

Regulating the Information Landscape of Pakistan: A Causal Layered Analysis (CLA)

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Abstract

This research investigates the "zigzag" information landscape in Pakistan, specifically focusing on the inter-party political contest during the April–May 2022 transition. Utilizing the Causal Layered Analysis (CLA) framework, the study deconstructs the systemic failures, worldviews, and underlying myths that allow external disinformation to be weaponized by domestic political stakeholders. By comparing Pakistan's information management with Indian and US models, this paper proposes a Strategic Communication Manual to transition the national discourse from an "Information Storm" to a "Digital Bridge."

1 Introduction

The information landscape in Pakistan is currently a significant hindrance to social stability and national development. It is defined by a radical divergence in reality created by competing political interests. This study posits that the core issue is a profound lack of understanding at the political leadership level regarding modern digital information regimes, leading to a state of constant "zigzag" in the flow of information.

2 Causal Layered Analysis (CLA)

2.1 Level 1: The Litany (Visible Problems)

The visible symptoms include record-breaking hashtags (e.g., *#ImportedHokumatNamanzoor*), viral misinformation, and public confusion regarding official diplomatic cables like the "Cipher." Information appears fragmented and contradictory.

2.2 Level 2: Social Causes (Systemic Drivers)

- **Political Contest Model (Wolfsfeld):** Stakeholders battle for "Narrative Supremacy" via social media, bypassing objective journalistic filters.
- **Inter-Media Affect:** The "Outside-In" effect where external sparks are immediately picked up by domestic actors to create a bandwagon.
- **Capacity Gap:** A total lack of institutionalized civilian strategic communication mechanisms within the government.

2.3 Level 3: Worldview (Deeper Perspectives)

The international portrayal of Pakistan—as documented by Dr. Siraj—often frames the country as "unreliable" or a "foe." Domestically, a "Zero-Sum" political mindset prevails, where truth is sacrificed for partisan victory.

2.4 Level 4: Myth and Metaphor

The underlying metaphor is the *Information Storm*. It is driven by the *Betrayal Narrative*—the historical myth that the nation is constantly being sold out by internal “traitors” and external “masters.”

3 Evidence Mapping and Case Studies

3.1 Case Study A: The Indian Chronicles (EU DisinfoLab)

A 15-year operation involving fake media outlets and resurrected NGOs designed to discredit Pakistan. This study shows how domestic political actors inadvertently legitimized these fake reports to attack rivals, failing to recognize the external disinformation network.

3.2 Case Study B: The April–May 2022 Narrative Vacuum

During the regime change, a massive “Narrative Vacuum” was created. While the PTI utilized a digital-first insurgency model, the incoming government relied on obsolete tools, creating a time lag that allowed conspiracy theories to dominate.

Table 1: The Narrative Vacuum Audit (April–May 2022)

Event	PTI Narrative Speed	Govt Response Speed	Time Lag
No-Confidence Vote	Real-time (02:00 AM)	Press Conference (Next Day)	14–16 Hours
Cipher Clarification	Viral Campaign (Instant)	Traditional TV Tickers	48–72 Hours
Economic Policy	Immediate Viral Hashtags	Recorded Broadcast	12 Hours

4 Global Benchmarking (Ways and Means)

Table 2: Information Management Comparison

Category	Pakistan	India (BJP/INC)	United States (GEC)
Response Time	Reactive (Hours/Days)	Proactive (Minutes)	Real-time (Pre-bunking)
Unified Voice	Fragmented	Centralized/Unified	Strategic/Inter-agency
Tool Usage	Obsolete (TV/Press)	Modern (IT Cells/AI)	Advanced (Data-driven)

5 Strategic Communication Manual: Recommendations

The Government of Pakistan must adopt the following “Ways and Means”:

- National Strategic Communication Cell (NSCC):** Establish a civilian-led 24/7 digital “War Room.”
- Pre-bunking Protocols:** Release verified facts *before* disinformation campaigns reach the domestic bandwagon stage.
- Unified Copy Rule:** Ensure all ministries use a single, data-driven “Fact Sheet” during national crises.

4. **Digital Literacy for Parliamentarians:** Mandatory training to prevent accidental "Band-wagoning" of external sparks.

6 Conclusion

By adopting modern, proactive mechanisms, Pakistan can shift its national metaphor from an *Information Storm* to a *Digital Bridge*. This transition is essential for ensuring that political contestation does not compromise national development or social cohesion.