

Master's Thesis

**Political propaganda on Twitter: How the Government of India responded to the
Pulwama suicide attack**

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Finally, I wish that Pakistan and India realize that conflict is never good for anyone, and that it is only possible to improve the lives of millions of people in the subcontinent through mutual respect and cooperation.

I wish for all the health, happiness, and prosperity in the world.

Declaration of Autonomy

I, Abu Bakar Ahmad—enrolled in the MA Media and Communication Science degree program at the Technische Universität Ilmenau—hereby affirm that this master’s thesis is my original work. No part/parts of this research has/have had been copied from any external source(s).

The Twitter data retrieved for the purpose of analysis has been extracted from accounts (@narendramod; @PMOIndia; @SushmaSwaraj; @MEAIndia; @nsitharaman; @adgpi) whose data/tweets were available publicly.



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Abstract

This study focuses on the political propaganda being done over Twitter by the public diplomacy stakeholder in context with The Pulwama suicide attack. The use of Twitter is inevitable for the institutes and political actors to state their political and institutional policy agenda regarding state affairs. Digital reflexive control was used as a theoretical framework to examine the event that triggered political propaganda in the pre-election era. The 4E funnel, an informational model of digital reflexive control, guided through to observe four key aspects, i.e., event, election, political propaganda, and public diplomacy, that strategize the implementation scheme of this model. Twitter accounts of public diplomacy stakeholders (Head state of government, ministry of foreign affairs, and military establishment) were selected to be analyzed. A quantitative content analysis based on the codebook containing formal categories, selected political discussion propaganda, public diplomacy, and election routine deductive categories designed to extract and analyze information retrieved from February 14th, 2019, the day of the Pulwama suicide attack until the election result announcement day May 23rd, 2019 was conducted. The political actors and institutional accounts used the 4E (Entice, Engage, Elevate and Exploit) funnel to disseminate their political and foreign policy agenda to get audience support both at the domestic and international front during the pre-election period and received significant engagement in context with the Pulwama event. The political discussion changed its course after the Pulwama suicide attack, which instigated cross-border military offense through foreign policy actors and political actors to materialize objectives. This endeavor adds to the understanding and implementation of reflexive control theory in the digital sphere to evaluate the implications in future cognitive aspects that can be applied to explore this topic from a different perspective.

Keywords: Political Propaganda; Public diplomacy; Pre-election propaganda; Twitter; Reflexive Control Theory; @narendramod; @PMOIndia; @SushmaSwaraj; @MEAIndia; @nsitharaman; @adgpi

Abstrakt

Diese Studie konzentriert sich auf die politische Propaganda, die von den Akteuren der öffentlichen Diplomatie im Zusammenhang mit dem Selbstmordattentat von Pulwama über Twitter betrieben wird. Die Nutzung von Twitter ist für die Institute und politischen Akteure unvermeidlich, um ihre politische und institutionelle Agenda in Bezug auf staatliche Angelegenheiten darzulegen. Digitale reflexive Kontrolle wurde als theoretischer Rahmen verwendet, um das Ereignis zu untersuchen, das politische Propaganda in der Zeit vor den Wahlen auslöste. Der 4E-Trichter, ein Informationsmodell der digitalen reflexiven Kontrolle, führte durch die Beobachtung von vier Schlüsselaspekten, d. h. Ereignis, Wahl, politische Propaganda und öffentliche Diplomatie, die das Umsetzungsschema dieses Modells strategisieren. Für die Analyse wurden Twitter-Konten von Akteuren der öffentlichen Diplomatie (Regierungschef, Außenministerium und militärische Einrichtungen) ausgewählt. Es wurde eine quantitative Inhaltsanalyse auf der Grundlage des Codebuchs durchgeführt, das formale Kategorien, ausgewählte politische Diskussionspropaganda, öffentliche Diplomatie und Wahlroutine als deduktive Kategorien enthält, um Informationen zu extrahieren und zu analysieren, die vom 14. Februar 2019, dem Tag des Selbstmordanschlags in Pulwama, bis zum Tag der Bekanntgabe des Wahlergebnisses am 23. Mai 2019 abgerufen wurden. Die politischen Akteure und institutionellen Konten nutzten den 4E-Trichter (Entice, Engage, Elevate und Exploit), um ihre politische und außenpolitische Agenda zu verbreiten, um die Unterstützung des Publikums sowohl im Inland als auch auf internationaler Ebene während der Vorwahlzeit zu erhalten, und erhielten im Zusammenhang mit dem Pulwama-Ereignis ein erhebliches Engagement. Die politische Diskussion änderte ihren Kurs nach dem Selbstmordattentat von Pulwama, das eine grenzüberschreitende militärische Offensive durch außenpolitische und politische Akteure auslöste, um Ziele zu erreichen. Dieses Projekt trägt zum Verständnis und zur Umsetzung der Theorie der reflexiven Kontrolle in der digitalen Sphäre bei, um die Auswirkungen auf künftige kognitive Aspekte zu bewerten, die zur Erforschung dieses Themas aus einer anderen Perspektive angewendet werden können.

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1. Introduction

The introduction chapter provides insight into the research endeavour by considering the critical aspects of the topic under consideration. The following chapter discusses the historical perspective of the countries involved in research, the study background, research objectives, the relevance of the study, signification of research, and how it will contribute to the contemporary research while filling the gap and finally, the research breakdown related to the proceedings of this research.

1.1 Indo-Pak Relations: A historical perspective

India and Pakistan are traditional rivals as their relationship remains hostile and complex due to numerous historical and political events. After the independence of both countries in 1947, they were involved in fierce conflicts (Qadir, 2002). According to Dwivedi (2008), Pakistan has been considering India a security concern during the last three decades because India's foreign policy has dominated the region. It has been stated in a similar study that both nuclear powers have fought three wars, i.e., in 1965, 1971, and 1999. Pakistan considers the superiority of India in terms of resources, economic patterns, educational and technological development, human resources, industrialization, defense industry, weapon, and size (Dwivedi, 2008, p. 2).

Menon (2009) repeated the Sharm al-Sheik statement regarding both countries. According to which, "dog attempts to rework India-Pakistan relations" (p. 2). It has been claimed that unfriendly and complex relationships between these two countries have been caused by their mutual decisions and choices rather than historical events. Discussing the various issues responsible for unfriendly relationships between these two countries, Sugunakararaju and Akhtar (2015) found some major issues, including cross-border terrorism over the Line of Control (LOC), the Indus Basin Treaty, and most importantly, the Kashmir issue. In the current era, both countries are attempting to involve foreign publics and public diplomacy by using digital tools to gain and win the minds and hearts of the intended people (Ruff, 2017). On social media, both countries blame each other for the prevailing terrorism and tension in the region. Linking with the Kashmir case, Ittefaq (2017) explained that both countries attempt to gain international media attention (especially Western media) through brutality and rivalry in Kashmir. For instance, Pakistan argued that India is responsible for

brutality in Kashmir, while India claimed that Pakistan is sponsoring terrorism in Kashmir and India.

Consequently, both nations are emphasizing their strong public diplomacy. Here, it must be noted that three wars between the countries are spreading hatred and tension between them, but multiple issues ground regional tension. However, the countries are consistently presenting their stance before the superpowers in the world in the forms of state-sponsored terrorism and cross-border terrorism (Chaudhary, 2018).

1.2 Study background

Since their inception of, India and Pakistan have found themselves in a continuous bipolar structure. The integration of the Cold War bipolar international system with an anti-imperial stance has led to the popular non-alignment movement of the political history of both nations. India and China had a clash due to territorial disputes since 1962, while in 1947, India was involved in a regional war with Pakistan for the Kashmir region. In both clashes, there was a struggle for power in the post-independence era. Consequently, this has become a part of the foreign policy of India (ÇELİK, 2020). As both countries are rival nations in the global nuclear south with a history of conflicts, including the Indo-Pakistan war of 1947-1948, the Chawinda war in 1965, later in 1971 Indo-Pak war, which led to the separation of east and west Pakistan, and in July 1999 both fought Kargil war (Padder, 2012). Currently, land-based conflicts have taken a turn into a digital world. Both countries shifted their fight to social media sites because of their instantaneous and significant response. According to *The Economic Times*, “80% of Indians now get their news from social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook”. Paradigm shifts in news consumption are due to easy access of the public to social media and smartphones (Çelik, 2019). Governments and their officials aim to engage social media users through strategic communication to support and push their strategic objectives.

On 14th February 2019 Pulwama incident took place before the Indian parliamentary election April 2019. About 40 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) personnel were killed in a suicide attack in the district of Pulwama, near Awantipora, Indian occupied Jammu and Kashmir (BBC, 2019). Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) immediately blamed Pakistan for the suicide attack by tweeting at 05:52 p.m. The attack happened at 03:15 p.m.

IST, and it took the foreign office of India to put the responsibility on Pakistan in just less than three hours.

Figure 1

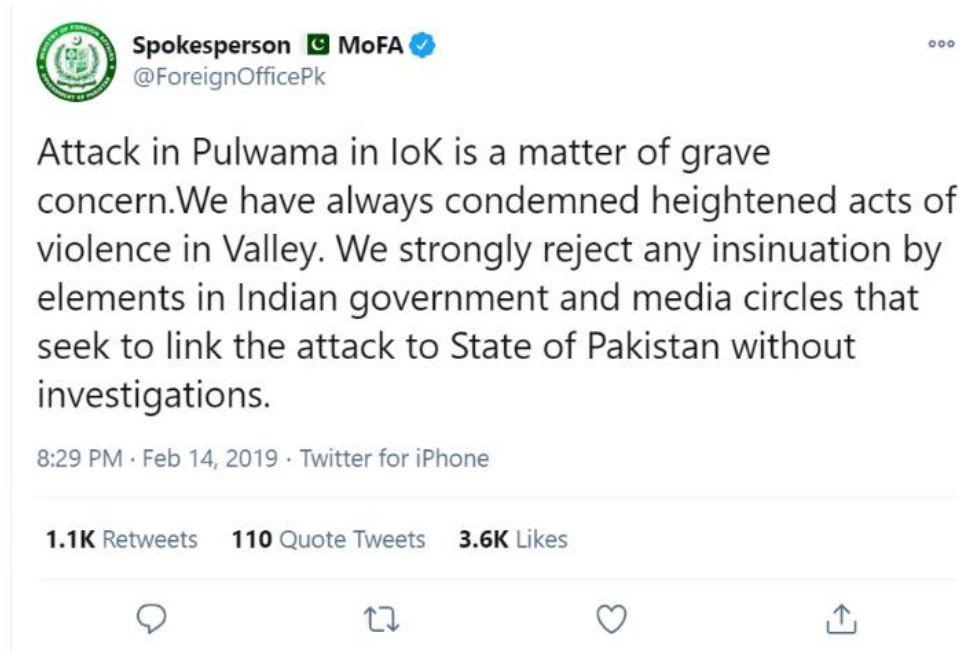
Screenshot of tweet by Ministry of external affairs India



Pakistan condemned the attack and distanced itself in response. Later, the situation turned into full fledge, not only a war of words but also a physical one. The international airspace has been crossed, followed by military attacks from both sides at the Line of Control (LOC).

Figure 2

Tweet: Response from Ministry of foreign Affairs Pakistan (MOFA)



The Indian ministry of external affair's tweets received a mixed response from the media and audience. The public discussion initiated the examining of the motive behind the Pulwama incident. Disinformation and propaganda started to disseminate immediately within political parties. They blamed each other for being Pakistan's ally, and specific hashtags were initiated to propagate the desired narratives.

Figure 3

Tweet: comments from audience, calling for action



Figure 4

Tweet: audience question the timing of event with respect to election proximity



Figure 5

Tweet: audience questioning the credibility of government



The *Times of India* published the headline stating, "Unfairly blaming Pakistan." The latter headline was changed when that news received public backlash. The *Times of India* had to issue a clarification with an editor's note at the end stating that its news story clarified that the terrorist was a member of Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad (Qrius, and Qrius, 2019).

Few media outlets reported that Prime Minister Narendra Modi is playing dirty politics over Pulwama. Emotionally charged fake news was trending over social media and mainstream media. Foreign media depicted the situation as "Indian media is war crazy" (Chandrashekhar, 2019). According to Vij, (2020), opposition political party spokespersons also expressed concern about Pulwama; Pawan Khera stated, "The government does not have answers on two crore jobs, farmer problems, and the cause of demonetization." So, they are engaging in such politics. There should be no politics in the Army."

India, Pakistan, Jammu and Kashmir have witnessed imperative situations after the Pulwama attack (ÇELİK, 2020). For instance, it has become a turning point, particularly for the government of India, as the attack is viewed as the legitimizer when it comes to making critical decisions related to national and international policy. Before election 2019, the government focused on the pre-election development and the politicians' statement rather than focusing on elections. For instance, 543 lawmakers were elected in the parliament. Like always, Kashmir became a considerable card in election campaigns. In all these activities, social media has played a considerable role as the digital rhetoric remained high. Prominent political actors like BJP politicians that included Minister Modi and BJP's president, Amit Shah, repeatedly referred to the Balakot attacks and Pulwama attacks throughout their election campaign. Subsequently, serious discussions on mainstream media and social media related to the Pulwama attack and Pakistan's involvement in this attack. The discussion continued till the results of the general election came out on May 23rd, 2019.

Indeed, social media was used as a proficient weapon of war and new militancy. Like politicians, extremists, and aggressive journalists, the problematic groups of India communicated their radical ideologies and promoted propaganda against Pakistan. Social media was also used to recruit relevant social media users for further propaganda (Chetty and Alathur, 2019). This geopolitical incident (Pulwama attack) has led to the circulation of outdated and misleading videos and images on different social media platforms like Twitter,

Facebook, and Whatsapp to reach millions of people. The aim was to trigger the sentiments and aggression of Indians against Pakistan and winning the election. Social media was aggressively used for propaganda because out of 900 million voters of India, 340 million used Facebook, and 230 used WhatsApp (Campbell-Smith and Bradshaw, 2019). Therefore, it was important to influence their voting decision.

The social media was bombarded with cyber troops who spread junk news to suppress the participation of political opponents and the voice of vulnerable users of social media. Bradshaw et al. (2017) defined *cyber troops* as political parties or government actors who use social media to manipulate public opinion. Political actors of India were also served as cyber troops. There was polarizing messaging between Indian and Pakistani politicians during these events, particularly on Twitter (Tyagi et al. 2020). After the Pulwama attack, political actors started working with different actors like social media influencers, volunteer networks, and private firms to shape their desirable or favorable public opinion over social media. Meanwhile, different innovative and sophisticated tools and techniques were being used for targeting, tailoring, and refining messaging approaches that include automation on social media platforms, targeted advertisements, and data analytics (Campbell-Smith and Bradshaw, 2019).

India's political parties have their IT cells that are famous for trolling, disinformation, propaganda, and automation. It has been found that Silver Touch, an Indian IT firm, built the NaMo app of Modi and made several fake Facebook and Twitter accounts (Facebook, 2019). After the Pulwama attack, there was a deliberate spread of disinformation and propaganda by political actors on Twitter that often-spread misinformation. As a result of digital illiteracy and hyper-connectivity, such false content spread more. Also, Indian cyber troops used multiple strategies, tactics, and techniques for spreading disinformation and manipulating public discussions against Pakistan through online propaganda. Also, trolling tactics were employed to suppress the participation of dissenting opinions along with political speech (Campbell-Smith and Bradshaw, 2019). Major political parties of India, BJP and INC, were involved in propagating fake news but started accusing each other (Reuters, 2018).

Poynter (2019) noticed that disinformation generally originates from non-credible sources like fake online accounts, but unfortunately, it is prolific and originates from its media outlets and prominent politicians in India. During the election of 2019, disinformation

was an official part of election strategies. For example, Indian media outlets (i.e., India Today and The Economic Times) published a photo of a Pulwama terrorist attacker in the combat uniform. Ironically, the image was taken from an unknown Twitter account and later labelled as fake (Poynter, 2019). Another source of disinformation and propaganda was paid workers or volunteers hired by political actors. These workers also had a duty to respond to any unfavorable Tweets, comments, and statements.

Along with this, paid workers and volunteers remained active on Twitter and created disinformation content (Boom Live, 2018). The effort of propaganda organizations was both volunteer-run and centrally coordinated. For instance, regional politics and the vast size of India confirm that propaganda efforts were coordinated geographically.

The reasons for rampant disinformation and propaganda in India include resource availability, low hurdles to entry, low regulation level in networks like WhatsApp, Facebook, and Twitter that facilitate the propaganda. Fertile ground is further given by the Indian population that comprises diversified language, religions, and castes and has different digital literacy levels. Misusing such factors, political actors of India exploited the population through propaganda and disinformation against Pakistan, which facilitated them in winning the general election of 2019.

The prime aim of the study is to critically analyse the content disseminated over social media, particularly over Twitter after the Pulwama event that triggered the political discourse at the domestic and diplomatic front right before the Parliamentary Elections. The aim has been acquired by analysing the retrieved Twitter data from the Pulwama attack on February 14, 2019, to National Election that occurred on May 23, 2019.

1.3 Research Objectives

Based on the research aim, the critical points of the objective are to analyse content and engagement in accordance with the theoretical framework of the 4E funnel of digital reflexive control theory. The study aims to evaluate the message content after the Pulwama incident until the May election 2019. Evaluating the applicable aspect of informational model, the 4E funnel of digital reflexive control on the content of the message by the stakeholder of public diplomacy

The study aims to discover how Indian public diplomacy stakeholders disseminated their content for political objectives and how the political discussion was sustained in context with the Pulwama event. The Pulwama incident raised the political temperature and triggered voters' sentiments to call for action offline as the significance of the incident reflected political discussion in context with an election.

Furthermore, the objectives are to explore the key element of propaganda techniques that act as a catalyst in reflexive control framework and trace the contribution of disinformation, discredit, and blame game in public diplomacy for attaining foreign policy goals.

The study would analyze the message related to the Pulwama event on Twitter posted by public diplomacy stakeholders following these objectives. The study evaluates whether the messages were rhetoric or informative, whether their content sustained political discussions to engage social media audiences, and whether the message content was meant to charge the audience emotionally and stimulate them for offline actions like war.

1.4 Relevancy of the study

By focusing on strategic communication and propaganda as a digital diplomatic communication tool, the study has synthesized relevant information taking the digital reflexive control informational aspect of the 4E funnel theory under consideration. Previous studies such as Bjola (2018) have thoroughly discussed theoretical and conceptual approaches in Western countries, explaining propaganda as reflexive control. Another previous study by Bojla and Pamment (2018) extended the discussion in the wake of reflexive control theory. It claimed that it represents a productive information warfare doctrine by countries like Russia. Previous literature has failed to focus on the relationship between Indian and Pakistan after the Pulwama attack and how social media fuelled intensifying a Cold war between these countries. It has been created a knowledge void. Considering this, the following study has stressed applying the 4E funnel theory on social media usage by Indian political actors and institutional spokesperson after the Pulwama suicide attack. The focus of the study is on the eastern nation, such as the long-term Russian ally India. It also provides valuable information related to the influence of national interests on foreign policy agendas and how the national interests are being used for propaganda (disinformation) for reaching not merely domestic but also a foreign audience with the help

of social media. The author understands the culture and political history of both India and Pakistan, which would enable to decode particular aspects of foreign policy and domestic political objectives.

However, the study's findings are specifically relevant to India and Pakistan's relationship and public diplomacy. For the empirical evaluation of the content of the messages, the study has applied the 4E funnel of digital reflexive control over Twitter data to achieve political and foreign policy goals. The study period selected is from the Pulwama event (February 14, 2019) to the general election of 2019 (May 23, 2019).

1.5 Significance of study

The significance of the study explains how social media has become a tool for information war and how Indian political leaders are aggressively using it for shaping public opinion and driving them for favorable action. Such information will better inform the audiences of both countries about manipulating strategies and tactics of governmental officials. The study's findings will help the practitioner, scholars, and audiences develop digital literacy to differentiate between disinformation and facts. The study uses the 4E funnel theory and reflexive control theory to help audiences see beyond their current political beliefs. It clarifies the pressure points used by government officials to charge the public for their desired course of action. For example, disinformation on social media influenced public opinion in the 2019 election, creating a win-win situation for political parties. The study tries to get people to stop relying on Twitter message content to form their political beliefs. Instead, it looks at more incredible details of the issue from various authentic sources.

With the information gained from the study, it becomes easy to understand democracy, ideologies, political policies, manipulating strategies, and the political use of social media in today's world. Another significance of the study is that it provides the latest political landscape of India by taking the message content of its political actors over Twitter as an example. For this, it has collected its Tweets from the Pulwama attack to General Election 2019. Therefore, conducting comprehensive and extensive research on the study topic was highly significant.

