain, Shahzad, & Saud, 2021). The "Plain Folks" strategy is grounded in the principle of relatability, seeks to connect India with the Afghan population and international world by portraying herself as a terror affected country in the region. This is also exemplified through India's extensive humanitarian assistance and development projects in Afghanistan, which are designed to build trust and foster a positive image among Afghans. For instance, India's significant contributions to educational and medical support not only aid in nation-building but also enhance India's soft power in the region (Bradshaw & Howard, 2017).

However, India's predominant use of people-centric approach and efforts for association with audiences also presents inherent limitations in countering the authoritative claims propagated by Pakistan. The absence of a robust propaganda strategy—where India could at the same time strategically appeal and reach multiple level audience - hinder its efforts to present a multi-dimensional front against Pakistan. This strategic choice reflects a broader trend in digital propaganda, where emotional appeals overshadow authoritative claims (Hussain et al., 2021), potentially resulting in less effective counter-narrative against Pakistan.

The divergence in the application of propaganda strategies by India and Pakistan highlights the varying impacts of digital propaganda on public opinion and diplomatic efforts. Pakistan has historically employed a more authoritative approach, leveraging its geopolitical position and historical ties to Afghanistan and Kashmir to assert its influence. This includes framing India's involvement in Afghanistan as a threat, thereby consolidating its narrative and justifying its actions in Kashmir (Hussain et al., 2021). In contrast, India's reliance on soft power and relatability may resonate more with the Afghan populace but lacks the authoritative weight necessary to sway international perceptions. Consequently, the effectiveness of India's propaganda is constrained by its

strategic choices, which prioritize emotional engagements and appeals over authoritative discourse.

The time series analysis of social media campaigns between India and Pakistan discovers significant insights into the evolving nature of state-sponsored information operations. This study aligns with existing literature that emphasizes the strategic use of social media as a battleground for narratives, particularly in the context of geopolitical tensions (Chagas et al., 2022; Keegan, 2022). The findings indicate that both countries have adeptly adapted their propaganda tactics in response to key events, demonstrating a sophisticated understanding of public sentiment, time frame, contextual intricacies and the digital landscape.

Pakistan's strategic emphasis on "Authority" during critical periods, such as the Taliban's ascendance, reinforces historical patterns of leveraging credible voices to enhance legitimacy (Knightly, 2004; Carruthers, 2011; Mair, 2016; Prier, 2017). Additionally, this research complements existing literature by illustrating that Pakistan's occasional use of "Bandwagon" and "Glittering Generalities" strategies reflects a nuanced approach to shaping narratives that resonate with broader public sentiments (Hussain et al., 2021). This aligns with recent studies suggesting that emotional appeals are pivotal in influencing public opinion within digital spaces (Farkas & Neumayer, 2024).

Interestingly, India's reliance on the "Plain Folks" and "Authority" strategies, particularly during heightened security crises in Afghanistan, highlights its intent to resonate with international sentiments and position itself as a concerned global actor advocating for Afghan rights (Shahzad & Saud, 2021). This finding is consistent with the literature that underscores India's efforts to construct narratives that garner support for its diplomatic initiatives (Chaudhari & Pawar, 2021).

The temporal analysis uncovers a complex interplay between the propaganda strategies employed by both countries, especially concerning the Kashmir conflict. The utilization of "Loaded Language," "Bandwagon," and "Glittering Generalities" by both Pakistan and India illustrates the intricacies involved in manipulating public sentiment and reinforcing ideological positions. This supports the assertion that digital propaganda is strategically aligned with broader geopolitical interests rather than being merely reactive (Tunstall, 2007; Neyazi, 2019). Furthermore, the findings suggest that while both countries have demonstrated adaptability in their propaganda strategies, their effectiveness is contingent upon the broader geopolitical context. For instance, Pakistan's use of the "Authority" strategy during significant geopolitical events, such as the Balakot airstrike, reflects a calculated effort to shape narratives in response to perceived threats (Rahman et al., 2023). Similarly, India's systematic disinformation campaigns reveal a strategic approach to undermining Pakistan's reputation on the international stage (EU DisinfoLab, 2020; ISSRA, 2024). Ultimately, this study discovered how both countries employ distinct propaganda strategies: Pakistan focus on bolstering the Taliban's credibility and deteriorated security situation in Kashmir, while India emphasizes on resonating with people centric approach on Afghanistan and associating of negative attributes to the issue of Kashmir. By leveraging these strategies, both countries aim to manipulate public perception and assert their geopolitical positions. The observed temporal peaks and fluctuations in propaganda activities reflect strategic alignments with key events and underscoring the adaptive nature of digital propaganda. The findings also underscore the necessity of understanding the evolving nature of propaganda in the digital age. The skillful use of social media by both countries highlights its critical role in shaping and amplifying conflict and diplomatic narratives. As social media continues to play a central role in future propaganda warfare, it is imperative for researchers and policymakers to remain vigilant about the sensitivity and importance of time frame and its implications for public discourse.

Total repost on a post by category reveal that Prime Minister, President and media of India have demonstrated effectiveness in employing the "Plain Folks" and "Transfer" strategies. The substantial engagement metrics—reposts for "Plain Folks" and "Transfer"—underscore India's adeptness in crafting relatable narratives and mobilizing

public support. However, it is crucial to interpret these metrics as indicators of reach and resonance rather than definitive proof of persuasive success or strategic victory. The "Plain Folks" strategy, which involves where speakers present themselves as an ordinary individual to connect with the audience, has been pivotal in Indian propaganda. This aligns with literature that emphasizes how media narratives that reflect ordinary experiences can enhance relatability and emotional resonance (Seth, 2016; Thussu, 2002). The ability of Indian actors and media to present their messages through familiar and relatable personas likely contributed to higher public engagement and sympathy. Building upon the foundational work of Brady et al. (2017), Ferrara et al. (2016), and Woolley & Guilbeault (2017), which highlights the broad spectrum and impact of social media-driven propaganda, this research offers a detail understanding of virality and resonance of posts in these contexts.

The "Bandwagon" strategy, which creates a sense of collective endorsement, reflects India's efforts in convincing public support by creating a perception of widespread agreement (Gaddard & Robinson, 2008). This approach not only garners significant reposts but also amplifies the perception of legitimacy and widespread acceptance, reinforcing the strength of India's digital landscape. In contrast, Pakistan's relative success with the "Authority" strategy, suggests a different approach. This incorporates use of authoritative claims, a technique that has been effectively utilized by Pakistan to link its messaging with credibility, particularly concerning the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan and Kashmir conflict (Madiratta, 2014). Pakistan's strength in this area highlights its ability to leverage appeals to authority in order to garner credibility and authenticity. Additionally, Pakistan's efforts with the "Glittering Generalities" strategy, indicates the effective use of positively charged messaging, a tactic that has been noted for its capacity to create favorable impressions (Entman, 2004).

The study also aligns with previous research indicating that emotionally resonant content often achieves higher engagement rates. For instance, Zhang (2022) demonstrated that during the COVID-19 pandemic, the emotional appeal of Chinese state media significantly enhanced public interaction. This study's results corroborate these findings by showing that relatable narratives in social media campaigns can significantly

amplify reach and impact. Additionally, the role of social media influencers, as highlighted by the Journal of Democracy (2024), is evident in the contemporary context of digital propaganda. Influencers and media's ability to sway public opinion through their follower base has been effectively harnessed in these campaigns, creating an impression of broad support for state-sponsored policies.

Pakistan's Foreign minister and Military spokesperson were more successful in the "Authority" category, respectively. This reflects Pakistan's efforts for trust building and credibility through authoritative claims in order to shape narratives around critical issues, such as the Taliban's recapture of Afghanistan and security situation in Kashmir. The use of authority strategy aligns with research on the power of credible sources in influencing public opinion (Robinson, 2000; Hussain, 2021). On the other hand, India's Foreign Minister excelled in the "Plain Folks" category, suggesting emphasis on relatability and people-centric approach in addressing issues like Afghanistan crisis and Kashmir conflict. Indian media's dominance across all categories, particularly in "Plain Folks" and "Transfer," suggests a strategic advantage of India in shaping public perceptions. The higher engagement metrics in these categories indicate the effectiveness of Indian media in portraying relatable narratives and mobilizing public sentiments.

The substantial engagement generated through the "Plain folks" strategy across both countries, with India's top post achieving 1,560,092 reposts, highlighted the potency of relatable and people-centric approach. The effectiveness of this strategy underscores the impact of relatable messages in garnering widespread support and attention (Wang & Zhuang, 2018). The significant engagement through the "Transfer" strategy emphasizes trust building rapport with audiences through symbolism and emotional appeals (Madiratta, 2014; Seth, 2016).

By concentrating on social media, particularly X (formerly Twitter), this research provides novel insights into the deployment and reception of propaganda in contemporary conflicts. Geiß and Lahmann (2021) emphasize the significant role of social media in amplifying propaganda content and constructing misleading narratives,

particularly in conflict scenarios. The study reveals the adaptation and virality of various propaganda strategies, including the effective utilization of tailored narratives and state-backed actors, which serve to enhance the efficacy of propaganda campaigns. This finding resonates with Jowett's (2012) research regarding the calculated nature of digital propaganda, wherein the dissemination of deceptive content is meticulously orchestrated to achieve specific geopolitical objectives.

Furthermore, this research underscores the pivotal role of state-backed media campaigns in amplifying these narratives. The strategic employment of relatable and divisive content has been central to both countries' endeavors to sway public opinion and promote their respective agendas. The implications of these findings are profound, highlighting the intricate relationship between social media dynamics and the propagation of conflict-related narratives in the digital age.

The primary themes identified illustrate the multifaceted tactics of propaganda warfare utilized by both countries. Pakistan emphasizes humanitarian crises and solidarity with Afghanistan as a form of soft power diplomacy. This approach aligns with existing literature, which posits that humanitarian efforts are often leveraged to enhance national image and influence international perceptions (Machado, Alaphilippe, & Adamczyk, 2020). By adopting this theme, Pakistan aims to position itself as a proactive and responsible regional player.

In contrast, India predominantly focuses on the strategic use of information related to counter-terrorism operations. This framing seeks to portray India as a nation affected by terrorism, thereby justifying its security measures and actions (Hussain, Shahzad, & Saud, 2021). The emphasis on counter-terrorism reflects a broader trend observed in South Asia, wherein state actors employ media to reinforce security narratives and negatively depict adversaries (Gabel, Reichert, & Reuter, 2022).

