

Digital Storytelling as Strategic Communication: A Case Study of Indian Content on Netflix

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Abstract

In the digital era, we are no longer fighting on battlefields but on the screens watched by millions around the world. The evolution of digital media has been transformed by rapid advances in digital technologies and internet connectivity. The emergence of Over-the-top (OTT) platforms has revolutionized the digital media landscape, enabling unrestricted, on-demand access across borders. In the age of streaming platforms, entertainment content has emerged as a powerful tool to shape people's perceptions. In this setting, India is effectively using the OTT platform to construct an anti-Pakistan narrative. Bollywood productions use strategic communication through storytelling and shaping narratives by selective representation and tilting of history in their favor. By using qualitative techniques, this research has analyzed the meaning and interpretation using non-numerical data, including observations, documents, and media content. The emergence of a cluster of movies during the Modi era reflects strategic communication through storytelling as a powerful tool to construct an anti-Pakistan perception. This study analyzes scenes and dialogues of five recent movies streamed on Netflix during the Modi Era, that includes Dhurandhar, Saare Jahan se Achha, Fighter, Kandahar Hijack, and Mission Majnu. Moreover, widespread viewership of these films amplifies how India uses storytelling techniques to strategically communicate with a larger audience. These movies/series shape an anti-Pakistan perception by reinforcing the stereotype of Pakistan as an irrational state and a threat in the region. This could lead to damage to Pakistan's credibility as a state and could diplomatically isolate Pakistan. This consistently portrayed Pakistan as sponsor of terrorism, weak state and a threat to regional stability. Furthermore, the study pointed out obstacles in the Pakistani media industry that limit Pakistan's access to Netflix. Lastly, this suggests possible options for Pakistan to construct a counter-narrative by strategic storytelling in the digital media landscape.

Keywords: Strategic Communication, Digital Storytelling, Netflix, Indian Cinema, Over the Top Platforms, Anti-Pakistan, Media framing

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Introduction

Digital platforms play a vital role in constructing the collective understanding of identity, culture, and even history. Within this context, Netflix emerged as a powerful tool due to its global reach and influence. In this setting, the Bollywood productions are significant in shaping narratives by selective representation and tilting of history in their favor. This growing Indian dominance on Netflix constructs a continuous anti-Pakistan narrative. This streaming uses strategic communication through storytelling to shape the narrative and influence people's perception internationally. Storytelling elements include emotions, hero-vs-villain format, thrill, and espionage, which are used to build a connection with the audience. On the other hand, strategic communication is the purposeful use of communication to achieve the objective of shaping perception.

The emergence of a cluster of movies during the Modi era reflects strategic communication through storytelling as a powerful tool for constructing an anti-Pakistan narrative. Indian movies/series on OTT have widespread reach and influence; however, it needs systematic analysis to understand the patterns of Indian movies and their narrative construction. Most of the literature covers the traditional media and general cinematic views; however, limited attention is paid to OTT platforms, e.g., Netflix, that have global reach and content available in multiple languages.

The study selected five Indian movies that were streamed recently on Netflix to ensure the content analysis is relevant and contemporary, reflecting current narratives and trends constructed by India. These movies/series, including *Dhurandhar*, *Saare Jahan se Accha*, *Fighter*, *Kandahar Hijack*, and *Mission Majnu*, are recently being streamed on Netflix and play a role in propagating politically driven narratives targeting Pakistan. The paper analyzes the scenes and dialogues of five selected movies/series streamed on Netflix during the Modi era as an instrument of strategic communication to build an anti-Pakistan narrative. The selected scenes and dialogues in movies/series associate Pakistan with terrorism as well as present Pakistan as an irrational state and a threat to the region. The study discusses the widespread viewership of Netflix and the storytelling techniques India uses in its content to strategically communicate with a larger audience. This could impact Pakistan's credibility as a state and could diplomatically isolate Pakistan. Lastly, the study suggests possible options for Pakistan to construct a counter-narrative by storytelling in the digital media landscape.

Theoretical Framework: Media Framing

Framing theory, by Robert Entman, describes the power of a communication text. Framing is widely used in social sciences and humanities, but there is no single theory that explains how frames are embedded within and represented in a text and how it shapes the thinking. Framing shows how information is presented in speeches, reports, books, and other forms of communication. According to this theory, framing involves selection and salience.¹ This means communication chooses some aspects of reality, and in the message, makes them more noticeable and meaningful. India is using this technique in its Netflix content, associating Pakistan with terrorism and calling Pakistan a state sponsoring terrorism inside India. Framing involves promoting a particular problem, its causes, moral judgements by evaluating actions and people involved, and recommendations to resolve the identified issue.² Indian movies and series represent Pakistan as a threat and a sponsor of terrorism, which creates fear among people and disrupts regional stability, and India as a protector that must stop Pakistan. According to Entman, Framing exists at four stages in the communication process: the communicator, text (in the form of words, statements that reinforce facts, images), receiver, and culture.³ India is a communicator; movies and series on Netflix are text in the form of digital media, countries all over the world on Netflix watching that content are the receivers, and reflect cultural ideas based on security, nationalism, and counter-terrorism. An increase in salience increases the probability that the receiver will perceive it. The word salience means making information more memorable to the public through repetition and association with culturally familiar symbols.⁴ Indian movies/series production with a similar idea of fighting against terrorism in Pakistan reinforces this perception. Even if an idea is mentioned a single time can have a strong impact if it matches the audience's existing beliefs. The framing selects certain facts and directs attention away from other important aspects. Such as associating Pakistan with terrorism, while ignoring the fact that according to the Global Terrorism Index Pakistan ranks 1 out of 163 countries, with a score 8.574/10 most impacted with terrorism.⁵

¹ Bertram Scheufele, "Framing Theory: Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm – by Robert M. Entman (1993)," *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 51, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x>.