1.6 Contribution to contemporary research

Previous studies such as Campbell-Smith, U., and Bradshaw, S. (2019) looked at cyber troops for spreading disinformation while discussing the Pulwama attack, while ÇELİK (2020) focused on Indian politics transformation post-Pulwama attack. Also, Banaji et al. (2019) particularly incorporated Whatsapp to spread misinformation, while Bjola (2018) has thoroughly provided a conceptual and theoretical explanation of propaganda as reflexive control. In the wake of such studies, the following research specifically sheds light on the practical application of propaganda as reflexive control and the 4E funnel theory in the context of content message over Twitter after the Pulwama attack. The topic was understudied academically, and there was a lack of information related to the topic that needs more information to enhance understanding. Therefore, applying the relevant theories to real-life examples adds new academic information and advances the existing knowledge. Furthermore, the study incorporates information related to social media sites that are new trends globally, and there is a lack of authentic and reliable information in this regard. Nevertheless, using the theoretical framework justifies how different tactics are being used on social media sites, especially Twitter, to form public opinion.

The study also contributes to the academic literature by providing empirical-based knowledge related to changing politics, changing trends, and changing the world. A major contribution is to recognise and explore a political issue in this digitalised era when social media is filled with doubtful and misleading information alongside clarifying dubious information that prevailed since after the Pulwama attack. The study's findings also help initiate academic discourse in the nuclear south, where the situation is tense since India and Pakistan's inception. Current literature related to strategic communication focusing on public diplomacy in context with this specific region merely covers the aspects. Hence, the effort is to find the missing pieces and initiate a thorough digital public diplomacy approach. The study's outcomes attempt to investigate further how digital reflexive control targets act or take counter initiatives to mitigate the hybrid warfare attacks over digital space. Also, the findings contribute to substantial literature by highlighting the dark side of digital diplomatic communication.

1.7 Breakdown of the research

The following thesis has been broken down into five prominent chapters. The first chapter is an introductory section that outlines the background scenario of the Pulwama

attack and the beginning of propaganda on Twitter by Indian political actors. It clarifies the research aim and objectives alongside justifying why researching the topic was required. Providing all this information makes a fertile ground for the study.

Chapter 2 incorporates theoretical frameworks like reflexive control theory and 4E funnel theory to provide details about these theories from a political stance. Analysing the existing literature, the section includes structure for holding or supporting the relevant theory and explains why the research topic is under consideration. Chapter 3 of the study is the methodology section that includes the methods, approaches, and techniques used to achieve the study's aim and objectives. It provides appropriate justification for using a method and mentions the strategies that suit the research objectives well.

Chapter 4 is the main section for research that incorporates findings and results related to research objectives. It involves collecting data from Twitter after the Pulwama attacks and applying these findings on theoretical frameworks i.e., reflexive control theory and 4E funnel theory. Finally, chapter 5 concludes the study discussion based on the findings of chapter 4. It also provides appropriate recommendations to deal with the research problem.

2. State Research

The following literature review revolves around propaganda research and public diplomacy research. These two aspects of the research field have been selected, and they will help achieve the research objective, i.e., the political agenda over Twitter and how the Indian government responded to the Pulwama attack in the digital era. Indian political actors and strategic communicators aggressively have been using social media networks, especially Twitter, to reach out to the foreign audience to change their opinion and convince them for favourable action. In this respect, the research related to political propaganda and public diplomacy will provide valuable insights into how public diplomacy has been used in the past and what are the strategies that have been previously adopted. The study of Svensson (2019) suggested that there was a user-generated content in Whatsapp and Twitter before general election 2019. In such content, there were rumours and claims that escalated tension between India and Pakistan. In the wake of this, the studies related to propaganda helps in understanding how different governments have used propaganda before the election.

Collectively, such information assists in critically analyzing the contribution of Indian political actors after the Pulwama attack and before the general election of 2019.

Previously, Bjola and Pamment (2018) and Bjola (2017) have provided a theoretical aspect of online propaganda and its negative impacts with the help of digital reflexive control theory. Black (2020) has also given comprehensive information related to the theory of political propaganda, but in a conventional aspect, i.e., it has portrayed the Second World War history (WWII). Similarly, Hopkins (2015) has thoroughly explained cyber-diplomacy and new public diplomacy along with its relationship with propaganda. Dinata (2014) specifically focused on the influence of Twitter on current public diplomacy. Stories (2015) has explained how the government has lost public diplomacy by considering digital platforms. Indeed, the studies may provide valuable insights to make a ground for the proposed research. However, the review of such studies also demands better methodologies like empirical studies to capture how online disinformation dissemination generates offline influence by influencing their behavior and opinion from the perspective of India and Pakistan.

The importance of the proposed research is that it has synthesized the relevant information and applies the digital reflexive control theory. By considering the continuing history of war between India and Pakistan, the study will explore how the political actors use digital platforms for supersede the war-like situation. It will explain that the digital political strategies that manipulate the audience and drive them according to the desire of political leaders. It also sheds light on the evolutions in propaganda and public diplomacy after the arrival of digital media. The study will employ the digital framework that government institutions have used for communicating with their targeted audience. Another importance of the study is that the study is analysing Indian approach towards Pakistan as rival nation to achieve both domestic and international goals. The findings help to evaluate the practices of Indian political actors to present their case on the international platform against Pakistan, how India blames Pakistan for the Pulwama attack, and how India manipulated their people after the attack. Additionally, it is imperative to analyze how India is making digital diplomacy efforts empirically.

2.1 Propaganda research

The term propaganda was introduced by Roman Catholic Church who used in a sociological sense. It refers to the spread of unnatural ideas through an artificial or cultivated manner (Black, 2020). Then, Vatican has formulated the congregation for the propaganda faith in 1622 to harmonize the content and the teaching of faith to achieve power. With time, the word propaganda has been started considering a negative notion and was seen as immoral and unethical. However, different scholars have defined propaganda in their way. Black (2020) defined *propaganda* as something that applies to the advanced political language and is used for spreading principles and opinions that the governments see with aversion and horror. For example, the forces of propaganda like psychological warfare and public relations had become intertwined in the public's mind, which offended humanists who feared propaganda because it was considered a threat to democracy. Education was considered as a defense against propaganda as it leads to public enlightenment. Esteemed scholar, Lasswell (1927), defined *propaganda* as controlling opinion through considerable symbols. He also referred to it with a process of speaking less accurately but more concretely by using pictures, reports, rumors, stories, and other ways of social communications. According to George Catlin (1936), propaganda refers to a psychological installation by any prompt manner, either intellectual or emotional manner of particular views. Another concrete definition of propaganda is that it is an attempt that influences the personalities and controls the individuals' behavior by considering their doubtful or unscientific values Doob (1948).

Several political and social research and studies have been conducted on propaganda. Media studies have found propaganda as a dominant theme in media as it has been used for mitigating open-mindedness. Through propaganda, media intervene media consumers and realities, but media content cannot be eliminated as it provides pre-digested views, which cannot be experienced all of their life first-hand (Black, 2020). Advanced studies have revealed that the internet and online media have even eliminated the mediating factors as the propagandists reinforce pre-existing views on this new media (digital media) themselves. According to Ellul (1965), the hapless and vulnerable victims of overloaded information seek propaganda that results in chaos and tension. Studies have also emphasized the belief system of propaganda that shows parallels between the typical propaganda and dogmatic personality types. The studies have validated that strategic communicator are more likely to work as propagandists, and their primary duty is to ensure that the brains of their propagandizes are

closed (Gelders and Ihlen, 2010). Such propagandists tend to work successfully by elevating themselves above their goals and messages while conducting propaganda campaigns.

In contrast, Donohew and Palmgreen (1971) argued that it becomes extremely complicated for some media consumers (viewers and readers of mass content) to be vulnerable and accept media content instantly. Such an audience cannot find the contradictory knowledge or have no intention to stop a piece of contradictory information because of their closed-mindedness. Hence, they are passive targets of propaganda. While others undergo psychological discomforts as their brains are not opened, they started believing discrepant knowledge and exaggerated statements. If any propaganda cannot shape opinion yet, it confuses the audience (Fletcher et al., 2018). Scholars previously defined propaganda differently in their research. In media and political studies, it has been considered something used to generate and cultivate unnatural or new ideology, which is not generally factual. Such information may not change the opinion, but it creates confusion and chaos in society. It affects those media audiences who are closed-minded and are not concerned with discovering the actual truth.

2.1.1 Propaganda theory

Propaganda theory states that it is the handling of collective attitudes by using symbols for manipulation. Here, attitude means a tendency to act according to particular patterns of valuation (Gelders and Ihlen, 2010). It has been argued that the deliberative attitude can be separated from the attitude of propagandists because deliberation looks for a solution without prejudicing a solution in advance. Contrary, (Lasswell, 1927) found that propagandists are extremely concerned about evoking specific solutions. However, propaganda remains close with disinterested deliberation. Culturally, propaganda involves the particular cultural attitudes that are organized towards it. (Little, 2017) argued that the issues with the propagandist are intensifying the favorable attitudes to their purpose, reversing the hostile attitude, and attracting the rebellious attitude for preventing them from considering a hostile bent. The propaganda strategy in cultural terms can be explained in the form of stimulus-response. With this approach, propagandist remains concerned with those stimuli multiplication that is well calculated for evoking the favorable responses while the stimuli nullification will instigate the unfavorable responses. For instance, political actors do not only lie but involve others for lying on their behalf (Kampf, Manor and Segev, 2015). The lies include preventing media personnel from reporting regarding policy failure or appreciating the worst performance of government for their self-interest. Such leaders utilize those facts

that are directly resulted in the effectiveness of their political campaigns. Examples of propaganda are the premier pharmacist of Bashar al-Assad, media coverage in North Korea regarding eleven holes-in-one by Kim Jong-Il (Adena et al. 2015).

Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky have presented a propaganda model for explaining the functions of propaganda and systemic biases. According to this model, political, financial, and social policies are constructed in the audience's mind to manipulate them (Chomsky and Herman, 1979). The traditional ways of manipulation were advertisement, the content of mainstream media, and government sourcing. In the present scenario, social media networks help in promoting propaganda. The model applies to any nation that shares a similar economic structure (Catlin, 1936). The studies revealed the pervasiveness of politicians manipulating information that seems natural or factual (Sundstorm and Levenshus, 2017). Based on the game-theoretical perspective, the public is aware that politicians tell a lie for their interests, so the public adjusts their perceptions accordingly (Little, 2017). Supporting this, Sundstorm and Levenshus (2017) confirmed that the majority generally know that the government or politicians usually provide a modified and manipulating version of their information. Nevertheless, some fractions or naive citizens whose behaviour and beliefs are influenced by the modified media content or manipulating statements of politicians.

2.1.2: Digital political propaganda

Hotchkiss (2019) has found social media as a tool that fuels a potential conspiracy. It targets public interest groups that contribute to propaganda dissemination over social media (Jensen et al. 2019). According to Bojla (2017), the aggressive usage of online or digital platforms by political actors shifted the attention of academic discourse and researchers towards the investigation of darks sides of digital political propaganda and diplomacy. Since evolution of social media networks, state-sponsored propaganda has accelerated alarmingly. The congressional testimony of representatives of social media networks like Facebook, Twitter, and Google accepted that over 150 million people in the globe were exposed to the campaign of Russian disinformation before the presidential election 2016 (Bojla, 2017). According to Ittefaq (2019), digital media has changed manipulation methods due to its intrinsic features. Furthermore, it has been noted that algorithmic content dissemination and opinion-formation gatekeepers spread disinformation content instantly and ensures that it reaches worldwide. The content is more emotionally charged and resilient because confirmation bias is enabled and reinforced by confirmation bias.

Similarly, information weaponization through online propaganda has been used as an optimal instrument by some states to correct asymmetries of power in the international standing. Confirming that, different studies have found that promoting hatred and digital elevation of political polarization imposes an unavoidable influence on online propaganda. Considering this, King (2018) has insisted that assessing the influences of digital effects on people's behavior, attitude, and opinion is extremely difficult. Unfortunately, there is a significant evidence gap. Studies such as Bjola and Pamment (2016); East Stratcom Task Force (2017) have provided powerful evidence of Russian interference digitally, particularly in the political activities of European countries. It has been supported by the report of the European Commission (2017) that showed that the picture of the EU (European Union) had been negatively affected by online disinformation as it led to migration and financial crisis. Notably, the influence of propaganda becomes extremely complicated to measure because the influences and scopes are not confined to the digital platform. In contrast, Flecture et al. (2018) argued that the backdrop of accelerated digital uses of need and popularity of social media usage for finding news had encouraged policymakers, political actors, and government to take proper steps to tackle the issue.

Referring to disruptive effects, East Stratcom Task Force (2017) stressed that digital propaganda imposes disruption on societal discourse as it promotes disinformation widely due to no or lack of censorship. Defensive counter-strategies like East StratCom Task Force are considerable to expose digital patterns of propaganda. It also identifies the nodes of impacts in the misinformation network and improves the literacy of media related to the effective working of propaganda. Due to minimal control over the digital conversation agenda, the unnatural and pseudo topics promote disinformation in different social media platforms. Rejecting this, the study of Kampf, Manor and Segev (2015) enforced to overcome the corrosive influences on societal discourse and make it expensive for others to involve in disinformation to gain some control over digital disinformation.

Conversely, further studies concluded that digital propaganda remains here and can never be eliminated based on the modified version of the technological landscape. Fortunately, there is a possibility of reducing its corrosive outcomes by improved understanding related to its working. The literature review revealed a need for more studies with different methodologies to gain extensive information about the online and offline

impacts of digital propaganda. These studies must encounter different counterstrategies to overcome the negative influences of online propaganda.

2.1.3: Propaganda and disinformation.

Propaganda is a relatively old word that was originated in the 1600s. According to Jackson (2017), propaganda connotes the utilisation of information selectively for political effects. In contrast, disinformation is an advanced word that was used in the 1950s by Russian Soviet planners. It is defined as the dissemination of false news or knowledge that was spread to mislead public opinion. In several stances, the terms i.e. propaganda and disinformation overlap each other. Propaganda is defined as the utilisation of non-rational debates to either undermine or advance political ideals while sometimes, disinformation is used as an alternative title to undermine propaganda. In actuality, propaganda and disinformation are two different concepts. For instance, disinformation is an intended message politically that is formulated to engender public distrust, uncertainty, cynicism, apathy, and paranoia. All such factors disincentivise the engagement of people and mobilise them for political or social change. Conversely, disinformation refers to the sharing of false information with an intention of misleading someone. It is always purposeful, but it is not essentially be composed of fabrications. It is composed of facts that are blended with falsehood with the intention of supporting or discouraging an agenda. The agenda can be dismissing a claim and allegations of an opponent, distorting events to serve objectives politically, distracting the public from one's activity, and dismaying those who oppose the goals of someone (Jackson, 2017). Hence, these are two different terms with different meanings.

Wardle and Derakhshan (2017) claimed that the notion of fake news is an insufficient term for describing the complicated phenomenon of disinformation or misinformation. Supporting this, another study (High-level Group on fake news and online disinformation, 2018) demonstrated that the term could not capture the complex issues with disinformation because such information involves fabricated and manipulative content that goes beyond the traditional news. Also, disinformation and misinformation cannot be used to exchange words as they will be subjected to inadequate consistency (Snow, 2012). Misinformation is generally false information that may be gone viral with no intention of misleading anyone. In contrast, disinformation refers to that false information that has been planned by political actors and government officials tactically for misleading the public. De Cock Buning (2018)

elaborated that disinformation is used to spread biased and misleading information to manipulate facts and narrative and cultivate propaganda. Perhaps the motivation of the communicator creates a difference between misinformation and disinformation. The following study will focus specifically on disinformation as a tool for election campaign.

Before the US presidential election in 2016, the disinformation campaign was started. As a result, the global audience faced an enormous scale of digital propaganda and disinformation (Wardle and Derakhshan, 2017). In support of this, 'Assessing Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections' (2017) also illustrated that Russia was a clear originator of the disinformation campaign as it mediated in the elections. The findings of Prokop and Andrew. (2018) also supported this and indicated that 26 out of 32 individuals who interfered in the election were Russian. In the prolonged and wide-ranging election campaign, Russians trolled Americans by commenting on related posts and maintained bogus Twitter and Facebook accounts (Benedictus and Leo, 2016). According to the Internet Research Agency Indictment in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia (2018), their goal was cultivating discord in the US political system. These studies revealed that disinformation had been increasingly spread to achieve any political agenda. Additionally, social media has also facilitated in achieving the desired political objectives successfully.

Yglesias and Matthew (2018) quoted that manipulation and disinformation are more likely to be spread through online journals, blogs, and mainstream media other than social media networks. A survey report revealed that 40 per cent of Trump voters got news regarding the election on Fox News. The journalism objectivity of Fox News was criticized as most of the news content was comprised of propaganda than proper journalistic operation. The common tactic was mixing truth with lies for a confusing audience (Yglesias and Matthew, 2018). However, the studies indicated that disinformation is closely related to propaganda. Political actors use disinformation to promote their propaganda to manipulate the audience and well-established facts.

2.2: Public diplomacy Research

Diplomacy refers to a mechanism that is conducted by international actors for managing the foreign environment. Dinata (2014) defines *public diplomacy* as a program sponsored by the government to inform or influence public opinion in different countries. It is

a government-sponsored effort that allows direct communication with foreign publics (Melissen, 2005). It includes the official efforts to convince the targeted audience about foreign opinion to achieve supporting and tolerating a government's strategic objectives. The methods of public diplomacy include a statement of decision-makers, efforts to convince international media, purposeful campaigns conducted by political actors, and portraying official policies to international audiences (Snow, 2012).

Contrary, according to Cull (2009), public diplomacy is presently doing by anyone. The most prominent actors include non-governmental organizations, a state, terrorist organizations, multi-national corporations, international organizations, stateless paramilitary organizations, and other players operating on an international or global level. Public diplomacy is considered an international actor who handles the international atmosphere by engaging an international audience (Melissen, 2005). Supporting this, Cull (2007) mentioned that tools employed by such actors for communicating with the global public have turned into advanced, global, and real-time technologies like the internet. Such technologies have successfully blurred the rigid lines between the national and international news domains. Subsequently, the international image through public diplomacy has provided a soft power to the country involves in propaganda. The prime reason for this new public diplomacy is fostering relationships rather than transferring a message from top to bottom (Brown, 2008). Therefore, this new public diplomacy has turned actor-to-people into people-to-people, yet the international actors contribute significantly in this regard as they work as a facilitator.

2.2.1: Digital Public diplomacy

The technological revolution and arrival of social media have provided a platform to ordinary audience to communicate with anyone resides in foreign countries. Previously, diplomats or state officials exercised such facilities (Hopkin, 2015). Today, every individual exercise the power of monopoly as digital platforms give them absolute liberty. Such examples of absolute liberty that have been used to catch people's attention include Assange, Trotsky's Leak, and Wiki-leaks. Trotsky's leak showed the strengths of social class with the help of a single-minded party, while Assange's leak revealed the individual power of communication across the network. According to WikiLeaks, the threats of double-dealing have been recognized along with the significance of ensuring the minimum void between what is privately practiced and what is publicly claimed. According to Cull (2009), diplomacy rests on confidentiality principles, but digital diplomacy has just overridden such

confidentiality. The latest studies have found that digital public diplomacy is now, how international actors influence other foreign perception or even the perception of domestic global actors have been influenced by attractive, interactive, and persuasive ways of showcasing their stances in several problems through digital media. In support of this, Dinata (2016) commented that public diplomacy has started following social media trends. Twitter has been recognised most official social media networks, where political actors and diplomats mark their remarks for news agenda setting. These social media networks have become a platform for press releases where each individual's voice rises and reaches several people instantly. Extending this, Potter (2003) added that the tools used for digital public diplomacy are cyber-image that is also known as cyber-diplomacy. Nevertheless, based on these studies, it has been found that digital media resulted in shifting power.

Cull (2011) has connected public diplomacy with the area of credibility. For instance, public diplomacy depends on being credible to audiences, but now the credibility of everyone has seemed valuable. Hence the level of credibility of government and news organizations is now equal to someone in the audience. In this cyberspace, the politicians depend on the audience to share their message content with their online or offline social networks. Therefore, the credibility of information has been challenged as anyone can establish their network of friends digitally with no geographical limitations. As a result, public diplomacy agencies are less likely to seek the help of new media channels (Potter, 2003). Social Media networks provide more liberty and digital existence of an individual becomes more personalized as per the interest and taste of a person; hence, an outsider's interference seems incongruous. The countries like America and Britain have digital engagement team administered by government institutes that participates in online discussions to correct communicators' misunderstanding (Cull, 2011).

