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The biggest threat of the current age is fake news and propaganda

- 1) Introduction:
- 2) Decode the terms "Propaganda" and "fake news"
- 3) Why the biggest threat of a current age is fake news and propaganda?

(3.1) Extremist propaganda and fake news by militant groups to recruit young people
[TTP use of social media apps to recruit young people]

(3.2) Political propaganda and fake news to manipulate the election of a country
[Manipulation of the US 2016 election by Russia]

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(3.3) Use of propaganda and fake news to violate the sovereignty of countries by waging wars

[Recent military aggression of India inside Pakistan
→ Invasion of Iraq by the US on the pretext of presence of mass destruction]

(3.4) Extremist propaganda and fake news to justify the massacre of innocent civilians
[Holocaust: killing of Jews by Hitler]

(3.5) Political propaganda and fake news to besmirch the soft image of a country
[UN DisInfo Lab Report]

(3.6) Propaganda and fake news to manipulate public opinion

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[Propaganda against
Polio vaccine
[- Brexit referendum]

(3.7) Climate-scepticism
and fake news to
reduce global efforts
to mitigate climate
change

[- Anti-climate^{change} lobbies
fund fake news
to prevent the
transition from
fossil fuels).

- The Economist Report]

(3.8) Educational Indoctrination
by the elites to
extend their stay in
power

[Educational Indoctrination
by Hitler]

(3.9) Use of propaganda
and smear-campaigns
to damage people

[Meetha Shafi vs Ali
Zafar case]

4- Ways to counter propaganda and fake news?

(4.1) Early education to debunk propaganda and fake news
[Finland case study]

(4.2) Regulation of media outlets to reduce the spread of fake news and propaganda
[Pakistan Electronic Crime Act - 2016 to regulate news]

(4.3) Encouragement of fact-checking before the dissemination of information
[Nexus book by Harvard]

5- Conclusion

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ESSAY

Wildfire spreads within no time and leads to the destruction of lush-green forest. Similarly, in the age of technology, the information based on propaganda and fake news spreads like the wildfire. However, it is proved to be more lethal than wildfire. So, the biggest threat of the current age is fake news and propaganda.

The extremist propaganda and fake news are used by the terrorist organization to recruit young people.

In addition, political propaganda and fake news led to the manipulation of election result and violation of the sovereignty of a country.

Similarly, it is used to malign the image of a country internationally. Furthermore, it is used as a tool to

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justify the massacre of innocent civilians. Moreover, it is used to alter public opinion and reduce efforts to mitigate climate change. It is a need of a time, to hinder propaganda and false news. To counter propaganda and false news, early education should be used to counter propaganda and false news. Similarly, effective legislation to regulate media outlets and the habit of factchecking before the dissemination of information are highly required. Thus, the biggest threat of the current age is propaganda and false news as it is used in the recruitment of militant organization and manipulation of election result. However, it can be counter by legislation and factchecking.

Propaganda and false news are two terms with

similar meanings. Propaganda and fake news mean the biased and false information which is used for political and vested interests. The information concerned has nothing to do with the reality.

The extremist propaganda and fake news are used by the militant group to recruit young people. These outfits brainwash young people by glorifying people who detonate themselves in bomb blasts. Similarly, they promise monetary gains to young people after joining the organization. The youth due to financial problems and unemployment join such organizations. To illustrate, TTP, a militant group involved in terrorist activities in Pakistan, use social media apps like WhatsApp to allure young people

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to join its group. Thus, propaganda, particularly anti-state, and fake news are used to recruit youth in the terrorist organizations.

The political propaganda and fake news are used as a tool to manipulate the election of a country. This tactic is used by the enemy country to hinder free and fair election. As a result, the winning candidate does not have political legitimacy. It leads to political instability and economic crisis in a country. For instance, Russia intervened in the US 2016 elections by spreading fake news against the opponent of Donald Trump. As a result, Donald Trump won 2016 Presidency with the help of Russia. Thus propaganda and fake news

are used to alter the result of elections in one's favour.

The propaganda and fake news are also used to violate the sovereignty of a country by a waging wars. Some countries use false narratives and accusations to wage war with the enemy country for political gains and vested interests. For example, India used the fake flag operation of Phalgam to justify military aggression inside Pakistan. Similarly, the US invaded Iraq on the pretext of the presence of weapons of mass destruction. Thus, propaganda and fake news are used by the aggressive leaders to launch attacks in the enemy countries.