² Scheufele, "Framing Theory," 52.

³ Scheufele, "Framing Theory," 52.

⁴ Scheufele, "Framing Theory," 53.

⁵ "Global Terrorism Index," Vision of Humanity, last modified March 2025, <https://www.visionofhumanity.org/maps/global-terrorism-index/#/>.

Strategic Communication Through Storytelling

Strategic communication is the purposeful use of communication with stakeholders to achieve an objective. Strategic communication involves a master plan as per the behavioral preferences of the targeted audience to accomplish the organizational mission.⁶ Strategic communication is the effective development of a message, delivered using a high level of planning and audience research as per the end goals of a business or organization.⁷ The process includes who you are talking to, why you are talking to them, what form of communication you choose, and from which channel you share it.⁸

Storytelling is one of the means of strategic communication. In the digital world, storytelling using media is an effective form of strategic communication. In this media landscape, it requires more than facts to capture the audience's attention.⁹ Storytelling aims to inspire, evoke feelings in, and build trust with the audience. At the heart of a compelling story lies an emotional core. Through story, creating a narrative that aligns with the audience's experiences and values.¹⁰ Emotions drive decision-making more than logic; therefore, storytelling is a significant component of communication strategies. A compelling story follows a structural framework that enhances audience engagement by including an introduction, conflict, and resolution. In the digital era, visual storytelling has become a powerful tool for enhancing narrative impact, enabling brands to increase audience engagement through content such as behind-the-scenes and short documentaries.¹¹

While analyzing India, it is relying on this strategic communication through storytelling using the OTT platform such as Netflix by structuring its message around emotionally resonant story arcs that audiences easily recognize and internalize. The introduction stage presents India as a peaceful state that is closely aligned with the values of patriotism, safety, and national pride shared by its domestic people. The conflict stage presents Pakistan as a threat, an emotionally

⁶ "What is Strategic Communication," Columbus State University - A University System of Georgia Institution, accessed January 24, 2026, https://www.columbusstate.edu/academics/_docs/degrees/MA-Comm-what-is-strategic-communication.pdf.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Evan Kropp, "Crafting Compelling Narratives Is Key to Effective Communication Strategies," College of Journalism and Communications Online Graduate Program, last modified June 4, 2025, accessed January 24, 2026, <https://onlinemasters.jou.ufl.edu/effective-communication-strategies/>.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid.

charged depiction of terrorism, and insecurity that invokes fear and anger, while making stories relatable to the audience by connecting these threats to the citizen experience and collective memory. The resolution stage depicts India as the rightful victor and morally justified. This makes a Hero vs Villain storyline, in which Pakistan is a villain and acts irresponsibly and aimlessly; however, India is the hero, acting as a responsible and rational actor. Audiences who are unfamiliar with the region will perceive India as a responsible state, while Pakistan as an irrational and rogue state. This consequently, impacts public opinion and legitimizes India’s security narrative internationally and rejects Pakistan’s counter-narrative.

Strategic Communication Through Netflix Content

This part analyzes the five Netflix projects of India that shape a manipulated narrative against Pakistan, including Dhurandhar (2026), Saare Jahan sy Accha (2025), Fighter (2024), Kandahar Hijack (2024), and Mission Majnu (2023). The dialogues that appear to construct a perception about Pakistan are quoted, and analyzed. This section analyzes these movies/series dialogues that use strategic communication through storytelling to construct a negative representation of Pakistan globally.

1. Dhurandhar (2026)

Dhurandhar is a fictional thriller movie set in the world of intelligence and covert warfare. The fictional intelligence asset Hamza (Ranveer Singh) was sent to Pakistan on a task to neutralize threats to the national security of India. Hamza, an Indian asset that enters in Lyari, Karachi, Pakistan, and joined the Rehman Dakait Lyari gangster group, intending to neutralize the terrorism threat from its roots. The movie presents Pakistani political parties as supporter of militant groups for their narrow party interests. The movie frames a clear anti-Pakistan narrative, framing terrorism as a Pakistan-backed phenomenon. A scene presenting the 26/11 attacks,

Scene/Dialogue	Analysis
Dialogue <u>Major Iqbal ISI to Rehman:</u> <i>“Rehman, come fast, you are missing the most incredible moment of our lives. We are eagerly waiting for you to join us.</i>	This scene was the 26/11 Mumbai Terror Attack. The scene strategically communicates an anti-Pakistan narrative by portraying the Pakistani state institution as an enabler of terrorism by

