

DECODING BOTS OF TERRORISM IN BALOCHISTAN

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Abstract

Since the withdrawal of the US / North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces from Afghanistan in August 2021, Balochistan has experienced a renewed wave of terrorism with improved organisational/operational capabilities and better-equipped Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) and Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF). The information environment of Balochistan has also undergone a rapid change in the last three years, with the Baloch population, especially the Baloch youth, becoming more accessible to the Baloch Nationalist Militant Organizations through a very efficient militant narrative creation dissemination system. This system of narrative creation based on the manipulation of facts and fabricated stories matched by a dynamic propaganda dissemination system is quickly replacing the facts with an alternative reality. It has also successfully replaced the national mainstream media and is becoming an alternative media choice for the Baloch population. The Baloch Nationalist Militant Organisations' narrative has quickly gained popularity among domestic audiences and accrues credence from international media. An effective response mechanism is crucial to counter the far-reaching implications through a comprehensive and all-encompassing national effort.

Keywords: Terrorism, Social Media, Disinformation, Balochistan.

Introduction

Over the last two decades, counterterrorism laws have evolved to cater for the evolving threat of terrorism, including the laws that prohibit media coverage of terrorism that may create the intended feeling of terror amongst the society/ populace and also the glorification of terrorists meant to inspire others with their actions. Globally, media houses responded to this threat of exploiting the media with their set of rules/ ethics to prohibit/ restrict coverage of choreographed terrorist actions designed to terrorise the public and glorify the perpetrators to inspire their followers and, in some cases, even seek legitimacy. This self-imposed ethical prohibition by the global mainstream media challenged the terrorists to find new avenues for broadcasting their terrorist actions/ publication of their propaganda/ narrative. Online social media platforms provide a far more convenient, efficient, and secure solution. As social media platforms do not necessarily conform to internationally recognised journalistic ethics, they offer an effective alternative to the terrorists for publication of their terrorist acts and supporting narratives. In March 2019, a gunman broadcast live footage on Facebook of the attack on one of the mosques.¹

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Social media platforms came under scrutiny internationally, and different countries adopted their respective models for monitoring these digital platforms and made efforts to incorporate adherence to rules/ ethical practices evolved in the last two decades by/for media coverage of terrorism. However, this scrutiny of social media remained marred by the human rights groups campaigning for freedom of information and geopolitical polarisation, and today, there are numerous social media platforms available to terrorist organisations not only for publication of their narrative but also to provide them with secure means of communications. This challenge to counter the availability of online space to the terrorists for dissemination of their narrative is more complex for developing countries with lesser technological wherewithal and lesser leverage over the global IT companies that own the social media platforms.

International Terrorist organisations were quick to adopt the use of cyberspace to influence the masses through information propagation. Al-Qaeda has its media centres named Al-Sahab, Al-Andulus, Al-Malahim, etc., and Daesh has its Media houses called Al-Hayat, Al-Furqan, Dajla, and Saina to propagate its narrative to the world in general and potential financiers and recruits in specific.² Baloch Nationalist Militant Organisations (BNMOs) were equally quick to learn and create digital platforms and online media centres.

The scope of this study is to examine the creation of an alternative media by the Baloch Nationalist Militant Organizations through an elaborate ecosystem of narrative creation and information dissemination based on modern digital platforms. The study is restricted to understanding the processes involved in the creation of the mythical glorified terrorists' heroism and narrative of hate through disinformation and manipulation of historical facts in the absence of a cohesive state response in digital space. During the research, due to the social intricacies involved, a mixed approach is adopted to triangulate the information through various secondary and primary sources to present multiple findings. This study objectively quantifies the effort and impact of BNMOs' use of digital space by employing the Visual Verbal Video Analysis method. In contrast, the information used as the basis of terrorists' hate narratives is only available on the disinformation channels/ books of BNMOs. Thus, qualitative approaches are employed to authenticate/ negate through a discourse analysis of the data collected during interviews/ interactions.

