COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM IN BALOCHISTAN: A CASE OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION

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Abstract
Pakistan is a country that is experiencing violence in different shapes and forms such as ethnic conflicts in Balochistan and Karachi. The inactions of stakeholders have led to the creation of many religious and ethnic groups, hence increasing violent extremism in the country. As a result, different plans such as National Action Plan (NAP) to control violence in the country has not been sustainable. One the main area of failure is the online glorification of extremism and fake news management. With the help of social media and strategic communication insurgents in Balochistan have been able to recruit supporters. This paper will present the case of Balochistan for countering violent extremism with the help of strategic communication by presenting a framework. This paper suggests how stakeholders can be manged for effective communication and what are the impactions of strategic communication for countering sub nationalist violence in Balochistan.
Key Words. Balochistan, Violent Extremism, Fake News, social media, Strategic Communication, Discourse Analysis.

INTRODUCTION

According to Khan (2019) Pakistan is experiencing a wave of terrorism for more than two decades that has a huge cost in economic (loss of $130 billion) and human (more than 70,000 people killed) terms. Pakistan is a country that is experiencing violence in different shapes and forms may it be suicide attacks on public places, bombing on target places, or ethnic conflicts in Balochistan and Karachi. The inactions of stakeholders have led to the creation of many religious and ethnic groups, hence increasing violent extremism in the country (Said, Gul and Akbar, 2021). Javaid (2022) and Ahmed (2016) while explaining Pakistan's attempt to device an inclusive CVE strategy argue that deradicalization and counter-radicalization has always been two aspects of Pakistan's CVE programs. However, despite such programs the question remains, whether military operations alone can be effective in eliminating the peril of radicalism, which seems to be persistent despite multiple military operations.

Said, Gul & Akbar (2021) claim that the Top-Down approach for tackling extremism has not been fruitful in Pakistan. As a result, different plans such as National Action Plan (NAP) to control violence in the country has not been sustainable. They further claim that the stakeholders that really matter, such as, the middle and lower-level bureaucrats whose opinions must be listened to are missing from all strategies implemented so far. The National Action Plan (NAP) 20 action points have achieved varying levels of success (Zahid, 2016). Such as the Karachi operation, FATA region merger in Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa and substantial actions have been taken to restraint terror financing (Wahab, 2021). However, on the other hand there is evidence inferring that the plan was not that successful in countering violent extremism (Wahab, 2021). One the main area of failure is the online glorification of extremism and fake news management (Wahab, 2021). With the help of

social media and strategic communication nationalist insurgents in Balochistan have been able to recruit many supporters. Lately, the female suicide bomber Shari Baloch is a perfect example of their penetration in virtual space. Apart from this hate speeches are circulated through social media without any effective check from the authorities (Wahab, 2021).

Keeping in view the importance of social media and its implications on life of people NACTA has launched applications such as Chaukas and Tatheer (Khan, 2019). Through them suspicious activities on social media can be informed to authorities by public. However, there is more to do on sphere of social media and communication. Khan and Saeed (2018) further explain how social media is being used by extremists to increase militancy by sharing hate material directly to public. It is pertinent to mention that tackling terrorism promotion, hate literature, and terrorist glorification is on the agenda of NAP, however, due to lack of actions to limit social media activates of extremist group they have not be successful (Bashir Siraj, Hafsa Karaim, Dr. Kinsza Farqoor, Zafarullah and Bi Bi Sultana,2021; Khan et al., 2022). These proscribed outfits can still use Twitter, Facebook, and many other social media accounts in addition to their blogs and websites to reach general public and their followers with their messages (Khan & Saeed 2018). The success achieved through NAP is laudable, but the war on terror is now entered the realm of hybrid warfare putting strategic communication and fake news management on priority.

This paper will present the case of Balochistan for countering violent extremism with the help of strategic communication. It will first discuss the vitally of strategic communication followed by an analysis of FATA's strategy. Then the media discourse of Pakistan is discussed to create a context for further discussion. Before presenting the case of Balochistan an environmental analysis is offered to elaborate further how strategic communication can operate in Balochistan. This paper suggests how stakeholders can be manged for effective communication and what are the impactions of strategic communication for countering sub nationalist violence.