2.2.2: Twiplomacy

Twitter was introduced in 2008. It is a micro-blogging site that offers a platform for engaging with national and especially international audiences (Ittefaq, 2019). The platform allows a format of 140 characters in each tweet. Soon after the launch of Twitter, numerous public diplomats and political actors became a part of this technological, social site. A recognized US public diplomat in Europe, Colleen Graffey tweeted against the events that occurred in the world. According to Cull (2011), her message was infelicitous as she tweeted that buying a bathing suit in the Middle East has drawn specific scorn. Jared Cohen (media

expert of the Obama administration) was also criticized for his tweet in which he talked about a wonderful Frappuccino in Syria (NYtimes, 2010). These cases revealed that the actual issue with Twitter is the negligence of the prominent dimension of the site rather than their personalization. The platform has opened a space for not only bursting 140 characters but also listening to it in the same manner. The public diplomats are primarily responsible for listening, while Twitter has provided a wonderful ability to making that listening more visible and easier. The writers are encouraged to reciprocate and follow that raise the probability of re-tweeting an embassy Tweet and sharing them with their further network. In this way, local credibility will be booted (Ittefaq, 2019). Supporting this, Kampf, Manor and Segev (2015) pointed out that a lineup of go-to feeds has been created that assists the embassy in understanding their country – this would be conveniently taken by others, not merely the embassy but also the outside of the embassy. Therefore, it explains the potential of Twitter as a tool for writing, listening, and sharing content.

Tweets are those pieces of information that are interesting for their recipients. Here, the major risk is that a Twitter feed may be turned into spam if there is so much to state on a topic beyond the readers' particular interest. Indeed, Ciolek (2009) correctly added that it would be a mistake to assume that one size will suit all. Conversely, Twitter has provided a facility to include unlimited feeds (Lee, 2017). however, diplomats are encouraged to use screed feeds to distribute sensitive issues relevant to the audience. The mantra of public diplomats should be posting Tweets related to an issue.

Moreover, Twiplomacy or digital public diplomacy is extremely effective as it can instantly connect multiple people. The adverse impact is that any wrong information (disinformation) made by any Twiplomates (Diplomats on Twitter) also reached thousands or even millions of social media users immediately (de Cock Buning, 2018). The issue forced Twiplomats to remain extremely careful while performing their Twiplomacy. Kent and Taylor (1998) explained that each international actor has its popularity and reputation in the Twiplomacy world, but reliance on these elements cannot be made. For instance, Barack Obama was a popular American leader with 33 million followers, yet he was the least influential and connected state person on Twitter. The prime reason was his insufficient communication with his followers (Dinata, 2014).

2.2.3: Public diplomacy and digital engagement

Countries have realized the significance, strengths, and potential of using online platforms to catch the foreign public's attention and involve them to convey a positive image and goodwill. The most important factor is that it does not require an allocation of big-budget (Ittefaq, 2019). Moreover, the study of Kent and Taylor (1998) related to the engagement in public diplomacy through the internet has found that social media networks have increased the engagement of numerous people towards an activity of public diplomacy. In support of this, Kamph, Manor and Segev (2015) concluded that several foreign ministries are more likely to use digital platforms to engage a foreign audience through interactive digitalization features. Conversely, exploring the efforts of political actors for engaging public through Twitter, Yepsen (2012) argued that most of the topic of public diplomacy remains unnoticed while only a few topics engage more audiences especially that charged people emotionally. Considering this, Bjola and Jiang (2015) probed the diplomatic engagement of Japan, the United States, and the European Union and revealed that none of the embassies of such countries is interacting with the public on social media. Interestingly, the study also discovered that social media networks are more likely to be used as a tool for disseminating information.

In addition to this, Sundstorm and Levenshus (2017) probed the techniques and tools utilized for public engagement through Twitter. For this, dialogic communication theory was used to explore the digital strategies that can enhance the relationship between people and communicating sources. The study has successfully found that political actors are more likely to interact with the audience to engage social media users. Another study was conducted by Jiang (2016), who investigated the use of Sina Weibo by international embassies in China; the study focused on the tone of comments on the Embassy's social media pages. The study resulted that Weibo tends to be used for engaging Chinese audiences. Based on the study's findings, it has also been analysed that informal communication can be enabled by technologies that may fail to equate to the increased engagement with the digital public.

Extending the research on digital engagement and public diplomacy, Ciolek (2010) explored the engagement on the Facebook page of the Jakarta Embassy before the visit from former American president Barack Obama. The findings suggested that the effective utilization of digital platforms may contribute significantly to public diplomacy. Comparing the results of multiple Korean embassies, Lee (2017) investigated people's engagement by

counting the number of reactions of the embassies' posts. Based on the results of Cull (2009) that were conducted on the public diplomacy domain, Lee (2017) noted that embassies are using a one-way communication model rather than a two-way communication model that ensures public engagement. Another interesting finding of the study is that cultural postings have more reactions as compared to message dissemination. Based on the overall findings and different results of the reviewed literature, it has been analyzed those social media networks are not much effective and useful for state institutions and diplomats.

In most cases, the interactivity of the digital platform has not been used appropriately to make it more engaging. The review suggested a need for more empirical studies to understand the accurate and effective implication of social media features and techniques for ensuring digital engagement. The potential of digital diplomacy can merely be achieved through enriched literature.

2.3: Propaganda and Public diplomacy

As per the argument of Mor (2007), the government uses direct communication for influencing foreign public opinion while a consistent and stable international diplomacy feature has been used for competing with rival governments. In the international policies of several states, one of the prominent and notable trends is propaganda war. The studies revealed that public diplomacy is yet to be tackled at a theoretical level despite the increased significance of diplomacy in war and peace (Storie, 2015). The diplomatic theory is yet dominated by communication between the governments of a country with another. Images, impressions, and perceptions pertain the public opinion and intensify public opinion. Yepsen (2012) explained that propaganda is emotion-laden, source-based, and cause-oriented content, which employs mass persuasion media for cultivating the mass mind for achieving the intended goals. Notably, media use is not constructive or destructive as every social institution, including citizen-based, government, and commercial-based utilizes propaganda for their interests and objectives. An ethical question that has been involved with propaganda is that how asymmetrical the share of information always in the favour of the sponsor of the propaganda (Yglesias, 2018). Prokop and Andrew (2018) noticed that propaganda consists of pro-social elements that do not stray from the truth. On the darker side, in public diplomacy, propaganda works on a pro-source function strictly that employs any way that is essential for fulfilling its intended goals. It has been supported by the findings of Snow (2012) that illustrated that political scientist such as Harold Lasswell and Jacques Ellul and the guru of

public relations Edward Bernays considered propaganda as a weapon of advanced technology of society in which propaganda prevails through competition. They have found public diplomacy as an official governmental strategy used for increasing policy dialogue with the public.

Conversely, Hopkins (2015) demonstrated that public diplomacy is those efforts that promote and sustain ethical practices, but propaganda is more related to power, particularly, soft power as it relies on indirect behavioral impacts like ideology, values, and culture. Such influences direct countries toward interdependence. King (2018) claimed that it is just an ideal version of diplomacy because the government is more likely to recognize and clarify different aspects and strategies to make their favorable judgment. Another contrary aspect has been identified by Dinata (2014), who stated that diplomacy to the public or public diplomacy has less manipulative ways than propaganda. Moreover, in public diplomacy, the target audience is proactive consumers that consume messages from the sender ranging from public affair officers to NGO's head (Brown, 2008). Also, such messages get responses as receivers persuade back. Hence, it can be termed as a two-way exchange of opinions or ideas. Considering this, GeldersandIhlen (2010) further mentioned that public diplomacy is gentler propaganda and an advanced toolkit for diplomats. Today, public diplomacy is not being used with sincerity and honesty, but it has been filled with negative propaganda. Even citizen bloggers and other social media influencers are performing the roles of diplomats and propagandists by using social media (Snow, 2012).

2.3.1: Digital reflexive control model

Reflexive control theory is a unique Russian model based on Maskirovka (Russian military deception) dated back in 1903 (Lefebvre and Smolyan, 1968 (1971), p 45). Reflexive control later was known to the west through Lefebvre and Smolyan's work, known as the book title "The Algebra of conflict" in 1968, translated into English in 1971. Lefebvre and his team conceptualized reflexive control in dual aspect "cognitive" and "informational." The focus of this study will remain informational control of adversary as a destructive approach. Reflexive control involved four key factors, including propaganda/disinformation, foreign policy goals, pre-election period, and context (specific event) that triggers the process of reflexive control through cognitive or informational aspects.

After the aggressive use of the Reflexive control theory by Russia in Ukraine, several western analysts started taking an interest in it (Huhtinen et al., 2021). Thomas (2015) demonstrated that this is more a homegrown concept than cognitive weapons as it involves information warfare as a tool. Theoretically, *Reflexive control theory* is defined as transferring prepared information for a partner or an opponent to stimulate him/her to make a predetermined decision voluntarily (Thomas, 2004). The concept and theory of Reflexive control showcase how the media technology and information environment have been misused by governmental actors, political leaders, and the military. Galeotti (2019) stated that reflexive control is an imperative factor in balancing between advantages and costs in international politics. According to King (2018), the most appreciating part of Reflexive control is concealing the activities before acquiring intended results. The ultimate aims of Reflexive control are to manipulate the target discreetly. Initially, the Reflexive Control process was used to manipulate the situation perception and how it is more likely to be perceived by opponents. Reflexive control has now become useful as rational actors can choose a clear solution for resolving the problems. Reflective control theory has been concealed as a part of the decision-making process in such a process (King, 2018). Thomas (2004) found that intended effects are attained by deliberately impacting the information environment of the intended target audience. The influencing methods are selected to portray the targeted person's cultural and mental behavior patterns and his/her ways of reasoning. In this way, Reflexive Control exploits the orientation of the opponent. The widely means of Reflexive control are pressurization, deception, and disinformation (Komov, 1997), while the primary targets are decision-makers (Thomas, 2004).

Positively, Canel and Luoma-aho (2019) revealed that reflexive control theory could control security and hide identity for overcoming the risk of losing hierarchies and maintaining military reputation. Unfortunately, governments like Russia use it for their selfish interests. As there are few restrictions on social media, Russia used trolling and fake news to tell their version of stories for achieving the benefits.

Furthermore, Reflexive Control is perception management in which social and psychological factors are extensively used (Giles et al., 2018). The concept is connected with the cognitive concept in which truth is malleable while the double-thinking concept becomes a part of social realms (Chotikul, 1986). In the digital age, Reflexive control theory can also be applied by generating online data and using the cognitive profile of the target opponent

(Bjola and Pamment, 2018). All these resources are useful for the powerful implication and prediction of political behaviour. It requires transferring unstructured digital data into the structural form in which different attributes like types of connection, topics of conversation, number of likes, and geolocation may assist in identifying patterns, relationships, and trends. Based on the digital reflexive control theory, there are four layers for filtering cognitive behaviours.

There is an informational concept of digital reflexive control theory that facilitates strategic communication. Hallahan et al. (2007) define strategic communication as a "purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfil its mission" (p. 3). Employing two-way communication with foreign audiences is direly needed to attain foreign policy agendas. Strategic communication helps to design foreign policy short-, mid-and long-term goals, whereas public diplomacy channels foreign policy goals in action.

Evolution of mass media theory of propaganda (magic bullet theory) changed the dynamic of digital diplomatic communication and focus will be brought onto a digital reflexive control 4E funnel and how it all intersects with one another in digitalized societies. Communication research in other domains (e.g., political communication or advertising) offers a theoretical foundation for investigating social media-based diplomacy. Most of the time, digital diplomacy studies related to public diplomacy get support from public relation theories of dialogic communication or international relations frameworks where two way of communication is analysed and discussed. The purpose of this study is to analyse the content of Twitter messages in context with Pulwama (event base) that sustain political discussion during pre-election Indian general election 2019. The aspects mentioned earlier are significantly aligned with the present study, and reflexive control as a theoretical framework covers the communication as propaganda (disinformation) and covers foreign policy goals (diplomatic communication) and political communication.

Moreover, diplomatic communication exceptionally coping the pace of social media and adeptly following that of mass media theories throughout media evolution. Access to the internet, World Wide Web, and social media networks have enabled the public to flow information to varying degrees of awareness for propaganda and disinformation campaigns (Till, 2020). Arab spring is a classic example of a Magic bullet in the age of social media networks. The call of action against the Arab dictator was organized through Facebook and

disseminated a powerful message that broke the shackles of fear against tyrants. (Manor, 2017). Propaganda as disinformation is one of the primary components of the reflexive control process.

Nevertheless, the model of digital reflexive control theory that facilitates informational concept describes strategic communication with an opponent, inclining one to make the intended decision. The reflexive control model permits an initiator to induce adversaries to take a decision beneficial to the initiator through propaganda and information manipulation (Bjola and Pamment, 2018). The reflexive control model is more likely to be applied from a strategic and tactical perspective of a government, diplomats, and military of a country (See figure 6).

Figure 6

Reflexive Control model illustrating the process of “Cognitive” Tactical model and “Informational” 4E funnel of Digital reflexive control (Bjola and Pamment, 2018). Blue line represents present scope of study

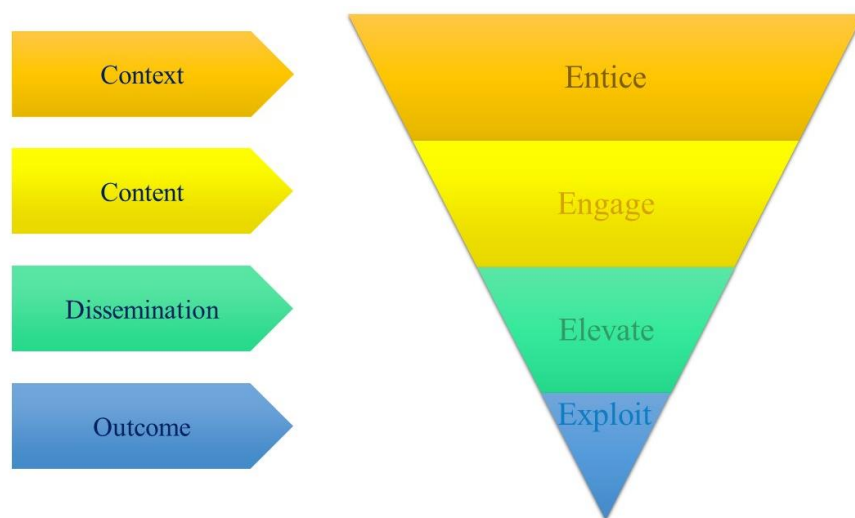


For the reflexive control model to succeed digitally, four considerations are vital, i.e., context, content, dissemination, and outcome. The *context* creates an information environment of A, which will instantly integrate tailored strategic communication to shape digital communication (Taylor, 2018). Informative and fact-based *content* messages maintain political discussion that will emotionally charge the audience or mislead them – this works by undermining a fair exchange of political perception. Media channels or other botnets accelerate the deliberate attempt of dissemination of a message. Lastly, an *outcome* is where a

digital audience is motivated to take political steps offline, whether constructive or destructive (Bojla and Pamment, 2018). These four considerations are collectively known as the “4E funnel of digital reflexive control: entice, engage, elevate, and exploit” (see Figure 7).

Figure 7

The 4E Funnel of reflexive control digitally (image based on: Bojla and Pamment, 2018).



All four is used for inducing the opponent to pursue particular actions favoring the other party. The first layer is ‘entice’ that links with the context of the information of a party and the degree to which an instant influx of online message is modified more closely to the national political environment. This helps in shaping digital conversation before elections. The second layer is ‘engage’ that deals with the message content, whether informative and fact-based or misleading and emotionally charged. The content serves as undermining a fair sharing of political perception for engaging more audience. Elevate is the third layer in which consideration implies amplification issue and the degree to which such messages disseminate. The fourth layer is ‘exploit’ that informs the significant consequences, i.e., whether the digital audience is motivated to take political steps offline or impose constructive or destructive intention (Bjola and Pamment, 2018).

2.4: Summary

The chapter has analysed the theories related to public diplomacy in the digital age, online propaganda, digital reflexive control theory in the digital age, and digital disinformation. It has been found that social media networks, especially Twitter, have become a platform for shaping public opinions. This new trend has challenged national and international security as it facilitates the weaponization of societies, spreading false political agendas and promoting political propaganda across boundaries. The digital reflexive control theory and 4E funnel theory helped analyze how disinformation was created and circulated before the election. Political actors are more likely to use such a platform to manipulate the audience and stimulate them for favorable actions. Importantly, the review has found that presently, public diplomacy is not merely conducted by ministries and governmental officials but even by a random person in the audience. Shockingly, the credibility of such people is more than a political leader as the public has already aware that politicians manipulate the audience for their interests. In light of this, the political leaders have started hiring agencies and bloggers to help in spreading propaganda and disinformation. Such agencies have made bogus Twitter accounts that help in making a particular topic a trend.

Moreover, it has been found that countries like Russia have used digital public diplomacy to make their stance more widespread. The Reflexive control theory may help understand how an event-based communication of Indian political actors after the Pulwama attack has been initiated. Overall, it has been analysed those modern countries are more likely to conduct their war-like situation on social media networks. In this way, the war will not remain confined within a territory or geopolitical boundaries. More studies are required to specifically analyse the use of Twitter for engaging, elevating, and exploiting the audience by political actors and diplomats. The study is also required for investigating how public diplomacy is carried on digitally and how the dissemination of messages becomes influential.

To analyse the digital propaganda and disinformation by Indian political actors, 4E funnel reflexive control theory can be helpful as the four considerations, i.e., context, content, dissemination, and consequences, are facilitated by these 4E (entice, engage, elevate, elevate, and exploit) method. Based on the theory of digital reflexive control, it needs to filter the information collected on social media to achieve favourable outcomes from propaganda.

Below are the proposed research questions that are derived from the digital reflexive framework by connecting propaganda, disinformation, and public diplomacy:

Main question: What was the content of the messages in context with the Pulwama incident until May 2019 Indian election over Twitter by public diplomacy stakeholders?

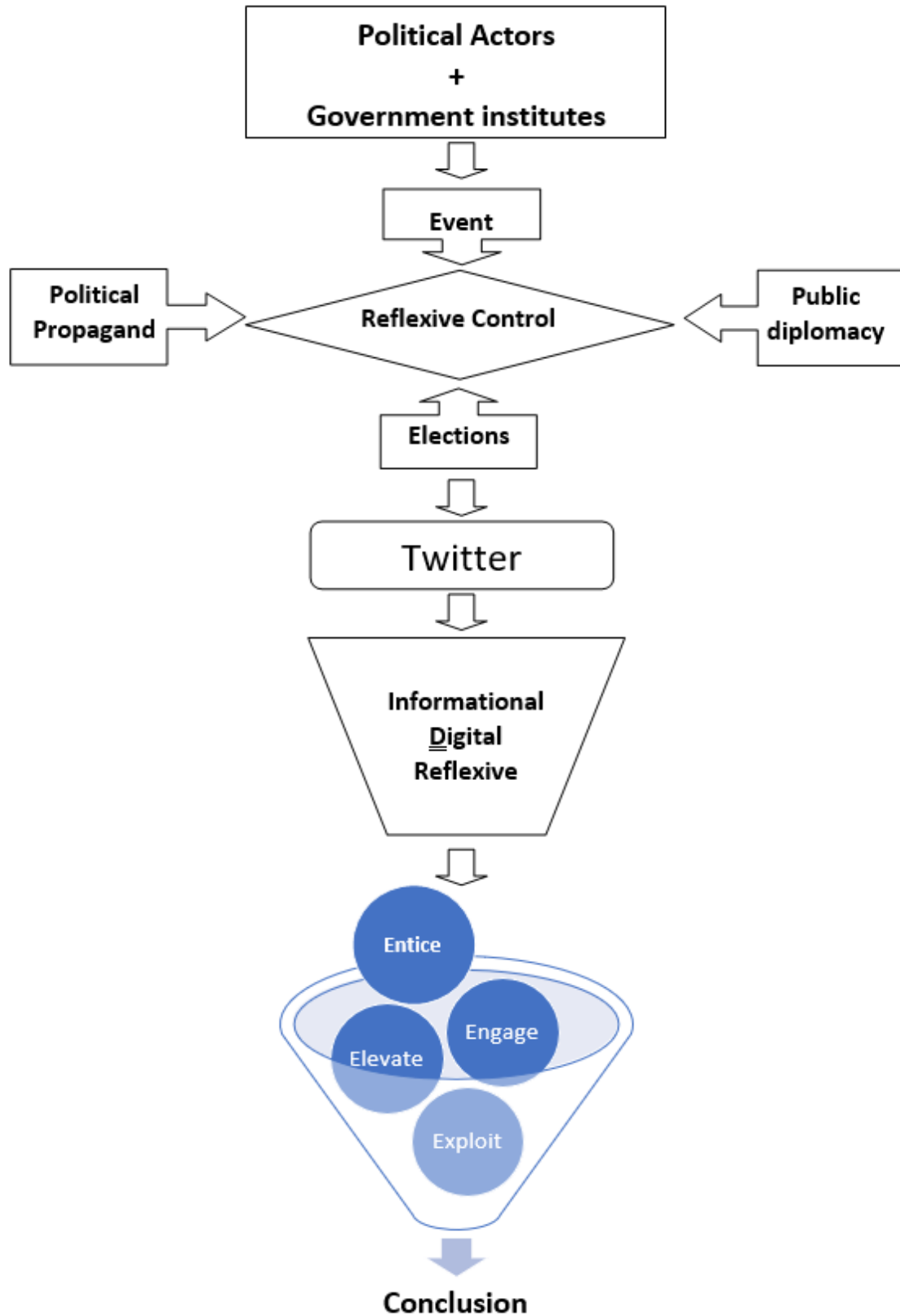
Supporting questions:

1. To what extent do the tweets of Indian public diplomacy stakeholders reflect their political approach in context with the Pulwama event during elections campaigns?
2. To what extent the content of Twitter messages of public diplomacy stakeholders implied propaganda tactics?
3. To what extent do public diplomacy stakeholders disseminate their foreign policy agenda in context with the Pulwama event both at domestic and international platforms?
4. To what extent Pulwama event was used for voter mobilization by public diplomacy stakeholders during election campaigns?
5. To what extent audience engagement varies depending on the content of messages by Indian public diplomacy stakeholders?