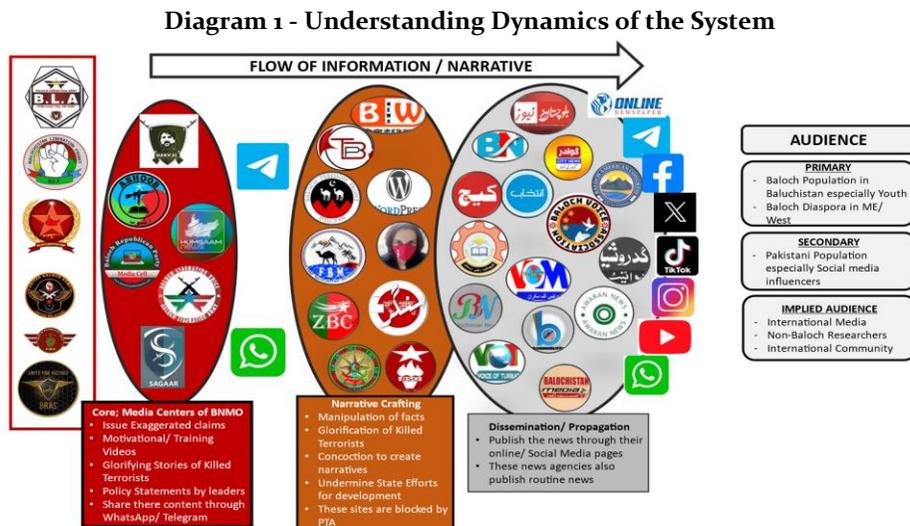
Creation of Information Dissemination System by BNMOs

To understand the methodology used by the BNMOs to craft and disseminate their narrative to the intended target audience, an in-depth knowledge of Baloch history, an understanding of geographical and demographical realities and prevailing tribal culture must be the foundation of the analysis to be able to differentiate between the facts and disinformation. Baluchistan, with a harsh climate of annual rainfall below 5-6 Inches, is geographically spread over 347,190 square kilometres of Baluchistan (43% of the landmass of Pakistan) with a scattered population of just 14.89 M in 2023 (6.3 % of Pakistan's Population). This scattered Population in small villages, commonly known

as killis, not only makes the service delivery by the state institutions difficult but also creates a massive challenge in disseminating information. The rapid spread of communication systems in Baluchistan since 2014/15, especially the mobile networks and the advent of social media platforms, addressed this challenge of information dissemination. BNMOs seized the opportunity and created an alternative information dissemination system based on digital/ social media platforms before any state institution or even the existing mainstream media houses could adopt it. The feeling of disenfranchisement in the Baloch population created by the poor reporting/ less coverage of Baluchistan's problems (social/ infrastructural/ governance/ calamities issues) by the mainstream national media also contributed to the instant success of this alternative system. Accordingly, BNMOs, especially BLA-A and BLF, have created narrative dissemination systems supported by directly controlled media houses and indirectly supported news agencies in digital space. These elaborate systems have successfully manipulated perception locally within Balochistan and have been relatively successful in influencing national and international media.

Understanding the Dynamics of the System

Since 2020, BNMOs have evolved into an elaborate system organised in multi-layered groups/ channels/ pages/ accounts on all available digital platforms to disseminate information.



Source: Made by Author, Material Retrieved from Bras WhatsApp Link³

The Diagram explains the stages of narrative building by manipulating facts to the intended audience through local news agencies based on digital/ social media platforms. The media centres of respective BNMOs primarily issue (1) exaggerated claims of deaths of security forces in terrorist activity as and when conducted, (2) conformations on the death of any terrorist(s), (3) glorification of dead terrorists, (4)