<i>Rehman, this is the destruction your guns and ammo have unleashed. It seems like Gazwa e Hind is starting right here from Mumbai.</i> Scene <u>Headlines on Television:</u> <i>'Mumbai Terror Attack 7 places targeted encounter still on inside Oberoi Hotel</i> Dialogue <u>Major Iqbal dialed a Phone call:</u> <i>Salam o alaikum, Ali, you target the Taj Hotel, media is giving it maximum coverage. Have you started the fire yet? My brother, unless we see the fire blazing, the mood doesn't kick in; we need to scare them out of their minds</i> Scene Sound of Blast <u>News on TV:</u> <i>Six blasts in 35 minutes</i> Dialogue <u>Continued Phone call of Iqbal:</u> <i>Remember do not spare anyone in those rooms, they are infidels. Women, kids, old people Kill them all, my brother, everyone is an infidel, do not hesitate.</i> Scene <i>Nara Takbeer slogans in the room by the Rehman dakait. Then in the movie they displayed the actual 26/11 recordings between handlers and terrorists, encouraging and praising each other.</i>"¹²	associating Pakistan with the 26/11 attacks. The scene and dialogue directly construct the link between the terrorist network and Pakistan's ISI. The presence of ISI Major Iqbal in the scene depicts Pakistan behind the 26/11 Mumbai attacks. Major Iqbal from ISI was encouraging the terrorist to attack innocent civilians and enjoying those attacks that portray Pakistan as an inhumane and irrational state. The state security forces are sponsoring terrorism inside India and disturbing the regional stability.
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¹² *Dhurandhar*, directed by Aditya Dhar, (Netflix, 2026), 2:18:48 to 2:23:56.

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The same theme is reinforced in another scene, a dialogue between Rahman and Major Iqbal.

Scene/Dialogue	Analysis
Dialogue <u>Major Iqbal ISI:</u> <i>ISI thinks that along with Kashmir, we should spark the Punjab movement again, so they have requested something Mumbai style to go down in Amritsar on 15 August.</i> <u>Rahman:</u> <i>I am always ready to serve ISI brother, sent the list to Uzair; the goodwill will reach ahead of schedule.</i>”¹³	The scene represents that Pakistan is taking responsibility of Mumbai terrorist attacks and planning another terror attack. The scene securitizes Pakistan as a state sponsoring terrorism and security forces collaborating with the terrorist group and contributes to the regional instability.

The last scene of the movie,

Scene/Dialogue	Analysis
Scene <i>“What is Operation Dhurandhar? For the first time in the history of espionage, we will send our asset to infiltrate the Pakistani underworld, their mafia, their gangs. In fact, evidence has shown that directly or indirectly, Pakistan has been involved in nearly every major terror attack worldwide. When the ISI sends a terrorist organization to strike India, where do they get their arms and ammunition? From their underworld, that’s why by infiltrating these groups we will get first-hand intelligence on their mafia, their links with terrorists, and the ISI’s involvement. We are going to induct criminals for this operation,</i>	The movie ended on a declarative note, Pakistan is behind all the terrorist attacks, generalizing an Indian political claim. Throughout the scene, terrorism is repeatedly linked to Pakistan territory and ISI and portrayed as systemic and Pakistan-sponsored. However, India is securitized as a responsible and rational state fighting against terrorism for peace and stability.

¹³ *Dhurandhar*, 2:41:50 to 2:42:20

those who are either on death row or serving life sentences, people who have no purpose left in their lives. We will give them a purpose, and if we succeed, we might just have a killing machine in our hands.” ¹⁴	
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2. *Saare Jahan Sy Accha*

Saare Jahan sy Acha is a spy thriller series set in 1970.¹⁵ Pratik Gandhi as Vishnu Shankar, an Indian intelligence officer RAW, undertakes covert operations of penetration in Pakistan and sabotages Pakistan’s nuclear program. The series depicts a Us versus Them mentality examined through dialogues where India is justified as a rational and responsible state and Pakistan as an irresponsible and irrational state, where its actions are presented as a threat to the whole world. In one scene, Kartika Kamra, her character name Fatima Khan, played the role of the journalist and editor, presented as a responsible Pakistani journalist who wrote the truth about the political leaders of Pakistan, who are evil and irrational elites in her writing. She speaks to her uncle, a part of those elites,

Scene/Dialogue	Analysis
Dialogue <u>Fatima Khan (Pakistani Journalist):</u> “<i>In the country where the Prime Minister himself intimidated reporters, is a country better off without a nuclear bomb. She added, I know Bhutto isn’t accustomed to hearing the truth but, if possible, remind him, in our country, Prime Ministers change faster than the seasons, so better to stop viewing the public as slaves.</i>”¹⁶	Fatima was shown as a sensible Pakistani journalist and a hero who was concerned about her state. Through her dialogue, an anti-Pakistan image was made, where the Prime Minister is threatening the journalist and frames Pakistan as an intolerant and oppressive state where civil liberties are under threat. Emphasis on the change of the political leadership represents institutional weakness and a lack of freedom for the media, suggesting that Pakistan is unstable enough to develop a nuclear arsenal.