Pakistan's engagement in diplomatic initiatives such as the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) reflects its efforts to leverage support from the Muslim world in addressing regional issues, particularly concerning the Afghanistan and Kashmir conflicts (Iqbal & Hussain, 2018). In contrast, India's discourse centers on domestic political themes and counter-insurgency operations, indicating a focus on internal dynamics. The findings reveal how both countries utilize state-backed channels to promote narratives that address both domestic and international geopolitical concerns. In India, the government's narrative has faced criticism for fostering Hindu nationalism while portraying Pakistan as an adversary (Khan, 2016). This trend illustrates the intertwining of domestic political gains with foreign policy objectives (Aday et al., 2005). Meanwhile, Pakistan emphasizes on international cooperation, human rights and self-determination for Kashmiris aims to garner diplomatic support and counter India's claims (Rubina Waseem & M. Sajjad, 2022).

This study confirms that both Pakistan and India are engaged in intricate information warfare that necessitates a nuanced understanding. This aligns with research indicating that digital propaganda is increasingly employed to manipulate public opinion and amplify specific narratives (Woolley & Howard, 2018). The findings illustrate the complex interplay between humanitarian concerns, security narratives, diplomatic endeavors, domestic politics, and geopolitical dynamics.

Both countries utilize social media to advance their strategic objectives, employing a range of themes to influence public opinion. This research provides a comprehensive overview of how digital propaganda operates within a conflictual environment and highlights broader implications for regional stability. The application of topic modeling offers valuable insights into unraveling the complexities of information warfare in the context of Indo-Pak conflicts. Thus, the strategic deployment of these themes reveals how state-backed actors manipulate narratives to create a polarized digital environment.

## 6.2 Identification of New Characteristics of Propaganda

This study examines a dataset comprising 35,911 English Language posts using both supervised computational content analysis and unsupervised topic modeling techniques. The main objective was to identify, categorize and analyze the presence of propaganda strategies within data set, as well as to derive new characteristics that reflect the evolving nature of propaganda in digital landscape.

The debate surrounding the topics and themes in propaganda campaigns- specifically the distinct but often linked Fall of Kabul and the Kashmir conflict - reveals the deliberate use of classic propaganda strategies, each serving distinct functions. After critical analysis of the topics and engagement with individual posts shows that predominantly 10 propaganda techniques such as appeal to authority, transfer, plain folks, glittering generalities, bandwagon, fear appeal, loaded language, name-calling, testimonial, and card stacking are prevalent in the rhetoric and content of both campaigns.

For example, references to international bodies like the UN or OIC illustrate the appeal to authority, lending credibility and legitimacy to claims about humanitarian crises or security threats. The transfer technique is evident when positive attributes-such as peace efforts-are associated with Pakistan, while negative connotations are projected onto India, thereby channeling collective emotions to shape perceptions. Similarly, plain folks' narratives that highlight the struggles of flood victims or ordinary Kashmiris serve to humanize these issues and evoke empathy, fostering identification with the cause.

The use of glittering generalities-vague yet emotionally charged terms like "peace" and "resilience"-inspires support without offering substantive detail, while bandwagon appeals, such as claims of widespread OIC support, pressure audiences to conform to the perceived majority opinion.

Further, fear appeal is a recurring strategy, with warnings of terrorism or imminent war designed to create anxiety and justify policy responses. *Loaded language*-terms like "condemn," "Black Day," and "struggle"-intensifies emotional engagement, while name-calling and testimonial tactics simplify complex conflicts through labels and endorsements from authoritative figures. Card stacking is evident in the selective presentation of facts, such as emphasizing one side's grievances while omitting inconvenient details about the other, thereby shaping a biased narrative.

The analysis commenced with a process that focused on identifying established propaganda strategies within the posts. This was followed by the application of topic modeling to uncover latent themes. After the analysis of individual themes for common strategies and additional critical engagement with the content, the scholar identified and operationalized the following two novel strategies or characteristics of propaganda;

**6.2.1 Urgency:** This strategy is the digital intensification of crisis rhetoric. Urgency is created by calling on the people to take immediate action as the opponent groups or events happening are of serious nature that could threaten the interests/security of all involved.

**6.2.2 Blaming:** This strategy represents a modern, scalable form of the technique. Blaming involves identifying a particular group and resting the whole responsibility in them for the worsening situation. It involves naming the

individuals, actors, groups and countries against whom the propaganda is directed.

The strategic deployment of urgency manifests distinctly in both states' propaganda architectures. In the context of Afghanistan, Pakistan's discourse constructs Afghanistan's situation as requiring immediate international action, leveraging time-sensitive humanitarian rhetoric to accelerate Taliban recognition while systematically omitting governance deficiencies. This temporal framing serves dual purposes: it pressures global actors to bypass scrutiny protocols while positioning Pakistan as an indispensable crisis mediator. Conversely, regarding Kashmir, India's narrative ecosystem artificially inflates threat imminence and Afghan spillover risks. By manufacturing temporal pressure through security alerts and "preemptive action" justifications, New Delhi normalizes extraordinary measures that would otherwise face democratic opposition. The parallel yet divergent urgency frameworks - humanitarian versus securitized - reveal how temporal manipulation has become a cornerstone of modern state propaganda.

Blame attribution operates as an institutionalized narrative mechanism in both states' propaganda. Concerning Afghanistan, Pakistan's consistent attribution of Afghan instability to India and the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) exemplifies strategic scapegoating, absolving Islamabad of accountability for Taliban governance failures or cross-border militancy. This externalization tactic achieves three objectives: it redirects domestic discontent, fractures international consensus on Pakistan's role, and reinforces victimhood narratives. In the context of Kashmir, India mirrors this approach through monolithic blame attribution, reducing Kashmir's complex sociopolitical unrest to singular "Pakistan-sponsored terrorism" causality. Such reductive framing serves to legitimize militarized responses while obscuring local grievances. The bilateral blame paradigm creates a self-perpetuating cycle where neither state engages with substantive conflict drivers, instead reinforcing mutual antagonism as a governance tool.

Pakistan's propaganda matrix demonstrates sophisticated hybridization, blending traditional Islamic solidarity appeals with emergent urgency/blaming tactics. The deliberate omission of Taliban abuses amidst humanitarian rhetoric constitutes a modernized "card stacking" approach, where selective humanitarianism masks uncomfortable truths. India's strategy similarly innovates by grafting urgency/blaming onto classical fear propaganda (Kashmir discourse) and bandwagon appeals (image-polishing). This synthesis is particularly evident in how New Delhi transforms blame attribution into geopolitical capital, using Pakistan-centric threat narratives to bolster its UNSC membership claims. Both states exhibit what might be termed "discursive alchemy" - converting historical propaganda templates into dynamic tools suited for digital information ecosystems.

The weaponization of urgency and blame carries profound consequences for regional stability. By embedding these strategies within UN frameworks (Pakistan) or counterterrorism alliances (India), both states institutionalize conflict-perpetuating narratives at multilateral levels. The resulting discursive lock-in - where competing temporal and causal frames become entrenched in international policy - elevates propaganda from perception management to active conflict determinant. This evolution demands scholarly reappraisal of traditional propaganda models, particularly regarding how digital amplification transforms temporal framing and blame attribution into tangible geopolitical currencies. The Kashmir-Afghanistan nexus thus emerges as a critical case study in 21st-century narrative warfare, where emergent strategies don't merely supplement classical techniques but fundamentally reshape conflict ontologies.

### **6.3 Implications of Study**

The implications of this study regarding information warfare between Pakistan and India, as well as its broader geopolitical context in South Asia, are profound:

### **6.3.1 *Influence on Digital Propaganda and Narrative Control:***

Supervised computational content analysis and unsupervised topic modeling analysis was instrumental in uncovering the underlying strategies, its effectiveness and themes propagated by both the countries. It revealed a strategic deployment of propaganda and themes that aligned with the different phases of the conflict. The ability of strategies to manipulate public perception represents a significant evolution in the tools of modern warfare. This manipulation has explicit consequences for political decision-making, both within India and Pakistan and in the international community, influencing policy and response strategies.

### **6.3.2 *Polarization and Ethical Implications:***

The polarized narratives propagated by Pakistan and India pose challenges to peace initiatives in the region. By manipulating public opinion through state sponsored campaigns, propaganda warfare can challenge peace discussions, making it difficult for citizens to participate in informed and factual discussions. The study's findings on the use of moral justifications in themes stress the ethical intricacies of modern information warfare. The exploitation of moral values to justify actions can have widespread implications on peace initiatives.

### **6.3.3 Implications for the Geopolitical Arena:**

In the wider geopolitical context, the study illustrated the emerging complexity of digital warfare and its implications for the evolution of warfare on social media platforms, where control for narratives and public opinions are as critical as physical conflicts.

The study highlighted the growing importance of perception management in international conflicts. The ability to control narratives through social media means has become a powerful tool in the geopolitical toolkit. The manipulation of information and the creation of echo chambers pose significant challenges to peace endeavors. The spread of digital propaganda erodes confidence in democratic processes and peaceful efforts.

### **6.3.4 Integrating Computational and Critical Approaches to Analyze Propaganda:**

The study's hybrid methodology—integrating close textual analysis, topic modeling, and critical rhetoric—highlights the effectiveness of mixed-methods approaches in propaganda research, offering a model for future analyses of persuasive tactics in large datasets. Practically, the identification of urgency and blaming as propaganda strategies enhances media literacy, enabling policymakers and the public to systematically detect and counter such narratives, particularly in conflict zones where these tactics inflame tensions (e.g., Afghanistan, Kashmir). Together, these findings underscore the importance of combining computational and critical methods to both understand and mitigate manipulative discourse in geopolitical contexts.

## **6.4 Limitations of the Study**

While this study provides valuable insights into the deployment of propaganda strategies and unraveling themes during the Indo-Pak information warfare, several limitations should be acknowledged:

**6.4.1** Dataset was limited to English-language posts. This excludes non-English discourse, which might present different perspectives or intensities in computational analysis, particularly in regions directly affected by the conflict. The linguistic focus potentially overlooks the full scope of the international conversation surrounding the conflicts. Consequently, claims about the overall dominance of certain national strategies are tentative and should be qualified by this linguistic constraint.

