



MEDIA AS A WEAPON OF NARRATIVE BUILDING: A CASE OF FIFTH GENERATION WAR

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Abstract

In this new era, warfare techniques have changed as demand for the new modern world. This is an economic, political, and social connectivity-oriented century where the media is the crucial instrument of hybrid warfare. The mindset, narrative, perception, and information are the primary weapons of hybrid war or media warfare. This war can destroy a country's culture from the inside and disturb people's beliefs and views; moreover, it can also impact a country's economy with high intensity. People are expected to go rogue and become rebels against their state or nation. Usually, the reasons for this war are frustration, lack of authentic reason, and or absence of political objective or ideology to serve the country. This war has a huge impact on people's minds and thinking for a long time. It separates people into groups and segments believing in different propaganda and fallacy. The research is a qualitative analysis of previously published relevant documents. The study concludes that media



has played an immense role in building or shaping a narrative that one wants since media is among the powerful weapons used to converge or diverge people's minds against one idea.

Key words: Social media, Narrative building, Fifth generation war, Information warfare, Propaganda, Pakistan, India, Terrorism, Qualitative research.

Introduction

The fifth generation of warfare typically involves fighting through means of deception and miscommunication by taking advantage of the growing technologies. It does not include physical military action; rather, it is known as the “information and perception” war. (Abbott, 2010). It is not an addition to the tools and methods of provoking conflicts against governments, but a relatively emerging kind of warfare that takes place within the countries and among states but is not used inevitably to initiate or launch a war against any group. Instead, groups compete with one another for cultural supremacy, legitimacy, and authority based on ideals. Although economic disenfranchisement due to a group's entrenched cultural superiority over another is not a key motivator for fifth generation conflict, it may be significant. On the other hand, fifth generation warfare may be viewed as a struggle between different groups for dominance within the state (Kelshall, 2019).

The power of storytelling goes far beyond our need to be able to relate to the stories that we see on the screen in front of us. In fact, it is something so core to our society that we are not even capable of living without it. We depend on consistent storytelling and connection with one another in order for us to maintain some semblance of an ecosystem. (Ryan, 2004) There is a common trope about how the first thing people do when someone tells them sad news is to ask for a good story about someone else who has gone through something similar. That way, they can stop thinking about their own problems and feel more comfortable in the perceived setting, a little bit longer, as they hear someone else's worse situation.

The fact that storytelling is essential to our lives is a good indication that it doesn't matter how well an actual story is told. It doesn't matter how technically well-crafted or rich in emotional content the story is if someone can't connect with it or understand it. If the delivery feels inauthentic, or if the delivery of the story is botched, our connection will be destroyed, and there's very little we can do about that (Khan H, 2021).

This unflinching power of narrative to create empathy and grief for an audience, even if we don't feel like we need grief over something as simple as a movie rating, has



propelled our current narrative culture into some dangerous territory (Singer & Brooking, 2018). It is hugely damaging because while we may recognize the fragility of our stories, the idea that they could stop communicating to us all together is, in a way, too much to take. It means that we will have to reassess this relationship with narrative and what it means for our society at some point in the future (Nadeem, Mustafa, & Kakar, 2021).

As a society, we are dependent on narratives for our survival and a thriving group of individuals who value their ability to connect with others; it is implausible that we will resolve this conflict anytime soon. It is thought that people are looking at decades or centuries before any sort of solvency can be reached. But like humans, all we can do is hustle to find a way to make it work for us (Prier, 2017).

Literature Review

Media as a Weapon of Fifth Generation War

Khan H. (2021) noted that media play a significant role in the narrative building through fifth generation warfare. In this regard, the critical role of media comes into the picture. If you concentrate, it is pretty easy to determine the narrative being used as a weapon that can both engage and destroy our humanity at the same time. It may be unintentional or purposeful, but it has the power to do one of those things all by itself. Very few people are aware of this ambiguity, and therefore the only thing they seem capable of doing is repeating the same mistakes over and over again, expecting different results.