METHODOLOGY

This paper uses a mix of narrative review and critical discourse analysis. These qualitative analysis focuses on summarizing and synthesizing different areas of literature to identify pertinent issues for discussion and analysis (Wall, Stahl and Salam, 2015). In this paper while using narrative review the researchers have examined the theory of communication as a whole and particular theories such strategic communication and fake news management (Wall, Stahl and Salam, 2015). The main focus was to identify several perspectives of theories, present conceptualizations of important constructs and develop major themes for discussion (Gee, 2014). Critical discourse analysis was particularly used for PEST analysis of Balochistan. Different research publications and reports were viewed as communicative process taking place in Balochistan (Gee, 2014). Then through these documents the context of Balochistan was analysed to understand the structures and processes taking place in Balochistan (Jorgensen and Philips, 2002).

VITALITY OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION FOR COUNTERING VIOLENT EXTREMISM.

Strategic communication for this paper is conceptualized as a tool that feeds meaning to different issues through narratives that are constructed, negotiated, or renovated in a continuous loop. Depending on the context and situation the stakeholders can be government organizations, political movement, activist groups, non-profit organisations, and any actors that can be part of the contemporary society. This paper argues that there is a fundamental principle to communication that reality is personality dependant and any person who takes up violence finds it justified in their reality. As Lindlof argues, "if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences,". This perspective on communication considers that "communication is the chief means by which the social world is created, understood, and reproduced across time and space" (Lindlof, 2008, p. 947). While explaining it further Burleson and Bodie (2008, p. 953) highlight, "constructivism assumes that humans actively interpret the world, construct meaningful understandings of it, and act in the world on the basis of their interpretations." As Donsbach and Donsbach (2008) explain this process is not linear in nature but an interactive process, that can provide explanation of what happens

around us during any societal interaction. When communication is used for a planned outcome, it is called strategic communication.

Strategic communication popularity as a science started in the second decade of this century (Van Ruler, 2018). Holtzhausen and Zerfass (2014) claim that initially the concept was mainly used for the military and national governments communications programs. They further argue that with the evolution of the concept it is now considered as an umbrella concept that can be employed in range of activities may it be health communication or perception management. According to them this concept is not a substitution to any pervious concept of communication sciences. This is a concept that can offer complementary insights to pave way for interdisciplinary research. Hallahan et al (2007) assert that it is important to study this field because today's problems are different than the traditional communication activities and changes in technology is making it hard to distinguish among many kinds of communication. This concept is also important because in today's dynamic world every organization prefer to communication directly with their stakeholders (Van Ruler, 2018).

The focus of strategic communication for countering violent extremism must not only be on the process but also on the action or practice of extremist and the factors that can prevent or enable them to execute a plan. However, this conception was missing the public sphere, then Holtzhausen and Zerfass (2014) added it to the definition. Abdulhamid *et al* (2021) claim that the conception of public sphere has changed after the popularity of social media. The penetration of Facebook, YouTube, Twitter, and other social media platform has marginalized the role of major public media. Holtzhausen and Zerfass (2014) explain that the contemporary public sphere is more participative compared to 20th century. Previously, it was the old media that would represent the viewpoints of the society however, now new media allows the public to directly take part in any public debate without any hurdlers. In the past the public sphere belonged to a very selected class the well-connected and aristocratic people (Holtzhausen & Zerfass 2014). With the evolution of social media, the sphere is now more open to a variety of classes (Shahzad & Siraj 2020). Making it easy for the radicals to forward their agenda to public.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION IN CASE OF FATA

Let's analyse the communication strategy for FATA Secretariat as case in point for state's strategy for countering violent extremist. The document points towards a relationship that is based on knowledge and information sharing through participatory approach. The strategy claims to be proactive in nature where awareness about values about Islam and Pashtun culture would be increased to address the issue of violence and extremism. The FATA strategy is more about image building than co creating meaning about the pertinent issues of the Pushtun society. It is more about imposing a predefined meanings by 'outsiders' than understanding the means from the perspective of 'insiders. The state assumed that trust can be built through a pro-development strategy without harnessing the social structure through debate and discourse. The FATA Secretariat is branded as an image builder and problem solver without understanding the problems of people. This implies that conception of strategic communication in Pakistan is contrary to the understanding of Holtzhausen and Zerfass (2014) and Quy and Ha (2018) and needs a reconsideration. Before reassessing the discourse of communication for countering violent extremism, we must understand the discourse of media in Pakistan.

