

Panjshir Files: Fake News & Bias in Indian Media Coverage of Afghanistan

September 2021

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Summary

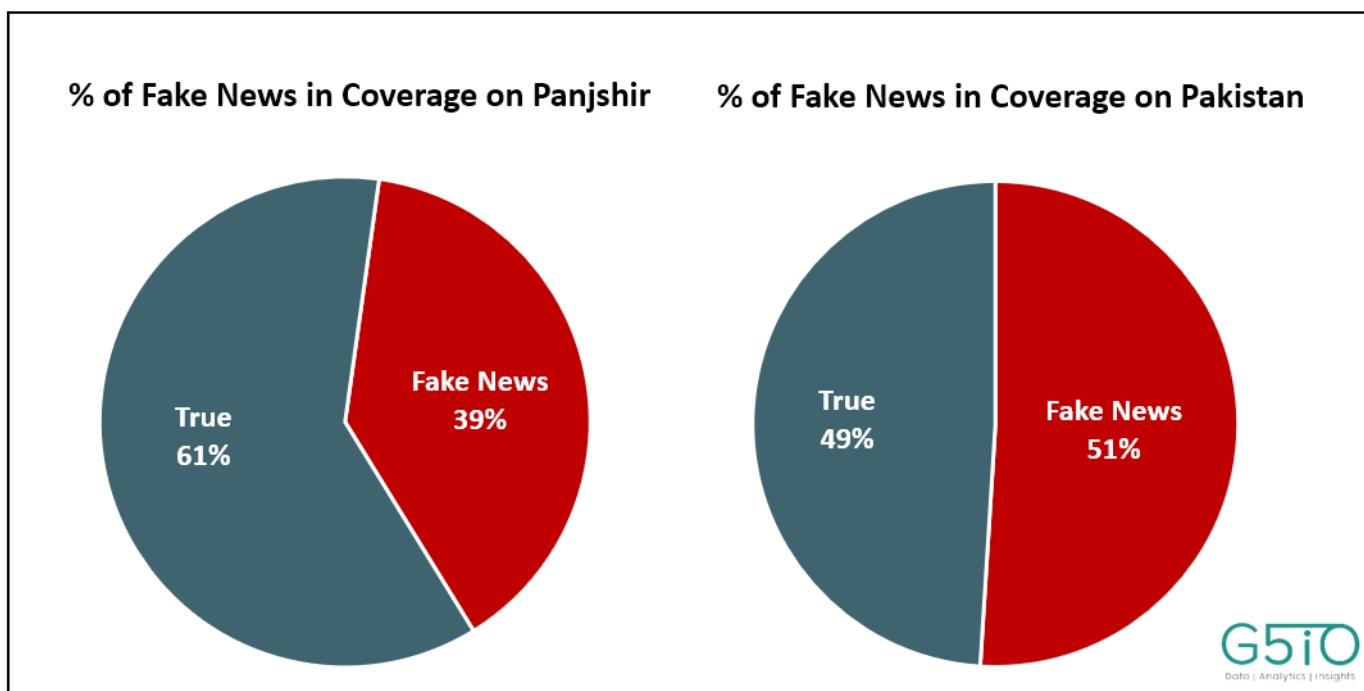
- Amidst the unfolding collapse of the Ghani Government over the last month, there has been a marked increase in disinformation and fake news proliferating throughout Indian Media related to the Afghanistan conflict.
- The following study shows how Indian media networks have not only remained biased in favor of the NRF but have comprised mostly of fake reports and analyses.