Mujeeb-ur-Rehman (2021) elaborated on the importance of different resources used in these new war techniques. As time and resources have changed, and with the development of modern weapon systems, technological advancements in the battlefield environment and strategies for harming or damaging opponents have all contributed to this type of warfare. Fifth-generation warfare is hybrid warfare centered on disseminating forged media channels that include but are not restricted to mediums like newspaper articles and internet sources like websites, blogs, etc. In addition, ideas and original themes are imitated, false imageries are created, fallacious stories are narrated, and spies are set (imposters/lurking falsehoods specialists) on media in the hopes of causing chaos, uncertainty, and worry in their rivals' minds.

Instead of publicly recognizing and appreciating their own LEA's (law enforcement agencies) work and sacrifices, some media members choose to highlight, rather than criticize, their role in keeping serenity and maintaining law and order with their country.



The cultivation syndrome states that the more a person is exposed to media, the more it will influence their perception of reality; thus, fake news, comments, and hidden lies made by media persons to misrepresent various facts on important issues, send negative messages, harming the nation's morale and shattering their faith in their national institutions. (Khan A. M., 2021) The governments in various countries have taken the initiative to counter fake news and credit to avoid the calamity of any propaganda fueled by these channels.

Khokhar (2019) highlighted the spread of false information and the misuse of modern technologies and devices has developed as a new platform for fifth generation warfare to release agenda on targets. Under this warfare, famous media personalities, political mentors, social activists, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) launch media campaigns to make their narrative public.

Our safety threats are primarily internal and external, supported by terrorist organizations and numerous ill-stimulated forces. Imposters are deliberately trying to create a chasm between the people and their institutions. The flaws are being exploited in order to wreak further havoc on the national fiber and unity of the unit. Narratives are sugar-coated and handed to company-cultivated media sellers, who generally engage in contact without assessing their cardinal virtue and promote perplexing exaggerations as a kind of media and psychological warfare. Tahir & Afridi (2019), considering how the media today has established ineradicable ties with its followers and audience, view that media is growing increasingly powerful and thriving daily.

Shamsi (2021) emphasized the need for technology in 5GW. Due to the growth and availability of information technology, media as a tactic of hybrid warfare has shown to be effective. At least one social networking application in Pakistan is accessible to 46 million people in Pakistan. Unfortunately, they are more receptive to the adversary's misleading propaganda due to a lack of adequate education and understanding.

Social Media Trending

The proliferation of social media has spread these bleeding-edge tools in every region of the world. This trend has become a challenge for strategic defense planners and military planners. Some ideas on the matter are as follows:

In an article entitled "How fake news helped Russia win the election," *The Washington Post* reported, "the internet has become a platform for spreading false or misleading information." It continues, saying: "the Internet has become a significant tool



for spreading false and inflammatory stories.” Rather than professional troops, citizens are expected to and will initialize war in this fifth generation of warfare. Hence, the notion of 5GW arises when citizens strive for legitimacy with the state and between themselves. The narrative of social movements, which might take the shape of mobs or packs, is fueling this fight. (Qureshi, 2019) A term that comes to mind is violent global social movements. These social movements are a part of the media that helps envision and form ideas in people’s minds.

The dissemination of propaganda is one of the most common uses of social media platforms. All other components of internet strategy are dependent on it since it gives all other forms of content meaning and context (Layton, 2018). Terrorist groups’ propaganda dissemination is not new or innovative, but the usage of social media constitutes a big step forward in propaganda distribution capabilities.

Social media allows for the ongoing sharing of audio, video, and static material on an unprecedented scale, allowing for building and reinforcing the master narrative. The brutality perpetrated by a terrorist group is given context, meaning, and purpose in this story. Between September and December 2014, Berger and Morgan (The ISIS Twitter Census) believe that ISIS had 46,000 Twitter support accounts. Berger estimates that both the official and supporting ISIS accounts output around 200,000 tweets per day (West, 2016). This retweeting is crucial because it decentralizes distribution, allowing for more resiliency and audience penetration.