2.5 Research Model

Figure 8:

Outline of the research process



3. Research Method

Following chapter, outlined the details for steps involved in extracting, collecting and organizing and analyzing data for research findings. It has linked the employed methods with the concepts and theories found in the state of the research. Primarily, the data concerned with this research has been obtained from Twitter. The section also included Codebook elaborating the details regarding selected Twitter accounts. Relevant data has been extracted from Twitter from the date Pulwama incident 14 Feb 2019 until 23 May 2019 Indian parliamentary Election. The framework used for the study is the digital reflexive control theories' 4E funnel approach that has helped narrow down the content and evaluate the content disseminated by the public diplomacy stakeholders after Pulwama event.

3.1 Research design

Three major research designs are used in research studies: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed research (Bryman, 2006). Qualitative studies are designed on text-based studies that do not include a numeric form of data. Conversely, quantitative studies include numeric data to achieve the research objectives. There is a combination of qualitative and quantitative data in the mixed research method (Dos Santos et al., 2017).

As the research aims to analyze the message content of public diplomacy stakeholders both political actors and institutional actors of India over Twitter. The study has been designed to quantify the collected data and statistically analyze categories in accordance with quantitative content analysis approach. The quantitative research method was chosen in order to quantify the Twitter content messages for statistical analysis to find empirical evidence to validate the theoretical framework (Riffe et al., 1998). Furthermore, applying digital Reflexive control theory and the informational model the 4E funnel to the findings necessitates the use of a quantitative research method, just as counting the number of relevant messages on Twitter necessitates the use of a quantitative method. Given these considerations, a quantitative content analysis approach was chosen. As a result, data must be evaluated and interpreted in accordance with the quantitative research design.

3.2 Content analysis

Data analysis in research refers to the processes that are used to inspect, clean, transform, and model data to explore and interpret valuable information to draw a concrete conclusion. (Brandt and Brandt, 1998). It is critical to select the appropriate analysis

technique to evaluate the message content. Considering this, the study designed to opt a content analysis technique. Alawode and Adesanya (2016) have selected content analysis for discussing election political advertisements of 2019 in Nigeria's selected national dailies. Lilleker and Surowiec (2019) examined digital political propaganda on social media by using content analysis. Another related study has been done by Recuero et al. (2020) in which content analysis technique was used to analyze political propaganda and disinformation campaigns on Twitter at the time of Brazilian's presidential election in 2018. The content analysis method is defined as a study of communication artifacts and multiple documents in various formats such as audio, video, numeric or alphabetic texts, and images. (Bell, 2001). Content analysis is considered a useful way to investigate patterns in the findings in a systematic and replicable manner (Selvi, 2019).

3.2.1 Twitter Content Analysis

With the advancement of media landscape, technology has become a considerable part of academic studies. The scholars have shifted their focus on online media and other advanced platforms such as social media networks (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, WhatsApp), online applications, blogs, and websites. Different features of Twitter have made it one of the most researched digital networks among researchers. The considerable feature is that it has made the content available to researchers in the form of text, reactions, videos, and pictures. It is usually used by political entities to raise their voices on a particular topic.

As the study aims to retrieve information from Twitter, it requires information in different forms like a picture, audio, and video alongside texts. Xia et al. (2019) have used Twitter content analysis technique to evaluate disinformation campaigns by Russians troll farm. Twitter content analysis technique was used in the study to analyze Twitter profiles of Russian's IRA (Internet research agency). Donstrup (2020) used the Twitter content analysis technique to evaluate political propaganda in social networks during the Andalusian electoral campaign. Also, Golovchenko (2020) used Twitter content analysis technique for measuring the influence of pro-Kremlin disinformation on Twitter. With the help of content analysis, this study would examine the content of the message over Twitter after the Pulwama suicide attack that has triggered the political discourse considering foreign policy and domestic pre-election political situation.

Another rationale to use content analysis is that it evaluates the factors responsible for political discussion, propaganda techniques, public diplomacy campaign and factors that persuade the audience and voters to act accordingly. This information also necessitates the inclusion of data in various forms. As a result, the content analysis technique is appropriate for the type of data collected. Content analysis techniques can be used for both qualitative and quantitative data, and they can help categorize codes, concepts, and themes in ways that no other analysis technique can (Drisko and Maschi, 2016). Understanding the intention of Indian political actors, recognizing disinformation and propaganda in their message content, and presenting differences in message content in contexts with the Pulwama event are some of the goals for using content analysis in this research.

The study divided into two steps using the content analysis technique. The first step is data collection and organization, followed by statistical analysis of quantified data.

Categories were defined in accordance with the theoretical framework of digital reflexive control, coding rules were established, texts were coded, and finally, results were presented.

The current study is based on a content analysis of the Twitter accounts of Indian public diplomacy stakeholders, both political actors and institutional entities, in order to evaluate the content disseminated after an event that triggered political and foreign policy objectives during the pre-election period. The following section of this subchapter focuses on the creation of the codebook that will be used to organize the data retrieved for this project.

3.3 Codebook development

The development of a codebook entails listing codes in accordance with the code definitions (McLellan-Lemal and Macqueen, 2008). This method allows the researcher and other teams to keep track of different ways to use codes to create understandable data. For categorizing data retrieved from the Twitter accounts of India's political actors and institutional stakeholders in public diplomacy, a codebook has been developed specifically for the proposed study. The development of Codebook categories are designed in accordance with the informational aspect of digital reflexive control of the 4E funnel, taking into account the context, content, and dissemination outcome element. (see Appendix A7.01.). The process of assigning codes (numbers) to variables that are thought to be part of the data is referred to as coding, whereas the codebook is a detailed document with coding instructions (Neuman, 2014). Coders must store information about certain variables present in the data in a code-

sheet that is prepared in accordance with the codebook after going over the content they intend to analyze. Below are descriptions of the categories that were included in the codebook created for this study.

3.3.1 Category-1: Formal category

This category of the codebook contains the formal variables that can be found in the data collected for this study. This category included a total of 16 variables, including: tweet text, presence of image(s), presence of video(s), presence of hashtag(s), language, number of replies, favorites, retweets received, and so on.

Furthermore, details about the nature of the image or video attached to the tweet were added to this category to highlight whether the image or footage referred to domestic affairs, foreign relations, national defense, or other topics. To address the findings of the formal categories, the following research question was developed:

RQ: What were the content characteristics and audience engagement (retweets, likes, and replies) of tweets in context with the Pulwama incident by public diplomacy stakeholders on Twitter until the Indian election in May 2019?

3.3.2 Category - 2: Political Discussion

For asserting the involvement of public diplomacy stakeholders in the political discussion helps to analyze this category. Using this category, it has been checked that whether the stakeholders of public diplomacy imply political engagement by using weak links that potentially sensitize the Pulwama event to gain political mileage and influence the audience to action in their favor in upcoming election. Based on this category, the supporting-research question was:

SRQ-1: To what extent do the tweets of Indian public diplomacy stakeholders reflect their political approach in context with the Pulwama event during elections campaigns?

Table 1

Details for political communication after the Pulwama event.

Political Discussion	Interpretations
Political approaches	Political engagement to hack information environment by setting course of discussion.
Informative	Making aware public with useful information
Rhetoric	Content that triggers the weak links and reflects political objectives
Emotionally charged	The emotion depicted through content on certain topic i.e., Anger, frustration, disappointment, and sadness

Note. Political discussion is derived from the 4E Funnel of digital reflexive control (Bjola, 2018)

3.3.2 Category-3: Propaganda techniques

Applying different techniques have been used to determine whether Indian political actors are engaged in public diplomacy. Disinformation, discredit, false analogy, and blame game are some of the variables that have been added to this Codebook category. All of these categories were coded if the provided interpretations based on the following terms were aimed at both the Indian and foreign publics. The supporting-research question was given below in reference to the significant category findings:

SRQ-2: To what extent the content of Twitter messages of public diplomacy stakeholders implied propaganda techniques?

Table 2

Details for Propaganda strategy used in event-based communication

Propaganda techniques	Interpretations
Disinformation	Keeping the audience in the dark or providing distorted facts to construct the desired narrative for political and foreign policy gain.
Discredit	Constructing narratives that discredit political actors and rivals.
False analogy	Creating a link between historical events and the Pulwama incident and justify the shortcomings
Blame game	Holding Pakistan and its political adversaries accountable for terrorist activities or the crisis situation.

Note. above techniques deduced from propaganda (Lasswell 1927, 627)

3.3.3 Category-4: Public diplomacy

Invoking various public diplomacy approaches to gain the support of domestic and international audiences to create an information environment favorable to India's foreign policy agenda. The public diplomacy stakeholders include both political and non-political actors from three domains of public diplomacy, namely the Head of State and Spokesperson, the Ministry of External Affairs and Spokesperson, and the Ministry of Defense and Armed Forces Spokesperson. In relation to the Pulwama event, the variables include an advocacy campaign, military provocation, a domestic approach, and international approach. All of these variables contribute to a better understanding of the information shared on Twitter by Indian political actors in the aftermath of the Pulwama attack. Interpretation of the aforementioned included categories in light of the strategies implied by public diplomacy campaigns. The supporting-research question was given below in reference to the significant category findings:

SRQ-3: To what extent do public diplomacy stakeholders disseminate their foreign policy agenda in context with the Pulwama event both at domestic and international platforms?

Table 3

Interpretation of variables of public diplomacy approach

Public Diplomacy	Interpretation
Advocacy Campaign	Putting Pulwama event in the context of internationally recognized issues like terrorism, peace and security, defense, and disarmament.
Military provocation	Instigating enemy to use military options
Domestic Approach	Creating public opinion to gain support for the Pulwama event.
International Approach	Creating a favorable information environment to gain international support for the Pulwama event.

3.3.4 Category-5: Election campaign

The political actor's interaction with the public via rallies and public events. Motivating potential voters to participate in the electoral process to strengthen democracy or to support their efforts to achieve their political and foreign policy goals Following the Pulwama suicide attack, the election campaign will be crucial in terms of gaining public support to legitimize military actions against rival nations and further building the support bank to materialize the political and foreign policy agenda. These are the categories that have a significant impact on election outcomes, voter mobilization, and the election as an event. The supporting-research question was based on this category:

SRQ-4. To what extent Pulwama event was used for voter mobilization by public diplomacy stakeholders during election campaigns?

Table 4

Interpretation of variables of Election campaign

Election Campaign	Interpretation
Voter mobilization	Motivating voters to participate in the upcoming election.
Election as an event	Political events such as rallies or election gatherings and campaigns.

3.4 Data collection

The secondary data has been collected using a programming script Snsrape in python by Martin Beck (see appendix for original code), a general-purpose language (Lutz, 2001). The data collect within timeframe of election period. Election campaign started from 12th January 2019 and the Pulwama suicide attack happened on 14th February which changed the whole pre-election campaign how changed domestics political discourse and foreign policy agenda. Hence, we have selected the timeframe from the Pulwama suicide attack 14th February to election outcome date 23rd May 2019.

Twitter data (Tweets published on the Twitter accounts of political actors and public diplomacy stakeholders) has been downloaded by employing the Snsrape package available for the python programming language (Martin, 2020). Different Microsoft Excel files were formed for different Twitter accounts of the recruited political actors and institutional accounts as they contained related tweets and sorting the Tweets from newest to oldest automatically. This data includes Tweet ID (serial unique number helps to randomize the data for sampling), Tweet URL (leads to exact source), Timestamp (contain digital footprint date and time), Text (message content), links (External source, video, article or reply to other tweet), Hashtags (keywords to elevate the message), Image URL (Pictures, infographics) engagements measures (Like, retweet and replies)

Table 5

Detail regarding data collected from selected accounts

Accounts	Number of tweets (N)
@narendramodi	744
@PMOIndia	446
@SushmaSwaraj	133
@MEAIndia	234
@nsitharaman	85
@adgpi	314

Note. Timeframe: the data was collected from the 14th of February to the 23rd of March 2019.

3.5 Sampling

Sampling is a method of selecting a unit for research purposes. The proposed study used the content messages of Indian political actors as a sample. Since the goal of this study is to conduct a cross-sectional content analysis of Twitter data, the timeframe selected is from the Pulwama suicide attack on February 14th, 2019, to the General election for Prime Ministerial Candidacy on May 23rd, 2019. Six public diplomacy stakeholders' Twitter handles were chosen as a sample (see Table 6). Only messages about the Pulwama suicide attack, the 2019 general election, political discourse during that time period, and foreign policy agenda were extracted. Random sampling was generated using the excel formula " $\text{fx}=\text{RAND}()$ " with the Twitter ID column randomized to make the entire data randomized to choose as the sampling strategy for the study. A random sample of 30 tweets from each public diplomacy stakeholders' Twitter accounts was analyzed to determine how they communicated with the public in the aftermath of the Pulwama suicide attack. In random sampling, everyone has an equal chance of being recruited (Jawale, 2012).

The pre-testing aided in the identification of public diplomacy stakeholders relevant to the Pulwama incident, as well as their executive power in the domain (Himmelboim et al., 2017). They are also major public diplomacy actors, such as heads of state, foreign ministers, foreign office spokespersons, institutional spokespersons or office bearers, and ministries of defense and arm forces. For more information, see Table 6.

Table 6

Political actor and public diplomacy stakeholders of Indian Government

Description	Name	Twitter Handle	Followers
Prime Minister of India	Narendra Modi	@narendramodi	69.3 million
Office of the Prime Minister of India	PMO India	@PMOIndia	42.8 million
Foreign Minister of India	Sushma Swaraj	@SushmaSwaraj	12.9 million
Ministry of foreign Affair India	Official Spokesperson, Ministry of External Affairs, India	@MEAIndia	2.1 million
Minister of Defense	Nirmala Sitharaman	@nsitharaman	4.4 million
Military Spokesperson India	ADG PI - INDIAN ARMY	@adgpi	7.1 million

Note. Figures reported on June 20, 2020

3.6 Pre-test

To determine the reliability of the codebook, a pre-test was conducted using data randomisation in Microsoft Excel with the help of the rand formula for each Twitter account (Neuendorf, 2002). Using an excel formula, a random sample of 30 numbers (representing the tweets downloaded) was drawn for each account. A student enrolled in the Master of Arts in Media and Communication Science program at Technische Universität Ilmenau served as the pre-second test's coder, with the author serving as the primary coder. Before beginning the pre-test, the two coders spent several sessions getting acquainted with the codebook and the coding process. For the pre-test, R the statistical programming language used to run the packages('psych') for Cohen's Kappa (Gardener, 2012). Fleiss Kappa test scale was used to assess the reliability of the two coders (Collins, 2003). The pre-test achieved an average of 0.8; according to the Fleiss Kappa scale, this value represents substantial agreement among the coders (Nichols et al., 2010), allowing the coding process to proceed (see Appendix A7.0.2). There were a few challenges in interpreting categories that did not have a significant

reliability score of 0.6. We were able to achieve Fleiss kappa greater than 0.6 after revising the interpretation and sequence of the variable in certain categories.

3.7 Methodological challenges

As reflexive control theory has never been incorporated into any quantitative content analysis, there are several methodological challenges. Using reflexive control theory as a theoretical framework was quite challenging in terms of developing a cookbook with appropriate data analysis categories. The cognitive and informational operational aspects of reflexive control theory are distinct. It was difficult to choose the most appropriate aspect of theory operationalization to complete the task in the allotted time frame. Therefore, the selection of informational aspects best suited to analyze the retrieved data from Twitter API that can be deduced from theoretical framework work.

Most importantly, the sorting and organization of data that fit proposed study, it was unclear that what would be the appropriate technique for analyzing data as it needs to analyze pictures, audio, video, text, and numbers simultaneously. After going through different analyzing techniques, content analysis was taken to systematically interpret information while using python to retrieve data set. Moreover, coding has been taken a considerable time as each Tweet needs to be analyzed correctly as per the categorized variables. It has placed great physical demand on the researcher.

Another methodological issue is whether the selected research approaches and methods are appropriate and align with the research objectives and whether it helps validate the research findings. There was an issue with how well the findings align with the theoretical ideas and framework. Following the ethical principles was another methodological problem. The researcher also worked on meeting the ethical consideration while extracting the information. For instance, it has been ensured that the recruited tweet is appropriately coded. To maintain the research ethics, coding was done while keeping ideological bias at bay.

4 Results

The focus of this chapter is to present the findings from the research question and sub research questions associated with this project after the data has been coded. The sub-chapters below underscore the results that pertain to the various categories of the codebook.

4.1 Results of SRQ1: *“To what extent do the tweets of Indian public diplomacy stakeholders reflect their political approach in context with the Pulwama event during elections campaigns?”*

Table 7

Details regarding political discussion by public diplomacy stakeholders.

Accounts	Narendra Modi		PMO India		Sushma Swaraj		MEA India		N Sitharaman		ADGPI		X^2	p	V
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%			
Total Tweets	744	100	446	100	133	100	234	100	85	100	314	100			
Political discussion															
No	181	24.3	256	79.8	110	82.7	209	89.3	23	27.1	312	99.4	925.1	<0.000***	0.344
Negative	270	36.3	72	16.1	6	4.5	23	9.8	12	14.1	0	0			
Neutral	130	17.5	4	0.9	5	3.8	2	0.9	27	31.8	0	0			
Positive	160	21.5	8	1.8	12	9	0	0	21	24.7	1	0.3			
Cannot Distinguish	3	0.4	6	1.3	0	0	0	0	2	2.4	1	0.3	Note		

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

The result shows more than 79% of content disseminated by institutional Twitter accounts (@PMOindia, @MEAinda, @ADGPI) did not discuss political agenda or political affair pertaining to general elections 2019. Still, the rest of the up to 20% shows that they discuss the Pulwama event to elevate the temperature of the election debate. The only political actor then foreign Minister almost did not show any interest in the political discussion during the election period as she was not contesting the election. During the election campaign, the Twitter content of Prime Minister Narendra Modi remained 36.6% (n=270), significantly high in terms of negative political discussion compared to other public diplomacy stakeholders selected for content analysis, which interprets targeting of a political opponent and rival nation Pakistan (see Table 7).

The defense minister used 31.8% (n=27) neutral political discussion, which is higher in number than other accounts. The positive discussion is also being dominated by then-defense Minister Ms. Nirmala Sitharaman, which is 24.7% (n=21) as compared to Prime Minister, which is 21.5% (n=160). The political debate is not distinguishable, is meagre to identify, and very negligible, 0.6 % (n=12) overall.

The overall content of the messages by public diplomacy stakeholders was 68% (n=1330) informative compared to 32% (n=626) of tweets that do not contain any political information that suggests any relevance with the election and the Pulwama event as presented in table 8. Then defense minister was the 61.2% most actively providing information regarding her activities and political agenda and campaign.