Methodology

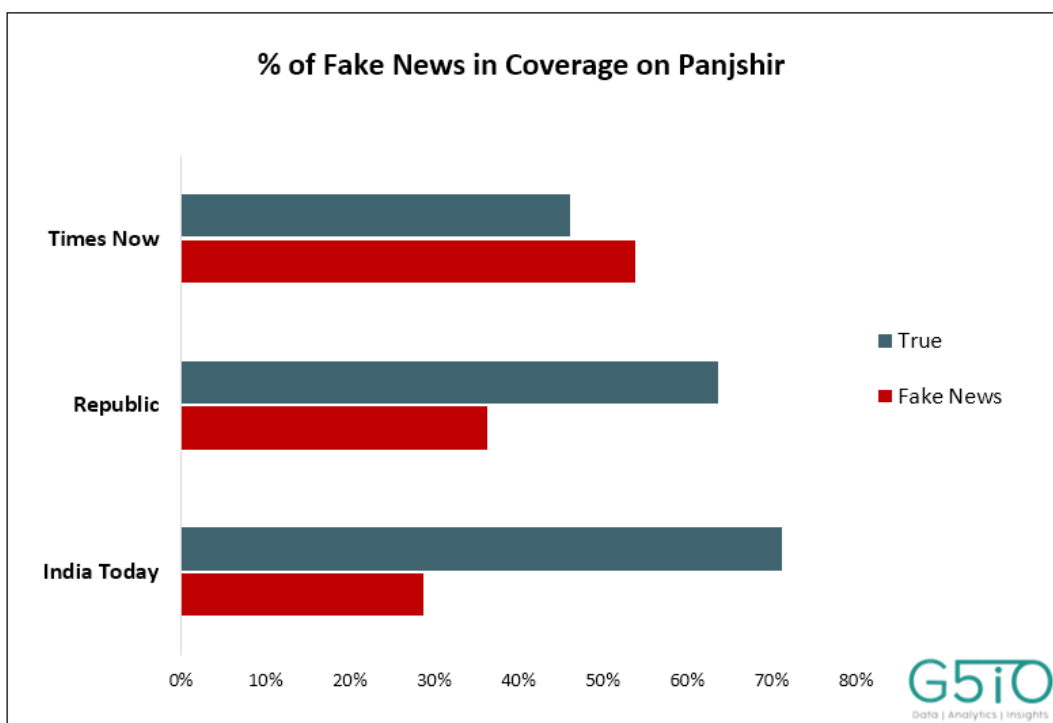
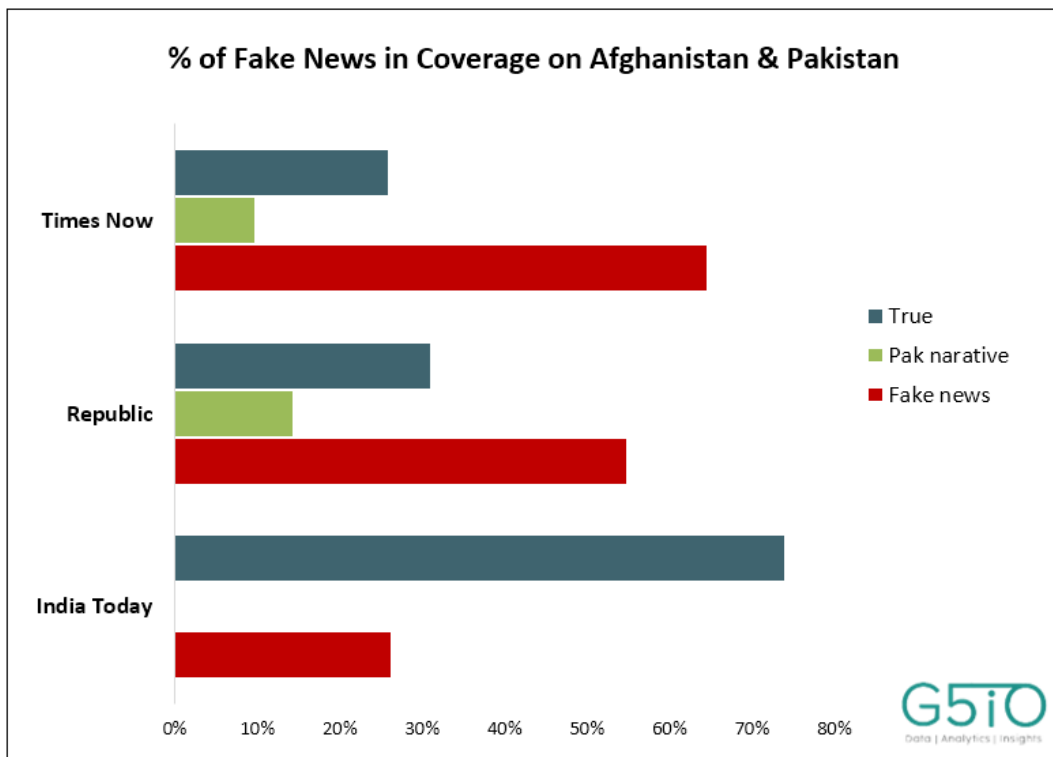
- The report is based on Twitter data from 3 major Indian news networks: The Republic, Times Now and India Today
- Data includes all tweets, news reports and commentary related to Panjshir over the last 15 days.

