Annual Methodological Archive Research Review
http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about
Volume 4, Issue 3 (2026)

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about

Weaponizing Narratives: A Cinematic Analysis of *Dhurandhar Movie*

Aroob Ahmad
BS Scholar, Department of English and Linguistics, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad Email: aroobahmed222@gmail.com

Dr. Asim Aqeel
Associate Professor, Department of English and Linguistics, University of Agriculture, Faisalabad Email: asim.aqeel@uaf.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

This study critically analyzes the role of propaganda in the movie *Dhurandhar* acting as a capsule to construct narrative where events and characters are frogged and where meaning is actively produced and regulated. The paper also discusses *Dhurandhar* movie as cinematic site of propaganda and the ways in which film works as an effective medium for constructing and communicating ideologies. By integrating perspective from cinema studies and propaganda theories, the analysis focuses on the way visual combination, narrative structure, and cinematic elements such as camera framing, sound designing and mise-en-scène are all use in calculated manner to influence the audience. The analysis further shows that selected movie not only reinforces political and social ideas through its aesthetics and visual choice but also wronged the historical elements of Pakistani politics. The study concludes that the movie blurs the line between the enjoyment of cinema and persuasion by incorporating propaganda into its cinematic form using qualitative textual and film analysis. In the end, movie is presented as an instrument to construct narrative of the audience and a cultural product, explaining how movies can influence public opinion, promote and legitimize specific worldviews about the context these people never experiences. The paper has used the political science of propaganda and cinema studies to analyze the movie and interconnect the happening events with real events by the help of New Historicism; literary theory.

Keywords: Cinema studies, Propaganda, Ideological Manipulation, *Dhurandha*r, Film Analysis, Media Influence.

Introduction

In contemporary society, media is one of the most powerful and influential tool to impact people's opinion, creating political narratives and guiding ideological viewpoints. Cinema occupies a particularly strong position among different means of media due to its capacity to ingrate narrative, emotional engagement and visual deception on a single platform. Although movies are mostly seen as a source of entertainment, they also serves as a tool of manufacturing ideologies and have a power

Annual Methodological Archive Research Review
http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about
Volume 4, Issue 3 (2026)

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about

to subtly but significantly affect audience's viewpoint. Cinema can legitimize some ideologies and opinions while opposing marginalized viewpoints through skill-fully crafted stories, portraying selective viewpoints and manipulate emotions. Because of this, movies often contribute to the spread of propaganda. The use of propaganda by political organizations, government, and dominating entities to sway people opinion and uphold ideological control is not a modern phenomenon. Propaganda which was always associated with political speeches, new media and posters has grown its roots in modern artistic creations where messages are convinced subtly but effectively. Contemporary propaganda frequently uses emotional storytelling, heroic portrayal, symbolic imagery, and strategic framing instead of overt persuasion. In this sense, movies become a very powerful medium because viewers connect with them on an emotional level, which facilitates the more organic and unconscious absorption of ideological themes. Propaganda's evolution into a cinematic form illustrates how media, power, and ideology are changing in modern society. In this framework, the film *Dhurandhar* becomes an important cinematic text. The movie uses persuasive representation to convey political and ideological narratives in a way that goes beyond straightforward storytelling. *Dhurandhar* tends to promote specific ideological presumptions while influencing the audience's perception of sociopolitical realities through its portrayal of conflict, nationalism, power relations, and character development. The film's selective depiction of identities and events shows how cinematic narratives may impact public perception and support prevailing discourses. Such portrayal raises important questions about how movies create nationalistic feelings, manufacture consent, and use entertainment to legitimize ideological agendas. *Dhurandhar* is a word of Sanskrit which means "the one who bear loads", which is an Indian movie, using Pakistani characters and events to forcibly join them with Indian security and intelligence failures. The film opens with a plane hijacking sequence in which the perpetrators are presented as originating from Pakistan, and Indian Interior Minister is trying to negotiate with them and this action was followed by other terrorist attempts from the Pakistani side and after some years to few incidents Indian Military to perform *Dhurandhar*, to attack Pakistan in its own soil. By attributing several security-related incidents to actors connected to Pakistan, *Dhurandhar* offers a specific perspective of political reality. Following the Pahalgam attack, which sparked conflicting interpretations and allegations in public debate, the movie was published during a time of increased political tensions. Additionally, a series of security lapses are depicted in the movie through a narrative prism that holds Pakistani characters and institutions mostly accountable. The film appears to address an audience already familiar with dominant nationalist narratives concerning Pakistan. This film was allegedly released after Pahlgam attack which was forcibly blamed on Pakistan without any investigation and an intense escalation after 1971. Through this process, film is transformed from a cultural product to a tool for the creation and dissemination of social and political meanings. Films can incite audiences to embrace specific points of view while inhibiting critical resistance by dramatizing events and emotionally framing disputes. As a result, studying propaganda in movies becomes crucial to comprehending how the media shapes public opinion and contributes to ideological indoctrination.

