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## Assessment of the Effectiveness of Social Media in Shaping the Perception of the Public on National Security Matters in Pakistan: A Securitization Theory Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

*Social media has evolved a lot and at the same time, it offers an opportunity to make statements on strategic communication platforms to reach billions of people within the shortest time. This study aims to determine the role of social media in constructing people's perceptions of national security issues in Pakistan based on securitization theory. Securitization theory provides a way of analyzing how political issues are put in a category of existential threats by discourses that require exceptional measures. This paper highlights the importance of social media as a securitizing actor to produce and circulate narratives that inform the opinion of the public and policymakers. Social media plays an important role in the securitization process proved by examination of the framing techniques, audience acceptance as well as the media-state interaction. Social media also has issues related to the presence of misleading information and its consequences for national security policy. Future perspectives focus on the opportunities provided by the development of superior technologies like artificial intelligence and predictive analytics for improved analysis of securitization processes on social media. There is a need to establish better communication, media control, and public participation in constructing positive security discourses.*

**Keywords:** Public Perception, Securitization Theory, Social Media, National Security.

### 1. Introduction

In the present technological development and globalization period, social media plays a significant role in different facts of life. In the global world, countries are struggling to deal with the effects of social media as an empowering tool that could also be a threat to national security issues. Media acts as an intermediate that makes communication more transparent whereas, at the same time, the negative perspective of social media as a technology is spreading fake news, propaganda, and manipulation of the populace into voting for a particular candidate (Schroeder, 2018). Especially in the case of Pakistan, the dynamics of social media have changed a lot, and it has registered significant strides in terms of its reach in the urban-rural population. This adoption has changed how information is used and shared throughout society across spheres of interpersonal communication as well as larger public and political discourse (Rao & Kalyani, 2022). The social media is subtle because modern social applications

such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and others are deeply engaged in defining political discourses, forming public opinion, and even guiding social movements.

In Pakistan, social media has emerged as a significant player in national security affairs due to its effectiveness in advancing state perspectives and agendas while countering them. It has been used in engaging the public through government organizations or in communicating with terrorists (Abbas et al., 2019). On the other hand, non-state actors use these platforms of radicalization and recruitment act as a challenge to state security forces. Such successive juxtaposition emphasizes the value of social media as a twofold weapon; that is, either to maintain or destabilize a nation depending on the regulation or misuse of the same for social or antisocial factors. However, the consequences of social media are not limited to the national policy level but extend to the international policy level as well (Hadžić, 2020). These platforms are open to external actors to advance their respective agendas thus deepening the security dynamics for Pakistan. The country needs to understand and respond to digital assumptions to protect its security as well as to reduce social vices arising because of social interconnectivity. Therefore, finding out how social media impacts public opinions and national security policies only in Pakistan is not only relevant to scholarly research but also have paramount interest to the nation. In Pakistan, social media has spread at a fast pace and deeply embedded itself in Pakistani society and consequently, it has raised new challenges for security discourses within the country. It has opened access to information and granted the citizens more freedom of speech, and social media presence, albeit bringing in substantial risks and threats to the country's stability (Ad'ha Aljunied, 2020). These networks, because of the broad access and the immediacy of the communication, can impact the public sentiment and have power to bring social change, polarity and the political discussion is in the hands of the social media.

Social media holds benefits/disadvantages for the free world, which cause distress for national security agencies and policymakers in Pakistan. On the one hand, these platforms are useful in governance and delivery of public services improving transparency and accountability (Permata & Nanda, 2019). At the same time, they turned into a stage where misinformation, fake news, and propaganda are actively spreading. All these mediums have been used by domestic and external actors to achieve their goals, mislead society, and cause division within society. The challenge is enormous due to the relative anonymity of the internet, where the identity of the people presenting information can remain unknown and the sources of the information cannot be traced. It also makes it possible for state actors to post unverified information that creates divisions within society, all these are influence operations carried out by external actors seeking to weaken social cohesion. Social media has been applied to raise political animosities, fundamentalist violence, and narratives that question the authority of the state. The persuasive employment of social media by terrorist organizations and radical groups to engage the people in their course and radicalization is among the biggest threats to the national security of countries (Downing, 2023). It is used to spread radicalization, organize and coordinate terrorist acts, and use secure communication channels. The consequences of such practices are significant not only for the protection of people's lives but also for the principles underlying the described society and its culture. It is important to understand social media through its technological, sociopolitical, and security lens. The Prime Minister of Pakistan asserted that the use of social media poses a threat to the country's national security, however, to address this emerging threat, it is essential to establish sound policies for the protection of Pakistani's interests which are in turn important for the development of strategic approaches that will assist in exploiting the positives from these social media platforms while minimizing any negatives that are deemed to pose a threat to the country's security. This task is difficult to