Social media users might instantly browse and share stories with their audience. Journalists were pushed to alter their material to a more “clickable” style as news moved to social media, shorter headlines, more frequent posting, and more exaggeration to compete with other journalists and prominent blogs. Journalists began to use social media as a source for breaking news. As a result, dubious information may reach journalists, who were fast to push storylines without verifying it to compete with others. All sorts of media have become a weapon of narrative building, which eventually leads to change in perception.

Technological and Communication Revolution

Information technology has revolutionized communication, which has improved contact between individuals, organizations, communities, and states. Its coverage area grew significantly quicker than expected since it was designed to enhance communication and information distribution. Furthermore, the human thirst for technology helped it expand swiftly and around the globe in a short period (Nadeem, Mustafa, & Kakar, 2021).



This mainly happened because technology brought people together and made education, health, travel, communication, and improved lifestyles easier.

Shortly after nations began to enhance their adaptability to emerging technology, the more developed states began to weaponize it to gain an edge. Information warfare has advanced to the point where it is both sophisticated and dangerous. Electronic media gained the most from the tremendous advancements in information technology (Prier, 2017). Since then, the comparatively sophisticated countries, led by the United States, have been engaged in a never-ending propaganda war.

A compelling narrative is crucial to successful propaganda. Propaganda's effects are less potent than they would be if there isn't a well-established and well-understood narrative. The media has become weaponized, and it is being used aggressively against the target states (Singer & Brooking, 2018). While modern information technology breakthroughs and advances have brought people, society, and nation's closer together, they have also increased the potential of being exploited and mistreated. As a result, de-weaponizing the media is vital to preventing it from becoming a tool of mass manipulation in the hands of relatively developed countries (Abbasi, 2018).

It was never anticipated that the media would one day become highly efficient for weaponizing narratives. Propaganda is a powerful technique proven to control populations on a large scale when utilized successfully. Both state and non-state actors may now distribute misinformation more efficiently than ever before, thanks to the weaponization of media and mastery of the trend. Because of the convergence of technical and social elements, propaganda spreads faster, cheaper, and broader audiences. Web 2.0 enabled the ordinary internet user to transition from information consumer to information creator. As a result, the development of social media as a network-building tool cemented existing opinions within each hemophilic network (Qureshi, 2019). The "citizen reporter" was made possible through blogs, video uploads, and social media. Anyone with an opinion and internet connection could now share it with anyone in their network who was prepared to listen.

Media Warfare against Pakistan

Since 1998 when Pakistan became a nuclear state, the rivals changed their battle strategies against Pakistan because it's not easy to conduct traditional battles. Hence, they are launching a hybrid war against Pakistan. The worldwide media attempt to assemble misperception about Pakistan's atomic weapon program. With think tanks, nuclear specialists, and fundamental western lawmakers, the worldwide press advanced one-sided,



negative analysis and purposeful publicity against Pakistan's atomic status. In September 2001, Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) raised worries that Pakistan's nuclear weapons could fall under the control of fear mongers (ISIS, 2001). Moreover, in April 2004, the European Union (EU) Parliament scrutinizing Pakistan for its expansion exercises passed a goal (Nadeem, M. A., Mustafa, G., & Kakar, A. 2021). Simultaneously, the worldwide media also began to spread bits of hearsay that Pakistan may end and move back its atomic weapon program because of mounting global strain.

Social Media as a War Weapon

We can't deny that the internet is the central tool to create propaganda against the enemy in this twenty-first century. The information is the game changer and a source of narrative building in 5GW. The fake news and misleading information are more destructive on international forums. Social media in 5GW is a vast field of study. It has many social networking sites that generate propaganda, such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and WhatsApp (Nadeem, M. A., Mustafa, G., & Kakar, A. 2021).