**6.4.2** The curated dataset relied on specific keywords related to the selected campaigns. This method might omit relevant discussions that do not utilize these keywords, thus potentially narrowing the breadth of the captured narrative and overlooking subtler, yet significant, aspects of the conversation.

**6.4.3** Concentrating exclusively on human-generated content provides insights into the strategies of propaganda warfare but it does not account for bot-generated content focus. The influence of bot generated engagement, which can counter or endorse human narratives, is therefore not considered in this analysis.

**6.4.4** The selection of posts based on keywords and the identification of selected actors could be influenced by the inherent biases in the algorithms used. These biases may affect the dataset's overall analysis for our results in conducting computational analysis.

**6.4.5** While temporal analysis allows for an in-depth examination of critical events and periods, it may not capture the evolving nature of the discourse outside timeframes. Subsequent developments pre-August 2021 and post January 2023 is not reflected, which might alter the trajectory of the narratives.

## **6.5 Recommendation for Future Areas**

By pursuing future directions, researchers can contribute to a more nuanced understanding of digital propaganda warfare, and the potential for fostering constructive dialogue and conflict resolution:

**6.5.1** Future research should explore multilingual datasets that include Urdu, Pashto, Dari, Kashmiri, and other relevant regional languages. This approach would provide a more comprehensive view of the global discourse on the conflict and yield deeper insights into regional perspectives.

**6.5.2** Subsequent studies should investigate how emerging propaganda strategies—such as creating urgency and assigning blame—influence digital propaganda warfare. Research should empirically assess the prevalence, persuasive efficacy, and differential impact of these strategies across varied geopolitical contexts.

**6.5.3** Future studies could employ more diverse and sophisticated data collection methods, such as semantic analysis or advanced machine learning algorithms. These techniques would help capture a broader range of conflict-related discussions beyond those identified by specific keywords.

**6.5.4** Researchers should pursue comparative analyses of human and bot interactions on social media. Such investigations would reveal how human users respond to, amplify, or

counteract bot-driven narratives, enabling a more holistic understanding of the digital landscape during conflicts. Furthermore, exploring the intersection of propaganda strategies with emerging technologies—such as artificial intelligence and deepfakes—will be essential for assessing their potential impact on the information landscape.

**6.5.5** Future work should examine and adjust for algorithmic biases. Employing diverse algorithms for data collection and analysis, coupled with validation through both advanced machine learning and human analysis, would enhance the accuracy and reliability of research findings.

**6.5.6** Longitudinal studies spanning extended time periods would be valuable, potentially incorporating temporal segmentation and real-time analysis to cover both high-impact events and broader timeframes. This approach would enable researchers to track narrative evolution over time, providing insights into the long-term effects of propaganda warfare strategies and the resilience of various narratives

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## ANNEXURE

*Appendix “A”***Queries with Key words and Hashtags for Data Collection**

<b>General Selection Criteria for Posts</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created between 15 Aug 2021 and 14 Jan 2023</li> <li>• Contained “Kashmir” and “Afghanistan” in the text/hashtag</li> <li>• Contained one or more of 80 popular hashtags, 600 user mentions on Kashmir issue and one or more of popular 49 hashtags and 250 user mentions on Taliban Recapture of Afghanistan (Lists attached as Appendices “A”, “B” and “C”).</li> </ul>
<b>#Posts Collected</b>	<b>35,911</b>

<b>Metric</b>	<b>Case Study #1: Kashmir Conflict</b>	<b>Case Study #2: Taliban Recapture of Afghanistan</b>
Posts met the following criteria:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created between 15 Aug 2021 and 14 Jan 2023</li> <li>• Contains one or more of the following terms in keywords/ hashtags:</li> <li>• Kashmir</li> <li>• IIOJK</li> <li>• Kashmir Solidarity Day</li> <li>• Kashmiri Lives Matter</li> <li>• Kashmiri</li> <li>• Dossier IIOJK</li> <li>• Kashmir Awaits Justice</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Created between 15 Aug 2021 and 14 Jan 2023</li> <li>• Contains “Taliban Recapture of Afghanistan” in the hashtag or text:</li> <li>• Save Afghan Lives</li> <li>• Afghanistan</li> <li>• Afghanistan</li> <li>• OIC4Afg</li> <li>• Afghan</li> <li>• Afghans</li> <li>• Afghan Peace Process</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kashmir Black Day</li> <li>• IIOJK Under Siege</li> <li>• Sohail Mahmood</li> <li>• Syed Ali Gillani</li> <li>• Kashmir Bleeds</li> <li>• Black Day For Kashmir</li> <li>• Youm e Istehsaal</li> <li>• Kashmiris Lives Matter</li> <li>• Kashmir Lives Matter</li> <li>• Youm e Istehsal e Kashmir</li> <li>• Baramulla</li> <li>• Kupwara</li> <li>• Kashmiris</li> <li>• Bandipore</li> <li>• Youm e Istehsal</li> <li>• 371G</li> <li>• Pellet Gun</li> <li>• Indian Aggression</li> <li>• Kashmir Freedom Movement</li> <li>• Kashmir Solidarity</li> <li>• International Community</li> <li>• Kashmir Refugees</li> <li>• Kashmiri Diaspora</li> <li>• Cross Border Firing</li> <li>• Youth Resistance</li> <li>• Government Collapse</li> <li>• Humanitarian Crisis</li> <li>• Refugees</li> <li>• Security Forces</li> <li>• Women Rights</li> <li>• Jammu And Kashmir</li> <li>• Kashmiris_Rendered_R</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Afghanistan Crisis</li> <li>• Kabul</li> <li>• DRONE</li> <li>• AIRSTRIKE</li> <li>• Terrorist</li> <li>• Ayman</li> <li>• Zawahiri</li> <li>• Taliban</li> <li>• AQ</li> <li>• TTP</li> <li>• Qaeda</li> <li>• Pakistan US</li> <li>• Pak US</li> <li>• US Pak</li> <li>• Civ Mil</li> <li>• US withdrawal</li> <li>• Talibans</li> <li>• UNHRC</li> <li>• Black Day</li> <li>• Afghan Refugees</li> <li>• Fee l4 Afg</li> <li>• Afghan Diaspora</li> <li>• Afgahnistan</li> <li>• UN</li> <li>• Indian Aggression</li> <li>• Taliban Takeover</li> <li>• Kabul Evacuation</li> <li>• US With drawal</li> <li>• Humanitarian Crisis</li> <li>• Taliban Resurgence</li> <li>• Security Forces</li> <li>• Peace Process</li> <li>• Counter Terrorism</li> </ul>
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	<p>efugees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Syed Ali Geelani</li> <li>• Guru Nanak</li> <li>• Guru Nanak Jayanti</li> <li>• Youm e Istehsal Augst 05</li> <li>• Release Yasin Malik</li> <li>• Black Day</li> <li>• Pak Indo</li> <li>• Indo Pak</li> <li>• India</li> <li>• 371C</li> <li>• Jammu</li> <li>• Pandit</li> <li>• 370</li> <li>• ARTICAL 370</li> <li>• JKLF</li> <li>• UN Resolutions On Kashmir</li> <li>• Line Of Control</li> <li>• Human Rights Violations</li> <li>• Kashmir Plebiscite</li> <li>• Presidential Palace</li> <li>• Islamabad</li> <li>• Pakistan</li> <li>• OIC in Pakistan</li> <li>• UNGA</li> <li>• OIC 48 CFM</li> <li>• UNGA 76</li> <li>• PM Imran Khan At UNGA</li> <li>• Kashmiris Lives Matter</li> <li>• OIC</li> <li>• Kashmir Martyrs Day</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Taliban Governance</li> <li>• Doha Agreement</li> <li>• Fall of Kabul</li> <li>• Fall of</li> <li>• KHAN</li> <li>• Trump</li> <li>• U.S.</li> <li>• Troops</li> <li>• Biden</li> </ul>
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kashmiri Martyrs</li> <li>• Kashmir Martyrs Week</li> <li>• Syed Ali Shah Geelani</li> <li>• Syed Ali Gilani</li> <li>• 371A</li> <li>• Kashmir Dispute</li> <li>• IOK</li> <li>• Occupied Kashmir</li> <li>• Indian Atrocities</li> <li>• Kashmir Conflict</li> <li>• Unand Kashmir</li> </ul>	
<b>#Posts Collected</b>	<b>23597</b>	<b>12314</b>

## Appendix 'B'

## User Mentions Used for Data Collection – Taliban Recapture of Afghanistan

(250 Usernames)