training and propaganda videos, (5) statements by their leaders, and (6) literature (training/ motivational). This information is communicated to the next tier through a close circuit of scrambled telegram/ WhatsApp numbers that comprises so-called news agencies/ media influencers that not only acknowledge the actions of these BNMOs as legitimate but also manage appropriate additions/ manipulation of facts to make it sound more chaotic to render success to the terrorist. These news agencies/ media influencers consider all terrorist acts against the security forces, local/ settler population, and even development projects as politically legitimate. This group of digital news agencies creates disinformation campaigns on all available digital platforms to ensure its propagation to all the intended audience. Interestingly, none of these news agencies/ media influencers are registered with national/ international media/ press regulatory authorities. The next layer in this alternative content dissemination system comprises multiple online/ social media news agencies that are mainly localised to their region in nature but have a considerable following/ influence among the ethnic Baloch population in cyberspace followed by the outermost layer of this system comprising of innumerable individual media influencers/ self-acclaimed journalists that are spread globally to contribute in dissemination of content through their X (Twitter), Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, Snapchat, and other social media applications. This layer also uses WhatsApp and Telegram channels to spontaneously share news among all the participants and create synergy in the dissemination campaigns. These WhatsApp groups work as information initiators tagged as journalists and are spread across Baluchistan province and globally in the Baloch diaspora. All the members in such groups are only included through an invitation link⁴.

The most exciting part of this alternative content dissemination system is that although many self-acclaimed journalists, media influencers, and graphic designers are spread across Pakistan, the anonymity of the source is maintained through cover names/ multiple scrambled numbers while ensuring full credit to narrative crafting agencies to maintain their relevance as news breakers.⁵

Crafting Narratives/ Disinformation

This elaborate alternative narrative dissemination system crafts narratives through exaggeration and manipulation of facts and creates infographics/ videos. In the succeeding paragraphs, several crafted narratives are analysed; myths are busted to understand the complete ecosystem of crafted narratives and dissemination. Despite being founded on lies, this crafting of narratives has rendered a fair quantum of success to BNMOs due to a lack of adequate response/ rebuttal from state institutions/ media entities.

The Story behind the creation of Majeed Brigade

The story of the creation of BLA-Achu and Majeed Brigade by Aslam Baloch, as narrated by Miran Mazar, editor of The Baluchistan Post⁶ (TBP), explains that Majeed Brigade was named after two brothers: Majeed Langove Senior, who died on August 2,

1974, when he was holding a hand grenade that exploded in his hand while he was sitting on a tree to assassinate Mr Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto for dismissing the elected Govt of NAP in Baluchistan and started a military operation in Baluchistan and Majeed Langove Junior who died while fighting security forces in Quetta in 2010.

Fact Check

No assassination attempt on Prime Minister Mr Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto on August 2, 1974, is recorded even in the books written by nationalist Baloch writers. However, two different accounts of killings in Quetta in the 1970s can be found in the books. Firstly, Dr Naimatullah Gichki, in his book, vaguely (without any reference) mentions the death of Majeed Mengal⁷ (BSO member) in the 1970s while protesting against Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto. Whereas a detailed narration of the incident of killing of a Rikshaw driver, Mohsin Kanshi, resulting from aerial firing by the security guards of Mr Qayyum Khan, who was visiting Quetta in connection with the visit of Princess Pahlavi in May 1972, is given by most authentic writer on the Baluchistan political crisis of the 1970s, Mir Ghaus Bakhsh Bizinjo.⁸ It is important to note that Mir Ghaus Bakhsh Bizinjo had firsthand knowledge of all the happenings, and his book 'Autobiography' is the most authentic source on happenings of the 1970s. It does not mention any such assassination attempt on Mr Zulfiqar Ali Bhutto in his autobiography.⁹

Fact Check on Aslam Baloch aka Achu, aka Merick

Although he was not a Baloch, Aslam Tajik is glorified and celebrated as the most prominent icon of Baloch resistance in the 21st Century. The original name of Aslam was Takari Muhammad Aslam, son of Rahim Dad, and was an Afghan Tajik by ethnicity.¹⁰ In 1992, Aslam came to Baluchistan while his family (parents and siblings) remained in Afghanistan.¹¹ It is reported that Takari Muhammad Aslam, as a child, was a household helper at the house of Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri while he was in a self-imposed exile in Afghanistan, and he brought him along to Pakistan¹² on termination of his exile when the Najibullah administration began to crumble in the face of Islamic resistance in Afghanistan.¹³ While BLA was created in Kohlu District in the early 2000s under the leadership of Balach Marri, son of Nawab Khair Baksh Marri, Aslam did not join BLA but remained a close aide of Nawab Khair Bakhsh Marri. There are speculations that Aslam became part of BLA in 2010 when he was a clerk in the mineral department¹⁴ and also the informer/ spokesman (aka Meerak Balcoh) of BLA groups in the Sharig/ Khost areas of Harnai District. He announced the creation of the Majeed Brigade after the killing of Majeed Langove Junior in 2010, and the first activity by the Majeed Brigade was the attack by Darwesh Baloch in Dec 2011 in Quetta, killing 13 civilians.¹⁵ By this time, Aslam Tajik had come under the radar of security forces. He was thought to have been killed in a military operation in the Sibbi district in 2016.¹⁶ It was learned later that he survived but was injured and travelled to Afghanistan/ India for treatment. He was a rising star in the Baloch Militant landscape and from Afghanistan; it was reported that he went to New Delhi through a fake Afghan passport for treatment of his injuries in a private hospital, Max Health Care.¹⁷ Following his treatment, he came back to