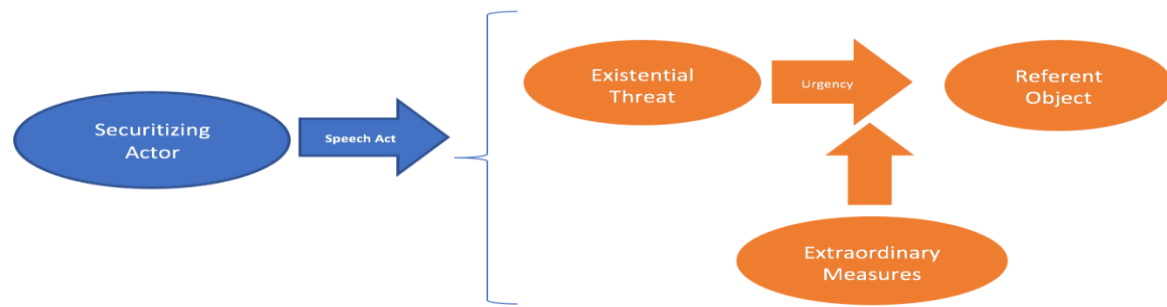
accomplish, especially in the current world marked by increasing technological advancement and the almost real-time flow of information across borders which do not support conventional security measures (Kukulin, 2021).

This paper aims to critically discuss the function of social media in constructing Pakistan's public security sensibility. Thus, employing the theory of securitization, the study will further understand how social networks cannot only act as channels for information exchange but also as means for the implementation of securitization. (Khan & Pratt, 2022). Securitization theory studies how entities transform subjects into security concerns, which provides a framework for analyzing how social media is utilized to cause security threats that require extraordinary action and exemptions. The paper will analyze the means through which social media either enhances or diminishes the experiences and perceptions of security within the public sphere. (Rauf et al., 2018). It will discuss examples of how social media causes issues such as security threats on misinformation by the government and others, propaganda by both state and non-state actors, and social media complicity in either rallying or disengaging public opinion on security issues of national importance. This paper also determines the effects of these dynamics in policy management as well as public reception. By employing case studies and examples the research will provide findings regarding the efficiency of social media as an instrument of securitization. The paper offers ways in which digital media can be secured with policy implications. These recommendations focus on how it is possible to tap into some of the advantages offered by social media to improve the state's security, albeit avoiding the other commercial vices that are associated with social media. The results reveal the strategic importance of social media in the context of the current security situation in Pakistan. (Birkland, 2019).

## **2 Theoretical Framework: Securitization Theory**

Security theory provides a complex framework for understanding how nations and states transform information into security threats. Originally developed by the Copenhagen School of International Relations, by Barry Buzan, Ole Weaver, and Jaap de Wilde. Security theory shifts focus from conventional military threats to broader issues that can be "made safe" (Buzan et al., 1998). The basic premise of the theory is that security is not limited to a few cases but emerges from specific considerations (Balzacq, 2019). According to this framework, security concern is not caused by intrinsic merit but arises when influential actors have succeeded in convincing the public that it poses an existential threat and needs measurements for management. The theory emphasizes the power of language and narratives in security practices, arguing that labeling anything as a security issue raises the bar considerably, justifying the use of special forces or resources is required (Anwar et al., 2023).