India claimed Pakistan's involvement in the Pulwama attack where they allegedly linked Pakistan with Jaishe Muhammad; Pakistan denied the unproven allegation of India. Moreover, they summoned each other's foreign envoys. India tried to make Pakistan isolated in diplomatic fronts. Suppose those terror elements used their soil to do terror activities in India. In that case, Pakistan has to investigate, and India has to provide evidence. Still, instead, India prefers to Play blame games to target Pakistan's peaceful image where Pakistan was ready to cooperate (Dawn, 2019). India creates great propaganda against Pakistan to hire blue tickers on Twitter to blame Pakistan for this situation.

On the fake news of the surgical strike, India faced a great troll from social media users. Indian propaganda failed as *Dawn* news reported that it is critical to specify that the alleged video of 'observer' was transferred on February 25 on the BBC India site, while the episode occurred on February 26 (Dawn, 2019). For what reason was the assaulted place not displayed in this video? The online media clients in Pakistan are having a good time over this 'careful strike II' guarantee, which is just about as bogus as the first. The fact is that around 15 pine trees were to some extent or completely harmed when the Indian payload dropped. The whole occurrence was a ploy by the BJP government to collect more votes in the forthcoming public races (Fake Surgical Strike, 2019).

The youth of Pakistan mainly uses social media. It leads to some significant factors such as Breaking news stories, mobilizing people for campaigns, and promoting the



regional humanitarian problems. Some activists and Politicians are direct to their audience, which is a plus point, but if someone uses it for destructive purposes against Pakistan, its consequences will be more horrified in terms of anti-campaigns to create mob and create anarchy in Pakistan (Eijaz, A. 2013).

Government Minister for Interior Sheik Rashid Ahmed said that online media was the significant weapon utilized to obliterate harmony in Pakistan. Tending to a presser in the setting of the understanding endorsed between the public authority and Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP), he said the inside service held a gathering on the issue while Pakistan's organizations are likewise investigating the matter. He told countless individuals from India, Korea, and the United States were dynamic on the web-based media to upset the harmony in Pakistan. "Unfamiliar components utilized the web-based media to spread falsehood as 200,000 individuals from India were online on the informal communities (The News, 2021).

Indian Involvement in Baluchistan

Pakistan security agencies trace the movements of Yadav, facilitating from the boundaries of Iran by India. The mission of Yadav was to sabotage the economic projects inside Pakistan, especially CPEC, and to build the narrative of unsafe Pakistan for investment on international forums. Unfortunately, if he got successful in his mission, the Gawadar and Karachi port may get ultimately slowed down; this can cause an extreme recession in Pakistan to demotivate Chinese investors (Kumar, N. 2017).

International establishments on behalf of India want to promote their interests in Baluchistan to destabilize the region, especially Pakistan, as Russia also announced the Greater Baluchistan movement at the time of their invasion in Afghanistan in 1979. Similarly, India established its consulates in numerous cities of Afghanistan to monitor their spy movements in Baluchistan. Moreover, the Indian intelligence agency Raw and Afghan Intelligence Agency make a joint venture to start a campaign to injure the national unity of Pakistan starting from Baluchistan.

India has dispatched a sight and sound site and application of Balochi radio help which broadcast its transmission in Balochi language circulating articulations of the senior authorities of Indian Knowledge office RAW to actuate Balochi people group to face Pakistan. Furthermore, India has additionally dispatched a TV news Channel, "Zee Salam" for a similar reason. Pakistan Army has effectively handled disorder and adequately battled and crushed rebellions in Baluchistan battle psychological oppression in Ex-FATA area. Head of Army Staff General Qamar Javed Bajwa said at the new Munich Security



Conference: “The presence of psychological oppressors of different tints and shadings can’t be precluded. Notwithstanding, today, I can say with satisfaction and conviction that there are no coordinated psychological militant camps on our side of the line. Pakistan Army has pursued an ongoing and bleeding battle against psychological warfare and rough radicalism at a great human and material expense. More than 35,000 Pakistanis have lost their lives, 48,000 are fundamentally injured or handicapped with a monetary expense surpassing US\$250 billion – just a negligible portion of which is shared by our worldwide accomplices,” Pakistan armed force completely comprehends the secret thought processes and goals of slander crusades dispatched by India (Nadeem, M. A., Mustafa, G., & Kakar, A. 2021).