Afghanistan in 2017 and started to re-organise his splinter group out of BLA, named BLA-Achu. To prove the generosity of the leader of the newly found BLA splinter group, Aslam Tajik went on to set a personal example by sending his son Rehan on a suicide attack to target a bus in Dalbandin carrying Chinese, injuring 5 Chinese on August 11, 2018.¹⁸ This attack became the only second suicide attack in the Militant Landscape of Baluchistan, followed by numerous glorification stories by the media houses linked with BNMOs helping to earn a Godfather status for Aslam Tajik. However, there is an apparent discrepancy in the claims about the age of Rehan at the time of his suicide attack; as per the Baloch National Movement's martyrs list, Rehan was 20 years old (born on June 15, 1998), while as per TBP claim, he was 22 years.¹⁹ Meanwhile, available information from Baloch Militant media cells makes it difficult to confirm the marriage of Aslam Tajik and Yasmeen Qalandarani, residents of the Tutak area of Khuzdar. It is speculated that Yasmeen's brother joined BLA under Balach Marri in the early 2000s in the Kohlu area, and there, Aslam Tajik's marriage was arranged with Yasmeen Qalandarani.²⁰

After the death of Aslam Achu in the Aino Mena area of Kandahar, Afghanistan, in December 2018, the ex-student leader turned Terrorist Basheer Zeb assumed the role of the next leader of the BLA-Achu group. Still, the group remained less active in 2019/2020. BLA-Achu became active again in 2021 by establishing the Hakkal media centre and issuing their first publication, Cheda (Baloch word meaning to aim at), followed by ten more books, as mentioned in Table A.²¹

Table 1: Hakkal Media Publications

Ser	Publication	Year of Publication	Main Contents
1.	Cheda (Baloch word meaning "To Aim at")	2021	Fifty-two pages in Urdu are divided into six chapters, comprising BLA's manifesto, organisation, basic training, code of conduct, and the motivational message of the BLA commander-in-chief in the last chapter.
2.	Shari	April 2022	It is a collection of articles in Urdu and English glorifying Shari Baloch, including an article by her husband, Hebatan Bashir (A suicide bomber who attacked Chinese teachers at Karachi University). ²²
3.	Helkari	December 2022	It is a 248 pages comprehensive training course in Urdu divided into eight chapters on weapon and combat equipment training,

			including making booby traps, suicide jackets, and IEDs.
4.	Sniper Helkari	March 2023	The 42-page general sniper training course in Urdu details using a Russian-made 7.62 mm Dragunov sniper rifle.
5.	Jadeed Mahartain (Modern Skills)	April 2023	It is a 44-pages Night Vision Devices training course in Urdu, including Longot AL350, Longot A10, AN/PVS-7, and Laser Dot for rifles.
6.	Fry the Brain (Sniper Techniques)	December 2023	It is a 616-page Urdu translated version of "Fry the Brain, the Art of Urban Sniping and its Role in Modern Guerrilla Warfare" by John West.
7.	Naqabil-e-Shikast Samachar (Undefeatable Rebel)	March 2024	It comprises 90 pages in Urdu, with five chapters containing revolutionary motivating ideas. These include guidance on handling hardships during the fight, operational and social media security, and organisational training.
8.	Digital Security	2024	Five pages in Urdu on digital security, including an introduction to the Dark web (Tor browser and DuckDuckGo search engine).
9.	Khufiya Cell (Secret Cell)	Not known	111 pages in Urdu on operational security, security during recruitment/ training, and security of sleeper cells
10.	Hathiyaroon ki Sifarkari (Zeroing of Weapons)	Not known	52 pages in Urdu on zeroing of pistol, AK-47, M16, Sniper Rifle, RPG-7, Grenade Launcher (GP-25), Laser dots and LMG
11.	Guerilla Jangi Hikmat Amlian (Guerilla Tactics)	Not known	41-page abridged Urdu translation of "Guerrilla Warfare" by Ernest, Che Guevara