DISCOURSE OF MEDIA IN PAKISTAN

Kugelman (2012) while discussing the role of social media in Pakistan identifies ways in which it acts as a communication tool. It gives more attention to news overlooked by conventional media; it is a main tool to circulate information about social campaigns and protests. Social media helps in promoting humanitarian efforts serve as promoters for social causes and inspire communication between voters and their leaders. (Dr. Kinza Farooq, Dr. Siraj Bashi, Dr. Huma Zafar, Dr. RukhsandaZarar, Dr. Waseem Sadiq,2021) while discussing the political economy of media in Pakistan claims that it is a tool for advancing the agenda of both civilian government and the

military and in special cases pro-democracy movements. In the words of Raza Rumi, "there were more than 50 years of unstoppable, concerted, well-funded propaganda by the state and the state construction of a [national] identity that is completely fictitious." (Maqbool, 2021, p.1). If we analysis the content of news and current affairs programs the most discussed topic is 'Politics' (72 percent), followed by 'Health' (4 percent), 'Terrorism' (3 percent), 'Economy' (2 percent), 'Education (2 percent)' and 'Sports' (2 percent). In such shows the majority of participants are politicians whereas the subject specialist are rarely 73 percent political figures, 22 percent analysts and only 5 percent subject experts (Khan et al., 2022; Maqbool, 2021).

Students actively use new media for political information such as sharing opinions and discussing issues around politics with fellow community members (Ahmad et al., 2019). In Pakistan, Facebook is the most used network among youth for political information compared with other social networks such as Twitter (Ahmad et al., 2019). According to Zulqarnain (2017) majority of social media users in Pakistan are in the age group of 21-25 years. He further reports that 37.8% of youth uses social media to seek information and 34.9% uses the traditional media. The result shows that 31.4% of users of social or traditional media seek information about political and social affairs and 27.33% users seek entertainment news followed by 23.2% seeking information related to relief activities. The study by Toor and Ahmed (2021) on the impact of social media in Pakistan suggest that for effective communication social media is vital.

The analysis of media in Pakistan implies that the people in Pakistan are more inclined to political issues, while overlooking pertinent issues like terrorism and violent extremism. Despite the fact that the country is crippled by poverty, terrorism and illiteracy the issues are not on the agenda of information providers or seekers. Because of wrong agenda setting a trust deficit is emerging between the people and state. Building on the pervious discussion now this paper will present the case for strategic communication in Balochistan to counter violent extremist with focus on sub nationalist violence.

ENVIRONMENTAL ANALYSIS OF BALOCHISTAN

Before presenting the case for strategic communication for Balochistan to counter violent extremist it is better to create an understanding about the external environment in which the government have to operate. For this purpose, PEST analysis will be employed to get a better sense of the context. The author acknowledges the fact that for a prudent analysis primary research would have been a better but keeping in view the limitations of time and resources the idea was dropped. This analysis is based on the secondary data and is generalised in form. The data used is mostly from the reports and data sets of government and UNDP.

POLITICAL ENVIRONMENT

The political environment in Balochistan is mostly dominated by the nationalist and religious parties. The South is dominated by nationalist, whereas the north is dominated by religious parties with a swinging mandate to the nationalists. A single party can never form a government in the province. The system of governance in Balochistan is hybrid where some districts are run by civil-cum-tribal authority while others are managed by military-cum-tribal authority. The interest of mainstream political parties has always been missing in Balochistan due to its minimal role in electoral process.