WATCH (679)	China (10)	JhansiRakshaParv (6)	HunnyBakshi (4)	EidAlAdha (3)	Afghanishtan (2)	Monkeypox (2)	Birbhum (1)	JointSecurityExercise (1)	RobbElementaryschool (1)
UPDATE (244)	ImranKhan (10)	LatestNews (6)	India (4)	ElectronicTotalStation (3)	AFGvsBAN (2)	MorbiTragedy (2)	BuddhaPurnima (1)	KargilVijayDiwas (1)	RussianUkraineCrisis (1)
Afghanistan (89)	RussiaUkraine (10)	Maharashtra (6)	IndianArmedForces (4)	Exclusive (3)	Agnipath (2)	MumbaiTerrorAttack (2)	Budgam (1)	MahaparinarvanDiwas (1)	RussianUkraineWar (1)
Ukraine (69)	UkraineRussiaCrisis (10)	MorbiBridgeCollapse (6)	Jaishankar (4)	G20FMM (3)	AgnipathScheme (2)	NeverForget (2)	BypollResults2021 (1)	MaharashtraPoliticalCrisis (1)	SalmanRushdie (1)
Covid19 (48)	VandeBharatam (10)	Peacekeepers (6)	JanetYellen (4)	G20India (3)	AnantnagEncounterUpdate (2)	ParakramDivas (2)	CabinetMeeting (1)	MahavirJayanti (1)	SCO (1)
MannKiBaat (36)	AsiaCup2022 (9)	SouthChinaSea (6)	LAC (4)	G20Summit2022 (3)	ArunachalPradesh (2)	PPC2023 (2)	ChhathPuja (1)	MainpuriByElection (1)	ShabEbaraat (1)
IndianArmy (35)	Auli (9)	UNISFA (6)	LargestVaccineDrive (4)	GandhiJayanthi (3)	AshokaChakra (2)	PunjabElections2022 (2)	Christmas (1)	ManipurElections2022 (1)	ShinzoAbe (1)
UNGA (29)	COVID (9)	UnitedNations (6)	MMNaravane (4)	GandhiJayanti (3)	AsiaCup (2)	RajasthanCongressCrisis (2)	COP26Glasgow (1)	MCDElections (1)	SidhuMooseWala (1)
RussiaUkraineConflict (27)	IndianNavy (9)	USArmy (6)	Mumbai (4)	GorkhaRiflesInfantry (3)	AsiaCupT20 (2)	RajasthanPoliticalCrisis (2)	CORRECTION (1)	MEA (1)	SingerKDeath (1)
AmritMahotsav (24)	KulgamEncounterUpdate (9)	VeteransDay (6)	NationalWarMemorial (4)	HimachalPradesh (3)	AtmaNirbharBharat (2)	RIMPAC (2)	Covaxin (1)	MeToo (1)	SoporeEncounterUpdate (1)
HarGharTiranga (24)	MakeInIndia (9)	WorldNews (6)	OperationGanga (4)	HimachalPradeshElections (3)	AustraHind (2)	RussianArmedForces (2)	COVID19 (1)	MilitaryNursingService (1)	SriLanka (1)
IndiaAt75 (23)	RussiaUkraineCrisis (9)	YudhAbhyas (6)	Podcast (4)	IndiaIndependenceDay (3)	AzaadiKaAmritMahotsav (2)	RussianUkrainianCrisis (2)	DelhiMCDPolls (1)	MSC2022 (1)	Sthapnadivas (1)
INDvsAFG (23)	SriLankaCrisis (9)	ArmedForces (5)	ProjectAgreement (4)	IndiaUS (3)	BharatParv2023 (2)	SardarPatel (2)	Dhanteras (1)	MulayamSinghYadav (1)	StubbleBurning (1)
JammuAndKashmir (23)	UkraineCrisis (9)	AshokChakra (5)	RakshaParv (4)	INDvsPAK (3)	BRICSat15 (2)	ShaheedDivas (2)	EidUIFitr (1)	MumbaiTerrorAttacks (1)	T20WC (1)

Pakistan (20)	ActionsAt 75 (8)	Beating Retreat (5)	RashtraRakshaSamarpanParv (4)	InternationalWomensDay2022 (3)	BRICSIndia2021 (2)	ShinzoAbe Shot (2)	Expo2020 Dubai (1)	NariShakti (1)	TamilNadu (1)
IDY2022 (19)	IndiaInUNSC (8)	Budget2022 (5)	SaluteVeterans (4)	Kabul (3)	CannesFilmFestival (2)	SriLankaEconomicCrisis (2)	genderequality (1)	NationalGirlChildDay (1)	Telangana (1)
T20WorldCup (19)	IndiaPakistan (8)	COP26 (5)	ShehbazSharif (4)	KJSDhillon (3)	CDS (2)	T20WorldCup21 (2)	GoaElections (1)	NationalKnowledgeNetwork (1)	ThisDayThatYear (1)
Taliban (19)	MainBharatHoon (8)	Delhi (5)	StayDistantStaySafe (4)	LataMangeshkar (3)	Chhattisgarh (2)	Tokyo (2)	GujaratElectionResult (1)	NetajiSubhasChandraBose (1)	TokyoParalympics (1)
ANIPodcastWithSmitaPrakash (18)	Modi (8)	ElonMusk (5)	Tawang (4)	MaharashtraPoliticalTurmoil (3)	CommonwealthGames (2)	Tricolour (2)	GujaratElections2022 (1)	NewYear2022 (1)	TokyoParalympics (1)
Diwali (18)	Tiranga (8)	IndianAirForce (5)	UkraineRussiaConflict (4)	MahavirChakra (3)	ConstitutionDay2022 (2)	UkraineConflict (2)	Gujaratpolls2022 (1)	NewYear2023 (1)	Tripura (1)
RepublicDay (18)	XiJinping (8)	InternationalDayofYoga2022 (5)	UNDay (4)	MarineInfantryRegiment (3)	DEFCONNECT (2)	UkraineRussia (2)	Gymnich (1)	NewYork (1)	UkraineInvasion (1)
UN (17)	AtmanirbharinDefence (7)	JoeBiden (5)	UnmannedAerialVehicle (4)	Mizoram (3)	DHQ (2)	Ukrainian (2)	HijabVerdict (1)	OpPawan (1)	UkraineRussianWar (1)
NationalFlag (16)	BraveHeroesofIndia (7)	RussiaUkraineWar (5)	USDiplomats (4)	MoD (3)	DISC6 (2)	UNSC (2)	HimachalElectionResults2022 (1)	OpVijay (1)	UkraineRussiaWar (1)
RepublicDay2022 (16)	HijabRow (7)	X (formerly Twitter) (5)	VaccineCentury (4)	NainitalFloods (3)	DroupadiMurmuru (2)	UttarPradeshElections (2)	HimachalElections (1)	PAKvsAFG (1)	UNGA77 (1)
DefExpo2022 (15)	IAF (7)	UDPA TE (5)	VeteransDayEveryDay (4)	Odisha (3)	EasternFront (2)	Veterans (2)	Holi (1)	PamporeEncounter (1)	UttarakhandRain (1)

## Appendix 'C'

**User Mentions Used for Data Collection - Kashmir Issue  
(600 Usernames)**

Pakistan (939)	2021recap (2)	7IPHRCSeminar (5)	Tajikistan (27)	PakArgentinaAt70 (2)	Brussels (4)
PakistanDiplomacy (13)	FIFAWorldCupQatar2022 (1)	Togo (4)	StrongerTogether (9)	HappyHoli (1)	MartyrsOfKashmir (3)
Punjab (7)	IIOJKUnderSiege (77)	CPEC (2)	Karbala (5)	Japan (20)	RwandaGenocide (2)
Finland (4)	Sikh (11)	NSP (1)	Algeria (3)	IndiaHRviolations (8)	PakistanForAll (1)
SergeyLavrov (3)	Ireland (6)	UAE (43)	HisseinBrahimTaha (2)	RashidMeredov (5)	Russia (16)
23NisanKutluOlsun (1)	PakAzeriDosti (4)	Covid_19 (9)	75thPeKuchKhaas (1)	G20 (3)	SriLanka (8)
APPNews (852)	48OICCFM (2)	Ashura (5)	PKDay (26)	PakFMinGermany (2)	Buddhist (4)
Pakistanstands4humanrights (13)	GoGreenShirts (1)	TroikaPlus (4)	Tashkent (9)	Holi (1)	MerryChristmas (3)
QuaidEAzam (7)	FloodsInPakistan (76)	D8 (2)	KashmirEUweek2022 (5)	Egypt (19)	Sceince4Development (2)
FloodsInPakistan2022 (4)	UNAOC (11)	PakEUWater (1)	AllamaIqbal (3)	Iraq (8)	PakistanNavy (1)
Sindh (3)	Jinnah (6)	Covid19 (39)	IndiaFakeRepublic (2)	RoshanDigitalAccounts (5)	Spain (16)
50thHANGORDay (1)	PakGerman (4)	DefenceAndMartyrsDay (9)	AfghanPeaceProcess (1)	Guyana (3)	tourism (8)
OICInPakistan (842)	4thCommittee (2)	At (5)	SolidarityVisit (26)	PakFMinSpain (2)	Cambodia (4)
PMReliefFund (13)	HappyHoli (1)	Uganda (4)	Tunisia (9)	ImranKhanPTI (1)	NaseeboLal (3)
SheikhKhalifa (7)	KashmirisLivesMatter (76)	Diwali (2)	Kulgam (5)	Kuwait (19)	SCO (2)
FreeYasinMalik (4)	USA (11)	PakistanForAll (1)	Baisakhi2022 (3)	Italy (8)	pakturk_friendship_zindabad (1)
Snooker (3)	KashmirAccessiontoPakistan (6)	KashmirBleeds (39)	IneEriksenSoreide (2)	Srinagar (5)	YFM2022 (16)
75thPeKuchKhaas (1)	Pakistan4HumanRights (4)	DefenceDay2021 (9)	APSPeshawar (1)	HaiderAli (3)	Trekkers (8)
IIOJK (593)	AbuDhabi (2)	AugustoSantosSilva (5)	Austria (24)	PakGermanDosti (2)	Canada (4)

Youm_e_Takbeer (13)	Holi (1)	UK (4)	WeatherUpdate (9)	IneEriksenSoredie (1)	PakChinaIronBrothers (3)
Singapore (7)	KashmirSolidarityDay (76)	Easter2022 (2)	Kupwara (5)	PakFMAAtUN (19)	technologytransfer (2)
Gambia (4)	Yasin_Malik (11)	PakistanNavy (1)	Bannu (3)	Kanchenjunga (8)	PMPakCOP27 (1)
Srebrenica27 (3)	KashmirAwaitsJustice (6)	Azerbaijan (38)	investment (2)	SustainableDevelopment (5)	Belarus (15)
AfghanPeaceProcesses (1)	PakThailandAt70 (4)	dossier (9)	ARF (1)	HappyBaishakhi2022 (3)	Turkey (8)
OIC48CFM (548)	ADB (2)	Baramulla (5)	PakistanDay (24)	PakistanFloods2022 (2)	CHOGM22 (4)
Africa (12)	ImranKhanPTI (1)	UNGeneva (4)	adventure (8)	Instagram (1)	Pakistani (3)
Somalia (7)	Youm_e_Istehsal_e_Kashmir (76)	EnteringFuture (2)	leadingtheworld (5)	terrorism (19)	Tehran (2)
HealthForAll (4)	10BillionTreeTsunami (10)	pakturk_friendship_zindabad (1)	Congo (3)	KSA (8)	Reflect2022 (1)
stamp (3)	liberation (6)	GuruNanakJayanti (36)	Iqbal (2)	UNHRC (5)	IllicitFinancialFlows (15)
APSPeshawar (1)	PKDay22 (4)	GCC (9)	awamimarch (1)	IBSF (3)	Turkiye (8)
UNGA (483)	Afghanistan (2)	BrahMos (5)	PakistanZindabad (24)	PakJapanAt70 (2)	CICASummit2022 (4)
Niger (12)	IneEriksenSoredie (1)	vaccines (4)	AlexanderSchallenberg (8)	IstanbulProcess (1)	PakUAEAt50 (3)
SyedAliGilani (7)	KashmirLivesMatter (68)	EuropeanUnion (2)	Nanak (5)	Uzbekistan (19)	trade (2)
interfaith (4)	30Years (10)	PMPakCOP27 (1)	coronavirus (3)	Libya (8)	SaveAfghanLives (1)
Tajikistan (3)	Martyrs (6)	PMPakatUNGA (36)	IsDB (2)	US (5)	Kazakhstan (15)
ARF (1)	PMIKAtSCOSummit (4)	Germany (9)	BehindYouSkipper (1)	IqbalDay2021 (3)	27OctoberBlackDay (7)
Islamabad (330)	AfricaDay (2)	Braille (5)	ClimateChange (23)	PAKvsEng (2)	Copenhagen (4)
Oman (12)	Instagram (1)	WeatherForecast (4)	ASEAN (8)	KarachiUniversity (1)	PakUzbekistanAt30 (3)
UNDay (7)	China (64)	Fatah (2)	NATO (5)	WangYi (19)	Twiplomacy (2)
InternationalWidowsDay (4)	BlackDay (10)	Reflect2022 (1)	CORRUPTION (3)	MangoDiplomacy (8)	SemiFinalT20WC (1)
Tanzania (3)	PakBahrainAt50 (6)	PakistanAt75 (35)	Islamophobia_in_india (2)	VesakDay (5)	EconomicDiplomacy (14)
awamimarch (1)	PMIKVisitsTajikistan (4)	humanrightsforall (9)	BlackDayForKashmir (1)	IronBrothers (3)	COAS (7)