Image Damaging through FATF

Money from unfair means is used to undermine and demolish Pakistan to put them on the grey or black list of FATF. For that purpose, Indians and Israeli agencies use all their sources to complete the task as tax criminal (individual or association) moves unlawful cash through various channels by fudging its source to decriminalize it. The astoundingly complex nature of the worldwide monetary framework “has given freedom to fraudsters to control financial associations. Lawbreakers generally utilize various strategies to change their illicit cash into authentic pay. The unlawful money laundering (ML) mafia is worldwide in its scope. As indicated by an examination drove by the United Nations Office on Medications and Crime (UNODC) while concentrating on the size of ML tracked down, criminal returns added up to 3.6 percent of worldwide Gross Domestic Item (GDP), with 2.7 percent (or USD 1.6 trillion) being washed (Mukhtar, A. 2018).

In the hybrid war, worldwide associations are taken advantage of as strategic pressure to acquire political targets. Pakistan has made many penances to battle illegal intimidation and guarantees harmony and security in the area. It assumed part of the forefront state in the US-drove battle against psychological warfare. Regardless of making penances and experiencing colossal misfortunes in the battle against psychological warfare, the United States has advanced a movement to put its name on a worldwide fear-based oppressor financing watch list (Nadeem, M. A., Mustafa, G., & Kakar, A. 2021).

Those international powers who are not willing to see Pakistan growing want to create unfavorable circumstances for Pakistan inside and outside the country. They want to push Pakistan backward by increasing terror financing, bribery, human trafficking, extremism, and unsafe environment for foreigners. As more cases are highlighted on social media, rivals can be more likely to generate propaganda.



Pakistan Army is the most disciplined and the most dedicated institute and has a professional attitude for the country, but India and the US always blame ISI for their failures by tweeting without evidence. They always blame ISI supports non state actors in the region but don't have evidence to prove their allegations. Pakistan always shows India's aggressive face in Indian occupied Kashmir to divert international attention from the issue. They create propaganda of the strenuous activities of Pakistan in Baluchistan by providing doctored videos. India propagates that they want a good relationship with the Pakistani government. Still, their army doesn't want bilateral relationships on peaceful levels, which means that the Pakistan government and the army have different interests and are not on the same page. Still, India got failed to prove this (Azad, T. M. 2019).

Findings and Conclusion

As we know, war has been evolving from generation to generation. We live in the era of 5GW, which is considered the most dangerous and effective amongst all generations of war in the past. It affects any state's internal and external structure, and fifth generation war can damage a state's reputation and its inhabitants.

Now that social media is a very normal part of most people's daily routine, this war is getting more crucial and effective with time passing by. It is getting way easier to manipulate people and their mindsets by creating fake scenarios and showing fake news with made up reasoning, not only selective forces but everyone is now a part of this warfare playing different roles and promoting different theories without any conflict with another. The information is easily accessible for those exploiting privacy and hacking into the lives of others via the internet and social media and then using it for their gains against the state. This war can get more sensitive and critical in the future as information technology is rapidly taking over the whole world. That is why this 5GW is also called Hybrid War.

Groups also practice this war to be culturally dominant and achieve cultural supremacy. Narratives are being used as a weapon to affect emotionally, which can eventually lead to the destruction of humanity. Imageries are created, and stories are constructed on media to cause chaos and multiple types of uncertainties by which rivals can have a sense of worry and fear in their minds. Some people play their role in promoting peace by highlighting the sacrifices of law enforcement agencies. At the same time, others criticize their actions negatively to harm the morale of the nation and misrepresent the facts by fake news to shatter the confidence of those trying to maintain peace in the state.