Securitization theory, mainly initiated by the Copenhagen School in the late 1980s, is a complete paradigm shift in the discipline of security studies. The development of this theory arose from the desire to shift the understanding of security from mere military threats to several factors that are capable of disturbing national and international stability. (Baele & Jalea, 2023). Ole Wæver, Barry Buzan, and Jaap de Wilde posited that security is not a fixed condition but constructed through discourse (Buzan, Waever, and De Wilde, 1998).



*Figure 1 Process of securitization*

The essence of securitization theory can be found in its framework for understanding security as a speech act. Securitization is when naming something a security issue which is ultimately referred to as the 'securitizing move' (Nyman, 2023). A successful securitization move requires the construction of the threat to gain acceptance by the audience, in turn thereby justifying the take of extraordinary measures due to the perceived threat. This process underlines the discursive nature of the security practices indicating that there are no security discourses without power. (Lupovici, 2019).

In media studies, Securitization theory has been used to analyze how the media can either shape the securitization process. The media are therefore instrumental in informing the society of the narratives likely to elevate issues to matters of security. Research has highlighted how terrorism, migration, and even public health crises have been securitized in the media and how this has altered the perception of the public as well as policymaking according to the principles of securitization theory (Aradau, 2018). This perspective is very important in dissecting the part played by social media in modern security threats, where information can easily turn into a security threat due to its speedy circulation. (Makhortykh, 2018). The broader field of security studies has dramatically changed the field through hybrid security theory, which provides a lens for examining contemporary security issues. Security theory expands the approach to include a wide range of non-traditional threats. This conceptual extension allows for the inclusion of economic, environmental, and social health issues as potential security concerns that require an immediate and unique response. Different research is required to find how discursive processes contribute to the construction of diversity as a social threat. While this approach targets the structural power relations and interests that stand to gain from advocacy and the political and economic advantages of such strategies, securitization theory looks at the existence of a media play in such processes. The media contribute positively to the promotion of specific claims or act as a negative influence due to their coverage and format. The theory helps scholars to understand how recent incidents can transform important topics into urgent security problems, thus influencing public opinion and policy responses. This aspect of security thinking becomes important digitally during the information period when rapid dissemination of information is done but emphasizes the importance of critical scrutiny of securitized claim acceptance and objection. It is an indispensable tool for dissecting communications, intelligence, and national security policy to provide insights into how security is built and contested in the modern world (Sjöstedt, 2019).

### **3 Literature Review**

#### **3.1 Role of Social Media in Public Perception**

The way people perceive policies and events has always been an area of concern to scholars and policymakers as public perception forms the basis of any democracy. In his book titled 'Public Opinion,' Walter Lippmann, whose work is referred as communication science, described public opinion as an organism resulting from community deliberations based on

internal and external factors (Lippmann, 2017). Previously, public opinion research was based on the collection of data through polls, and then qualitative and quantitative analysis. Nevertheless, public opinion analysis has changed with the introduction of social media in society and there are new techniques for analyzing the perception of the public (Tagliapietra, 2022).

### **3.2 Social Media as a New Frontier in Public Opinion Analysis**

It is evident that social media platforms have brought drastic changes in the ways people's opinions are expressed and in the measurement of the same. Due to the popularity of these sites among the common people, governmental sectors, organizations, and personalities, there is growing attention towards the analysis of social media-based public opinion (SMPO) in different fields and disciplines including social sciences, politics, education, medical sciences, marketing, transport, finance, knowledge sharing, and disaster management. Social media offers a means through which users obtain and spread opinions concerning specific issues and is cost effective compared to surveys. (Tessmer, 2019).

The use of social media for the analysis of public opinion has numerous advantages that have enhanced research on public opinion by changing how people analyze it. Social media applications provide rather broad access to the opinion data of the society that can be gained without paying, the data analyst can analyze the opinions of the members of society with regard to their age, gender, or geographical location, including the detailed one. This accessibility eradicates methodological drawbacks characteristic of traditional surveys, like problems with representative sampling, hierarchical structure of opinions' formation, and difficulties in collecting longitudinal data, thus providing deeper and more timely analysis of public opinion. (Lukacovic, 2020). In the view of Anstead and O'Loughlin, since social media is a conversational platform, allows it for a public and open stage for opinion exchange which enhances the depth and the coverage of opinion in the public domain issues.