The amount of reasoning about the election campaign in context with the Pulwama was not so significant 83.2% (n=1627) overall. Still, the rhetoric being projected by the prime minister was quite obvious, which is 35.1% (n=261) of the content of his Twitter account (see Table 8).

Table 8

Detail regarding Informative and Rhetorical aspect of political discussion

Accounts	Narendra Modi		PMO India		Sushma Swaraj		MEA India		N Sitharaman		ADGPI		X^2	p	V
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%			
Total Tweets	744	100	446	100	133	100	234	100	85	100	314	100			
Informative															
No	236	31.7	411	92.2	115	96.5	222	94.9	33	39	313	99.7	846.1	<0.000	0.658
Yes	508	68.3	35	7.8	18	13.5	12	5.1	52	61	1	0.3			
Rhetoric															
No	483	64.9	413	92.6	127	95.5	218	93.2	74	87	313	99.7	299.99	<.000***	0.392
Yes	261	35.1	33	7.4	6	4.5	16	6.8	11	13	1	0.3			

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Table 9

Details regarding Emotionally charged content disseminated by public diplomacy stakeholders

Accounts	Narendra Modi		PMO India		Sushma Swaraj		MEA India		N Sitharaman		ADGPI		X^2	p	V
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%			
Total Tweets	744	100	446	100	133	100	234	100	85	100	314	100			
Political discussion															
No emotions	514	69.2	399	89.5	130	97.7	222	94.9	78	91.8	302	96.2	338.6	<0.000	0.208
Anger	191	25.7	12	2.7	0	0	3	1.3	1	1.2	0	0			
Frustration	15	2	4	0.9	2	1.5	6	2.6	2	2.4	0	0			
Disappointment	14	1.9	5	1.1	1	0.8	0	0	1	1.2	2	0.6			
Sadness	9	1.2	26	5.8	0	0	3	1.3	3	3.5	10	3.2			

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Most of the Twitter content by the public diplomacy stakeholder expressed was not so emotional (84%(n=1642)) in context with the Pulwama event. The exception was the prime minister's account expressed anger 25.7% (n=191) of the time, and a relatively low 2% (n=15) expressed frustration in his speeches during election events and rallies. The rest of the public diplomacy stakeholders were not so expressive in terms of expressing motions except the Twitter account of the prime minister office, where they expressed sadness 5.8% (n=26) and 2.6% (n=6) frustration expressed by the spokesperson of the ministry of external affairs. The overall disappointment expressed by the public diplomacy is 1.2% (n=23). (See table 9)

4.2 Results of SRQ2: “To what extent the content of Twitter messages of public diplomacy stakeholders implied propaganda tactics?”

Disinformation disseminated through public diplomacy stakeholders was 16%(n=315) overall. The major chunk of disinformation was disseminated was through the account of the Prime of India and the account of the Prime minister's office, which is 27.6% (n=205) and 17.3% (n=77) respectively. The Foreign Minister did not involve herself in any disinformation campaign and the percentage remained zero (n=0). The minister of external affairs did contribute to the disinformation in context with Pulwama which was 7.3% (n=17).

The content disseminated through public diplomacy stakeholders was 19.1% (n=373) of the total 1956 tweets uphold propaganda tactic which reflects the discrediting the enemy or political opponent in context with Pulwama event. The prime Minister's Twitter account exceeds the propaganda in comparison with other political and institutional accounts which is 34.1% (n=254). The institutional account that represents the prime minister's office propagates 18.2% (n=81) to discredit the political opponent and arch-rival nation Pakistan. The least Interest shown by the political actor to use propaganda to discredit was the foreign minister of India which is 3.8% (n=5) tweets.

The content disseminated by public diplomacy stakeholders were contained traces of propaganda technique called false analogy which 13.1 % (n=256) overall. The most significant participant of such content was the prime minister himself which 28.2% (n=210) which the major chunk of overall 13.1% (n=256) tweets.

The public diplomacy stakeholders used propaganda technique blame game which is 19.2% (n=375) of the content out 1956 tweets. The prime minister account was most

prominent amongst other account for using blame game to make political narrative against political opponent and arch-rival Pakistan in context with Pulwama event. The ministry of external affairs blamed Pakistan 8.1% (n=19) of total 234 tweets during 14th February to 25th may (See table 10).

Table 10

Details regarding propaganda tactics used by the public diplomacy stakeholders

accounts	Narendra Modi		PMO India		Sushma Swaraj		MEA India		N Sitharaman		ADGPI		X^2	p	V
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%			
Total Tweets	744	100	446	100	133	100	234	100	85	100	314	100			
Disinformation															
No	539	72.4	369	82.7	133	100	217	92.7	79	92.9	304	96.8	155.63	<0.000	0.282
Yes	205	27.6	77	17.3	0	0	17	7.3	6	7.1	10	3.2			
Discredit															
No	490	65.9	365	81.8	128	96.2	216	92.3	74	87.1	309	98.4	299.99	<.000	0.392
Yes	254	34.1	81	18.2	5	3.8	18	7.7	11	12.9	5	1.6			
False Analogy															
No	534	71.8	420	94.2	132	99.2	221	94.4	80	94.1	313	99.7	248.89	<0.000	0.357
Yes	210	28.2	26	5.8	1	0.8	13	5.6	5	5.9	1	0.3			
Blame Game															
No	492	66.1	369	82.7	124	93.2	215	93.2	75	88.2	306	97.5	195.44	<0.000	0.316
Yes	252	33.9	77	17.3	9	6.8	19	6.8	10	11.8	8	2.5			

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

Table 11

Details regarding public diplomacy strategy implied by the stakeholders

Accounts	Narendra Modi		PMO India		Sushma Swaraj		MEA India		N Sitharaman		ADGPI		X^2	p	V
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%			
Total Tweets	744	100	446	100	133	100	234	100	85	100	314	100			
Advocacy															
No	425	57.1	378	84.8	123	92.5	204	87.2	84	98.8	267	85	236.24	<0.000	0.348
Yes	319	42.9	68	15.2	10	7.5	30	12.8	1	1.2	47	15			
Military provocation															
No	544	93.1	395	88.6	132	99.2	215	91.9	81	95.3	299	95.2	150.89	<.000	0.278
Yes	200	11.4	51	11.4	1	0.8	18	8.1	4	4.7	15	4.8			
Domestic Approach															
No	527	70.8	284	63.7	124	93.2	212	90.6	76	89.4	202	64.3	109.02	<0.000	0.236
Yes	217	29.2	162	36.3	9	6.8	22	9.4	9	10.6	112	35.7			
International Approach															
No	697	93.7	385	86.3	124	93.2	102	43.6	81	95.3	247	78.7	354.55	<0.000	0.426
Yes	47	6.3	61	13.7	9	6.8	132	56.4	4	4.7	67	21.3			

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

4.3 Results of SRQ3: “To what extent do public diplomacy stakeholders disseminate their foreign policy agenda in context with the Pulwama event both at domestic and international platforms?”

The content disseminated by public diplomacy stakeholders through twitter were contain 24.3% (n=475) advocacy campaign in overall content. Both political and institutional accounts quite active to advocacy campaign to through foreign policy agenda in context with Pulwama event. Political actors Prime minister lead the campaign with 42.9% (n=319) contain foreign policy agenda, Followed by Prime Minister office and spokesperson of armed forces then Ministry of External affairs 15.2%(n=68), 15% (n= 47) and 12.8% (n=30) respectively (See Table 11).

The content disseminated through public diplomacy stake holders to trigger the event by insinuating the Pulwama event through call for action against the enemy were 14%(n=290) overall. The major contributor to such insinuation were Prime minister of India himself 26.9%(n=200) of his total 744 tweets. After Prime minister office account, the account of ministry of external affair’s was at forefront to insinuate the Pulwama event through twitter content which were 11.4%(n=51) and 8.1(n=19) respectively. The least provocative amongst them the Minister for external affairs with just 0.8%(n=1).

The content created to influence the domestic audience by the public diplomacy stakeholders in context with Pulwama event 27.1%(n=531) overall. The content disseminated through twitter handle by the prime minister office of India lead the foreign policy agenda to influence the domestic in context with Pulwama event throughout the election period 36.3(n=162) followed by the armed forces spokesperson’s account 35.7%(n=112). The Prime minister of India account used Pulwama event to influence the domestic audience during election campaign through his tweets 29.2%(n=217).

The foreign policy agenda in context with Pulwama event disseminated through twitter accounts of public diplomacy were 16.4% (n=320) overall. The ministry of external affairs was prominent public diplomacy actor to throw foreign policy agenda to influence international audiences 56.4%(n=132) followed by the spokesperson of armed forces 21.3% (n=67). The minister for external affairs were most vocal amongst the political actors to elevate the foreign policy agenda 6.8%(n=9).

4.4 Results of SRQ4: “To what extent Pulwama event was used for voter mobilization by public diplomacy stakeholders during election campaigns?”

The voter mobilization through public diplomacy stakeholders were 32.2% (n=629) overall. The political actors were amongst the most prominent player to mobilize voter to participate in the upcoming general elections which were Prime Minister 65.9% (n=490), Minister of Defence 62.4% (n=53) and Minister of External affairs 3.8%(n=5). The institutional activism regarding voter mobilization were notable by the prime minister office twitter account 17.3%(n=77) and least amongst were by spokesperson of ministry of external affairs 1.3%(n=3) and spokesperson of armed forces 0.3% (n=1).

The election as event being discussed amongst the public diplomacy stakeholders were quite notable and were 31%(n=607) overall. The notable discussion regarding election event or election campaign were highlighted by the political actors through twitter, the prime minister account was proactive into discussion 69%(n=513) followed by Minister of defence 63.5%(n=54) and then Minister of external affairs 14.3% (n=19). The institutional public diplomacy stakeholders were least active to discuss election process, the prime minister office was leading with 4%(n=18) followed by 1%(n=3) and then no discussion (0%) at all by the spokesperson of ministry of external affairs (See table 12).

Table 12

Details regarding voter mobilization and political activities by public diplomacy stakeholders

Accounts	Narendra Modi		PMO India		Sushma Swaraj		MEA India		N Sitharaman		ADGPI		X^2	p	V
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%			
Total Tweets	744	100	446	100	133	100	234	100	85	100	314	100			
Voter Mobilization															
No	254	34.1	369	82.7	128	96.2	231	98.7	32	37.6	313	99.7	765.54	<0.000	0.626
Yes	490	65.9	77	17.3	5	3.8	3	1.3	53	62.4	1	0.3			
Election as an event															
No	231	31	428	96	114	85.7	234	100	31	36.5	311	99	949.09	<.000	0.697
Yes	513	69	18	4	19	14.3	0	0	54	63.5	3	1			

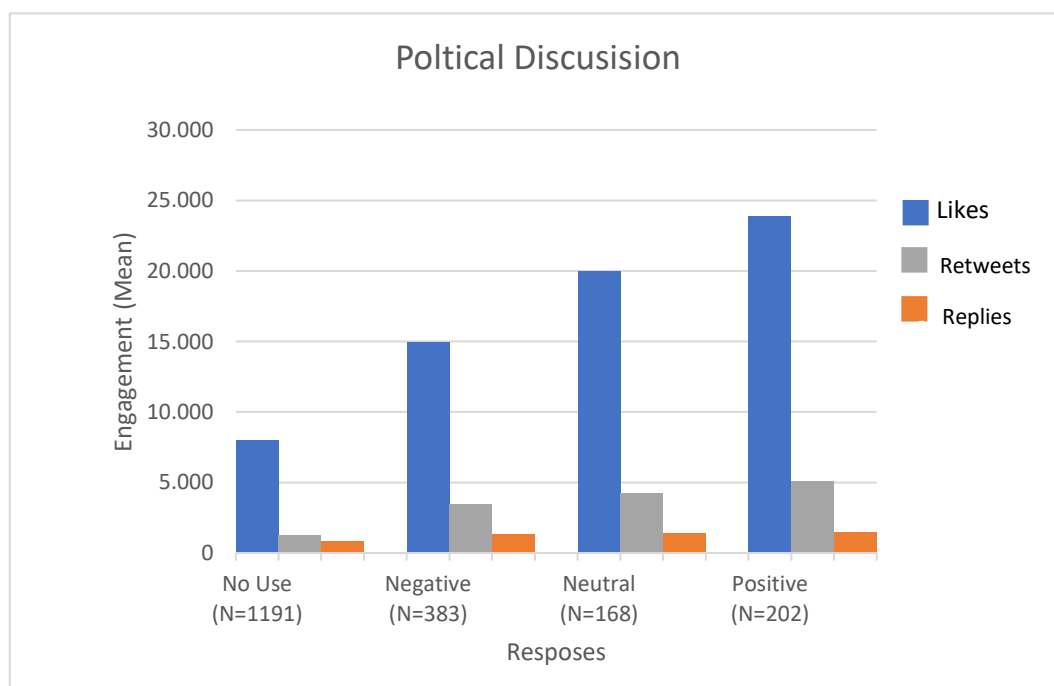
Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$

4.5 Result of SRQ5: “To what extent audience engagement varies depending on the content of messages by Indian public diplomacy stakeholders?”

The 60.9%(n=1191) tweet content was not based on the political discussion in context with The Pulwama event, which received average engagement per tweet (8003 likes, 1222 retweets, and 784 replies) as compared to tweets which contained negative political discussion 19.6% (n=383) received average engagement per tweet (14913 likes, 3434 retweets, and 1343 replies). The negative content received (+86% likes, +181% retweets and +71% replies) more engagement compared to political discussion that has no context with the Pulwama event and election. The mean 112% more engagement is quite a significant percentage. The neutral discussion engaged audiences (19949 likes, 4252 retweets, and 1366 replies) which is higher by (+149% likes, +248% retweets, and +74% replies) than the no political discussion in context with the Pulwama event. The positive discussion engaged audiences (23878 likes, 5102 retweets, and 1486 replies) which is higher by (+198% likes, +317% retweets, and +89% replies) than the no political discussion in context with the Pulwama event (see figure 9). It is observed that the political discussion that has any context with the Pulwama event gained more engagement than another political discussion.

Figure 9

Average audiences' response on tweets per informal variables



Compared to non-informative and no-rhetoric content disseminated by public diplomacy stakeholders, the political discussion that includes informative and rhetorical aspects in context with the Pulwama and election event has significantly higher engagement. Only 32% (n=626) of the content was informative. In comparison, 16.8 % (n=328) was rhetoric, given that it received more engagement that had nothing to do with Pulwama or the election event (11198 likes, 2006 retweets, and 942 replies) than informative (18734 likes, 4257 retweets, and 1234 replies), average engagement on rhetoric content (16127 likes, 3866 retweets, and 1392 replies). Overall, the informative and rhetorical content received 66 percent more engagement (see figure 10).

Figure 10

Average engagement received on informative and rhetoric content.

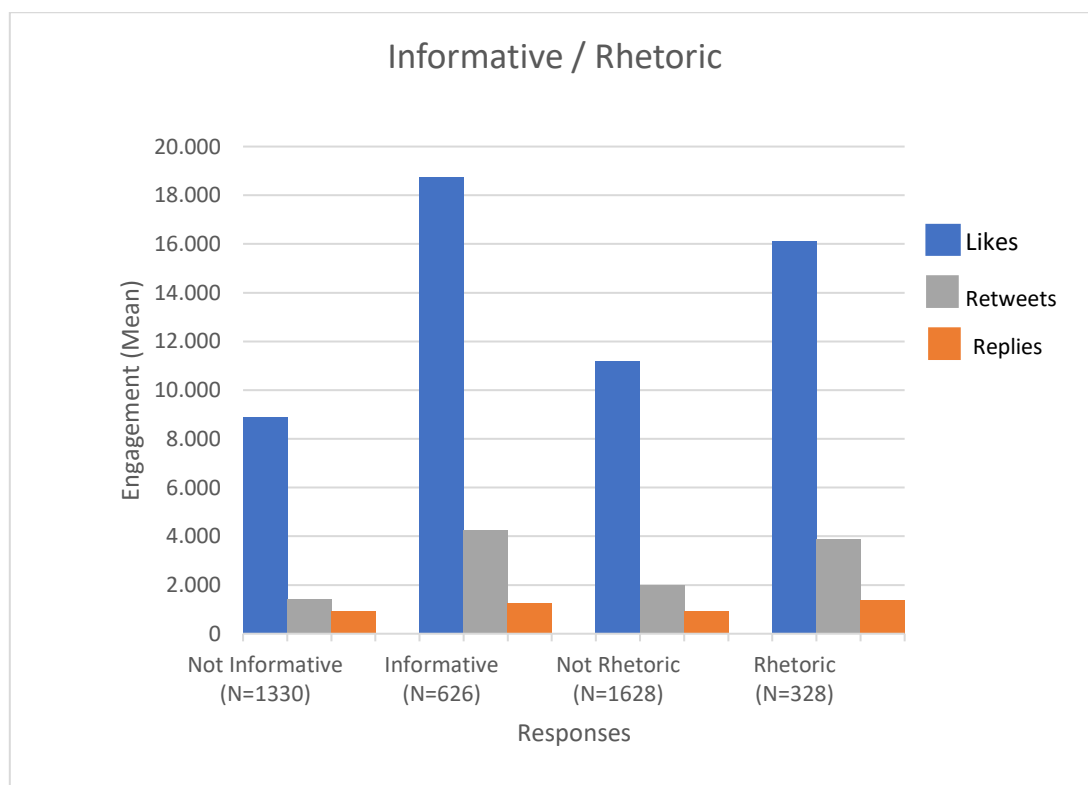
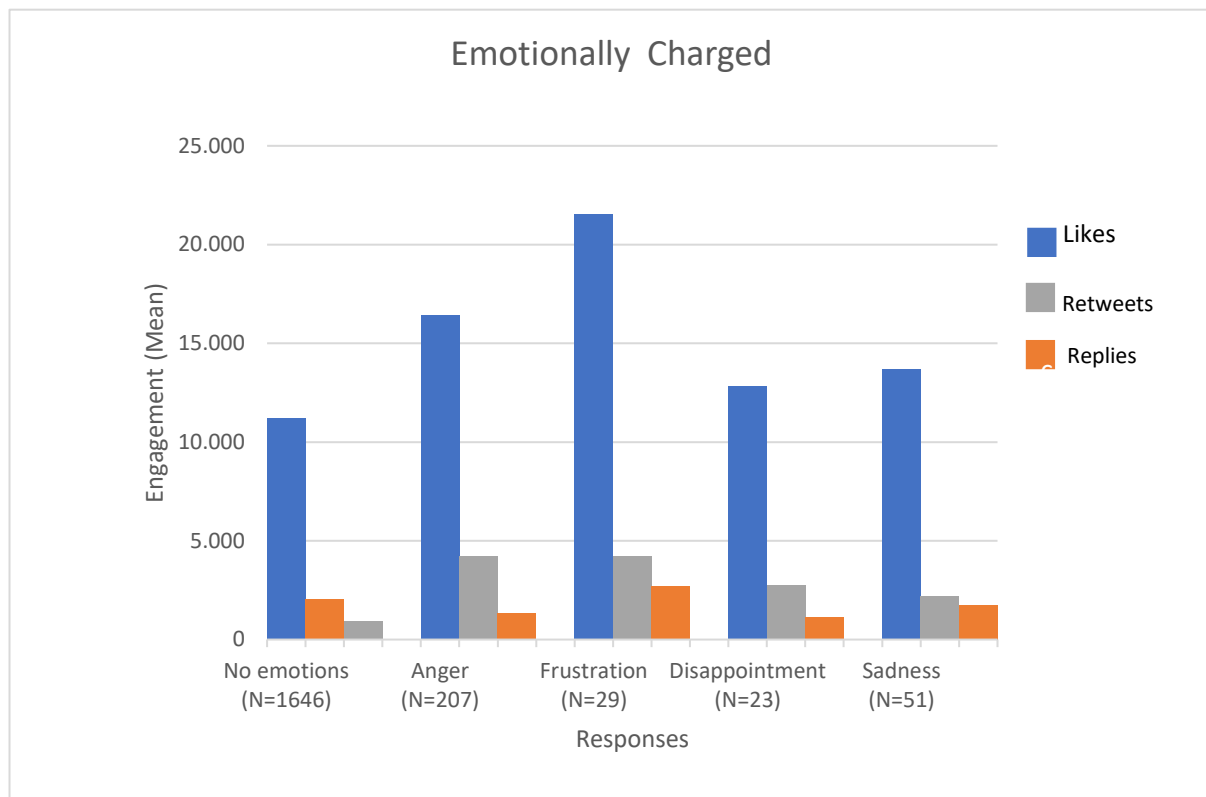


Figure 11

Emotionally charged content disseminated by the public diplomacy stakeholders



The Pulwama suicide attack shifted the focus of political discourse and raised the temperature both domestically and across the board. The institutional and political actors were in sync with each other on narrative disseminated through Twitter. The element of frustration was recorded higher in comparison to anger, disappointment, and sadness. The tweets containing frustration were only 29 but received average engagement (21533 likes, 4252 retweets, and 2702 replies) more than content comprised of anger (16450 likes, 4250 retweets, and 1333 replies). The tweets containing anger are seven times higher in numbers than frustration, but audiences' reception was -42% lower than frustration but 60% higher than disappointment and sadness overall engagement (see figure 11).