ECONOMIC ENVIRONMENT

The economic outlook of Balochistan is also not that promising, it has the highest poverty rate in Pakistan. Children are suffering from malnutrition and hunger is widespread among the adult as well. The contribution towards the GDP of Pakistan is declining with each pass decade. However, the province has a good prospect in trading and mining sectors.

SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

Balochistan is a place where nuisance value has more currency because of which the society is clinging with elite capture and tribalism. In the whole society there is omnipresent deprivation and mistrust that has resulted in low social capital. The youth of province feel alienated from rest of Pakistan as they cannot comprehend a good future for themselves owing to the poor health and education indicators. Their apprehensions are further aggravated by the increasing incidents of insurgency and missing persons.

Technological Environment

On the technological front the province is lacking like the other aspects. It has the lowest household internet rate in Pakistan. The mobile phone ownership in Balochistan is the lowest. Almost 60% area of the province is without internet coverage and the rest of area that has internet coverage, experiences the lowest speed. The southern part of Balochistan has no mobile internet. The most alarming fact is that despite being highly suitable for IT infrastructure the province is facing all these problems.

The PEST analysis of Balochistan clearly indicates that the external environment of the province is alarming and in such context the people tend to be more sceptical about any intervention that the

government may initiate. In such situation strategic communication becomes vital for the authorities to counter any kind of violence. So, the question is not about why but how strategic communicators can operate in Balochistan.

IMPLICATION OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION IN BALOCHISTAN.

As Marynissen and Lauder (2020) explain that one of the main aims of strategic communication should be helping stakeholders to gain access to public debates through thoughtful, and good arguments that may advance their organization's objectives. They further argue that implementor need to understand that strategic communication rejects the notion that communication can be regulated and controlled hence making all stakeholders part of process is fundamental. Currently, if we examine the context of Balochistan we can hardly witness any thoughtful public debates with the stakeholders about countering violent extremist that may help the government. Beside that the state is still holding to the notion that communication can be regulated and controlled. Holtzhausen and Zerfass (2014) further builds the case for Balochistan that we must understand that shared meanings in the discourse are constructed with the help of opposing arguments hence controlling discourses or narratives is meaningless.

This implies that it is more important for the government to act as the point of departure for meaning creation than being the most effective channel for information sharing. Hence, strategic communication role is more than just transmitting the information, it has to focus on action and meanings. Building on the argument of Nurfalah (2021) that strategic communicators should not view people of Balochistan just as receivers of message and media as channels of communication. The authorities must understand how meaning is co-created when stakeholders interact with them. They need to infer how communication can be interpreted and adjusted according to the context and situation. Quy and Ha (2018) with a word of caution for the government of Balochistan that a modern-day government cannot enforce their will on people or force them to accept their policies without appropriately conveying the intent. If people are not engaged, they would develop a feeling that their freedom of choice have been compromised. This will create a psychological reactance, that could take the forms of compliance, reluctance, complaints, violence and extremism among the people of Balochistan. Considering these matters, it is important for Balochistan to opt for modern day strategic communication. However, engaging the stakeholder is not as simple as it may sound, so, this paper deliberates the issues related to stakeholder management before proposing a framework for countering violent extremism.

STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT FOR STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION IN BALOCHISTAN.

Holtzhausen and Zerfass (2014) explain that letting the communication process control free to co-create meaning can be overwhelming for the implementors. They assert that the best way to overcome this messiness is through participation of stakeholders in the process. As explained by UNECE (2021) the management need to ensure participation of both external and internal stakeholders. As the external stakeholders will add reality to the process whereas, the internal stakeholders will add value to the process. Engaging stakeholders can create further problems and the authorities need to be thoughtful about them. Donsbach and Donsbach (2008) highlight that the constant variables for strategic communication are audiences and stakeholders, the desire for behavioural outcomes, media channels, agency, and reputation management. The stakeholders depend on the nature of situation, for a political intervention they can be voters or constituents. Whereas, for countering violent extremism they can be victims' families, educational institutions (both formal and informal), communities and so forth (Halpern, 2015). Marynissen and Lauder (2020) while further explaining the issue explains that each stakeholder has a unique set of features that can influence the ability of the communicator to reach their goal. It can be problematic for the implementors to plan on a pre-determined set of features about the stakeholders.