Afghanistan (302)	AiIB (2)	CleanEnergy (5)	HumanRightsViolations (23)	Palau (2)	Cote (4)
Poland (12)	IstanbulProcess (1)	WidowsDay (4)	Australia (8)	KarachiWelcomesBilawal (1)	Paralympics (3)
Weather (7)	IWD2022 (61)	FIFAWorldCup (2)	NewZealand (5)	France (18)	UNCIP (2)
InternationalWidowsDay2022 (4)	GilgitBaltistan (10)	IronBrothers (3)	culturaldiplomacy (3)	Modi (8)	T20WorldCup (1)
Venezuela (3)	PakFinlandAt70 (6)	FATF (32)	Israeli (2)	پاک ترک دوس ی ش زندہ باد (5)	KashmirWantsFreedom (14)
BehindYouSkipper (1)	PMSardartanveerilyaskhan (4)	Jordan (9)	BRI (1)	Isamabad (3)	DYK (7)
Kashmir (260)	Akhuwat (2)	ClimateAction (5)	LIVE (23)	PéterSzijjártó (2)	COVID (4)
70年の友情 (11)	KarachiUniversity (1)	WorldRefugeeDay (4)	Berlin (8)	KartarpurCorridorForPeace (1)	PMIKatOIC (3)
وطن کی م ی ش گواہ رہتا (7)	WomenInDiplomacy (61)	floods (2)	NuclearPower (5)	SyedAliShahGeelani (18)	UNDay2021 (2)
IPHRC (4)	Kashmiri (10)	SemiFinalT20WC (1)	DigitalDiplomacy (3)	Nigeria (8)	Ukrainian (1)
Vesak (3)	PMIMranKhan (6)	Iran (32)	KashmiriMartyrs (2)	AJK (4)	MuslimLivesMatter (14)
BlackDayForKashmir (1)	PMShehbazAtUNGA (4)	Lebanon (9)	ChineseNationalDay (1)	Isbconclave2021 (3)	Hungary (7)
OIC4Afg (250)	Award4Pakistan (2)	CPJ (5)	UNSGinPak (23)	PMShehbazInKSA (2)	Cricket (4)
Afghan (11)	KarachiWelcomesBilawal (1)	Yemen (4)	Climbers (8)	ManzoorHussain (1)	PrideofPakistan (3)
Argentina (6)	KashmirBlackDay (60)	FMConnect (2)	PakFMinChina (5)	Denmark (17)	UNDP (2)
IslamicDevelopmentBank (4)	Norway (10)	T20WorldCup (1)	Dushanbe (3)	OICICIM12 (8)	UNHCR (1)
ViolenceAgainstWomen (3)	PublicDiplomacy (6)	EngageAfrica (31)	Korea (2)	APHC (4)	NewYork (14)
BRI (1)	RiadMalki (4)	LongLivePakistan (9)	climate (1)	Istanbul (3)	KashmirMartyrsDay (7)
PakAtUN77 (230)	AyeshaMalik (2)	EidUlFitr (5)	75thPayKuchKhass (22)	PMShehbazInTurkey (2)	DonPramudwinai (4)
Belgium (11)	KartarpurCorridorForPeace (1)	20SCOSummit (3)	cuisine (8)	MeethiEid (1)	QuaidDay (3)
CHOGM2022 (6)	YasinMalik (58)	FSPDay2022 (2)	PakistanWithUAE (5)	UNGA77 (17)	UNESCO (2)
journalist (4)	PakTurkiyeAt75 (10)	Ukrainian (1)	Economy (3)	PakFMinIran (8)	VisionFO (1)

WeatherReport (3)	RealPakistan (6)	Kashmiris (31)	Madrid (2)	APPNes (4)	PakFMAtARF (14)
ChineseNationalDay (1)	RoR (4)	Mexico (9)	climatefinance (1)	JammuMartyrs (3)	KashmirRejectsIndia (7)
KashmiriLivesMatter (213)	AzizBhatti (2)	Emirati (5)	Balochistan (22)	Raast (2)	DossierIOJK (4)
Celebrating7Decades (11)	ManzoorHussain (1)	75thIndependenceDay (3)	Culture (8)	MGISummit (1)	QueenMaxima (3)
discipline (6)	Palestine (51)	G77 (2)	PakTuerkiye_Friendship_Zindabad (5)	UNSC (17)	UnityGovernment (2)
K2 (4)	PakUSAt75 (10)	UNHCR (1)	ECOSummit (3)	PakistanDayParade (8)	WorkingWomen (1)
WorldHealthDay (3)	ResilientPakistan (6)	SyedAliGillani (31)	MargallaDialogue 21 (2)	APPNew (4)	Shopian (14)
climate (1)	sciencediplomacy (4)	Morocco (9)	Cuba (1)	Jeddah (3)	PakGermanyAt70 (7)
UNGA76 (140)	Bali (2)	EmomaliRahmon (5)	GuruNanak (22)	radioactive (2)	Epidemic (4)
ISPR (11)	MeethiEid (1)	AbidaParveen (3)	Expo2020 (8)	MoSinKabul (1)	Quetta (3)
disinformation (6)	UN (51)	GDI (2)	Palestinian (5)	Bahrain (16)	Vietnam (2)
Kartarpur (4)	Portugal (10)	VisionFO (1)	Eid (3)	PakistanHostingOIC (8)	WorldTourismDay (1)
WorldHealthDay2022 (3)	unity (6)	Youm_e_Istehsal_Augst_05 (30)	Mazar_E_Sharif (2)	BabaGuruNanak (4)	Turkmenistan (14)
climatefinance (1)	Sudan (4)	PakistanFloods (9)	CWG (1)	Kabul (3)	PakistanDay2022 (7)
India (117)	BDF15 (2)	GuruNanakJayanti2022 (5)	PakFMAtSCO (22)	Ramadan (2)	EpidemicPreparedness (4)
Maldives (11)	MGISummit (1)	AfghanRefugees (3)	Guinea (8)	Navratri (1)	Rawalpindi (3)
Dogra (6)	Geneva (48)	GurbangulyBerdimukhammedov (2)	Peace (5)	FloodReliefOperations (16)	WorldBank (2)
Katpana (4)	SDGs (10)	WorkingWomen (1)	EidAlAdha (3)	ReleaseYasinMalik (8)	23NisanKutluOlsun (1)
YasinMaik (3)	WashingtonDC (6)	EU (27)	NationalMinorities Day (2)	Bangladesh (4)	ClimateCrisis (13)
Cuba (1)	Sweden (4)	PakSpainAt70 (9)	diplomacy (1)	Kazakhstan (3)	PakKSAVisit (7)
PMImranKhanAtUNGA (99)	BipinRawat (2)	Hussain (5)	AfricaDay2022 (21)	RamadanMubarak (2)	Everest (4)
Netherlands (11)	MoSinKabul (1)	Afghans (3)	Heritage (8)	Nepal (1)	RuslanKazakbaev (3)

faith (6)	OIC (48)	HappyEaster (2)	PMIKinChina (5)	Indonesia (16)	WorldOceansDay2022 (2)
LeavingNoOneBehind (4)	SirojiddinMuhriidin (10)	WorldTourismDay (1)	FaizAhmadFaiz (3)	SamehShoukry (8)	50thHANGORDay (1)
YumeIstehsaal (3)	XC_Int_Conf22 (6)	KartarpurCorridor (27)	NationalSecurityPolicy (2)	BeSeenBeHeard (4)	COP27 (13)
CWG (1)	Syria (4)	Romania (9)	FIFAWorldCupQatar2022 (1)	LossAndDamage (3)	PartnersinPeace (7)
YumeIstehsal (88)	CDS (2)	Indian (5)	KashmirMartyrsWeek (21)	Refugees (2)	Expo2020Dubai (4)
PakistanArmy (11)	Navratri (1)	Agenda2030 (3)	HumanRightsDay (8)	NSP (1)	SelfDeterminationDay (3)
Gandhara (6)	WEF22 (46)	HappyNewYear (2)	PMShehbazInTuerkiye (5)	Kyrgyzstan (16)	YusefAldoubeay (2)
Malaysia (4)	Thailand (10)	23NisanKutluOlun (1)	Fin4Dev (3)	SaudiArabia (8)	75thPeKuchKhaas (1)
2 (2)	Youm (6)	SyedAliGeelani (27)	PaGermanyAt70 (2)	Bosnia (4)	HumanRights (13)
diplomacy (1)	Thar (4)	Standup4Kashmirirights (9)	GoGreenShirts (1)	Mango (3)	PMShehbazSharif (7)
Islamophobia (84)	Christmas (2)	Journalism (5)	Ukraine (21)	RussiaUkraineWar (2)	FightCorruption4HumanRights (4)
PakJapan70years (11)	Nepal (1)	AhsanRamzan (3)	HumanRightsDay2021 (8)	PakEUWater (1)	SergeiLavrov (3)
Houston (6)	PakistanAtDavos (44)	HaridwarGenocidalMeet (2)	ProtectedAreasInitiative (5)	Qatar (16)	1 (1)
Mozambique (4)	Bandipore (9)	50thHANGORDay (1)	FloodReliefFund2022 (3)	SohailMahmood (8)	AfghanPeaceProcess (1)