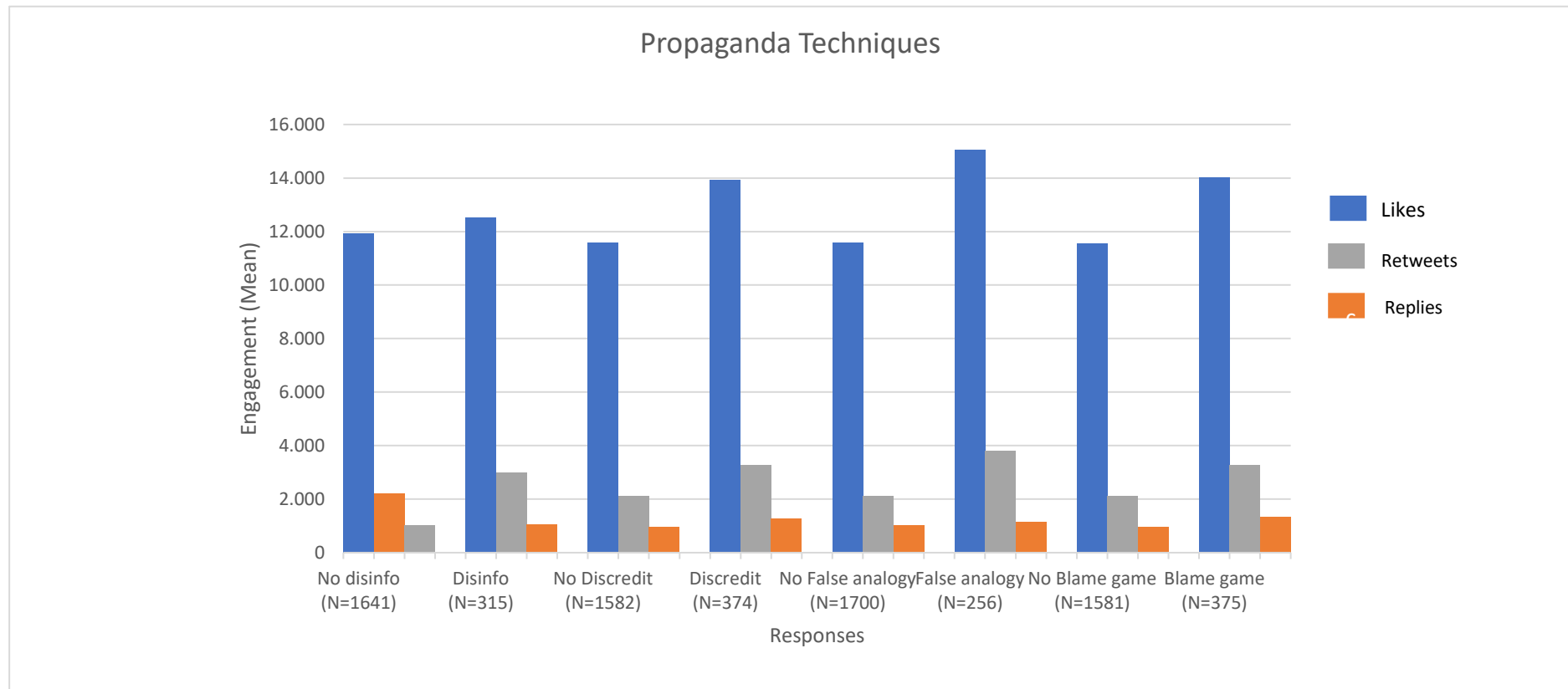
The propaganda techniques used by public diplomacy stakeholders were an average of 17 percent (average n=1626) of the content that contained disinformation, discrediting the rival, false analogy, and using blame game to manipulate the audience to achieve the desired goals and objectives both domestically and internationally. Even with only 17 percent of the content, the average propaganda technique received 26 percent more engagements. The

propaganda techniques worked well in disseminating the domestic political and foreign policy agenda (see figure 12).

The public diplomacy strategy implied having domestic and international support to achieve desired objectives was set to measure through average audience engagement received per tweet on advocacy campaign on terrorism, peace, and conflict, and defense and security (16352 likes, 3684 retweets, and 1245 replies) 24.3 percent (n=475) of the total content. The military provocation content is 14.8%(n=290) which received engagement (15231 likes, 3559 retweets, and 1345 replies) higher engagement despite fewer tweets. The domestic approach was comparatively higher in number 27.1% (n=531) by public diplomacy stakeholders in context with the Pulwama event and received significant engagement per tweet. i.e., (12759 likes, 2581 retweets, and 1361 replies). The international approach with 16.4%(n=320) was comparatively less vigorous than the domestic approach, so the engagement was quite reasonable in numbers (8279 likes, 1630 retweets, and 885 replies) despite a large number of domestic audiences (see figure 13).

Figure 12

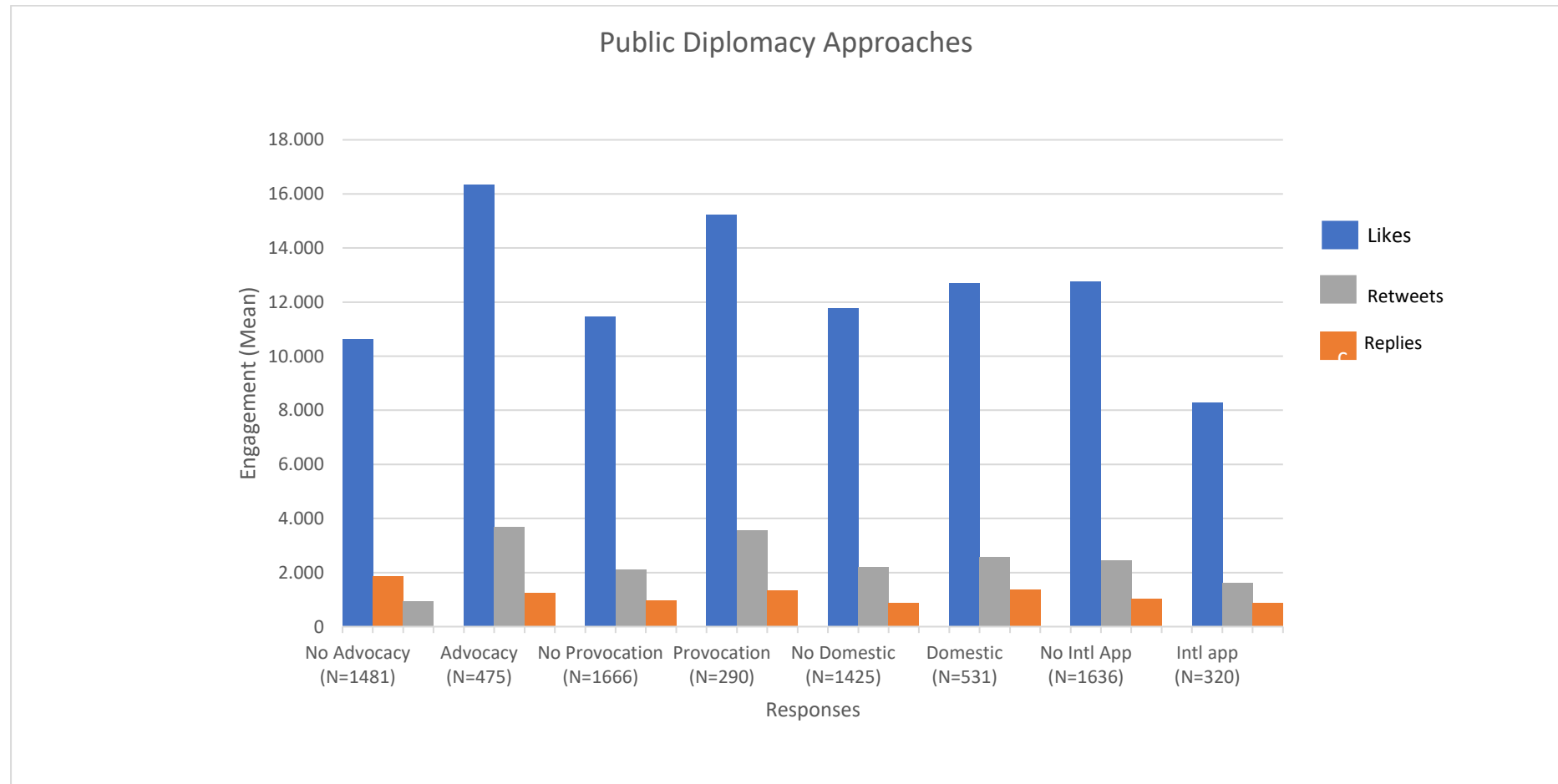
Propaganda techniques implied by the public diplomacy stakeholders



Note: Disinfo (Disinformation)

Figure 13

Public diplomacy approaches implied by the stakeholders

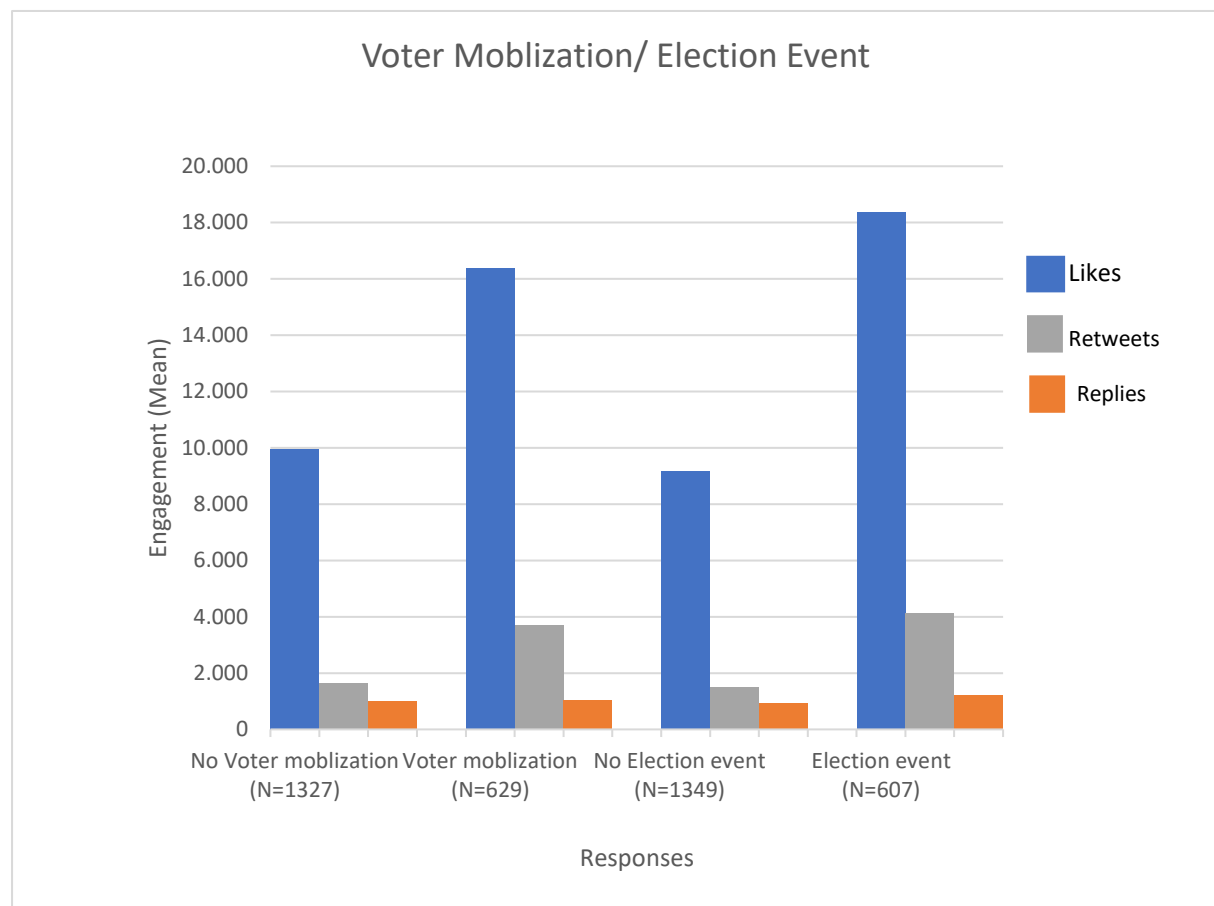


Note: Intl app (International Approach)

The content created by public diplomacy stakeholders to engage the audience for voter mobilization and election campaign received significant engagement per tweet (16393 likes, 3715 retweets, and 1032 replies) higher by average 63% as compared to tweet that has no appeal for a vote and political activism (9954 likes, 1655 retweets, and 1010 replies). The tweets contain Election events, and political rallies were 31%(n=607) which is comparatively reasonable during the pre-election period. The engagement received on these tweets was quite promising (18364 likes, 4133 retweets, and 1221 replies), higher by 102% than non-election event-related tweets.

Figure 14

Audiences' response on voter mobilization and election events



5 Discussion

The last chapter will discuss the study's summarized findings and interpretation of the result, the study's limitations, and an outlook for future research in the field of digital diplomacy.

This study investigated how Indian public diplomacy stakeholders used social media to achieve political and foreign policy objectives. This study used the Digital reflexive control theory's informational model, the 4E funnel, to examine the strategies implied over twitter in context with the Pulwama event in the pre-election scenario by examining public diplomacy stakeholders' communication. According to Yepsen (2012), digital diplomacy is a core medium of public diplomacy. Social media is being actively used in election campaigns and by government departments to communicate with the foreign public. The use of Twitter by world leaders is compelling and influential in Twitter diplomacy literature

5.1 Result discussion

Twitter has a unique environment as compared to other social media networks. Twitter has been considered an authentic political communication medium and more newsworthy than other SMNs (Social Media Networks). News outlets and global media retrieve their day-to-day news agendas through official Twitter handle press releases and political agendas. The decentralized nature of the world's media outlets makes it challenging to keep up with global events as they emerge in the news. While Twitter provides a single firehose containing every tweet sent by every user on the planet, monitoring the world's online news outlets necessitates a massive global crawling infrastructure and a constantly updated list of news outlets (Leetaru, 2019).

The discussion chapter is structured as per the 4E funnel of digital reflexive control, and categories are divided according to the sense and essence of the 4E funnel that drove from theory. This chapter will conclude the results of four key elements of reflexive control theory, i.e., Event (Event-triggered political discussion), election, propaganda, and public diplomacy. I will be interpreting findings in the discourse four stages of digital reflexive control 4E funnel, including Entice, Engage, Elevate and Exploit.

Table 13

Details regarding the 4E Funnel of digital reflexive control theory

Entice	Engagement	Elevate	Exploit
Negative political discussion	informative	False analogy	Disinformation
Rhetoric	PD domestic approach	Advocacy campaign	Discredit
Expressions of anger	Voter mobilization	PD International Approach	Blame game
Military provocation	Election event		

Note: PD (Public diplomacy)

5.1.1 Entice

After the Pulwama suicide attack, the first Tweet was done by the spokesperson of the Ministry of external affairs to put the responsibility on Pakistan for carrying out the attack, which later was elevated by the official Twitter account Prime minister's office India. The political discussion enticed through negative discussion was 383 tweets from the whole 1956 tweets after the Pulwama to election day. Two hundred seventy tweets were posted on account of Prime minister Modi that has a negative political connotation in context with Pulwama event towards Pakistan and political rivals which 70% of negative political discussion of overall discussion.

Figure 15

Screenshot of @MEAIndia tweet category “negative political discussion”

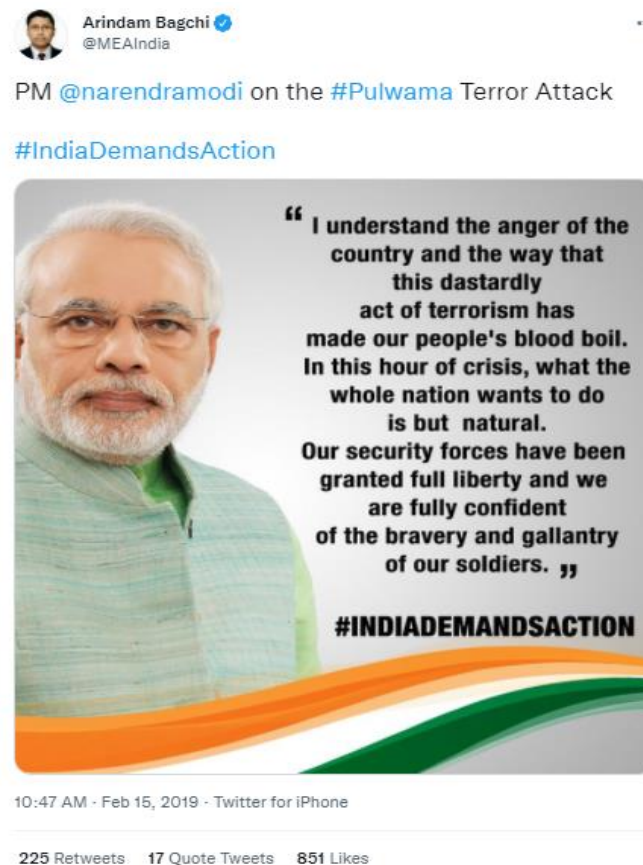


The Prime Minister disseminated 261 tweets containing rhetoric elements that brought past decisions with current failures to evade political point-scoring. Prime Minister Modi made excuses regarding the security lapse due to inadequate measures taken by the previous governments and not buying a sufficient amount of fighter planes to counter the rival nation Pakistan when Indian fighter planes were shot down during the cross-border aggression on 26th of February 2019.

The element of anger shared by the public diplomacy stakeholders, which translated into the enticement of the event, was evident through the political actors it was led by non-other than prime minister Modi with 191 tweets out of total 207 tweets that expressed anger in context with Pulwama followed by institutional account PMO India 12 tweets. The overall mood of Prime minister Modi expressed anger in context with the Pulwama event, which later materialized through military action known as surgical strike Balakot, by violating international airspace.

Figure 16

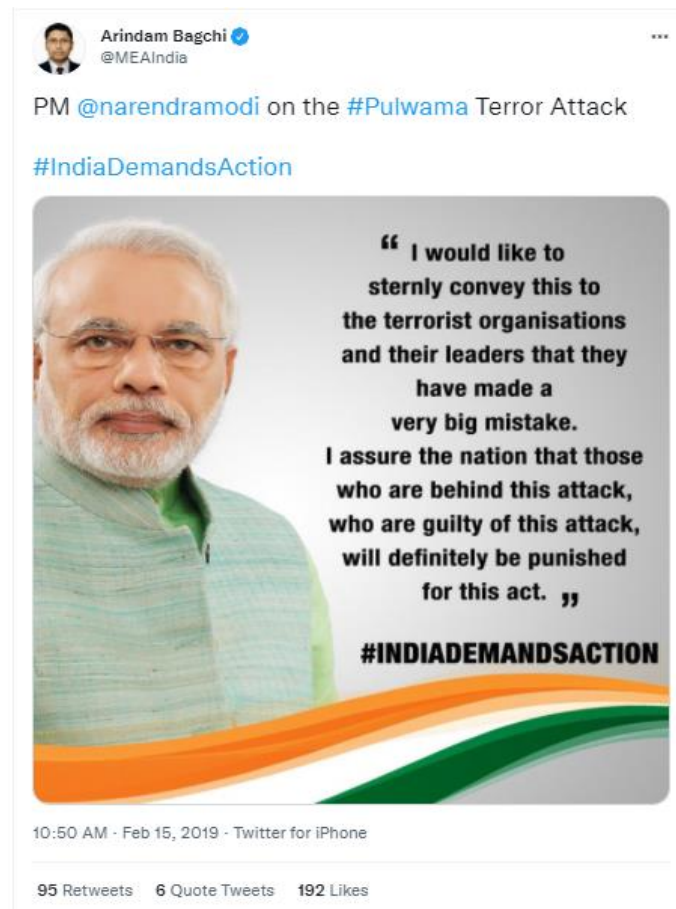
Screenshot of @MEAIndia tweet category “expression of anger”



The military provocation is the tipping point to start the nuclear war by instigating Pakistan due to the Pulwama suicide attack. The prime minister gave the full autonomy to initiate the military action against Pakistan and elevated the whole episode into a full-fledged war. The Indian Ministry of External Affairs kicked off the next day's campaign containing hashtag #IndiaDemandsAction #Pulwama and #kashmirTerrorAttack worldwide to reach domestic audiences and foreign audiences.