The extremist propaganda and fake news are used

to justify the massacre of innocent civilians. Several aggressive leaders view minority group with contempt. Therefore, they use propaganda to create animosity in the hearts of majority group for a minority. As a result, they have public consent for killing minority group. To illustrate, Hitler used propaganda to justify the decimation of Jews in the Holocaust. Similarly, the government of Myanmar use propaganda to kill Rohingya Muslims. Hence proved, propaganda is used to justify the mass slaughter of innocent civilians.

The political propaganda and false news are used to blemish the soft image of a country. In recent days, soft image of a country is important for

foreign investment and trade with other countries.

Therefore, enemy countries use fake news to malign the soft image of one another. According to the UN Disinfo Lab report, India is funding several NGOs and media outlets to spread fake news about Pakistan. In short, countries use fake news and propaganda to malign the soft image of enemy countries.

Propaganda and fake news are used to manipulate public opinion. Social media is used to make public opinion. Certain people use fake news to alter public opinion in their favour.

It helps them to fulfill their secret agendas. For example, fake news are spread against polio vaccine that it cause infertility. As a result, most people are reluctant to give polio

vaccine to their children. Similarly, during Brexit, some politicians spread fake news that leaving European Union will be beneficial for medical funding. As several funds will be reallocated for health. Thus, fake news are widely used to manipulate public opinion.

Some climate sceptic people use fake news to reduce global efforts to mitigate climate change. As transition to green energy will result in the loss of profit from using fossil fuels. As per the Economist report, about \$10bn are used annually to publish literature against climate change measures. As a result, the burning of fossil fuel goes unabated. Thus, anti-climate change lobbies and fake news to prevent the transition

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away from fossil fuels
to green energy.

Educational indoctrination, tool of propaganda, by the elites to extend their stay in power. Historically, politicians have used educational text books to propagate certain narrative in the public. As a result, they extend their rule. For example, Hitler used educational indoctrination to propagate anti-communist agenda. Similarly Altaf Anjum stated in his book, "What's Wrong with the Education in Pakistan" that political elites in Pakistan have used education for indoctrination and justification of their rule. Hence proved, education is used by the powerful to achieve their vested interests.

Lastly, propaganda and

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smeared campaigns run through social media to defame people. Some people with their malicious intent spread false news about renowned people. As a result, the image of that person is intentionally tarnished to achieve certain gains. To illustrate, Meesha Shafi, a famous singer, accused Ali Zafar of harassment. To counter her false accusation, he filed a defamation case against her. Thus, fake news are being spread to defame famous people.

The above aforementioned paragraphs explained the threats of fake news. The following paragraphs will explain how to counter propaganda and fake news.

Through early education,

children should be equipped with the skills to debunk propaganda and fake news. With the relevant skills, children would be able to differentiate between fake news and credible news. As a result, fake news will be hindered. To illustrate, Finland equip the students with all the relevant skills, to differentiate between credible and fake news, from the early years of their education. Thus, early education and awareness help to hinder propaganda and fake news.

Social media outlets should be regulated to reduce the spread of fake news and propaganda. For this, effective legislation should be made which will discourage social media outlets from spreading fake news. On addition, strict penalties will also help in this regard.

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For example, Pakistan Electronic Crime Act, 2016 was promulgated to prevent the spread of false news by imposing strict penalties. Hence proved, regulation of media outlets can prevent the spread of false news.

The encouragement of factchecking, before the dissemination of information, can prevent the spread of propaganda and false news. Fact-checking helps in validating the authenticity of information. For example, Hanari stated in his book "Nexus" that false news can be countered through fact-checking." Hence, the habit of fact-checking through various sources can hinder the dissemination of fake news.

In a nutshell, among many threats, false news and propaganda are proved

to the biggest threat of the current age. It is because fake news and propaganda are used to recruit young people in terrorist organisation. Similarly, it is used as a tool to manipulate elections, launch aggression and malign the soft image of an enemy country. Moreover, it is used to shape public opinion and to justify the mass slaughter of innocent people. However, the threat of fake news can be countered by early education, effective legislation and factchecking from various sources. As a result, people can be protected from the threat of extremist propaganda and fake news.