McGregor pointed that social media's temporal sensitivity enables the recording of the populations' reactions to policies and events in real time. Moreover, Salleh points out that social media does not only help to expand the understanding of what is currently publicly acceptable but also provides a tool for political and social visioning into the future and an instrument for social engineering of the population's Weltanschauung. (Lukacovic, 2022).

Using social media for gathering and analyzing public opinion has the following benefits, but it also has the following challenges. The relativity of data is another issue since social media participants are diverse and not a random sample of the population, thus, the results may be biased toward certain segments, opinions, etc. Secondly, the issue of bias in the information being shared may also emerge since the users will not be able to give their genuine opinions due to factors like status, fear of negative repercussions, or the need to conform to a certain norm. Thirdly, social media data can also be considered as not very credible since such sources can contain a lot of distorted and fake information, including bots and fake accounts (Downing, 2023). However, there is a significant lack of systematic studies that focus on these issues, and therefore, further exhaustive research should be conducted to increase the work's credibility and reliability of data obtained from social networks for the analysis of public opinion.

Social media poses unique challenges that are vital to note and conquer for researchers and policymakers to come up with effective analyses of public opinion in each society. Solving these problems will be important for the further development of social media as a source for the analysis of public opinion in the future (Sjöstedt, 2019).

Social media has impact on perception analysis and has offered more ways of data collection in the different opinions. It has a number of drawbacks when using for data collection, but also

have benefits over conventional survey methods like accessibility, tracking and prediction in real-time. Efforts should be made in future for the exploration of such problems towards achieving the goals of optimizing social media for understanding as well as modifying the perception of the different group of people.(Ad'ha Aljunied, 2020).

### **3.3 National Security and Social Media**

In the era of internet and technological advancement as a part of the lifestyle of the people of the world, the construction of the concept of national security and its relation to social media has got a very significant place. It is essential to note that social networks are not only the tools for interpersonal communication but also potent agents that shape people's decisions offering proper channels for information sharing, and social groups organization. This study aim to compare a literature that investigate the effects of social media on national security and how it impacted people's awareness of propaganda dissemination, fake news, and activities conducted by state and non-state actors (Rafiq, 2019).

The populations also obtain information from social networks which shapes the perception of the community on issues associated with national security. Studies show that the current generation get information with the help of social networks and gets involved in different ways to perceives threats, politics, and wars. Mainly social networks can involve the exchange of urgent information which can inform the population on events occurring in the sphere of national security. This can also reduce the levels of panic amongst the audience and get the current information to as many people as possible. At the same time, it provides opportunities for posting fake news and misinformation (Lupovici, 2019).

Social media platforms are especially active in creating and spreading discourses that in turn inform the public about matters of national security. These platforms allow for the application of tags and popular posts that set certain concepts that may become the main narrative in society and the policy. For instance, in case of a national security threat, the use of hashtags can trigger a campaign and gain popularity in a short period thereby impacting the government actions and policies (Sameer, 2020). The communicative characteristics of posts and the given opportunity to share information and spread it can extend specific perceptions, establishing the general perception or misconception of security threats.

In turn, social media offers an interactive platform for sharing information and opinions and thus contributes to the formation of public perception. They can read the content, express their opinions, and add to the flow of discussions in which they actively co-author security discourses. While it brings social elements and common perception that can create unity it may also act as a catalyst to create social divides and further polarization of people. Thus, it can be concluded that social media is a valuable tool for influencing public perception of matters concerning national security, however, it has its potential for disseminating fake news as well. The role of social media in shaping the opinions of the population and public policy requires the careful management of content and the development of an effective communication agenda that would help construct only useful and positive narratives for the country's security and citizens' trust (Khan & Kaunert, 2023).