Annual Methodological Archive Research Review
http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about
Volume 4, Issue 3 (2026)

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189
http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about

The title of the paper "Weaponizing Narratives: a Cinematic Analysis of *Dhurandhar*" is to critically examine the propagandistic aspects of the film by using cinema studies and propaganda analysis. The study looks at the strategic use of formation of narrative, character portrayal, emotional appeal, and cinematic methods to create ideological meaning in the movie. The study examines the connection between cinema and power, focusing on how movies can serve as instruments for influencing public opinion. It does this by drawing on theoretical viewpoints pertaining to propaganda, ideology, and media impact. Additionally, the study aims to draw attention to the wider ramifications of ideological manipulation in modern film and how it affects viewer perception. Through this research, the paper makes the case that *Dhurandhar* should be seen as a cinematic text that is intricately entwined with ideological and propagandistic discourse rather than just as entertainment.

Literature review

In order to move people's opinion, attitudes, feelings, and actions in favor of a specific ideology, political agenda, organization, leader, institution, or cause, propaganda is a purposeful and organized method of communication. In contrast to regular communication, propaganda's principal goals are control, persuasion, and public opinion shaping rather than the presentation of objective information. In order to direct viewers toward a specific conclusion, it frequently chooses frames, exaggerates, or conceals information. The word propaganda originally stems from a Latin proverb propagare which means, "to spread" or to "propagate." The phrase has historically been linked to religious, political, and military persuasion, particularly in the twentieth century when governments and media organizations started utilizing mass media to sway sizable populations. Propaganda is a potent tool in contemporary society and can be found in newspapers, television, movies, commercials, social media, speeches, memes, and digital platforms. The nature, purpose, and effects of propaganda in society have been explained by a number of prominent theorists in the field of propaganda studies. Their contributions serve as the theoretical cornerstone for comprehending how propaganda functions in mass communication, politics, the media, and ideology.

One of the earliest theorist to thoroughly examine propaganda was Harold Lasswell , particularly within 1920s to 1930s. Lasswell described propaganda as "the management of collective attitudes by the manipulation of significant symbols" in his seminal work Propaganda Technique in the World War (1927). He maintained that emotionally charged symbols, catchphrases, and stories are how propaganda works to sway public opinion and inspire large numbers of people, particularly in times of conflict and political unrest. According to Lasswell, governments and political elites utilize propaganda as a tactical tool to create consent and uphold social control. His contributions established the groundwork for contemporary communication studies and propaganda. Another important theorist is Jacques Ellul, whose book Propaganda: The Formation of Men's Attitudes (1962) contained his main contribution. By contending that contemporary propaganda is intricately ingrained in technology cultures and mass media systems rather than being restricted to political speeches or warfare campaigns, Ellul broadened our understanding of propaganda. Ellul claims that propaganda shapes people's perceptions of reality and integrates them into prevailing ideological

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

structures. He underlined that propaganda works because it appeals to feelings, customs, and societal anxieties rather than rationality. His idea emphasizes how propaganda is pervasive and invisible in contemporary society. In similar manner, Robert jackel and Janice Hirota's book Propaganda (1995) made a very significant contribution to the propaganda studies. Propaganda, according to them, is a type of strategic communication intended to organize public consent and alter perception. According to Jackall and Hirota, propaganda frequently uses chosen truths, emotive framing, repetition, and symbolic representation to influence public perception rather than being entirely untrue. Their research focuses on how contemporary organizations, governments, and media sectors create compelling stories to sway audiences while hiding their ideological goals.