¹⁴ *Dhurandhar*, 3:13:19 to 3:15:04.

¹⁵ *Saare Jahan Sy Accha*, created by Gaurav Shukla, directed by Sumit Purohit, (Netflix, 2025).

¹⁶ *Saare Jahan Sy Acha*, Season1, Episode 6, (Netflix, 2025), 8.19 to 8.50.

Throughout the movie, this idea of weak institutions and deceptive leaders was reinforced. In another scene, between Vishnu Shankar (Indian Intelligence Officer) and Fatima Khan (Pakistan's Journalist).

Dialogue/Scenes	Analysis
Dialogue <u>Vishnu Shankar:</u> <i>“Pakistan needs education, infrastructure, but it does not need a nuclear bomb. Bhutto enjoys a seven-course meal in Saudi and asks the People of Pakistan to eat grass but make a nuclear weapon, these all are your headlines, right? Or you just want to make these sensational headlines, as much as I know you, you want to bring change in your country. You yourself said that you work for your nation. Pakistan is about to make nuclear weapons and, in a few months, they will have a nuclear bomb. If a person like Bhutto got a nuclear weapon, then millions would die, and your country would be bankrupt.</i> <u>Fatima Khan:</u> <i>what if India develops Nuclear Arsenals? India has no plan of developing nuclear weapons.</i> <u>Vishnu Shankar:</u> <i>We are ready to sign the NPT and all this is a top secret.</i>”¹⁷	The RAW agent Vishnu Shanker is stating the headlines of Fatima Khan's articles to remind her of the real needs of Pakistan. Both characters are presented as rational and responsible individuals who know the development of nuclear weapons is a dangerous, costly, and irrational decision by Pakistan. This framing ignores the reality that states pursue security and development simultaneously, especially when the enemy is conventionally strong and developing nuclear weapons. Indian conventional and nuclear development created a security dilemma for Pakistan, and it became necessary for Pakistan to build an arsenal to balance power with India. Moreover, Bhutto eats a seven-course meal while telling the people to eat grass, portraying Pakistani leadership as elitist, hypocritical, and indifferent to the public sufferings. This makes people interpret Pakistan as an irresponsible state whose leaders sacrifice the people for their destructive ambitions. The scene portrays Pakistan as a dangerous and irrational state

¹⁷ Saare Jahan Sy Achaa, Season 1, Episode 4, (Netflix, 2025), 8:27 to 9: 32.

	whose nuclear facilities must be neutralized for global safety and securitizes the hostile action against Pakistan as significant and a responsible act of security.
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3. *Fighter*

In the movie *Fighter*, top Indian air force pilots are chosen to counter terrorism and protect India. The story is set when a major attack occurs on the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in Srinagar. In the movie, the terrorist group backed by Pakistan is launching a terror attack on the CRPF. The story is fictional, yet inspired by the Pulwama and Balakot strikes. The brave pilots of Indian air force were tasked to destroy the terrorist camps inside Pakistan. The movie brings an anti-Pakistan narrative by depicting Pakistan as providing safe haven to terrorists to perform their mission. The movie justified India's response in Balakot as responsible, and successful, while Pakistan is presented as weak, dangerous, and a threat to the region. Throughout the movie, the scenes, dialogues, tone, and attire of actors reinforced an anti-Pakistan narrative. A scene at the ISI headquarters:

Dialogue/Scenes	Analysis
Dialogue <u>Police Officer:</u> <i>“Shame on us, their planning has been going on for so many days, and we did not get even a hint. Jaish is better than us; at least they can execute their plan.</i> <u>Police Clerk:</u> <i>In one way, we could say it is a favor for us from the Indian side that they targeted the Jaish's camp; if they had targeted our military bases, we all would have been martyred.</i> <u>Police Officer:</u> <i>Are you out of your senses? Are you calling the attack a favour?</i>	The scene represents Pakistan as weak state depicting that even the terrorist group is better than Pakistani government. In this scene, a Pakistan ISI officer is praising the Indian attack on terrorists and is glad they did not attack military bases and kill them, illustrating Pakistan as a state that is unprepared, weak, and fearful of India. Moreover, the statement “now we should stop giving our bases to India” presents Pakistan's acknowledgement of giving living space to terrorists.

<u>Police Clerk:</u> <i>No, sir, I am trying to say that we allowed Jaish's fighters to live in our land, and Indians know this. The attack is a declaration;</i> <u>Police Officer:</u><i>(interrupted) that whenever they want, they can enter our home and kill us. Is this what we are supposed to say to the public?</i> <u>Police Clerk:</u> <i>No, sir, I am just saying we should stop giving shelter to Mujahideens in our homeland.</i> Scene Terrorist named Azhar entered the room Dialogue: Azhar: <i>Continue your conversation that you do not need Mujahideens anymore, you are right, but if the thinking is small, how can our objective be big, we carried out suicide attack and they responded with airstrike, today we dug more than 300 graves, now Pakistani forces need to think bigger, because now we will not forget the graves and funerals and nor the revenge, now there will be no terror attack there will be war.</i>”¹⁸	
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¹⁸ *Fighter*, directed by Sidharth Anand (Netflix, 2024), 1:04:23 to 1:06:06.