### **3.4 Spread of Misinformation and Disinformation**

Social media plays a critical role in the spreading of fake news and/or conspiracy theories that negatively impact national security. Many works have revealed how fake news can quickly circulate and erode people's confidence in formal organizations while also worsening the security situation. In security situations, fake news is tenderized and within a short span, it results in the creation of panic among the populace, and for security agencies, it becomes hard to manage the situation. For example, rumors during terrorism incidents or calamities may

contribute to disorganization and slow response to the calamity (Masood & Mir, 2023). Disinformation activities by state and non-state actors targeting nations are mostly conducted through social media. Such campaigns can be directed to elections, spread fake information, and fuel strife in the population.

### **3.5 Propaganda and Psychological Operations**

social media is effective in propagating messages and psychological operations (PSYOPS) used in determining national security. Governments employ social media as a tool for spreading propaganda that aligns with the objectives of their nations' security. For instance, the Chinese and Russian governments are well-documented for employing these SNSs to push their geopolitical narratives and fight back against those of the West. Terrorist groups nowadays use social media to seek followers, promote their political agendas, and plan terrorist acts. Research has indicated that terrorist groups such as ISIS utilize social media platforms to recruit new members and conduct terror attacks (Fazal et al., 2022).

### **3.6 Operational Strategies of State and Non-State Actors**

The state and non-state actors have come up with intricate methodologies of leveraging social media for the national security interest. Social media is a warfare zone fought on the internet where state actors participate in information warfare against the targeted nations. Some of them are hacking different accounts, trolling, and creating fake accounts to spread propaganda. National security agencies are slowly shifting their attention from just monitoring the social media platforms to countering the adversaries. This ranges from monitoring any extreme content, demystifying fake news, and coming up with a counter-narrative to the effects of disinformation. (Khan & Kakar, 2023).

**Russian Interference in U. S. Elections:** The research into Russian involvement in the 2016 US presidential election has pointed out the role of social media in the dissemination of hatred, propaganda, and fake news, as well as in influencing the voting process (Javed, 2019).

**ISIS's Use of Social Media:** Research conducted on how ISIS is involved in the use of social media platforms like; Twitter and Telegram; reveal strategies through which group recruits its members, processing of its agenda and planning of attacks; this underlines the dangers of non-state actors (Khan & Shah).

**China's Influence Operations:** This paper will demonstrate that China's influence operations on social media platforms especially in Hong Kong and Taiwan show how state actors employ social media to advance their political agendas while silencing the opposition (Trédaniel & Lee, 2018).

Social media acts as the driving force of various discourses surrounding national security and acts as an opinion maker for the people and a generator of fake news and propaganda. Addressing these problems assumes the understanding of the trends of the usage of social networks and coordinated work of the national security structures to monitor, prevent, and mitigate the effects of the toxic narratives on the social media.

### **3.7 Securitization Moves in Media Portrayal of Security Issues in Pakistan**

According to the securitization theory that was advanced by the Copenhagen School, issues are socially constructed through discourse to become issues of security. This theory also identifies the use of speech acts to present an issue as posing an existential threat that requires extraordinary measures. The media of Pakistan has a significant influence on the Pakistanis and the general perception of threats like terrorism, political instabilities, and regional conflicts. This literature review compiles works that relate securitization theory with the media framing of security concerns in Pakistan and the effects of the media on securitization. (Rafiq, 2019).

### **3.8 Media as a Securitizing Actor in Pakistan**

The media of Pakistan is a very active and influential securitizing actor that tends to put issues into the security narrative. Studies have examined how various security issues are portrayed in Pakistani media, revealing patterns and strategies of securitization:

**Terrorism and Extremism:** Security, especially through anti-terrorism campaigns against people such as the Taliban and other groups forms an important part of the media in Pakistan. Security reports present terrorism as a threat to the existence of the nation, thus garnering most people's support for military action and strict security measures. According to the media, terrorists are a concrete threat that must be combatted immediately, which contributes to the perception of terrorism's constant presence. (Al Abd, 2022).

This paper reveals how the media constructs terrorism through a focus on the events following the Peshawar school attack in 2014. The calamity was presented as a vast concern as was the detailed manner in which the attack was described the attack was presented as a litmus test for the nation and a rallying call to go to war against terrorist actors was made. This event demonstrated how the media discourse can create securitization and legitimize exceptional measures. (Hussain, 2020).