*Appendix “D”***Rationale and Limitations in Data Collection**

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Rationale and Limitations</b>
Posts created between 15 August 2021 and 14 Jan 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Rationale for choosing said dates</u>: Accurate data could not be collected retrospectively given the limitations on the X (formerly Twitter) API. Given the nature of both the case studies (main topic of the research), data collection could only begin from 15 August onwards. Posts collection was stopped on 14 January 2023 as sufficient data (35,911 posts) had been collected.</li> <li>• <u>Questions around relevance in Q</u>: Given that major change happened in Afghanistan after of Kabul in August 2021, data collection starting in before the event could be a disadvantage. But at the same time, there were numerous other issues gaining focus in India and Pakistan context particularly the security situation after revocation of the special status of Jammu and Kashmir, its socio-politico impact and upsurge in protest and violence in Indian-administered Kashmir. However, with 23,597 posts collected, it is evident that the Kashmir conversation was still relevant in the news.</li> </ul>
Post contained the word “Kashmir” and “Afghanistan” either in the text and hashtag	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Insufficient filter</u>: There were several thousand posts daily that referred to Kashmir and Afghanistan without explicitly using the word. All of these were left out with the chosen filter. While this could potentially introduce bias, it is unlikely that there is a statistically significant difference between content that includes the word “Kashmir” and “Afghanistan” that which does not.</li> </ul>
Post contained one or more of the 129 popular hashtags, 850 users Mentions (list provided below as Appendices C&D)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Rationale for choosing hashtags/ mentions</u>: Hashtags and users mentions helped narrow down the data collection to include the relevant conversations and influential users on the platform.</li> <li>• <u>Potential bias through social media filter bubbles</u>: Selecting these values could introduce bias, particularly given that they were chosen from the researcher’s personal X (formerly Twitter) feed. In order to compensate for this potential bias, a conscious effort was made to include users and content from both the countries.</li> </ul>

*Appendix 'E'***LIST OF VARIABLES - TALIBAN RECAPTURE OF AFGHANISTAN**

**1. Name Calling:** Terrorists, Miscreants, Cowardly, Extremists, Insurgents, Militants, Criminals, Traitors, Fidayeen, Aggressors, Radicals, Terror Outfit, Infiltrators, Fanatics, Conspirators, Accused, Proscribed, agitator, fundamentalist, terrorist, aggressor, dictator, crook, illegitimate, puppet, traitor, hostile, communist.

**2. Glittering Generalities:** Peacekeepers, Patriotism, Freedom, Democracy, Justice, Integrity, Bravery, Sacrifice, National pride, Empowerment, Honesty, Resilience, Solidarity, #HumanRights, #Unity, Diversity, Hope, Strength, #Brave, Heroes, braveheart, freedom fighter, justice, honor, peace, nationalism, integrity.

**3. Transfer:** Courage of a lion, Strength of the Indian Armed Forces, Values of the Constitution, Spirit of Nari Shakti, women empowerment, Legacy of Shaheed, martyrs, Salute to Veterans, Commitment to peacekeeping, Resilience of the people, Dedication of the Armed Forces, Sacrifice of brave heroes, Trust in military, Azaadi, national pride, heritage, India Independence, National War Memorial, ManKiBaat.

**4. Testimonial:** CDS General Bipin Rawat on national security, Joe Biden endorsing cooperation, Veterans sharing their experiences, Influential leaders advocating for peace, Statements from military officials on operations, Community leaders discussing unity initiatives, Endorsements from NGOs, Quotes from families of martyrs, Insights from experts on conflict resolution, Testimonials from citizens on national pride, Statements from US Diplomats about India-US relations, Comments from Elon Musk on technological advancements, Public figures supporting Make in India, Leaders discussing the importance of democracy, Testimonials from refugees about humanitarian assistance, endorsements from military leaders or politicians.

**5. Plain folks:** citizens, people, masses, Local heroes, Families, Students, Farmers, Holi celebrations for unity (#Holi), Community, local communities, Neighbors, cultural events, Local businesses, Everyday people, Kashmiri, Local events, NariShakti, community support, local issues.

**6. Bandwagon:** join for freedom, Azadi, Make India, International Day of Yoga, Veterans Day Everyday, Rally behind Operation Ganga, Embrace the spirit of nationalism, Main Bharat Hoon, Join hands for Kashmir, Solidarity, Fight Against Terrorism, Celebrate, national pride, Support our troops, Salute Veterans, Participate, Join, call for democracy, Get involved, Be part, Stop Terrorism, welcome, together, sympathy.

**7. Card Stacking:** Successful operation, achievements, Showcasing, positive outcomes, statistics, peacekeeping missions, veterans' contributions, narratives, stories, economic growth, progress, partnerships, events, actions, security measures, military operations.

**8. Fear Appeal:** Terror Threats, National Security Risk, dangers, crisis, Radicalization, Public Order, Misinformation, foreign influence, challenges, dire, consequences, Mumbai Attacks, terrorist attack, insecurity, invasion, escalation, intimidation, hostage, threatening, lawlessness, insecurity.

**9. Loaded Language:** Infiltrating terrorists, Unbridled violence, Indiscriminate attacks, Humanitarian catastrophe, Draconian measures, Collateral damage, Appalling conditions, Hostile takeover, Ghastly acts, behavior of insurgents, Explosive situations, Prejudicial policies, Intimidating tactics, Inhumane treatment, Radical ideologies, aggressor assailant, Islamic mujahideen, victimhood, corruption, mismanagement, bloodbath, casualty.

**10. Appeal to Authority:** General Bipin Rawat, Joe Biden, UN, military officer, prime minister, present, chief, head, higher ups, elite, respected, COAS, White House, police, defence forces, Indian Armed Forces, Indian Army, Marine Infantry Regiment, Defence, New Delhi, Islamabad, Kabul.

*Appendix “F”***LIST OF VARIABLES– KASHMIR CONFLICT**

1. **Name Calling:** Terrorist, Extremist, Barbaric, Infiltrator, Outlawed, Impotent, Heartless, Uncivilized, Hostile, Killersquadron, Misogynist, Dissident, Gunner, Criminal, Unethical, Madman, fundamentalist, IndiaFakeRepublic, Malicious, Discriminatory.
2. **Glittering Generalities:** humanrightsforall, ResilientPakistan, StrongerTogether, Unity, liberation, independence, peacekeeping, #gallantry, #PositivityRate, #culturaldiplomacy, #EconomicDiplomacy, #interfaith, #ClimateAction, #humanitarian, #nationalunityday, PakistanZindabad, KashmirAwaitsJustice, RealPakistan, Gallant, Indomitable, Peacekeeper.
3. **Transfer:** #IronBrothers, #KashmirLivesMatter, #MartyrsOfKashmir, #PakChinaIronBrothers, #LongLivePakistan, freedom, #azadi, #nationalflag, Resilience of the people, Commitment to peacekeeping, Strength of the military, Spirit of solidarity, Trust in our armed forces, Values of self-determination, Hope for a better future, Power of unity, NuclearPower, DefenceAndMartyrsDay, KashmirAccessiontoPakistan, Youm\_e\_Takbeer, KashmiriLivesMatter.
4. **Testimonial:** Bipin Rawat, Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Afghan refugees, military officials, Community leaders, NGOs, violence affected families, experts on conflict, victims of war crimes, public figures, Leaders, human rights organizations, journalists, political leaders, PMImranKhanAtUNGA.
5. **Plain folks:** Everyday citizens, Local heroes, Families, Students, Citizens, Community, Veterans, Neighbours, local businesses, solidarity events, martyrs, Everyday people supporting human rights, Local events celebrating cultural diversity, #ClimateAction, Community members, Afghan refugees, MangoDiplomacy, PublicDiplomacy.
6. **Bandwagon:** #KashmirWantsFreedom, #humanrightsforall, #KashmirSolidarityDay, Stand with victims of war crimes and violence, #Islamophobia\_in\_india, #UnityGovernment, Get involved with community service projects, #PakistanDay, Join

hands, #FightCorruption4HumanRights, Support initiatives, Participate in protests, Rally behind the call, fighting against discrimination and marginalization, Join campaigns, Pakistan4HumanRights, KashmirBleeds, BehindYouSkipper.

7. **Card Stacking:** Successful operations, achievements, Showcasing, statistics, successful cultural diplomacy, achievements, narratives, international support, unity during events, humanitarian efforts, sloganeering, DossierIIQJK, IllicitFinancialFlows, FATF.

8. **Fear Appeal:** #terror, #NationalSecurityPolicy, violence and instability, failing to support armed forces, geopolitical conflicts, regional security and safety, illegal immigration,

border security, safety, #radicalising, #ViolenceAgainstWomen, #SaveAfghanLives, #disinformation, #diplomacy, Extrajudicial, Worsening, Horrific.

9. **Loaded Language:** Indiscriminate attacks, Humanitarian catastrophe, Draconian measures, Collateral damage, Appalling conditions, Hostile takeover, Ghastly acts, Barbaric behavior, Explosive situations, Prejudicial policies, Intimidating tactics, Inhumane treatment, Radical ideologies, Unbridled violence, Discrimination against minorities, surgical strike, devastating, gruesome.

10. **Appeal to Authority:** Bipin Rawat, Imran Khan, UN resolutions, military experts, respected journalists, human rights organizations, think tank, academics, international observers, international world, ISPR, COAS.