In another scene, an air force officer's father was watching the news on television, and the news broadcast,

Dialogue/Scenes	Analysis
Scene <u>Television News (broadcast):</u> <i>“Pakistan is releasing both of the pilots soon. This is the positive and significant impact of the Indian government’s continuous negotiations; there is a wave of happiness among families of both officers and across the whole country that our brave soldiers are returning to the homeland.”</i>¹⁹ Next Scene <i>One officer’s dead body landed in the aircraft, and the one who went to receive it, sitting inside the aircraft is crying</i> Dialogue <u>Indian force pilot:</u> <i>(crying) they did not send the other pilot, and extremely tortured the one they sent after he was killed.</i>²⁰ Next Scene Inside the bureau, Dialogue <u>Military Officer:</u> <i>They are animals, the body was in pieces, in bloody pieces, this is their diplomacy? These are their ethics? They are saying he was already injured, the liars! I saw his injuries; he was murdered by them,</i>	The scene is fictional, and it recreates the real event. The tone in the scene represents Pakistan as an immoral and irrational state. The actual event and response of Pakistan in the Balakot crisis were rational, responsible, and peaceful towards India, which is completely ignored in the movie, and it strategically portrays a negative image of Pakistan through storytelling via the movie. In reality, during the Pulwama Balakot episode, Pakistan’s former Prime Minister Imran Khan stated that India accused Pakistan without any evidence, as Pakistan has no incentive for such actions.²² Pakistan has planned the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia’s visit and the Investment conference for so long; why will Pakistan take such action at this time?²³ The Prime Minister added that Pakistan wishes to convey this message to the Government of India, our willingness for the investigation, in case any Pakistani is involved in this act.²⁴ If India provides any evidence against any Pakistani in this act, I (PM of Pakistan)

¹⁹ *Fighter*, 1:43:49 to 1:44:10.

²⁰ *Fighter*, 1:48:07 to 1:49:56.

²² Pakistan, Prime Minister’s Office, Statement of Prime Minister Imran Khan on Pulwama Attack (Islamabad: Prime Minister’s Office, 2019), https://www.pmo.gov.pk/pm_speech_details.php?speech_id=98.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

<i>tortured, and then murdered. How long will we be enduring this? Let's hand them down and break them into pieces.</i> ” ²¹	guarantee we will take action against him, not under any pressure but because these actions are against Pakistan's national interest. ²⁵ Moreover, Pakistan had captured an Indian pilot named Abhinandan after shooting down his plane in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. A day later, the former Prime Minister announced the release of the pilot as a peace gesture. ²⁶ The foreign minister said we gave India a message: we do not want to mistreat your citizens, we want peace. ²⁷ The actual response of Pakistan shows that Pakistan acted responsibly and rationally, while the movie is misleading the audience about Pakistan by presenting it as extremist in its thinking, and actions.
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4. IC-814: Kandahar Hijack

Kandahar Hijack is about the hijacking of an Indian airline flight IC-814 in December 1999. The flight was from Kathmandu (Nepal) to Delhi (India). Shortly after takeoff, hijackers seized the aircraft and forced it to fly across several locations for fueling, including Amritsar, Lahore, and Dubai, before landing at the hijacker's point, Kandahar, Afghanistan, which was under the Taliban's control. The hijackers demanded the release of militants. It was portrayed that the hijackers were operating with the support of the ISI. Several scenes and dialogues construct an anti-Pakistan narrative. Such as in a scene there are cross-talks:

Dialogue/Scenes	Analysis
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²¹ *Fighter*, 1:50:04 to 1:50:40.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ “No Compulsion or Pressure to Release Abhinandan, Did it for Peace: Qureshi,” Dawn, March 2019, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1467183>.

²⁷ Ibid.

Dialogue Person A (outside room): <i>“Hashmi is personally handling everything, the ISI is planning something big, they were gathered at guest house last night, they are not locals, they are Pakistanis, 5 of them were in Kathmandu for last 10 days planning something, I had placed a mike in their room.”</i>²⁸	Like many previous movies, this scene also portrays Pakistan as a sponsor of terrorism. The scene securitizes Pakistan security force i.e., ISI as an enabler of terrorism and propagating Pakistan as sponsor of terrorism inside India.
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There is a scene in the series depicting a Joint Secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs, saying:

Dialogue/Scenes	Analysis
Dialogue <u>Joint Secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs (India):</u> <i>Moulana Allah Baksh Bahawalpur, Pakistan, says he runs a lot of madrasas across Pakistan, recruits’ youngsters across the world, and raises funds for his terror acts. Out of his five sons, one has been in the Kot Bhalwal Jail in Jammu for the past five years</i> <u>His Senior:</u> <i>Masood. Masood was a highly regarded name in the world of Islamic Jihad. His speeches inspired people from all over the world to join the Jihad movement. He entered India illegally to make peace between two Kashmiri terrorist groups and was arrested. There were three unsuccessful attempts to free Masood. During one attempt, his close friend</i>	The dialogue linked the religious institution in Pakistan with extremism and terrorism. Moreover, through this scene, Pakistan is framed as the ground for the terrorists. The storytelling approach evoked moral clarity and urgency, demonstrating India as a responsible actor responding to the external threats, mainly from terrorism, coming from and supported by neighboring Pakistan.