Figure 17

Screenshot of @MEAIndia tweet category “Military provocation”



The campaign started with the tweet showing the reactions by US members of Congress with Hashtag #kashmirTerrorAttack the purpose was to show the domestic audience that Indian has support from International political players on this episode. It was evident that a suicide attack happened within the Indian administered part of Jammu and Kashmir, but India was demanding to take action. Since the first day of the Pulwama suicide attack, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs put the responsibility on Pakistan for the event within three hours.

5.1.2 Engagement

The Prime Minister was proactive in discussing the political agenda, mobilizing the audience for the next event, and sharing information about progress and development to

entice voters to participate actively in the election campaign. Out of the 1956 tweets, 626 were informative. The most significant number of 508 tweets were disseminated by Prime Minister Modi's informative account, which contained information about his political engagements, the Pulwama event, and the affectees of the Pulwama event. PM Modi was very active in emphasizing the accomplishments of his political tenure. Shri Santhanam, the then-Defence Minister, was also very active in providing informative content to engage audiences following the Pulwama event during the pre-election period.

Throughout the election campaign, Prime Minister Modi did not leave any event unmentioned when it came to the issue of Pulwama, and he always mentioned Pakistan, either directly or indirectly, in his speeches to the audiences. Prime Minister Modi touted his border aggression as a national victory. PM Modi expressed sympathy for the victims of the Pulwama attack, saying,

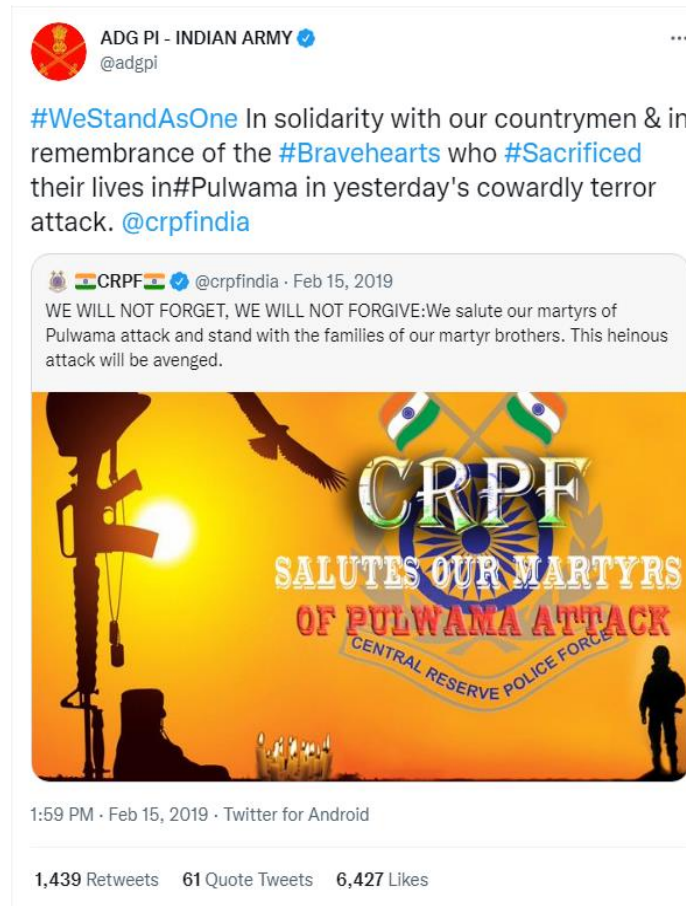
"I can feel the rage in you and in the hearts of the countrymen." I'm filled with the same rage."

The political manifesto depicts the BJP's foreign policy agenda to repeal Article 370 and annul Article 35a, which gives no resident of Jammu and Kashmir the right to purchase land and acquire domicile. Because Jammu and Kashmir are disputed territories, a UN resolution binds India and Pakistan to uphold the international charter.

With 35.7 % (n=112) tweets, the public diplomacy approach led the Twitter account of the spokesperson arm force. From the time of the Pulwama attack until the election, the ADGPI account campaigned on the bravery of its martyrs and soldiers who fought wars against Pakistan since 1947. The day after the Pulwama incident, ADGPI launched an initial hashtag campaign.

Figure 18

Screenshot of @MEAIndia tweet category “Public diplomacy domestic approach”



This process of engaging audiences was a deliberate effort to support the domestic public diplomacy narrative, sync with the foreign policy agenda, and gain support from domestic audiences for future endeavours.

Pre-election voter mobilization was fundamental to the strategy's success, and political actors took the lead in mobilizing voters to participate in the electoral process. Through tweets and hashtags like #voterkar, Pm Narendra Modi has repeatedly urged celebrities, opinion leaders, and media organizations to encourage their followers to vote. Pm Narendra Modi vigorously campaigned for the hashtags #votekar (Do vote) 15 times on March 24th, 2019, invoking dignitaries, celebrities, news agencies, and athletes.

Figure 19

Screenshot of @MEAIndia tweet category “Voter mobilization”



Except for the then-foreign Minister, who was not running in the election, political actors were very active in election events. Pre-elections, PM Modi's tweet contained 69 percent of the content political activities such as election rallies, voter mobilization, speeches to large political gatherings, and inaugurations to various development projects. Following in the footsteps of Prime Minister Ms. Sitharaman, the then-defence Minister, 63.5 percent of content containing political activities related to election events was disseminated. During the election campaign, Minister Modi addressed over 188 political gatherings, and there was a pattern for such activities with well-planned scheduling following the seven phases of voting.

5.1.3 Elevate

The Pulwama incident occurred nearly a month before the first phase of the election and nearly one month after the campaign began on January 12, 2019. The Pulwama incident was followed by military aggression, a limited cross-border war, and other significant events. The military standoff lasted nearly a month until the Pakistani government decided to release wing commander Abhinandan, captured after an Indian air force the Pakistani air force shot down a fighter jet.

During the war-like escalation on both sides, several political narratives were disseminated to boast their nationalism, some of which were false analogies designed to stifle long-term political debate. One appropriate example here was the military standoff that did

not go well for India; it was countered with a false analogy propaganda technique to fade away from the audience's minds.

Figure 20

Screenshot of @MEAIndia tweet category “False Analogy”



To elevate the political and foreign policy agenda, public diplomacy stakeholders launched various campaigns containing hashtags in context to the Pulwama event throughout the election period. Here are a few examples.

The hashtag #NationalWarMemorial was created prior to the February 26th Indian attack on an alleged Jaish-e-Mohammed training camp. Following the attack, opposition leaders questioned the facts surrounding the alleged terror camp attack. In response to the opposition leader's question about the attack, PM Modi launched the hashtag #JantaMaafNahiKaregi (The Public Will Not Forgive), calling the opposition leader's question an insult to the armed forces. After a successful anti-satellite missile test and propagation as a significant national defense milestone for defense deterrence, #MissionShakti (mission power) was launched.

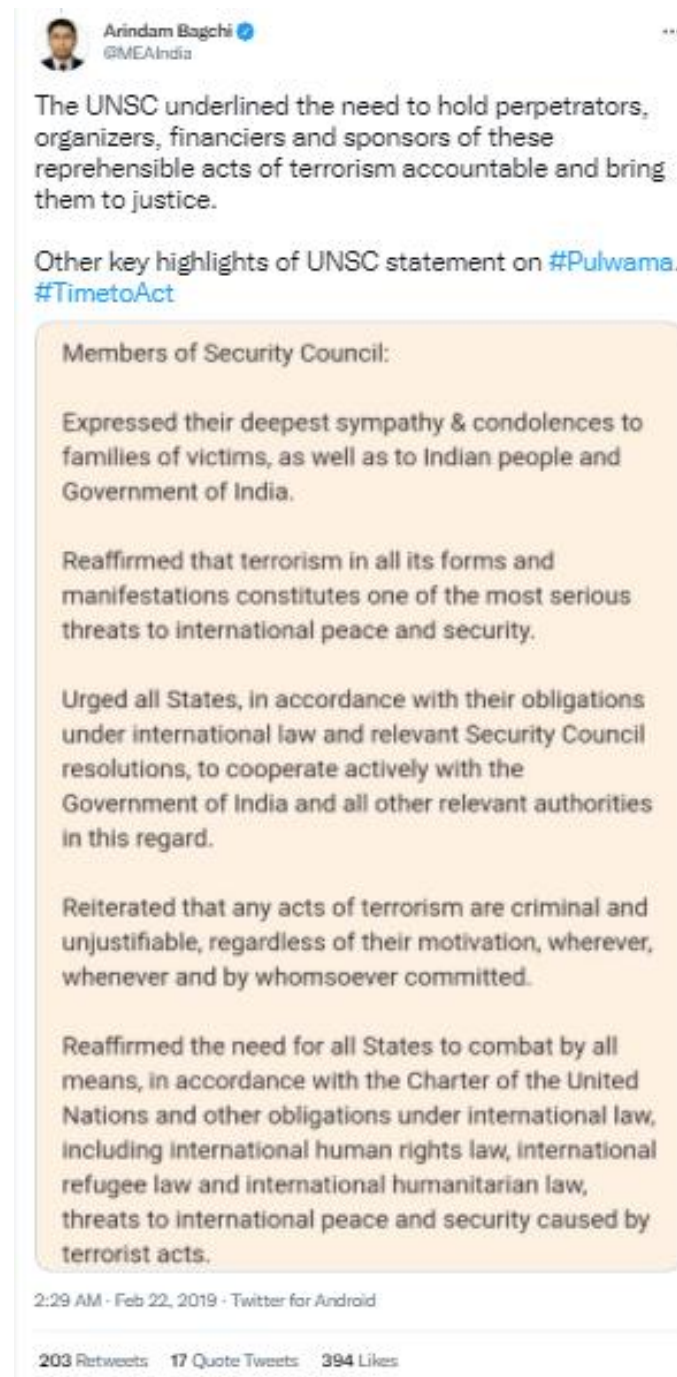
The official account of prime minister's office did not start any hashtags related to Pulwama. The minister for external affairs only used one hashtag in context to Pulwama, which was to question the opposition's stance and patriotism for addressing the question of the facts of the Balakot airstrike.

Within three hours of the Pulwama suicide attack, the official spokesperson account of the Ministry of External Affairs initiated the hashtag #Pulwama. The following day, all the

Ministry of External Affairs tweets were dedicated to the Pulwama campaign to advocate their foreign policy narrative. On February 15th, 2019, the hashtag Pulwama was used and #KashmirTerorrAttack and #IndiaDemandsAction, with an infographic quoting PM Modi's statements. (See figure 20.) After days straight of diplomatic efforts on international platforms, India obtained a condemnation statement from the UN Security Council on February 22nd, 2019. The Ministry of External Affairs promoted the narrative that Pakistan is under pressure to act against terrorist groups, boosted by the hashtags #Pulwama and #Timetoact.

Figure 21

Screenshot of @MEAIndia tweet category “Advocacy campaign”



Later, following the Balakot attack, India stated with the hashtag #RIC (Russia, India, and China), in which the MEA explained that given Pakistan's refusal to recognize and

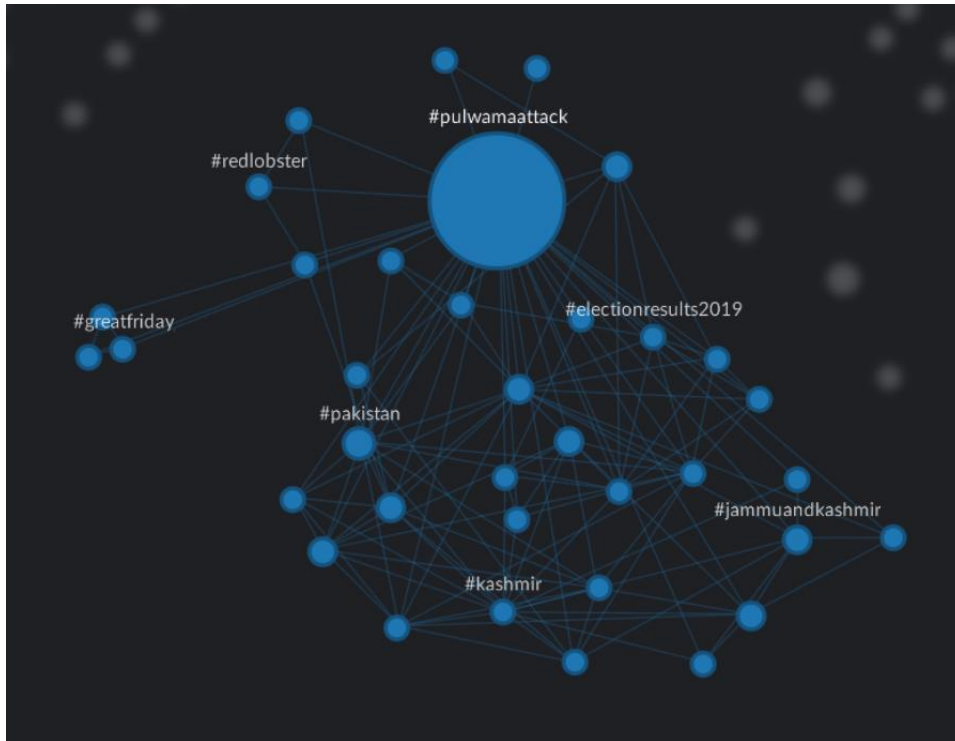
combat terror groups on its soil, as well as credible information that JeM was planning additional attacks in India, the GOI decided to take preventive action. The Balakot strike spawned a few more hashtags, including #Airstrike and #Balakotstrike. MEA highlighted a bilateral meeting between Paraguay's vice president and India's vice president, President Naidu, as being elevated considering the Pulwama incident and used for domestic and international public diplomacy with hashtag #Pulwama. MEA used the hashtag #Pakistan to reaffirm its narrative that Pakistan supports terrorist groups by refuting a statement made by Pakistan's foreign minister.

The defense minister used only two hashtags in connection with the Pulwama event: #PulwamaMartyrs while visiting bereaved families and #AbhinandanVarthaman when wing commander Abhinandan was released from Pakistan as part of a peace initiative.

After the Pulwama incident, the first tweet from the Indian armed forces' spokesperson account, @ADGPI, was to express solidarity with fellow citizens with the hashtag #WeStandasOne. They also used the hashtags #Bravehearts, #sacrificed, and #Pulwama (see figure 4). The ADGPI made the distinction that they did not attribute the CRPF (Central Reserve Police Force) as soldiers, whereas the narrative created to elevate the whole advocacy campaign by the Foreign Office and Prime Minister Modi was based on soldiers martyred in Pulwama.

Figure 22

Detail regarding the hashtags elevated from the #Pulwamaattack

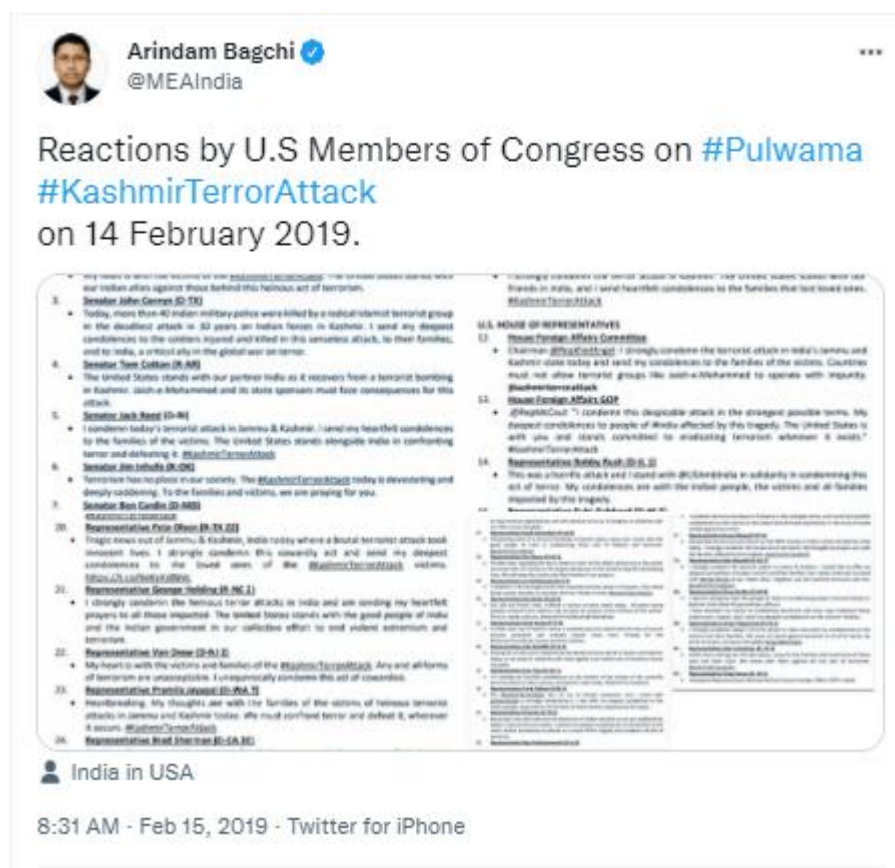


The ADGPI's second hashtag was #BravesSonsOfIndia, which expressed condolences to the families of CRPF personnel killed in the attack. Only two tweets were made in support of CRPF personnel killed in the Pulwama suicide attack. However, most tweets were made to highlight the sacrifice made by Indian soldiers during wars fought against Pakistan.

The international public diplomacy approach was quite evident in pleading the Pulwama case as terror financed and supported by Pakistan. The Indian diplomacy stakeholders achieved several milestones. First, they were able to obtain a UNSC condemnation statement mentioning the Jasir e Mohammed (see figure 7); later, they attacked an alleged terror camp by crossing international borders; and finally, they were able to obtain a UN declaration naming Masood Azher as a terrorist. Using diplomacy, India was able to keep Pakistan on the grey list of the Financial Action Task Force. For the first time in history, India was invited as an observer by the Organization Islamic Conference, marking yet another milestone achieved by the Indian diplomatic cadre during this period.

Figure 23

Screenshot of @MEAIndia tweet category “Public diplomacy international approach”



The MEA disseminated 132 tweets in context to Pulwama out of 234 during the pre-election period, while ADGPI disseminated 67 tweets out of 314. MEA was the public diplomacy stakeholder in charge of implementing foreign policy goals in the context of the Pulwama attack.

5.1.4 Exploit

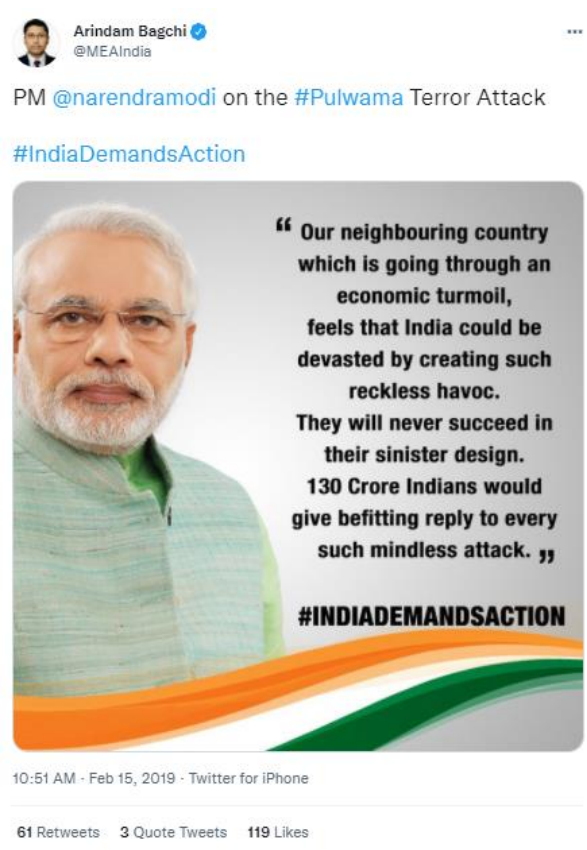
Lastly, the 4E funnel of digital reflexive control assesses the exploitation of weak links that can achieve the destructive aspect by manipulating facts. Following tactics can help to achieve exploitation of weak links and hot buttons.