**Table.1.** Users Categorization

#	Category	Explanation/ Notes
1	Government (Govt.) Actor/President	Head of States / Presidents (India and Pakistan)
2	Political Actor (s) / PM	Prime Minister (India and Pakistan)/PM Office of India (PMO)
3	Foreign Minister	Minister of External Affairs of India / Foreign Minister of Pakistan
4	Defence Minister	Minister for Defence (India and Pakistan)
5	Defence/Military Spokesperson	Director General Inter Services Public Relations (DG ISPR) / Spokesperson for the Ministry of Defense (Spokesperson MoD)
6	Foreign Office Spokesperson	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Pakistan (MoFA Spokesperson) / Spokesperson for the Ministry of External Affairs India
7	Diplomatic Mission	Diplomatic mission of both the countries (India High Commission in Pakistan/ Pakistan High Commission in India)
8	Media	News Agencies of India and Pakistan i.e ANI and APP

**Table 2.** Data Processing Steps

Action	Description
Removing Usernames	Remove X (formerly Twitter) usernames from the text
Removing Links	Eliminate URLs or web links from the text
Tokenization	Tokenization involves splitting the text into individual words or tokens
Punctuation and Number Removal	Remove punctuation marks, special characters, and numbers from the tokens
Text Lowercasing	Convert all text to lowercase
Lemmatization	Reduces words to their base or dictionary form
<b>Note:</b> The output generated from the preprocessing steps conducted earlier is utilized for subsequent analysis	

**Table 3.** Process Involved Posts Distribution based on Word Frequency

Action	Description
Post Processing	The output generated from the previously employed preprocessing steps, which include the removal of usernames and links, tokenization, lowercasing, stop word removal, and lemmatization, is utilized for further analysis
Word Occurrence Count	For each processed post, the algorithm counts the occurrences of words in the " <i>Category</i> " section of the data. This analysis helps identify the most frequently associated category for those words.
Category Assignment	The algorithm assigns the most prevalent category to each respective post in the raw post data. In cases where multiple categories share the same frequency, the algorithm selects the first encountered category from among those tied for the highest frequency

**Table 4.** Data Pre-Processing Steps for Category Analysis

<b>Action</b>	<b>Description</b>
Counting Category Occurrences	This study utilizes the 'value_counts' function to count the occurrences of each category in the dataset, providing an initial overview of category distribution.
Calculating Category Percentages	Percentage values are calculated for each category by dividing the category counts by the total number of posts in the dataset. This step offers a normalized perspective on the contribution of each category.
Creating a Summary Data Frame	A new data frame is generated to consolidate key information. It includes columns for the category, its frequency in the dataset, and the corresponding percentage.
Generating Tables and Charts	Tables and various types of charts are created to visually represent the distribution of categories. They serve as effective visualization tools, offering an immediate and clear depiction of each category's percentage contribution to the overall dataset

### Value of K For Each Topic

**Table 5.** Top 10 words in 10 topics (Pakistan – Taliban Recapture of Afghanistan → 10)

<b>Topic 1</b>	<b>Topic 2</b>	<b>Topic 3</b>	<b>Topic 4</b>	<b>Topic 5</b>
Afghanistan	Afghanistan	Pakistan	Pakistan	Afghanistan
Pakistan	OIC4Afg	Khan	attack	Pakistan
APP News	Session	UN	terrorist	FM
FS	Foreign	APP News	UN	humanitarian
UN	Extraordinary	Aftab	people	situation
Peace	Pakistan	Hasan	APP News	Afghan
Via	CFM	world	flood	support
meeting	17th	Afghanistan	PR	peace
Also	Islamabad	support	force	community
shared	Minister	Minister	security	APP News
<b>Topic 6</b>	<b>Topic 7</b>	<b>Topic 8</b>	<b>Topic 9</b>	<b>Topic 10</b>
Afghanistan	Afghanistan	UN	Pakistan	FM
support	humanitarian	FM	condolence	Minister
Pakistan	FM	right	family	Foreign
FM	Pakistan	meeting	APPNews	PR
UN	Afghan	Pakistan	loss	US
visit	must	Security	proud	UN
people	issue	Meeting	people	APPNews
humanitarian	crisis	APPNews	attack	UNGA
US	OIC	protection	terrorism	General
million	SG	commitment	life	Meeting

**Table 6.** Top 10 words in 12 topics (Pakistan - Kashmir Conflict → 12)

Topic 1	Topic 2	Topic 3	Topic 4	Topic 5	Topic 6
Pakistan APPNews LIVE President Islamabad Ali leader Syed Information medium	Pakistan year India PR celebration Indian national path Anniversary raise	Pakistan attack PR terrorist life country loss force people condemns	Pakistan Islamabad OIC4Afg Extraordinary 17th Session OICinPakistan CFM Sikh India	Pakistan Indian Kashmir Day APPNews Kashmiri struggle Syed Ali Black	Pakistan flood solidarity people support year Resilient grateful Climate last
Topic 7	Topic 8	Topic 9	Topic 10	Topic 11	Topic 12
APPNews IIOJK Kashmir via Indian right Kashmiris India KashmiriLivesMatter Kashmiri	Pakistan Foreign Minister OICinPakistan OIC48CFM FM Secretary OIC welcome PM	Afghanistan Pakistan FM humanitarian FS relation peace support situation bilateral	UNGA FM PakAtUN77 New High Commission OIC Pakistan meeting UN	Pakistan engagement right 2022 diplomatic Diplomacy team Watch Week outreach	India Pakistan Indian Day held Security KashmirBlackDay border security threat

**Table 7.** Top 10 words in 11 topics (India - Taliban Recapture of Afghanistan → 11)

Topic 1	Topic 2	Topic 3	Topic 4	Topic 5	Topic 6
US	Khan	terrorist	Minister	people	report
India	case	Police	Affairs	use	News
State	Mumbai	Kashmir	Sharma	due	AFP
Indian	Delhi	area	Ministry	Amritsar	Court
WATCH	arrested	Jammu	Prime	break	said
Secretary	accused	force	Defence	MoS	Afghanistan
ANI	registered	security	Visuals	vaccine	Agency
Afghanistan	Police	killed	Modi	India	Tunisha
via	Pakistan	encounter	2022	Afghanistan	medium
Blinken	Act	recovered	External	million	say
Topic 7	Topic 8	Topic 9	Topic 10	Topic 11	
UN	Khan	PM	troop	US	
India	Kerala	CM	Army	President	
Afghanistan	BJP	people	drone	Biden	
terrorism	Governor	Congress	Indian	Ukraine	
UNSC	Delhi	also	BSF	Joe	
EAM	people	Modi	Punjab	Russia	
Council	CM	Union	area	PM	
Security	Bengal	come	border	Russian	
Jaishankar	leader	country	fired	House	
country	Congress	India	near	meeting	

**Table 8.** Top 10 words in 15 topics (India – Kashmir Conflict → 15)

<b>Topic 1</b>	<b>Topic 2</b>	<b>Topic 3</b>	<b>Topic 4</b>	<b>Topic 5</b>
India	PM	India	police	India
Defence	India	woman	vaccine	Union
Minister	Modi	World	run	Minister
country	world	win	Kashmiri	Govt
Indian	Narendra	File	number	G20
economy	country	team	Yadav	Pakistan
CM	people	Cup	lakh	country
govt	tweet	first	people	border
Union	also	BCCI	location	Punjab
world	Active	match	joint	Min
<b>Topic 6</b>	<b>Topic 7</b>	<b>Topic 8</b>	<b>Topic 9</b>	<b>Topic 10</b>
last	India	India	Kashmir	Pakistan
India	security	say	Jammu	ANI
report	Ukraine	National	WATCH	EAM
24	terror	United	terrorist	via
COVID19	terrorism	International	Police	MEA
hour	Afghanistan	Security	area	Jaishankar
recovery	situation	Council	Sri	Multimedia
death	Source	UN	force	incident
new	UN	Permanent	Army	South
flight	UNSC	Delhi	district	Asia
<b>Topic 11</b>	<b>Topic 12</b>	<b>Topic 13</b>	<b>Topic 14</b>	<b>Topic 15</b>
India	India	India	2022	India
US	President	Ministry	Delhi	case
meeting	yesterday	High	Bangladesh	Air
Foreign	Assam	Rs	today	Delhi
Secretary	Indian	Health	near	Congress
Minister	Delhi	Commissioner	India	BJP
cooperation	huge	Union	New	chief
visit	Independence	Commission	war	leader
partnership	Dr	Lot	started	party
bilateral	year	Government	Mumbai	Rahul

**Table 9.** Posts Topic Frequency India - Taliban Recapture of Afghanistan

<b>Topic Number</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Topic 3</b>	<b>1870</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>Topic 9</b>	<b>1833</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>Topic 11</b>	<b>1802</b>	<b>17%</b>
<b>Topic 7</b>	<b>1275</b>	<b>12%</b>
<b>Topic 1</b>	<b>1106</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Topic 6</b>	<b>630</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Topic 10</b>	<b>564</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Topic 2</b>	<b>564</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Topic 8</b>	<b>502</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Topic 5</b>	<b>399</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Topic 4</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>10827</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 10.** Posts Topic Frequency India - Kashmir Conflict

<b>Topic Number</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>Topic 1</b>	<b>3407</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>Topic 9</b>	<b>2977</b>	<b>14%</b>
<b>Topic 11</b>	<b>2723</b>	<b>13%</b>
<b>Topic 2</b>	<b>2165</b>	<b>10%</b>
<b>Topic 3</b>	<b>1334</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Topic 7</b>	<b>1246</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Topic 5</b>	<b>1155</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Topic 15</b>	<b>1027</b>	<b>6%</b>
<b>Topic 12</b>	<b>996</b>	<b>5%</b>
<b>Topic 14</b>	<b>713</b>	<b>4%</b>
<b>Topic 10</b>	<b>662</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Topic 6</b>	<b>648</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Topic 13</b>	<b>635</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Topic 8</b>	<b>570</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>Topic 4</b>	<b>391</b>	<b>2%</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>20649</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 11.** Posts Topic Frequency Pakistan - Taliban Recapture of Afghanistan

Topic Number	Frequency	Percentage
Topic 5	328	25%
Topic 2	205	16%
Topic 4	141	11%
Topic 3	114	9%
Topic 6	97	7%
Topic 1	96	7%
Topic 7	87	7%
Topic 10	85	6%
Topic 9	78	6%
Topic 8	76	6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1307</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 12.** Posts Topic Frequency Pakistan – Kashmir Conflict

Topic Number	Frequency	Percentage
Topic 9	482	16%
Topic 8	467	16%
Topic 7	338	11%
Topic 6	248	8%
Topic 3	238	8%
Topic 4	237	8%
Topic 11	229	8%
Topic 10	199	7%
Topic 12	156	6%
Topic 5	125	4%
Topic 1	120	4%
Topic 2	109	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>2948</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 13.** Month-wise Frequency by Pakistan on Taliban Recapture of Afghanistan