²⁸ IC 814: The Kandahar Hijack, Season 1, Episode 1, directed by Anubhav Sinha, (Netflix, 2024), 3:46 to 4:15.

<i>Sajjad Afghani was killed. This was perhaps the fourth attempt.</i> ²⁹	
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Another scene:

Dialogue/Scenes	Analysis
Dialogue <u>The hijacked pilot:</u> <i>“Delhi control, this is IC-814, connect to Lahore, they want to take plane to Lahore.</i> <u>Indian officers (discussing in office):</u> <i>Don’t connect them to Lahore, that’s their plan, if they take plane to Lahore, it will be a problem</i> Message received in plane: <i>IC184 Lahore has not permitted you to land</i> <u>Hijacker:</u> <i>They are lying tell them to connect us with Lahore directly, right now</i> Pilot: <i>IC184 connect to Lahore</i> Scene Officers discussing in the office Dialogue <i>Person 1: Do we have any choice?</i> <i>Person 2: There’s Amritsar, once they land there NSG will capture them, Game over, right</i> Scene Person 2 called Ravi (another character in office) Dialogue: <u>Person 2:</u> <i>Ravi, (Ravi), if they land in Amritsar, we must storm the plane</i>	The terrorist’s insistence on landing in Pakistan is positioned as a problematic alternative in the scene. The statement, <i>Pakistan will not grant permission</i>, and the follow-up assertion, <i>Pakistan cannot be trusted</i>, portray Pakistan as an untrustworthy and unpredictable actor. This selective framing propagating Pakistan as a risky and problematic state, while India is a disciplined and rational actor.

²⁹ IC 814: The Kandahar Hijack, 35:51-36:34.

<u>Person 1</u>): Sir I suggest let them speak to Lahore ATC, Pakistan will not allow this and then they will have to land in Amritsar <u>Person 2</u>: What if Lahore give permission, then what happens, Pakistan cannot be trusted <u>Person 1</u>: Exactly.”³⁰	
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5. Mission Majnu

Mission Majnu is a Hindi thriller movie about an Indian intelligence operation in Pakistan in 1970s. In the movie, an intelligence officer was sent to Pakistan to expose the Pakistani nuclear weapons program. With a false identity, the main character was living as a citizen of Pakistan and gathering intelligence to expose Pakistan. Mission Majnu begins with the historical context from World War II, when the US dropped nuclear weapons on the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, ending the war. The scene narrates:

Dialogue/Scenes	Analysis
Scene “After the first drop of the nuclear bomb, it started a new race, the race to develop nuclear bombs. In 1971, Pakistan lost to India for the third time, and they wanted revenge at all costs. The only way for Pakistan to deter India is to make a nuclear bomb, but the war is not fought with weapons but intelligence, and India has RAW. Our Raw agents are infiltrated from Peshawar to Karachi, and they are not meant to use guns and ammunition, but to search for critical information and send it to Delhi, away from their homeland soil, the	The start of the movie created a Hero vs Villain perception, where Pakistan is presented as the villain, and India as the hero. The use of the word ‘Brave’ with an Indian soldier justifies India’s cause to send its soldier in Pakistan. Also, for heroic illustration, he was called a ‘soldier of the soil’ to build a sense of patriotism with the Indian soldier. The dialogues portray Pakistan as a villain, and the only way for Pakistan to deter India is by developing nuclear weapons.

³⁰ IC 814: The Kandahar Hijack, Episode 2, 12:45 to 14:10.

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<i>soldiers of the soil. This is the story of a brave soldier.</i> ” ³¹	
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The first scene of the movie:

Dialogue/Scenes	Analysis
Scene <i>“The scene starts with Azaan in Rawalpindi, Pakistan, 1974, in which an Indian spy was offering prayer in the Mosque.”</i> ³²	The scene linked the religion with the suspicion that the religion could be used as a covert means to perform harmful activities in Pakistan. The city of Rawalpindi is connected with Pakistan’s military; in the scene, the city and religion are shown in a specific context.

Another scene:

Dialogue/Scenes	Analysis
Dialogue <u>Bhutto</u> : <i>It is the time to show India its place, then the scene narrates, the nuclear facility location was chosen, project 706, Pakistan’s top secret.</i> <u>Bhutto (subsequent scene)</u> : <i>The international community must come together to condemn India’s irresponsible action.</i> Scene (narrates) <i>On one side, PM Bhutto was blaming India, and on the other hand, his illegal nuclear power was in action.</i> ” ³³	The portrayal of Pakistan’s leadership as hypocritical and dishonest to shape anti-Pakistan narrative without discussing the broader context of security dilemma and tensions between India-Pakistan in the region that made it necessary for Pakistan to develop nuclear weapons. This biased tone in the movie makes India appear as a good state and Pakistan as a bad state.