In the fifth generation of warfare, citizens will fight instead of professional armies. To further on the concept, it occurs when citizens seek legitimacy with the state, rather than from or for the state, as well as among themselves. This conflict is fueled by the narrative of social movements, which might take the form of mobs or packs. Due to no control and ease of sharing audio, video, and static material allows such groups to build up a massive narrative according to their desires and motives based on the propaganda. Media as a hybrid warfare tool has shown to be effective due to the rise and availability of information technology. Anything can be demonstrated with false proofs and evidence to make the narratives stronger and believable and can be shared by those believers to the maximum extent.

Stories have become very common, and every narrative is shared with the audience as more and more are becoming obsessed with sharing every little detail to their followers. Shorter headlines are also in trend that are not very clear and can be understood in various ways by people with different thinking abilities. To compete with others, journalists share stories without any verification and are exaggerated to gain more and more audience.

One of the most significant blows this war can give to any state is an economical disturbance to an unpredictable extent and can also help gain economic stability if used wisely. Due to this technological transformation, we have seen huge partnerships to help boost the economy and small entrepreneurs finding a way of playing their role in economic growth. This fifth generation war has been really effective to economic growth as the GDP of many states gradually increases, proving that it will end up being a powerful force that will transform the economy and society of the twenty-first century. As the effects of the global financial crisis threaten our administration's and business leaders' extraordinary progress, we must not underestimate the enormous value the internet economy has delivered to both wealthy and poor nations, as well as its potential for revitalizing global growth.

Political instability is held due to the number of reasons which are harming the political structure of the country, such as terrorist activities and the aggressive behavior from the political and non-political groups, sometimes state and government are not supposed to be on the same page that's why the government is unable to establish its influence. Both internal affairs and international affairs also influence the country's politics.

It is necessary to bring all political identities of a country under one umbrella and abide by one system instead of having different privilege statuses. The assassinations of social values and norms are also the key factor in destabilizing the country because masses



blame the government. The government should create a political balance to control the country's political situation. The broken system may cause the demolition of the state system and regime.

The war of this technological era changed itself very dynamically. Social media has become the tool of war where the news breaks and circulates in a region, whether it is accurate or just a rumor. This is the era of fifth generation war where war does not take place in the battlefield; instead, it is applied to destroy rival countries by propaganda. Such as, India run its election campaign on anti-Pakistan phenomena. It strengthened the vote bank of the candidate and, on the other hand, somehow destroyed the image of Pakistan, claiming fake surgical strikes and Pulwama attack, etc.

Presently, they make numerous characters; some with proficient foundations who vouch for one another, consequently making acknowledgment gatherings while in reality, they are bogus personalities. They made gatherings pages where they became the administrator and, being necessary for a digital group, pushed their publicity. They extended themselves as specialists, legal counselors, engineers, and teachers. They also cited their graduated class-related occurrences and nostalgic recollections that were generally phony. They also got some dash of family in their profile to give it more legitimacy.

India planted its people in Baluchistan to create hatred among people and then show it on social media to claim that the people of Baluchistan are not happy with the state. India doesn't want CEPEC to succeed. That's why they want to declare Pakistan as an unsafe region for the international community. That's why they organize attacks on cricket teams of different countries in Pakistan and use fake emails to threaten them.

Moreover, suppose all the rivals want to put Pakistan on a black list of FATF by proving that Pakistan promotes terror financing, money laundering, bribery, and human trafficking. In that case, this act will destroy Pakistan on International forums because people of different countries will not invest in Pakistan, which will decline the economy. They want to propagate that Pakistan has illicit cash flows which are directly used for terror activities in the world. This fact may isolate Pakistan on diplomatic fronts.

Pakistan's intelligence agency (ISI) is responsible for Pakistan's law and order situation. India wants to give the narrative that ISI has involvement in India's internal affairs. Moreover, the Pakistani government and Army are not on the same page, and the people of Baluchistan don't want to be with Pakistan. But, the ISI failed the propaganda of



RAW by arresting an Indian spy Kulbhushan Jadhav and by breaking his propaganda network that was propagating false news.

The government should create regulations to monitor social media activities because everyone is free to post whatever they want, but those things facilitate Pakistan's rivals. The government should identify the black sheep which creates false agenda against Pakistan.



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