Myth of Dr Allah Nazar

As per Ashob media (the official media cell of Baloch Liberation Front) and the Zurumbush Urdu Radio, the official media cell of the Baloch National Movement propagates Dr Allah Nazar as a gold medalist in surgery. It is also noted that as per Allah Nazar's Biography on Bolan Voice (BLF linked online media), Allah Nazar Baloch (actual

name Allah Nazar Muhammad Hassaini) was born in Mehi village of Mashkey Valley, matriculated from Gajjar Town in 1986, intermediate from Atta Shad Degree College Turbat in 1989 and secured admission in Bolan Medical College in 1992, and finally received a Gold medal in gynaecology in 1999.²³ He raised BSO-Azad in 2002 while still a student at Bolan Medical Complex.²⁴

Fact Check

Despite earnest efforts by the author, Dr Allah Nazar's qualification as a Doctor of Medicine could not be confirmed by Bolan Medical Complex Records. Meanwhile, his classmate opined that he left Bolan Medical Complex without completing his MBBS.²⁵ Moreover, a male gynaecologist is culturally not possible in Pakistan, especially in the tribal culture of Balochistan. BLF linked media channels in the process of glorifying their terrorist leader, forgetting to mention the killings of several innocent Balochs from his village (Mehe) and Mashkey valley, including his brother-in-law, Mr. Daulat Khan Baloch, personally ordered/ arranged by Dr Allah Nazar.²⁶

Fact Check on Exaggerated Claims by BNMOs

The list of disinformation spread by this elaborate narrative dissemination system is exhaustive and cannot be covered in an article. However, Jeeyand Baloch and Major Gawhram for BLA-A and BLF have regularly issued exaggerated claims to attract media attention and create a sense of accomplishment for their respective ranks and the local populace.

Table 2: List of Major Terrorist Attacks by BNMOs since February 2022

Date	Terrorist Attack	Claimed Deaths	Actual Deaths	Intended Impact through Disinformation/ BNMOs' Media
February 1-3, 2022	Operation Ganjal – Attack on FC Camps Panjgur & Naushki	195 ²⁷	9 ²⁸	Portray Capability/ Success of Militants
March 8, 2022	Explosion in Sibi, several minutes after President Arif Alvi addressed a colourful concluding ceremony of the Sibi Mela	7 ²⁹	5 ³⁰	Showcasing Intelligence and Planning to carry Impactful Attacks

April 26, 2022	Suicide Attack at Karachi University by Shari Baloch	Four, including 3 Chinese ³¹	Four, including 3 Chinese	Attracting Female Fighters
June 24, 2023	Suicide Attack by Sumaya Qalandarani on Frontier Constabulary Convoy in Turbat	Targeting Officers of the Pakistan Army ³²	1 Police	Glorifying and Showcasing the Capability of Female Suicide Fighters in BLA-A to Inspire More Females
February 5, 2023	Attack on Frontier Constabulary Convoy with an IED on the Quetta-Sibi National Highway in the Bolan District	6	Nil	Creating Terror through Exaggerated Claims
August 13, 2023	Attack on a Convoy of Chinese Engineers in Gwadar	11, including 4 Chinese	Four men injured	Propagation and Glorification of Terrorists
November 3, 2023	Ambush on Two Vehicles of Security Forces at Pasni	14	14	Showcasing their Capability through a Video
January 30/February 2, 2024	Operation Dara e Bolan – Attack on Military and Civilian Administration Offices in Mach, District Bolan	78 ³³	4	Showcasing Capability to Conduct More Sophisticated Terrorist Operations with Exaggerated Claims of Military Casualties
March 20, 2024	Attack on Gwadar Development Authority in Gwadar	Multiple Casualties, including Dr Imran ³⁴		Showcasing Intelligence Capabilities to plan and Conduct Attacks at more Secure Places
March 26, 2024	Attack on Pakistan Naval Base in Turbat	12 plus ³⁵		Showcasing Intelligence and Operational Capabilities to Target Well-guarded Military Installations