Last scene of the movie,

³¹ *Mission Majnu*, directed by Shantanu Bagchi, (Netflix, 2023), 1:05 to 2:16.

³² *Mission Majnu*, 2:23 to 3:02.

³³ *Mission Majnu*, 14:27 to 14:50.

Dialogue/Scenes	Analysis
Scene (narrates): <i>“Due to the sacrifice of the Indian agent the Kahuta facility was exposed to the world, while Zia kept denying this reality.</i> <i>Zia said in the clip attached in this scene, why should Pakistan indulge in the nuclear proliferation, against which Pakistan on principle is opposed, because we have no intention of developing any nuclear device sir. The scene further reveals that the truth does not stay hidden for so long, in 2004 AQ khan accepted that Pakistan has sold the nuclear technology to rogue nations like Iran and North Korea, Pakistan was unable to conduct the nuclear test in the next 20 years and in 1998, India under PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee leadership conducted its second nuclear test and become the biggest nuclear power in the subcontinent, our tricolor does not fly with wind, it flies with the blood of our martyrs.”³⁴</i>	This scene propagating India as a hero state that can achieve its objective of exposing Pakistan. Through the statements, President Zia kept denying the truth, and truth cannot be hidden for so long, which shows Pakistani leadership is hypocritical. Referring to AQ khan, the perception is made that Pakistan is an irresponsible nuclear-weapon state that is providing nuclear technology to North Korea and Iran, and contributing to nuclear proliferation. The patriotic dialogues at the end of the movie justifies India as a superhero, while Pakistan is portrayed as a dangerous, harmful, and weak state.

Viewership of Streaming Content and Pakistan’s Policy Options

The scenes and dialogues from the recent Netflix movies and series act as a propaganda campaign against Pakistan. These movies/series have a global reach and shape people’s perception around the world where this content is being watched. Movie *Dhurandhar* streamed on January 30, after breaking box office record of 1000 crore during its theatrical run.³⁵ *Saare Jahan sy Accha* was in

³⁴ *Mission Majnu*, 2:3:42 to 2:05:00.

³⁵ Saelee Rakshit, “Dhurandhar on Netflix: Did Akshaye Khanna really OVERSHADOW Ranveer Singh? OTT Viewers React, says ‘Not even...’,” *Bollywood Life*, last modified January 31, 2026, <https://www.bollywoodlife.com/news-gossip/dhurandhar-ott-release-on-netflix-did-akshaye-khanna-overshadow-ranveer-singh-in-aditya-dhar-film-3314434/>.

the weekly top 10 list in its debut week and ranked within the top 5.³⁶ It earned 2.3 million views in its debut week with 9.5 million viewing hours.³⁷ *Fighter* earned 12.4 million views in the first 10 days. It was the third most popular movie on Netflix in 2024.³⁸ *Kandahar Hijack*, ranked 2 globally and trended in 42 countries.³⁹ *Mission Majnu*, was in the top 10 list in 8 countries.⁴⁰ It earned 8.94 million hours of viewership in the first week.⁴¹

Movie/Series	Year	Trend	Viewership
<i>Dhurandhar</i>	2026	Record of 1000 crore in theater	Streamed on 30 January 2026
<i>Saare Jahan sy Accha</i>	2025	In the top 10 (debut week)	2.3 million views and 9.5 million viewing hours (debut week)
<i>Fighter</i>	2024	Third most popular (2024)	12.4 million (first 10 days)
<i>Kandahar Hijack</i>	2023	Ranked 2 globally, trend in 42 countries	4.1 million (debut week)
<i>Mission Majnu</i>	2023	Top 10 in 8 countries	8.94 million hours of viewership

Figure: Trending Statistics

The content gains a global audience because of platform reach, storyline techniques such as emotions and values attached to the character. Moreover, the use of universal genres such as

³⁶ “Netflix’s ‘Saare Jahan Se Accha’ OTT Verdict: Records Second Biggest Debut with 2M+ Views Among Hindi Shows of 2025,” *Firstpost*, accessed January 25, 2026, <https://www.firstpost.com/entertainment/netflixs-saare-jahan-se-accha-ott-verdict-records-second-biggest-debut-with-2m-views-among-hindi-shows-of-2025-13926726.html>.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ HT Entertainment Desk, “Hrithik Roshan Reacts As *Fighter* Breaks *Animal*’s Record, Becomes Biggest Bollywood Film on Netflix,” *Hindustan Times*, last modified April 4, 2024, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/entertainment/bollywood/hrithik-roshan-reacts-as-fighter-breaks-animal-netflix-record-biggest-bollywood-blockbuster-101712228092031.html>.

³⁹ Bollywood Hungama, “Netflix’s IC 814: The *Kandahar Highjack* Soars to No. 2 Globally, Trends in 42 Countries,” *Bollywood Hungama*, last modified September 4, 2024, <https://www.bollywoodhungama.com/news/features/netflixs-ic-814-kandahar-highjack-soars-no-2-globally-trends-42-countries/>.