Insights

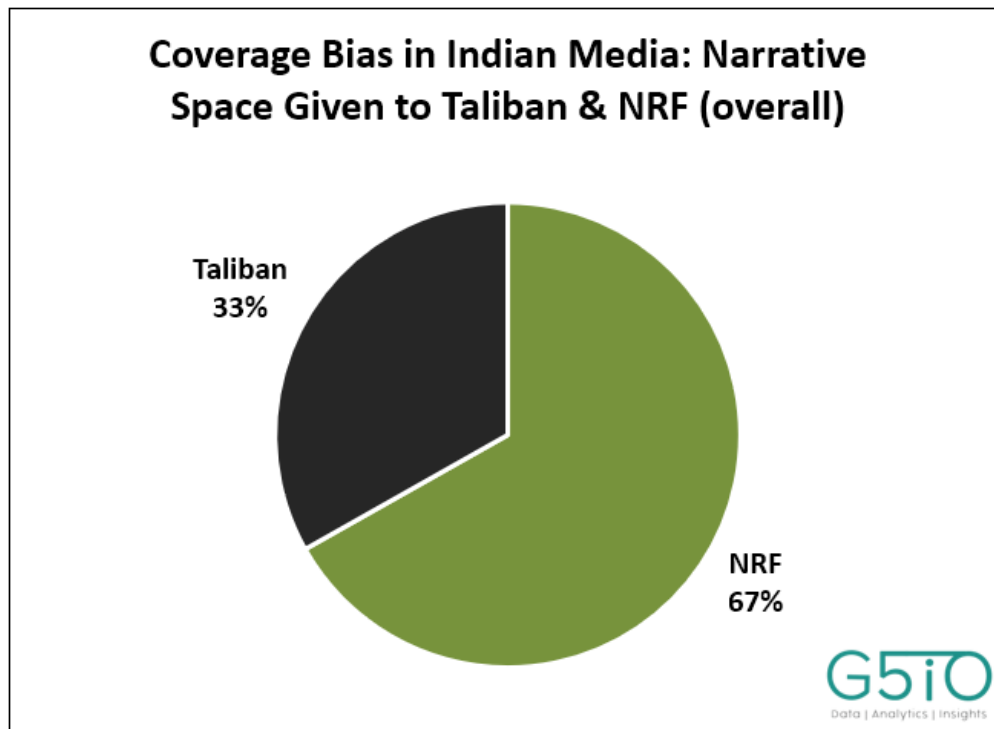
1. **Predominant Use of Fake News:** 39% of all coverage related to Panjshir was outright fake news. More than half (51%) of all coverage related to Pakistan in relation to Afghanistan was outright fake news



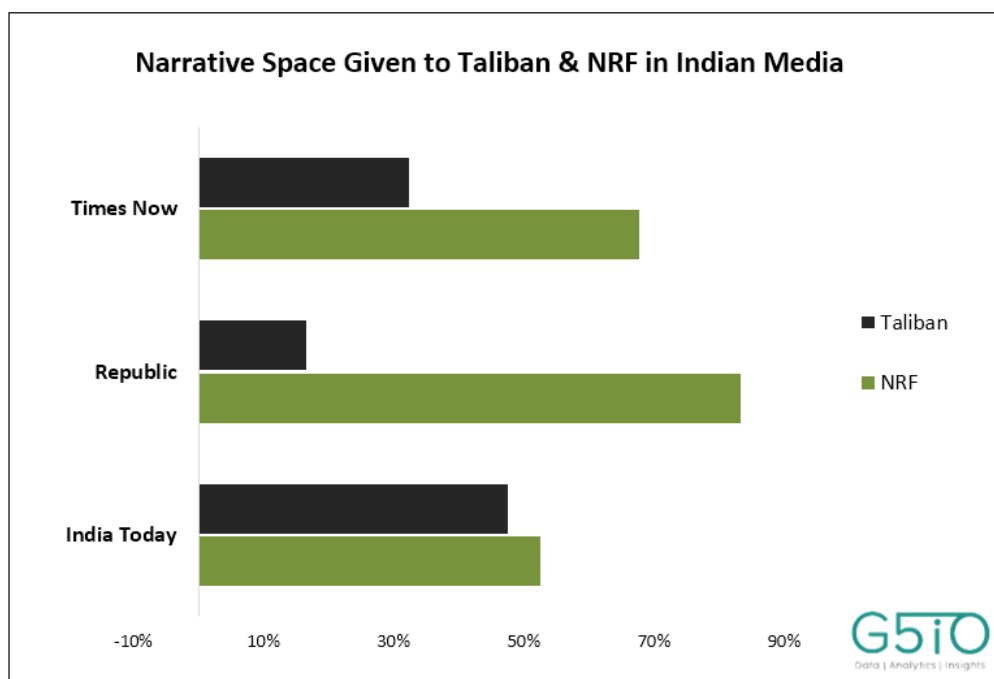
- With regards to the ratio between fake News and factual reporting, more than half (54%) of the reporting related to Panjshir by *Times Now* consisted of fake and/or unverified claims being pushed by the NRF.