**Political Instability and Corruption:** Political instability and corruption will also likely be securitized in Pakistani media. Political corruption is not depicted only as a political issue but as a security and integrity threat. This kind of framing is useful for explaining military and other state actors' 'interference' in politics to 'cleanse' the nation of corrupt political actors. The Panama Papers scandal involving then-Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif led to the securitization of corruption as a main issue because it was portrayed as a direct danger to the country's development. Labor was able to justify the judicial and military actions which followed by painting corruption as a national security threat (Al Abd, 2022).

**Regional Conflicts and Relations with India:** The conflicts in the regions are depicted by the media especially the tension with India through securitization. Pakistan's problems like the Kashmir dispute, border clashes, and regional hegemonism are portrayed as threats to the very existence and security of Pakistan. Reporting on the Pulwama attack and India's retaliation with an airstrike on the Balakot site in February 2019 exposed the media as an active contributor to constructing India as an imminent security threat. Those events were depicted in the media in a way that only highlighted the necessity for a strong military reaction and enhanced nationalist as well as securitized discourses.

### 3.9 Impact of Media Securitization on Public Perception and Policy

The securitization moves by Pakistani media have significant implications for public perception and policy:

**Public Support for Military Interventions:** Security issues are framed in existing terms and the public supports military interventions and extraordinary measures. Terrorism, political instability, and regional threats are represented as grave security threats that make military and state actions legitimate and urgent. (Masood & Mir, 2023).

**Normalization of Extraordinary Measures:** By repeatedly raising certain challenges to the level of threats to existence, the media rationalizes extraordinary actions, for instance, operations, curfews, and, or legal reforms. This normalization over time can result in the weakening of civil liberties and democratic rights.

**Influence on Policy Decisions:** How securitization occurs through media coverage plays an important role in the policy agendas and the decision-making of policy-makers. The government and military actions are taken concerning the securitized discourses of the media, as it gives the view of the audience, which is interested in actions rather than words (Sameer, 2020).



### 3.10 Criticisms and Challenges

The literature reveals several critiques and issues that are linked to media securitization in Pakistan. Bias and sensationalism in the news media are major problems since they create a skewed view of the threats and lead to unwarranted reactions and increased public panic. State actors have been accused of using the media as an instrument to promote certain political or security agendas, which reduces the role of the media as an independent securitizing actor. This manipulation can cause a magnification of certain issues in the prospective of the public which is not necessarily the true perspective (Hussain, 2021). The securitization of issues creates the possibility of a decrease in civil liberties and democratic rights as exclusive means of security can limit the rights of freedom of speech, assembly, and political activities. The gradual stripping of these rights is very worrying, especially in terms of the trade-off between security and liberty. The analysis of securitization theory alongside the depiction of security issues in the Pakistani media demonstrates how media can influence the perception and policies. It is necessary to appreciate these dynamics to get a view of the overall picture of securitization in the context of Pakistan through media and technology (Balzacq et al., 2016).

## 4 Discussion:

### 4.1 Interpretation of Literature about Securitization Theory

The media is portrayed in the literature as a securitizing actor in Pakistan where matters like terrorism, political instabilities, and regional conflicts are presented as threats to existence. This coincides with securitization theory which emphasizes how an issue is constructed to become a security problem. Mainstream media uses language, symbols, and stories that focus on the risks and threats thus creating a discourse of necessity for extraordinary actions. The essence of securitization therefore depends on the reception of the threat framing by the audience. Research evidence indicate that all attempts are made to get the support of the public by constructing security threats in Pakistan and thus legalizing the role of the government and the measures that it takes in the context of military operations and strict policies (Sjöstedt, 2017). This dynamic represents the essence of securitization theory, which considers the audience's perception of threats. The media constantly constructs specific issues as security issues, thus socializing society to accept the use of extraordinary measures like military action, curfews, and legal amendments. In this way, the media conveys repetitional and convincing policies to the public, and the nature of such measures is presented as reasonable and proper, which is an important aspect of securitization theory. The literature indicates that media and state actors are interlinked in the securitization process. The coverage of media might be controlled by the state actors to advance their security agenda while at the same time, the media stories might shape the actions of states. This dynamic also supports the theory because securitization is a process that involves the shifting of several actors and their interests.