The new media platforms can provide opportunity to strategic communicators to follow a holistic approach to communicate both collaboratively and persuasively (Michaelsen,2011) Sakaguchi-Tang (2012) explains that while using a stakeholder centred approach the communicator can use a wide range of communication techniques but need to ensure there is consistency in the message. There

are often divergent expectations for a strategic communicator that can create unrealistic expectation for an intervention (Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2014). The best way to overcome this problem is to have clarity about the roles and responsibilities of the communicators. There must be some realistic and measurable outcomes against which the performance can be gauged.

Marynissen and Lauder (2020) argue that in a world where multiple stakeholders are highly interconnected and where vast amounts of informal information appear as a reaction to a situation that is too complex to understand. It is an illusion that one can manage the communication with a guaranteed positive result in safeguarding one's own reputation. The idea of "manage" suggests a high degree of control that is often an illusion (Lauder & Marynissen, 2018); nudging may be all that is possible (Marynissen & Lauder, 2020). However, the intention may be of managing or nudging for both the implementor has to interact with their stakeholder. This raises another issue how to interact with any stakeholder in the best possible way in Balochistan.

For this Sakaguchi-Tang (2012) suggests that governments can take help from stakeholder theory to decide about attention and stakes of various stakeholders. While applying this theory institutions may fail in identifying critical or important stakeholders. To overcome this shortcoming, Sakaguchi-Tang (2012) recommends that stakeholders should be qualified on the following three traits: (a) legitimacy (either their actions are proper, appropriate, or desirable (b) urgency (if their rights are pressing, time - sensitive, and critical for the issues) (c) power (ability to impose their will). Any group that holds all three traits are considered as "definitive stakeholders". However, this doesn't imply that absence of any critical characteristics makes a stakeholder less important. Because any stakeholder can still make it hard for the implementors to communicate effectively. As the stakeholders also assess the degree of their stakes compare to each other to ascertain if they can compete or complement other stakeholders and may form nexus accordingly (Sakaguchi-Tang, 2012). The best example of this nexus is Baloch Raji Aajoi Sangar (BRAS) that joins the Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), Baloch Liberation Front (BLF) and Baloch Republic Army (BRA) under one banner. Previously these organizations were competing but now they complement each other. Apart from stakeholders there can be other implications that can hinder the process of communication in Balochistan.

IMPLICATIONS OF STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION FOR COUNTERING SUB NATIONALIST VIOLENCE IN BALOCHISTAN

BRAS or any other such organization having a dense network is another issue for the implementor in Balochistan. Such groups hold many shared values, norms, established behavioural restraints with the people, about solving Baloch issue that has created a dense network, making it challenging for the government to engage the public. As Fireman et. al. (1979, p. 21) argue, stakeholders may become part of interventions because they become "linked together in a number of ways that generate a sense of common identity, shared fate, and general commitment to defend the group". In situation of Balochistan the communicators should influence the stakeholders by generating a feeling of solidarity with the public not isolating them through their inactions.

To overcome the influence of any dense network like BRAS or any other sub nationalist outfit UNECE (2021) arrests that the organizations need to carefully monitor their external and internal environments before engaging their stakeholders. However, in case of Balochistan we hardly witness any assessment of environments, the government mainly depend on opinion rather than on analysis. Stakeholder mapping can provide the visualization with whom to maintain or develop a relationship to help achieve goals for the government (UNECE, 2021). As Sakaguchi-Tang (2012) asserts that a well-drawn map of stakeholders can ease and compresses the process of planning for the interventions such as countering violent extremism, as it will guide about proper actions that can help in maintaining a better relationship and removes the risk of unfitting actions or communications. Currently the government of Balochistan is mainly focusing on cautious strategies (Coombs, 2007) where governments justify themselves to the public and other stakeholders, with the focus of neutralizing negative perceptions attached to the issue (Marynissen & Lauder, 2020). However, scholars argue that merely refurbishing the reputation of the government will not suffice

(Holtzhausen & Zerfass, 2014). As Van Ruler (2018) suggests government must take its learning from situation more and less from normative theory. In modern times the situation assessment or communication can be more challenging because of social media and we must understand its impact on countering extremism. This paper will only concentrate on one aspect of social media that is fake news as such news tend to create more violence.