April 2024	12,	Ambush on a Passenger Bus on Quetta-Dalbandin Road near Naushki	11 soldiers ³⁶	11 civilian travellers	Projecting Innocent Punjabi Passengers as Spies
June 2024	25,	Attack on Frontier Constabulary Camp in Iskalko area of District Kalat	11 ³⁷	2 ³⁸	Exaggerated Claim to Prove the Success of Attack

Broader Extent of Impact

The unrestrained digital spaces, mainly social media in Pakistan in general and Balochistan in specific, do not fall under any legal/ legislative cover, leaving the state institutions only with the option of blocking digital platforms (Blockage of “X” is a case in point) or complete shutdown of internet in the high threat environment. Meanwhile, in the absence of legislation, the actions of state institutions are under scrutiny by domestic/ international human rights voices.³⁹ The State’s limited governance capability in digital space renders credibility to these disinformation powerhouses linked with BNMOs. Meanwhile, the involvement of hostile regional agents in digital space and electronic media is undeniable. Any terrorist attack in Balochistan instantly becomes a top trend in Indian Digital space/ perpetual headline propagating the BLA’s narrative on Indian electronic media. This was followed by detailed reports/ articles/ programs not only to propagate the narrative of hate created by BNMOs but also to render legitimacy to these terrorist attacks. The reports of these media houses based on manipulated facts start to resonate in publications of national and international media/ think tanks, rendering credence to these fabricated/ crafted narratives. In the **Global Terrorism Index 2023 report** issued by the Institute of Economics and Peace, The Baloch sub-nationalist group BLA overtook the ethnoreligious group (TTP) as the deadliest terrorist group, accounting for 36 per cent of terror-related deaths in Pakistan in 2022. Overall, terrorism-related deaths by BLA increased almost nine-fold between 2021 and 2022, while attacks nearly doubled during the same period. Pakistan's deadliest terrorist attack of 2022 occurred when gunmen bombed and shot at two separate security posts for the Frontier Corps in Baluchistan province in February 2022, causing 195 deaths.⁴⁰ The Index reported death toll was from media reports due to the non-availability of any government report/ clarification. The critical part is that the actual death toll of the same incident was **20 militants and nine Pakistani soldiers**.⁴¹ This erroneous data of 195 x deaths instead of the actual 29 deaths made a massive difference in analysis by such a recognised institute courtesy of the disinformation ecosystem created by BNMOs. This report by an internationally acclaimed think tank indeed implied to have granted a fake success/ heroic status to BLA terrorists.

The most concerning implication of the disinformation system is the impact on the local populace, especially the youth of Baluchistan. This disinformation mechanism through 1) exaggerated claims, 2) glorification of terrorists, 3) undermining the state efforts for peace and development, 4) declaring the government's development projects as the state's tools to loot the Baloch, 5) federation has always oppressed Baloch; 6) portray Baloch people as Xenophobic; has successfully achieved relative superiority in the perception domain and today, the new ranks of Baloch insurgents are educated and politically radical.⁴² Whereas, despite the reports of known cooperation between BNMOs (especially BLA) with Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) in training, operational, and logistic domains, BNMOs' media channels always distance themselves from religiously motivated terrorist organisations and maintain a more secular face in the perception domain.