### 4.2 Integration of Theory and Media Impact

Securitization theory extends the knowledge of the participation of social media in the sphere of national security by considering it as an efficient tool for constructing securitization narratives. Using these social media platforms, securitizing speech acts are spread and repeated rapidly, to a large number of individuals, and so influence people's perception and the decisions of policy-makers (Qadri, 2020). It escalates the threat perception of a given issue, and this makes the securitizing narratives be reposted on social media platforms hence going viral and eliciting quick public and policy action. In security threats, social media can convey opinions and information that are considered valid in real-time situations (Vigneau, 2019). Social media enables the sharing of and calls to action regarding security matters via hashtags,

posts, and campaigns that focus on specific threats, thereby supporting security initiatives. This aligns with the securitization theory's tenet that the acceptance of the audience and the collective response are critical (Qadri, 2020). However, getting fake news and fake accounts disseminated on social networks is a major threat to the sovereignty of nations. The spread of fake news causes panic diminishes trust in institutions and complicates the process of addressing crises. The securitization theory explains how these myths can be built and recognized as security threats and thus the importance of active management and counter-narratives by states Delgado Morán and Teano (2020).

#### 4.3 Implications for National Security Policy in Pakistan

From the theory of securitization, it can be concluded that strategic communication plays a significant role in the formation of national security policy in Pakistan. It should be active in the creation of truthful security narratives, including the spreading of factual information, at the same time actively combating fake news (Khan & Raza, 2022). This entails engaging the media and social media to encourage the right reporting and reduce the effects of fake news. It is necessary to support the media's responsibility and accountability in the framework of security issue representation by creating a policy for ethical coverage, avoiding the sensational approach, and encouraging a balanced presentation. Some of these can be provided through regulatory policies that will enable a media message to be in harmony with the nation's security goals but still be democratic (Fayyaz, 2023).

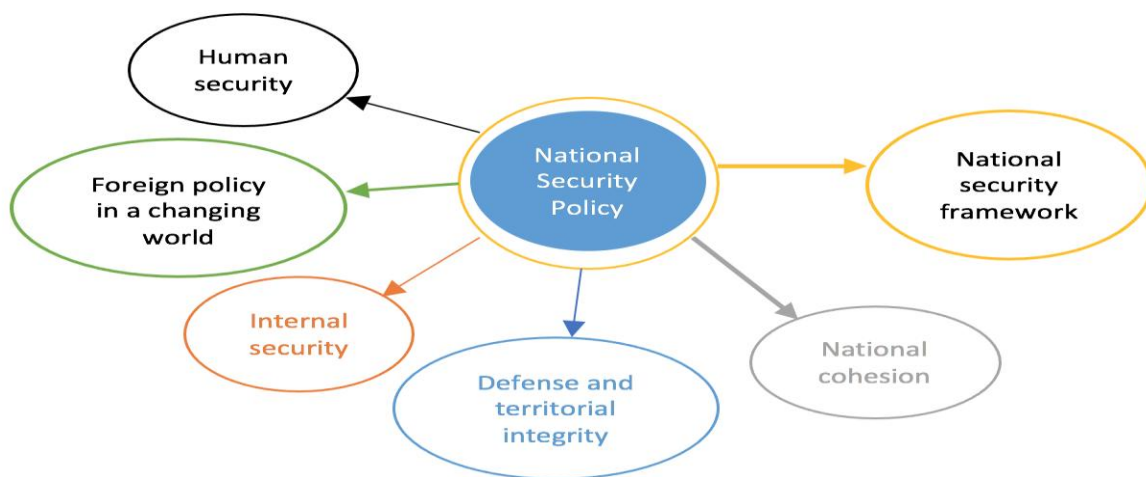


Figure 2 National Security Policy in Pakistan

Education and awareness of the public on security matters are also useful in countering fake news and false narratives. Public enlightenment on the type of security threats and the reasons for government action can lead to public support while awareness creation on the danger of fake news and the importance of critical media consumption can go a long way in checking the spread of fake news. Integration with social media is crucial to tracking and moderating content related to security issues (Sunawar, 2021). The creation of a fast response to fake news, the introduction algorithms for content moderation, and the sharing of correct information may contribute to a decrease in the negative narratives' influence and an increase in the security level.