2. **Coverage Bias:** About 67% of total coverage related to Panjshir favored the NRF's stance, with the remaining 33% comprising of statements and claims by Taliban officials.



- Within that, out of the three networks analyzed, India Today's coverage, while still pushing some fake news, appeared the most balanced with regards to providing nearly equal space to both sides. The Republic and Times Now on the other hand were clearly biased in their coverage towards the NRF.



Evidence of Fake News Propagated from Indian Media

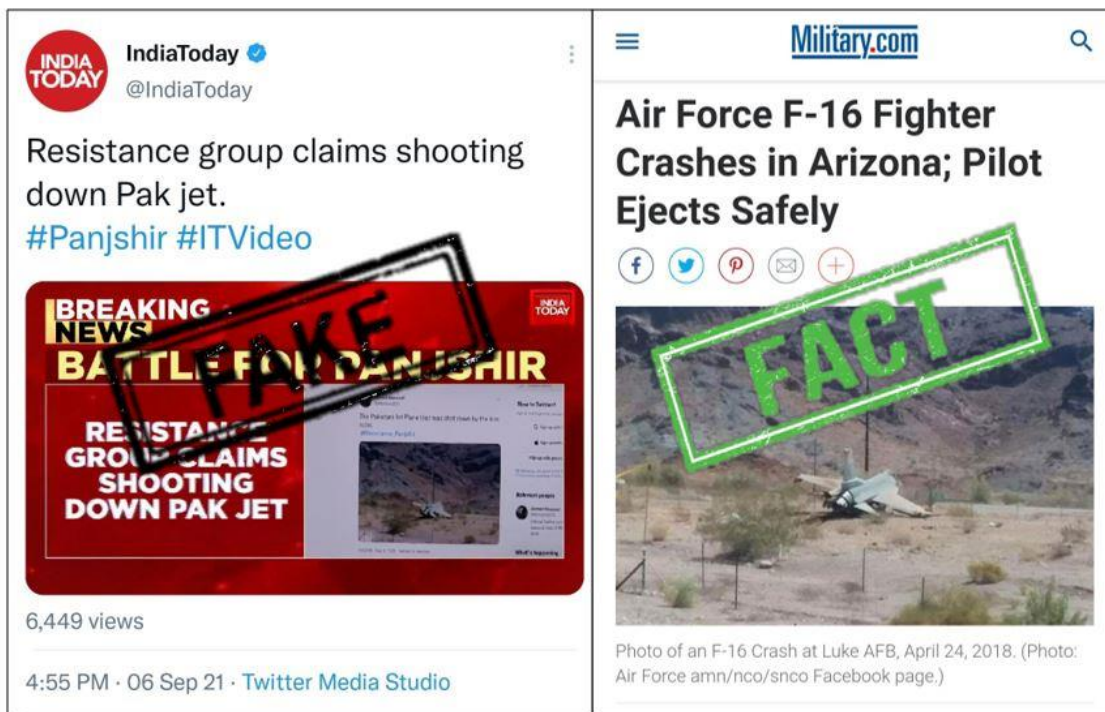
- Using video clips from video games as evidence of Pakistan attacking Panjshir.



- Footage from an RAF training exercise of an F15 (a plane which Pakistan doesn't fly) being falsely portrayed as a PAF jet in Panjshir.



- Using an old image of crashed US F-16 in Arizona portraying it a downed PAF F-16 in Panjshir.



Conclusion

Hence, based on the above, the overwhelming presence of bias and extensive reliance on fake news marks one of the most salient features that have come to characterize Indian media over the past few weeks.