Synthesis

- There is a well-coordinated and articulated system at work, which is utilising SMNs to orchestrate a campaign to develop hate in Baloch people and spread dis/misinformation amongst the domestic and international audiences about Balochistan based on separatism with broader ulterior designs.
- The fame and reach garnered by BNMOs' social media mouthpieces through the effective use of digital space have successfully influenced domestic and international perceptions about Balochistan.
- The narrative of hate against the state institutions is emotion-driven. It is on the rise in Balochistan, discrediting the state's development efforts and polluting the minds of the local populace.
- The Baloch youth and women are the primary victims of BNMO's glorified terrorists and heroism. They have reached that level where they openly acknowledge Aslam Achu, Shari Baloch, and Sumaya Qalandarani as heroes.
- Narrative creation through manipulated facts and fabricated stories neither abide by any academic/ media ethics nor refer to any original reference/source yet gain credence through citations by the publications of regional/international interest groups.
- Lack of effective regulation and control over social media platforms allows BNMOs to carve and twist narratives.

Suggestions

- Considering Pakistan's limited influence over the digital space, especially the companies that own social media applications, a continuous diplomatic effort at appropriate forums is suggested to raise the issue of the BNMO's exploitation of digital space.
- Presently, international law provisions are insufficient to hold owners/handlers of SMNs, which are a source of disruptive trends. Pakistan should take the lead in raising this at all possible forums, including the United Nations (UN), to

regulate and bring under effective check the exploitation of social media by Terrorists.

- The wide lateral spread of sources of second-tier media houses (creating narratives) makes it vulnerable; an all-integrated and perpetual intelligence effort may be planned to dismantle these disinformation powerhouses.
- BNMOs' narrative of Baloch disenfranchisement can only be addressed through development; ongoing development projects, especially infrastructure projects, must be pursued and completed in time.
- The threat of BNMOs' narrative based on fake news is real; a more conducive environment, with ensured financial support and necessary security for local and international journalists, should be created to create original content and research material with improved digital governance.
- The controversies surrounding the legislation to check the exploitation of social media by interest groups and making the creators of content based on fake news need to be resolved through a national dialogue; necessary legislation to hold culprits accountable even in digital space (content creators) must be completed on priority.
- Digital space is fast converting into a battlespace, with ordinary citizens becoming easy victims. While defensive measures are essential, a comprehensive campaign design based on counter and operational thrust lines through a dedicated organisation is imperative.
- SMNs are cheap and widely available, operating in the cognitive domain with few regulations, thus allowing all hostile elements to target ordinary people effectively. Inclusion in the education system is necessary to guard the populace, especially the youth, to educate the coming generations about this threat.
- There is no bar on creating social media platforms as an alternative to those beyond your control. The Chinese model in this regard is a case in point that must be studied for application within Pakistan.
- A comprehensive response by the state to counter the ever-increasing influence of terrorists in the digital space is recommended as following: -
 - Development of wherewithal to identify and block all the media outlets in digital space involved in terrorists' glorification.
 - The state's response in the digital space should move beyond X (Twitter) to more commonly used digital platforms like Facebook, TikTok, Snapchat, and Instagram. A coordinated information flow should be ensured during and after terrorist incidents to neutralise the impact created by the terrorists' digital space exploitation.
 - A more dynamic and inclusive approach by the provincial and federal governments to create a narrative in consultation with the existing study centres at Balochistan University and think tanks on the subject. The myths surrounding glorified heroes should be busted through informed narratives created from authentic information.

- Youth engagement by the state needs to become more innovative through perpetual interactions (physical meetings followed by virtual links) between state representatives and youth, especially in schools/ colleges and Universities.

Conclusion

The BNMOs have successfully created a perception of providing Baloch youth with a sense of purpose, a sense of shared Baloch identity and belonging, which they feel has been trampled upon by Pakistan's government for decades.⁴³ The narrative of hate spread by the BNMOs' media wings is just tipping the Baloch youth off that psychological barrier, where they become politically radicalised to join terrorist organisations. Meanwhile, the numerous students/ youth engagement organisations like the Baloch Students Action Committee (BSAC), Baloch Yakjehti Committee (BYC), and civil societies at the district level with their narrative of dissent towards the state policies and development differential between Baluchistan and other provinces further complicates the perception domain in Baluchistan. However, government institutions and their efforts in perception management cannot counter/ mitigate the threat in the information domain. The situation demands that state institutions move ahead of merely blockage of websites/ channels linked with BNMOs and need to be more innovative/ informed/ magnanimous in evolving mechanisms to mitigate the fast-winning narrative of terrorists in Baluchistan.

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