THE INFLUENCE OF FAKE NEWS ON COUNTERING VIOLENCE EXTREMISM

Any intervention has become more complicated with the invent of internet and social media platforms. In modern times people prefer using social media for communication as it is convenient, easy to find information and ideological support (Abdulhamid et al., 2021). Twitter and other social media platforms are used to mobilise support for any sort of activities ranging from social to political events. People can post content online through their smart phone. Individuals while sharing news can easily get misdirected as they don't reconsider before sharing any misleading story (Mughaid et al., 2022). Jain et. al. (2019) claims that such causal attitude towards (fake) news sharing is having negative impact on the society, as such vague news or rumours are creating resentment and apprehension among specific group of marginalized people and turning them towards violence. According to Narwal (2018) fake news can have a range of influences on people's life. Research have highlight that in last ten years majority of violent acts are provoked by such news circulated through social media (Narwal, 2018). Apart from this such news can turn people more emotional and extremely bias towards issues (Toor & Ahmed, 2021). The dissemination of fake news is a big concern for governments globally.

According to Jain et. al. (2019) there are three ways to share fake news on social media: trolls, cyborg users and social bots. Trolls are real humans who "aim to disrupt online communities" to provoke users to respond emotionally towards an issue. On the other hand, cyborg users use a combination of human input and automated activities. Initially the internet user will build an account and then with the of specialized programs will execute social media activities. Finally, social bots are social media account that are being operated by a computer algorithm, such accounts are able to routinely produce content on particular assigned issues.

Mughaid et. al. (2022) claims that due to fake news, it is getting difficult for people to get reliable information. The concerning fact is that fake news tends to propagate faster compare to truth. Haigh and Haigh (2019) explain that fake news can be used for different incentives: a form of online dishonesty; as a weapon of war; a profitable business; a kind of state propaganda; a plot to delegitimate alternative media; an extreme form of media bias; as a flaw in human nature and finally as a product of a post-truth society. As soon as a person receives a fake news, they take no time in reviewing the quality of information as it matches their set of beliefs and share it further (Haigh & Haigh, 2019). According to Narwal (2018) when people see some news repeatedly on their screen the chances of believing it gets higher irrespective of the fact that how illogical or ridiculous the news may be.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION FRAMEWORK FOR COUNTERING VIOLENCE EXTREMISM IN BALOCHISTAN

Building on the preceding discussion the following section will present a strategic communication framework for countering violence extremism in Balochistan.

Context Analysis	Stakeholder Management	Strategic Communication Deimensions	Possible Outcomes
•Envoirnment •Political •Economic •Social •Technological •Issue •Implementers/Stakeholder Perceptions •Need for Consensus •Need for Efficiency •Readiness/Willingness to Enagae •Implementor/Stakeholder History	•Legitimacy •Urgency •Power •Shared Norms/Values •Behavioural Restrains •Possible Alliances •Possible Rivalries •Relationship Network	•Sensemaking •Storytelling •Meaning Creation •Perception Managemt •Narrative Building •Managing Fake News •Issues Focused •Dissemination Focused •Consistent Messages	•Better Relationships •Value Creation •Colloboration on Issue •Consensus on Issue

CONTEXT ANALYSIS

The modern-day strategic communication government of Balochistan must take its learning from situation more and less from normative theory. To overcome any influence of sub nationalist groups, they need to carefully monitor their external and internal environments before engaging the public in Balochistan. The government must understand the environment and possible reasons for supporting the sub nationalist before planning any intervention. For environment analysis different tools such as PEST and SWOT analysis can be used depending on the issues and goals of the organization. Apart from this the government need to analyse the issues from the perspective of both, the public and the sub nationalist groups. The analysis of issues must find out either the issues need consensus building or not, if the people are ready to engage and how is the history between the stakeholder and implementor. Based on these findings then we need to plan how to manage the stakeholders.

STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT

For stakeholder management we need to rank them on the following three principles:

1. How much legitimate are their demands and actions either they are proper, appropriate and in line with the constitution.
2. Either their demands are urgent in nature or not, are these demands critical for the issues under discussion or not.
3. Finally, the planners need to assess their power if they have the ability to impose their will and either the power is coercive or non-coercive in nature.
   After ranking the stakeholders on these lines then we need to examine how much shared norms and values they hold and if their behavioural constrains are matched with the sub nationalist groups or not. Then based on this assessment the government can be reckoned if the stakeholders have tendency of getting into violent activities or not. On the other hand, the government need to assess if sub nationalist groups are already in an alliance, the planner needs to assess either their relationship network is dense or dilute. Based on these findings then the government can design the dimensions of strategic communication to counter violent extremism.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION DIMENSIONS

As discussed in the beginning strategic communication is conceptualized as a tool that feeds meaning to different issues. For communication this paper follows the fundamental principle that reality is personality dependant. The aim of strategic communication is to act as the point of departure for meaning creation than being the most effective channel for information sharing. Hence, strategic communication role is more than just transmitting the information, it has to focus on action and meanings. Strategic communicators should not view people of Balochistan just as

receivers of message and media as channels of communication. They must understand how meanings are co-created when stakeholders interact with them. Each stakeholder has a unique set of features that can influence the ability of government to reach their goal. It can be problematic for the implementors to plan on a pre-determined set of features.

It depends on the issues if the message should be about sensemaking or just story telling. For example, if there is a crisis situation such as killings or bombing then story telling can make the things worse, hence in such situation sensemaking will be more helpful. If the issues involve any ideological notion, then it is best to manage the perceptions of stakeholders through narrative building. Depending on the context analysis and stakeholder mapping the government can decide if the focus should be more on dissemination or issue management. The fundamental rule for any design of communication is that there should a consistency in the messages irrespective of the fact what tools are engaged.

No matter how well planned the communication plan maybe it can always be hindered by fake news and managing fake news should be the core of any strategic communication framework. Fake news is undermining the national security of many countries globally and governments are trying to find innovative ways to counter it. One of the major tools is introduction of new regulation. Such laws are proposed to give more power to hold individuals and technology companies liable for dissemination of fake news. In some countries laws are focusing to counter bots and cyborg. Then there are countries that prefer to improve on existing legislations.

Apart from regulation there are a set of pre-emptive measures that can help in managing such news. Institutions are focusing on fact-checking initiatives and crisis communications plan. The governments are designing issue specific communication plans for events such as elections or a terrorist attack. Organizations are looking to collaborate with potential partners or stakeholder to facilitates exchange of skills and knowledge. Such partnerships can help in identifying intersecting concerns between different issues and contexts and allow transmission of a dependable knowledge. Such collaborative engagements can be in form of non-governmental collaborative efforts; regional engagements; and government-industry partnerships.

Fake news can also be managed by policing online platforms; fact checking & rebuttal; censorship or regulation of media; counterpropaganda campaigns; political reform and media literacy training. We cannot stop fake news however they can be manged through a set of steps. Government must strengthen online accountability by implementing real name registration for social media accounts. We need to educate the users to ponder before sharing any news and know the main sources that are dedicated to fake news creation.

Finally in long-term measures Balochistan need to strengthen its social resilience for fighting extremism. This can happen through, inculcation of social norms on responsible information sharing, media literacy, and identifying the obligations of technology companies. The long-term media literacy needs to focus on the following lines. The government must introduce media literacy classes in schools and college. The students and teachers at these institutions should be taught responsible information sharing practices.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on this communication framework this paper concludes that the main of any communication in Balochistan must be based on building better relationships with all the stakeholders. The main aim of government must about value creation for their actions rather than raising fears through their inactions. The decision makers have to seek collaboration among all the stakeholders on pertinent issues such as countering extremism and fake news management. Without building consensus any action by the government will be a zero-sum equation.

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