<b>Months</b>	<b>Authority</b>	<b>Plain Folks</b>	<b>Transfer</b>	<b>Others</b>
2021-08	39 (7%)	24 (9%)	33 (12%)	7 (11%)
2021-09	70 (12%)	51 (20%)	19 (7%)	12 (18%)
2021-10	23 (4%)	9 (4%)	21 (8%)	9 (13%)
2021-11	23 (4%)	8 (3%)	13 (5%)	3 (5%)
2021-12	82 (14%)	21 (8%)	43 (16%)	14 (21%)
2022-01	19 (3%)	14 (5%)	2 (1%)	2 (3%)
2022-02	11 (2%)	3 (1%)	7 (3%)	2 (4%)
2022-03	25 (4%)	6 (2%)	17 (6%)	9 (13%)
2022-04	16 (3%)	8 (3%)	2 (1%)	4 (6%)
2022-05	36 (6%)	15 (9%)	12 (4%)	16 (24%)
2022-06	14 (2%)	13 (5%)	10 (4%)	10 (17%)
2022-07	19 (3%)	9 (4%)	2 (1%)	11 (16%)
2022-08	20 (3%)	13 (5%)	5 (2%)	6 (9%)
2022-09	74 (12%)	19 (7%)	13 (5%)	8 (10%)
2022-10	30 (5%)	9 (4%)	13 (5%)	5 (8%)
2022-11	30 (5%)	6 (2%)	19 (7%)	7 (10%)
2022-12	55 (9%)	19 (6%)	29 (10%)	6 (8%)
2023-01	11 (2%)	8 (3%)	8 (3%)	1 (2%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>597 (100%)</b>	<b>255 (100%)</b>	<b>268 (100%)</b>	<b>56 (100%)</b>

**Table 14.** Month-wise Frequency by India on Taliban Recapture of Afghanistan

Months	Authority	Bandwagon	Plain Folks	Others
2021-08	148 (8%)	52 (6%)	571 (8%)	85 (18%)
2021-09	193 (9%)	52 (6%)	527 (8%)	64 (15%)
2021-10	131 (7%)	54 (7%)	444 (7%)	60 (13%)
2021-11	71 (4%)	52 (6%)	368 (5%)	63 (15%)
2021-12	70 (4%)	45 (5%)	318 (5%)	28 (7%)
2022-01	51 (3%)	36 (4%)	250 (4%)	32 (8%)
2022-02	118 (6%)	54 (7%)	342 (5%)	64 (13%)
2022-03	150 (8%)	38 (4%)	443 (6%)	62 (14%)
2022-04	161 (8%)	43 (5%)	420 (6%)	55 (14%)
2022-05	97 (5%)	66 (8%)	396 (6%)	47 (11%)
2022-06	67 (3%)	63 (7%)	344 (5%)	47 (12%)
2022-07	70 (4%)	45 (5%)	313 (5%)	27 (6%)
2022-08	113 (6%)	51 (6%)	389 (6%)	50 (12%)
2022-09	119 (6%)	48 (6%)	338 (5%)	43 (10%)
2022-10	128 (7%)	45(5%)	422 (6%)	41 (9%)
2022-11	103 (5%)	56 (7%)	415 (6%)	41 (11%)
2022-12	123 (6%)	34 (4%)	380 (5%)	56 (9%)
2023-01	28 (1%)	19 (2%)	142 (2%)	13 (3%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1941 (100%)</b>	<b>853 (100%)</b>	<b>6822 (100%)</b>	<b>319 (100%)</b>

**Table 15.** Month-wise Frequency by Pakistan on the Kashmir Conflict

<b>Months</b>	<b>Authority</b>	<b>Plain Folks</b>	<b>Transfer</b>	<b>Others</b>
2021-08	19 (2%)	27 (4%)	11 (3%)	13 (6%)
2021-09	91 (8%)	86 (11%)	22 (7%)	44 (18%)
2021-10	20 (2%)	32 (4%)	24 (7%)	17 (7%)
2021-11	25 (2%)	39 (5%)	17 (5%)	24 (10%)
2021-12	122 (11%)	40 (5%)	14 (4%)	21 (9%)
2022-01	41 (4%)	28 (4%)	9 (3%)	12 (5%)
2022-02	32 (3%)	25 (3%)	28 (9%)	21 (9%)
2022-03	182 (16%)	60 (8%)	13 (4%)	69 (28%)
2022-05	74 (7%)	46 (6%)	20 (6%)	46 (19%)
2022-06	66 (5%)	49 (6%)	16 (5%)	25 (10%)
2022-07	36 (3%)	28 (4%)	19 (6%)	16 (7%)
2022-08	74 (7%)	62 (8%)	46 (14%)	40 (17%)
2022-09	132 (12%)	100 (13%)	18 (5%)	40 (16%)
2022-10	61 (5%)	33 (4%)	26 (8%)	22 (9%)
2022-11	45 (4%)	45 (6%)	18 (5%)	16 (7%)
2022-12	81 (7%)	42 (6%)	19 (6%)	20 (9%)
2023-01	22 (2%)	22 (3%)	9 (3%)	37 (14%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>1123 (100%)</b>	<b>764 (100%)</b>	<b>329 (100%)</b>	<b>227 (100%)</b>

**Table 16.** Month-wise Frequency by India on the Kashmir Conflict

<b>Months</b>	<b>Authority</b>	<b>Plain Folks</b>	<b>Transfer</b>	<b>Others</b>
2021-08	135 (3%)	75 (3%)	365 (4%)	99 (7%)
2021-09	304 (7%)	189 (7%)	521 (6%)	191 (15%)
2021-10	253 (6%)	203 (8%)	653 (7%)	199 (16%)
2021-11	204 (5%)	137 (5%)	507 (5%)	130 (10%)
2021-12	224 (5%)	183 (7%)	543 (6%)	135 (10%)
2022-01	184 (3%)	131 (5%)	448 (5%)	130 (10%)
2022-02	204 (5%)	143 (5%)	397 (4%)	97 (7%)
2022-03	303 (7%)	154 (6%)	610 (7%)	139 (11%)
2022-04	317 (7%)	151 (6%)	610 (7%)	137 (11%)
2022-05	241 (5%)	175 (7%)	577 (6%)	162 (12%)
2022-06	210 (5%)	135 (5%)	531 (6%)	140 (10%)
2022-07	218 (5%)	170 (6%)	493 (5%)	130 (10%)
2022-08	242 (5%)	185 (7%)	627 (7%)	166 (13%)
2022-09	348 (8%)	170 (6%)	584 (6%)	187 (14%)
2022-10	275 (6%)	172 (6%)	587 (6%)	158 (12%)
2022-11	302 (7%)	141 (5%)	508 (5%)	184 (14%)
2022-12	341 (8%)	110 (4%)	448 (5%)	131 (10%)
2023-01	133 (3%)	59 (2%)	259 (3%)	97 (7%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>4438 (100%)</b>	<b>2683 (100%)</b>	<b>9268 (100%)</b>	<b>1208 (100%)</b>

**Table 22.** Viral Strategies on a Taliban Recapture of Afghanistan and Kashmir Conflict – India

Categories	President	Prime Minister	Foreign Minister	Defence Minister	Defence Spox	Foreign Office Spox	Media
	India	India	India	India	India	India	India
<b>Authority</b>	24398 (10%)	328334 (7%)	46492 (16%)	2550 (12%)	2729 (13%)	23494 (23%)	671038 (22%)
<b>Bandwagon</b>	7974 (3%)	472688 (10%)	29544 (10%)	1378 (6%)	1956 (10%)	4289 (4%)	190436 (6%)
<b>Plain Folks</b>	63819 (27%)	1560092 (34%)	98290 (33%)	5769 (27%)	2876 (14%)	29535 (28%)	917469 (30%)
<b>Transfer</b>	94225 (40%)	1225878 (26%)	73945 (24%)	8835 (41%)	11202 (55%)	40006 (39%)	1053497 (34%)
<b>Virtue Words</b>	31422 (13%)	363578 (8%)	23931 (8%)	757 (4%)	519 (3%)	1607 (2%)	24791 (1%)
<b>Glittering Generalities</b>	14618 (6%)	648118 (14%)	24097 (8%)	2060 (9%)	967 (5%)	4657 (4%)	173675 (6%)
<b>Others</b>	389 (1%)	31014 (1%)	2234 (1%)	111 (1%)	73 (0)	-	34552 (1%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>236845 (100%)</b>	<b>4629702 (100%)</b>	<b>298533 (100%)</b>	<b>21460 (100%)</b>	<b>20322 (100%)</b>	<b>103588 (100%)</b>	<b>3065458 (100%)</b>

**Table 23.** Viral Strategies on a Taliban Recapture of Afghanistan and Kashmir Conflict – Pakistan

Categories	President	Prime Minister	Foreign Minister	Defence Minister	Military Spox	Foreign Office Spox	Media
	Pakistan	Pakistan	Pakistan	Pakistan	Pakistan	Pakistan	Pakistan
<b>Authority</b>	13196 (22%)	201495 (25%)	130942 (31%)	1565 (15%)	74086 (38%)	84674 (58%)	245 (38%)
<b>Bandwagon</b>	7214 (12%)	48816 (6%)	45870 (11%)	1202 (11%)	5062 (3%)	6452 (4%)	33 (5%)
<b>Plain Folks</b>	14747 (25%)	353362 (43%)	134874 (33%)	5914 (55%)	47077 (24%)	24988 (17%)	75 (11%)
<b>Transfer</b>	11734 (20%)	109362 (13%)	56125 (13%)	792 (7%)	53189 (27%)	15281 (10%)	250 (38%)
<b>Virtue Words</b>	4958 (9%)	51911 (6%)	30597 (7%)	698 (6%)	6513 (3%)	11836 (8%)	10 (1%)
<b>Glittering Generalities</b>	7027 (12%)	20639 (3%)	12175 (3%)	269 (3%)	-	900 (1%)	4 (1%)
<b>Others</b>	-	29552 (4%)	6292 (2%)	315 (3%)	8881 (5%)	2477 (2%)	39 (6%)
<b>Total</b>	<b>58876 (100%)</b>	<b>815137 (100%)</b>	<b>416875 (100%)</b>	<b>10755 (100%)</b>	<b>194,808 (100%)</b>	<b>146608 (100%)</b>	<b>656 (100%)</b>