The concept of issue management and response in the context of national security policies should include approaches to media and social media. Dissemination of information when disasters strike, quick dissemination of the right information, and public relations are some of the important elements. Incorporating media management strategies into crisis communication plans increases the efficiency of the response and improves the population's

confidence. Thus, securitization theory offers useful perspectives for analyzing the role of media in constructing national security discourses in Pakistan (Chaudhry, 2018). This way, the policymakers will be aware of the processes that take place during the securitization and thus will be able to avoid some pitfalls connected with the influence of media, the perception of the public, and further actions of the authorities. The causes and consequences of securitization are well illustrated in the themes of strategic communication, media regulation, public engagement, and especially the coordination with the platforms of social media as the vital elements of national security policy. Accordingly, the outlined strategy can strengthen the nation's stability and protection, and keep the principles of democracy and people's trust (Rafiq, 2019).

### **5 Future prospective**

Future research on the effectiveness of social media in the securitization of national security issues in Pakistan may include the integration of AI and ML for big data analysis of social media platforms to identify the patterns and trends of securitization narratives. This could give an actual time analysis of how security-related matters are presented and received in society. Furthermore, understanding how algorithmic curation and certain security narratives propagate biases and echo chambers can contribute to the analyses of the public's perception. Identification of the long-term trends of securitizing events on social media is the longitudinal studies that follow the changes in attitudes of the public regarding a particular securitizing event over time can also provide a broad perspective of the topic (Khan & Raza, 2022). The topics also provides interdisciplinary approach involving communication studies, data science, and security studies can enhance the analysis of the processes taking place. Engaging policymakers of multinationals and partnering with the social media platforms to decide only relevant content to be posted and finding misinformation will prove very crucial in enhancing the quality and accuracy of information that circulates in the general public concerning national security matters.(Farid & Sarwar, 2024).

Another direction of the analysis is the detailed study of the use of technologies such as artificial intelligence and machine learning to recognize the patterns and processes of securitization discourses in social media. This is useful in finding ways in which the security threats are socialised and how the public copes with them. Taking this into consideration, it can be assumed that comparing the impact of algorithmic prejudices along with concerning the enhancement of the particular security discourses will assist to elucidate the formation of perception mechanism. In addition, the integration of the communication science and methods of big data analysis and security science can enrich the perception of the processes taking place at the international level. Cooperation and engagement with the policymakers and SMCs for the formulation of guidelines to control the positive impacts of the content and dealing with the distortion will also be crucial for the enhancement of the effectiveness and moralities of the discussions regarding national security in the future.(Anwar et al., 2023).

### **6 Conclusion**

Social media play a central role in the construction of the Pakistani public's perception of national security issues, being analyzed through the lens of securitization theory. Social media platforms serve as the securitizing actors that create and disseminate the narratives that frame different objects as threats. This process affects the perceptions of the people and sanctions the use of measures by the state that are regarded as extraordinary. The research also establishes the idea of audience acceptance as essential in securitization and the complex relationship between media and state in shaping the security narratives.

Social media enables the rapid dissemination and engagement in security-related issues and on the other hand brings problems like fake news and biased/sensationalist reporting. It is imperative that to overcome these challenges, communication strategies should be employed, media literacy practices should be observed, and the public should be educated on appropriate media literacy.

To utilize sophisticated methods such as artificial intelligence and data science to present timely insights on securitization and narrative effects is recommended. Furthermore, there is also a need for cooperation between policymakers, social media authorities and researchers to define strategies for proper information management and the fight against fake news. It is possible when the specific aspects of the securitization of social media are considered which design more rational national security policies that will meet the requirements of security, democracy, and public trust.

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