Disinformation operation is the most powerful tool to exploit the situation destructively to achieve the design goals and objectives. Stakeholders of Public diplomacy responsible for both domestic and international approaches left no stone unturned to foreign

policy agenda and domestic political objectives. It started with a disinformation campaign of holding Pakistan responsible for the Pulwama suicide attack within three hours of the incident. Later the Prime minister himself drove the political campaign to gain political mileage by instigating public sentiments using patriotism and nationalism cards.

Figure 24

Screenshot of @MEAIndia tweet category “Disinformation”



Prime minister Modi disseminated 205 tweets containing disinformation out of 744 tweets posted between the Pulwama event and election result day. MEA posted 17 out of 234 tweets containing disinformation content to influence foreign audiences.

Discrediting the political opponent and rival nation was one propaganda technique to achieve desired objectives and shape the narrative that influenced the audiences. Both stakeholders of public diplomacy, political and institutional, have used propaganda techniques to discredit the opponent. Prime minister Modi's account, posted 254 tweets out of

744 tweets containing content that discredits the opponent, followed by the MEA's 18 tweets out of 234 during the whole election episode in context with Pulwama. The official account of the prime minister's office also played a discrediting campaign with 81 tweets out of 446 tweets.

Figure 25

Screenshot of @MEAIndia tweet category “Discredit”

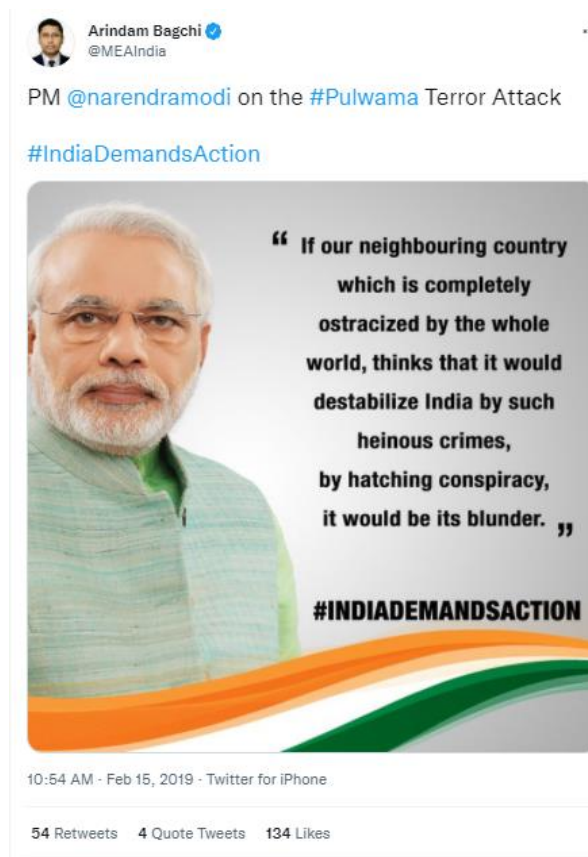


The blame game is also being played both for foreign policy agenda and domestic political objectives. MEA responsible for looking after foreign policy objectives mainly did the propaganda to play the blame game on rival nation Pakistan with specific objectives to achieve 19 tweets containing content to blame Pakistan in context with the Pulwama Incident and build a narrative against Pakistan before international audiences. Prime Minister Modi led the political propaganda to blame his political opponent and rival nation for legitimizing

its cross-border perpetration to gain political mileage in the upcoming general election 2019. 252 tweets were posted out of 744 tweets to propagate blame game.

Figure 26

Screenshot of @MEAIndia tweet category “Blame Game”



The above-mentioned tweets contain all the elements of the 4E funnel of digital reflexive control.

5.2 Conclusion

Domestic political discussion in context with Pulwama incident was significantly negative by political actors compared to institutional accounts, except the ministry of external affairs, which laid the groundwork for negative political discussion with tweets blaming Pakistan for the event. The institutional account has limitations in domestic political affairs because it is intended to be Apolitical. The political actors remain active in informing audiences about political activities, and their political stance as events after Pulwama unfold, whether it is an airstrike on a Jaish e Mohammed terrorist camp. The element of rhetoric

recorded in political actors' accounts to gain political mileage against political opponents while also distracting the public from their military failure in terms of providing evidence regarding the destruction of terrorist camps and the shooting down of military planes by Pakistan. Since the first day of the incident, military provocation has been used to gain domestic support for launching a military offensive against Pakistan, which has later materialized and been celebrated as a victory and boasted about throughout the political campaign for elections.

The political propaganda technique implied throughout the election campaign after Pulwama was quite noticeable. The disinformation technique was implied to distort facts to gain international support and domestic political support to initiate political and foreign policy agenda. The element of disinformation was recorded on political actors' accounts and institutional accounts to support their desired narrative. The blame game and discrediting the enemy and political opponents were noted immediately after the Pulwama incident, whether calling political opponent terrorist sympathizer for questioning the evidence of destruction terrorist camps. Discrediting the enemy for supporting nurturing them against India and refusing the jointly investigating the event. Propaganda techniques false analogy was also noted when the military plane was shot down and captured by the pilot. The first narrative was built that if India had French fighter planes, the situation would be otherwise. The French fighter plane deal was controversial due to financial ambiguity and corruption.

The Pulwama incident occurred within the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir, and it was concluded within three hours to shift blame to another country. The Ministry of External Affairs' decision to immediately blame Pakistan for the terrorist attack was hasty. The diplomatic campaign to isolate Pakistan was initiated by the Ministry of External Affairs and later carried out by political actors on international and domestic levels. Since 2009, India has called for global sanctions against the Jaish e Mohammed and the UN Security Council to declare its leader, Masood Azhar, a terrorist. Many attempts have been made since 2009 but have been thwarted on technical grounds by China (Hindustan Times, 2016). Following the Pulwama suicide attack, India finally succeeded in having Masood Azher designated as an international terrorist on March 13th, later officiated by the UN Security Council on May 1st, 2019 (UNSC, 2019). It was celebrated as a diplomatic victory.

Hence one of the key elements of digital reflexive control is to activate the public diplomacy channel to implement the strategy to achieve desired goals. The tweets of public diplomacy stakeholders demonstrated that India achieved numerous diplomatic milestones at the international level, including military action inside Pakistan without significant international reaction or condemnation, the success of India's cold start doctrine, isolating Pakistan in the Arab world and then maintaining Pakistan on the FATF's (financial action task force) grey list since 2018, and declaring Masood Azher an international terrorist.

The election campaign was designed according to election phases and was actively projected through the political actor's account. Prime minister Modi thoroughly motivated voters to participate electoral process and initiated hashtag #Votekar (Do Vote) by tagging celebrities, athletes, news outlets, and opinion leaders to increase the voter turnout. It definitively favoured the Modi government in election results.

The audience's engagement to the content disseminated by the public diplomacy stakeholders is quite significant in accordance with informal categories developed through the theoretical framework of the digital reflexive control informational model of the 4E funnel.

5.3 Limitations

The empirical research has some deficiencies of its own. The primary limitation concerns difficulties in sampling the tweets retrieved for accounts of public diplomacy stakeholders: the frequency of tweets posted on the Twitter accounts were not equal in number, as some of them only tweeted 85 in total, and the maximum number of tweets posted were prime minister Modi 744, making it difficult to strike a balance in the analysis. From each account 30 random tweets were selected that must cover all informal variables from each category deduced from the theoretical framework so findings would be more accurate.

One of the most difficult challenges was deducing categories based on the theoretical framework because there was no established codebook with the desired categories in the literature review. It took a genuine effort to empirically execute the theoretical framework to produce a plausible outcome that can be replicated in the future for research aspirants.

Since the data was old, I could not verify if any of the tweets were deleted by the creator of the tweets. The study had been planned while events were unfolding. Better results would likely have been obtained if I had established a research methodology.

This study was designed in accordance with the social media network Twitter functionality, as it is no surprise that other social media networks have different strata of audiences with different interests. Twitter has limitations in terms of word count, visual media, and engagement, which cannot be replicated on other social media networks to further evaluate the theoretical framework.

Digital public diplomacy is a relevantly contemporary area of research that is constantly changing with the advancement of social media. There is no specific theory of digital public diplomacy that defines the scope of research, which is both advantageous and disadvantageous. Digital public diplomacy cannot be limited to traditional forms of communication, which are not solely the domain of social scientists who evaluate and design communication. Practitioners and researchers in digital diplomacy have yet to delve into the scope of the digital environment in which artificial intelligence plays a critical role.

5.4 Future Implications

Scholars and practitioners of digital diplomacy interested in studying the communication of public diplomacy stakeholders, political actors, and institutions in the era of social media will benefit from this study. The study's findings revealed that political and institutional stakeholders in public diplomacy preferred to present themselves or the information they disseminate in a way that reflects the domestic political objectives and foreign policy objectives of the political actors and the institution itself, demonstrating that influencing and engaging audiences can shape their minds to act in the offline world.

Reflexive control theory has cognitive aspect as well, which can be explore through empirical study. Network analysis of the content creator and exploration of botnet that give support to elevate the message through widespread dissemination.

Although this study was limited to communication via Twitter, future attempts could include other platforms through which public diplomacy stakeholders reach out to their audiences, such as websites or other social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, etc., to highlight similarities or differences in communication carried out through these online networks. Another interesting perspective to consider regarding the communication by public diplomacy stakeholders is that of the audience engagement and feedback towards narrative built by the public diplomacy stakeholders will provide critical insights concerning socio-cultural dynamics and the audience's perception towards content disseminated in context with event-based communication.

5.5 Declaration of conflict of interest

The author declared that there was no subliminal or vested conflict of interest in this research project. This research aimed to focus on aspects of communication carried out within the framework of India's public diplomacy stakeholders. This attempt was not intended to promote or disparage any individual, country, state institution(s), group of people, or ideology – absolute neutrality was always maintained while working on this project. Given the tensions that have existed between the states of Pakistan and India since their inception until this writing, the author's nationality and religion have had no bearing on any aspect of this research or its outcome.

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Appendix

1. **Attached in this file**
 - a. Codebook
 - b. Coder Reliability Test Results
2. **Submitted separately as Digital Files**
 - a. Intercoder Reliability Coding Sheet and Syntax Analysis
 - b. Coding Sheet and Syntax for Analysis
 - c. Raw Extracted Data
 - d. Python Script for Tweets extraction

- **Codebook**

Introduction to the codebook

The codebook aims to categorize and analyse the Tweets' extracted information from the tweets of Indian political actors and public diplomacy stakeholders posted on their Twitter accounts. The unit of analysis is Tweets selected from 14 February to 25th May 2019 posted on Twitter after the Pulwama attack and until the General election 2019.

Table 1

Political actor and public diplomacy stakeholders of Indian Government

Description	Name	Twitter Handle	Followers
Prime Minister of India	Narendra Modi	@narendramodi	69.3 million
Office of the Prime Minister of India	PMO India	@PMOIndia	42.8 million
Foreign Minister of India	Sushma Swaraj	@SushmaSwaraj	12.9 million
Ministry of foreign Affair India	Official Spokesperson, Ministry of External Affairs, India	@MEAIndia	2.1 million
Minister of Defense	Nirmala Sitharaman	@nsitharaman	4.4 million
Military Spokesperson India	ADG PI - INDIAN ARMY	@adgpi	7.1 million

For answering the research questions, the codebook has been divided into further four categories after formal categories. The categories include (1) Domestic Political discussion and Pulwama, (2) Propaganda techniques, (3) Public Diplomacy strategy (4) General Parliament Elections 2019. As per proposed research model these categories would conclude into the 4 E funnel of digital reflexive control that have been proposed by Bojla & Pamment (2018).

Formal Variables

Table 2

Details about formal categories

Serial No.	Variable	Description	Treatment
1.1	Coder ID	Code assigned to the coder	Ahmad = 1 Other(s) = 2
1.2	Serial number	Mention the number of tweets that is being analyzed; the number should range in chronological order i.e 1,2,3	Numeric values only e.g, 132
1.3	Account	Mention value ascribed to every recruited Twitter account	@narendramod = 1 @PMOIndia = 2 @SushmaSwaraj = 3 @MEAIndia = 4 @nsitharaman = 5 @adgpi = 6
1.4	Date of posting	Enter information related to the date when the tweet was posted	Time format DATE = dd/mm/yyyy Example 28/10/1990

1.5	Time of posting	Mention information related to the time of posting of the tweet; use the 24-hour time format	Merely numeric values can be used; e.g, 17:23
1.6	Tweet URL	Enter the URL of the tweets	
1.7	Tweet ID	Tweet ID are unique numbers that helps to retrieve actual tweet from twitter archive.	ID=93789399292
1.8	Text of the Tweet	Enter the entire Tweet text	Text
1.9	Language of Text	Enter the language	Hindi = 0 English = 1 Both English and Hindi =2 Other = 3
1.10	Hashtag details	Enter hashtag content	No hashtag = NA Hashtag= If one or more hashtag present. Enter entirely.
1.11	Image details	Enter what the image is about	No image = 0 Infographic = 1 Pulwama attack = 2 Kashmir Issue = 3 Anti-Pakistan = 4 Election campaign = 5 Diplomacy=6 Other =99
1.12	Video details	Enter what the video is about	No video = 0 Infographic = 1 Pulwama attack = 2 Kashmir Issue = 3 Anti-Pakistan = 4 Election campaign = 5

1.13	Link	select if the tweet includes a link to external content or further information, eg. a link to the website of the conservative party.	0: there is no link to external content 1: there is a link to external content
1.14	Favourites	Enter number of received favourites	Merely numeric values can be used; e.g.; 542
1.15	Retweets	Enter number of times the tweet retweeted	Merely numeric values can be used; e.g.; 91
1.16	Replies	Enter the number of replies received by the tweet	Merely numeric values can be used; e.g.; 53

Category – 1: Domestic Political discussion and Pulwama

Table 3

Details about message content over Twitter related to political discussion pertaining to Pulwama event.

Serial No	Variables	Manifestation	Examples	Treatment
Political discussions				
2.1	Political approach	Tweets that represent political approach towards certain topic, issue or opponents.	Home Minister @rajnathsingh chairs meeting of floor leaders of political parties in both the houses of parliament in the wake of Thursday's #PulwamaTerroristAttack	no use = 0 negative = 1 neutral = 2 positive = 3 cannot distinguish = 99
2.2	Informative	The content message over Twitter that	Counter-terrorism on the agenda @MVenkaiahNaidu &	No use of informative content = 0

		intents to provide useful knowledge related to Pulwama attack	Paraguayan VP @HVelazquezPy held delegation-level talks. Reiterated commitment to fight terrorism; expressed condolences for #Pulwama victims. Identified areas of cooperation-hydropower, agriculture, space, ICT, renewable energypic.twitter.com/blmS Oxfwma	Use of informative content = 1
2.3	Rhetoric	The content message over Twitter that lacks any meaningful information about Pulwama attack	The country has felt the shortage of Rafale today. Today, Hindustan is saying in one voice, "What would have happened if we had Rafale?" The country has suffered a lot due to the first selfishness on Rafale and now due to politics: PM	No use of rhetoric content = 0 Use of Rhetoric content = 1
2.4	Emotional ly charged	Tweet that contains discontent or expression frustration, anger and other form of emotions.	#WeStandAsOne In solidarity with our countrymen & in remembrance of the #Bravehearts who #Sacrificed their lives in#Pulwama in yesterday's cowardly terror attack. @crpfindia	No use of emotions = 0 Expressing Anger = 1 Expressing frustration = 2 Expressing disappointment = 3 Expressing Sadness = 4

Category – 2: Propaganda techniques

Table 4

Details for Propaganda strategy used in event-based communication.

Serial No.	Variables	Manifestation	Examples	Treatment
Propaganda Techniques				
3.1	Disinformation	It relates to the false information that intends to highlight the potentials of BJP government to deal with Pakistan in the future and that information explains the current government can only protect India from Pakistan's attack.	In the light of continuing refusal of Pakistan to acknowledge & act against terror groups on its territory & based on credible information that JeM was planning other attacks in India,GOI decided to take pre-emptive action:EAM @SushmaSwaraj Remarks at #RIC http://myMEA.in/dw2pic.twitter.com/IZxGn7RDMz	No Use of disinformation = 0 Uses of disinformation = 1
3.2	Discredit	Offering information that discredit the domestic political actors and international political actors	These are the same people whose statements are helping Pakistan & harming India. They are the same people whose	No Use of discredit = 0 Uses of discredit = 1

			statements are being happily quoted in Parliament of Pakistan and in the radio of Pakistan. I want to ask them- do you support our armed forces or suspect them?: PM	
3.3	False analogy	Any tweet that links any historic event with Pulwama attack or narrative against Pakistan	Today every soldier, every citizen of the country is asking this question that why this treatment was done to the martyrs? Why such injustice was done to the great heroes who dedicated themselves for the country? What were the reasons, due to which no one's attention went to the memorial for the martyrs?: PM	No use of Pulwama attack = 0 Uses of Pulwama attack = 1
3.4	Blame game	Putting the blame on Pakistan for terror support or blaming opposition party for apologetic towards Pakistan	Loyal courtier of Congress' royal dynasty admits what the nation	No use of blaming the opposition or Pakistan = 0

	already knew- Congress was unwilling to respond to forces of terror.\n\nThis is a New India- we will answer terrorists in a language they understand and with interest! https://twitter.com/ANI/status/1108945371772796930 ...	Use of blaming the opposition or Pakistan = 1
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Category – 3: Public Diplomacy strategy

Table 5

Details regarding the Public diplomacy strategy in context with Pulwama.

Serial No.	Variables	Manifestation	Examples	Treatment
4. Public Diplomacy				
4.1	advocacy campaign	It refers to those messages that raised the issues related to peace and conflicts, terrorism, defense and other international issues.	Pakistan demarched on the act of aggression against India\n\nThe Acting High Commissioner of Pakistan was summoned this afternoon by MEA to lodge a strong protest at the unprovoked act of aggression by Pakistan	No Use of misleading = 0 Uses of misleading = 1

			against India earlier today\n\nhttp://my mea.i n/dwa pic.twitter.com/ AQ2gcVw82Z	
4.2	Military provocations	Calling for War: Threatening the Pakistan to avenge the attack. Indicators; Enemy, surgical strike	Opposition insults our forces time and again.\n\nI appeal to my fellow Indians- question Opposition leaders on their statements.\n\nTell them- 130 crore Indians will not forgive or forget the Opposition for their antics. \n\nIndia stands firmly with our forces. \n\n#JantaMaafNahiKar egihttps://twitter.com/A NI/status/11089487421 30941952	No use of Calling for War tactics = 0 Use of Calling for War tactics = 1
4.3	Domestic approach	Tweet that designs to target local audience mostly in local language or regional language. i.e., Hindi. Discussion pertaining to Pulwama attack or election.	#WeStandAsOne In solidarity with our countrymen & in remembrance of the #Bravehearts who #Sacrificed their lives in s#Pulwama in yesterday's cowardly terror attack. @crpfindia	No use of Domestic issue = 0 Use of domestic issues = 1

4.4	International approach	It refers to those actions that help Indian Political actors to gain international empathy over the attack.	Act of solidarity In a rare move, South African Parliament unanimously passes a motion condemning the Pulwama attack and condemns the cowardly act of terrorism. @CyrilRamaphosa Read more: s:///DAKF1NzMSI via: @NewIndianXpress , s:///mX07u063aB	No use of sympathy tactics = 0 Use of sympathy tactics = 1
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Category-5: **General Parliament Elections 2019.**

Table 6

Details regarding the General Parliament Elections 2019.

Serial no	Variables	Manifestation	Examples	Treatment
5.1	Voter mobilization	the Tweet that conveys the message to Indian public to vote in election 2019.	Today is the final phase of the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. I urge all those voting in this phase to vote in record numbers. Your one vote will shape India's development trajectory in the years to come. I also hope first time voters vote enthusiastically.	No use of vote appeal = 0 Uses vote appeal = 1

5.2	Election as an event	The content of Tweet that discuss or debate upcoming election 2019	Congress in MP is synonymous with colossal failures. It's a sweep for BJP in MP. My speech from Sagar.	0: No discussion of election
				1: Discussion of election

- **Inter-coder Reliability Results**

Categories	Kappa for two coders
Informative	0.889
Rhetoric	0.78
Emotionally-charged	0.716
Political Discussion	0.639
Disinformation	0.831
Discredit	0.923
False analogy	0.375
Blame game	0.684
Advocacy campaign	0.645
Military provocations	0.667
Domestic approach	0.865
International approach	0.902
Voter mobilization	0.8
Election as an event	0.791

Note. Average = 0.74