⁴⁰ Bollywood Hungama, “Sidharth Malhotra and Rashmika Mandanna Starrer *Mission Majnu* Clocks 8.94 Million Hours of Viewership on Its Opening Weekend on Netflix,” *Bollywood Hungama*, last modified January 25, 2023, <https://www.bollywoodhungama.com/news/bollywood/sidharth-malhotra-rashmika-mandanna-starrer-mission-majnu-clocks-8-94-million-hours-viewership-opening-weekend-netflix/>.

⁴¹ Ibid.

thriller and action and the hero versus villain form structure, makes it easy for the audience to follow without questioning the underlying political framing. The strategic storyline of these series makes this content gain visibility and a huge viewership. However, the use of political context simultaneously shapes the narrative by framing India as a defensive and rational actor and Pakistan as a threat and source of regional instability. This context-driven framing with the storytelling approach makes the narrative appear credible and neutral. This, consequently, acts as a powerful force shaping the global audience.

On the other hand, Pakistan has a limited presence on Netflix, and is unable to build a counter-narrative on the same platform. The filmmaker Nabeel Qureshi shed light on Pakistan's limited presence on Netflix, which is due to the shifting dynamics within Netflix from a centralized office in Los Angeles to a regional office in India.⁴² This geopolitical climate has created hurdles for the promotion of Pakistani content on Netflix.⁴³

In an interview with Asif Raza Mir, he spoke about why Pakistani content is not recognized internationally, not because of the content, but because of the quality of this content.⁴⁴ He shared his experience, as when he was working with *Geo*, the first time we exported our content to Barbados, Poland, Australia, and even to India, they liked our content, but the issue was quality.⁴⁵ Our content has technical issues, including our editing, audio, and visuals.⁴⁶ Platforms like Netflix have high standards of quality.⁴⁷ According to Tahseen Shaukat, chief executive of BVC media, another reason is that Netflix has a total of 180 million subscribers and only 100,000 from Pakistan, which is why the platform is not acquiring Pakistani original content.⁴⁸ In India, the subscription rate is high, which is why global platforms in Indian original content do not invest in Pakistan because of a smaller number of subscribers.⁴⁹

⁴² Entertainment Desk, "Indo-Pak Tension Why Our Content Isn't on Netflix: Nabeel Qureshi," *The Express Tribune*, last modified December 7, 2023, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2449221/indo-pak-tension-one-of-the-reasons-why-our-content-doesnt-make-it-to-netflix-nabeel-qureshi>.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Images Staff, "Asif Raza Mir Explains Why There Are No Netflix Originals from Pakistan," *Dawn*, last modified July 19, 2021, <https://images.dawn.com/news/1188038/asif-raza-mir-explains-why-there-are-no-netflix-originals-from-pakistan>.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid.

⁴⁸ "With Low Demand, Weak Storytelling, Pakistan Struggles to Break into Netflix," *Arab News*, last modified September 13, 2020, <https://www.arabnews.com/node/1733891/pakistan>.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

Pakistan needs to work on its technical capacity to reach the competitive standards of the platforms to gain global visibility. However, the geopolitical factor will remain an obstacle. Netflix's regional positioning reinforces the narrative imbalance, limiting Pakistan to project its perspective globally. Therefore, the possible options for Pakistan, along with the technical capacity (editing, audio, video, pacing), are to strengthen its digital diplomacy by using YouTube and local and regional platforms, including Tamasha, Urduflix, SHOQ, and See Prime, to reach and strategically communicate with the global audience. In the digital age, global narrative is not only shaped by the use of the big platforms, but also by viral and credible independent content. For that, Pakistan must focus on producing emotion-driven movies focused on everyday life and sacrifice to build connection and challenge the stereotypes rather than defensive messages. Moreover, using universal genres, such as thriller, spy, or crime or investigative series, brings algorithm visibility on YouTube and other OTT platforms. Consistent uploading of mini-series, documentaries, with good visual quality, clear audio, accurate subtitles, combined with thriller, emotional, and investigative storytelling strategies, can engage audiences and communicate Pakistan's perspective.

Conclusion

The expansion of the OTT platform has transformed digital entertainment into political and national narrative across borders. The research analyzed how recently streamed movies/series produced during the Modi era have contributed in Indian narrative building, focusing on dialogues, scenes, and characters. The analysis identified how repeatedly Pakistan was persistently linked with terrorism, threat, and regional instability. The selected movies represent the pattern of consistent narrative building by India against Pakistan. Additionally, it explored Pakistan's limited presence on OTT platform due to several factors including political, technical and economic factors. This research study does not claim that these productions directly shape the perception and determine their opinions. Instead, it is focused on the pattern of continuous narrative building through movies/series contributing to a broader political narrative shaped by India over a period of time. In this way, the research is focused on the pattern of narrative presented in Indian movies and series rather than measuring the influence on the audience. Future studies can build on these findings to conduct quantitative analysis of audience reception of these narratives, and examine how the viewers from all over the world perceive them and shape their narrative. Lastly, the policy

makers should focus on strengthening Pakistan's presence on digital media, particularly the OTT platforms that have global reach and influence to counter-balance Pakistan's narrative globally.