Furthermore, the "Propaganda Model" was introduced by Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky in their seminal work Manufacturing Consent (1988). They contend that the media serves political and economic elites by acting as propaganda apparatus. Their theory holds that media organizations shape public opinion in ways that benefit powerful groups by filtering information through ownership, advertising, political interests, and prevailing ideologies. Instead of using overt restriction, their research shows how propaganda covertly functions in democracies through news framing, media selection, and ideological predisposition. Additionally, Walter Lippmann (1922) introduces the idea of the "pseudo-environment," which advances our knowledge of propaganda. He claims that people rely on the media's simplified depictions of reality rather than interacting with it directly. By influencing public perception and decision-making, these depictions enable propaganda to create a reality that serves specific objectives. Lippmann's concept of the "manufacture of consent" highlights the critical role that the media plays in influencing public opinion (Lippmann, 1922). Additionally, Antonio Gramsci (1971) offers insightful analysis through his concept of cultural hegemony, despite not being solely a propaganda theorist. He contends that dominant groups dominate cultural and ideological institutions in addition to using political and economic strategies to hold onto power. This control guarantees that the general public accepts the viewpoint of the governing class as common sense. In this sense, propaganda serves as a means of spreading and normalizing hegemonic concepts in society (Gramsci, 1971). Emotional manipulation is typically used in propaganda. To sway audiences, it frequently employs fear, nationalism, patriotism, hope, rage, pride, hatred, or sympathy. Propaganda reduces complicated situations into emotionally charged narratives of "good versus evil," "us versus them," or "heroes versus enemies," rather than promoting independent thought. Audiences are more inclined to swiftly and unquestioningly accept communications because of this emotional structure. Propaganda comes in a variety of forms. There are different types of propaganda. In order to preserve credibility, White Propaganda typically uses information that is only partially true and freely indicates its source. Black Propaganda disseminates false information and conceals its actual source. Between the two is Gray Propaganda, when the information's veracity and source are ambiguous. Depending on its intent and setting, propaganda can also be political, religious, cultural, wartime, business, or ideological. Propaganda is frequently studied as an instrument of ideological production in media and film studies. Certain ideologies, national identities, political

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189
http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about

objectives, or social structures might be quietly normalized through films, television dramas, news broadcasts, and digital media. Media texts have the power to change public consciousness through symbolism, narrative framing, character depiction, and repetition—all without the audiences' full awareness.

Additionally, propaganda is a powerful communicative mechanism that shapes perception, constructs reality, and influences collective behavior. It functions not only through falsehood but also through selective truth, emotional persuasion, repetition, symbolism, and media control. Its ultimate aim is to direct how people think and act in ways that serve specific ideological, political, or institutional interests. The 1995 book Propaganda by Robert Jackall and Janice Hirota provides an important viewpoint on propaganda as a calculated communication technique used to sway public opinion and create consent. Propaganda, according to Jackall (1995), is a purposeful process that selectively presents reality in ways that serve specific ideological, political, or institutional purposes rather than just the dissemination of inaccurate information. Propaganda affects how audiences understand social and political reality through language, symbols, repetition, emotional appeals, and media portrayal. Jackall further says that propaganda works best when it seems normal and uncontested in society (Jackall, 1995). Propaganda progressively normalizes particular narratives through constant exposure in media, politics, advertising, movies, and public conversation, as opposed to overtly pressuring people to adopt particular viewpoints. Propaganda thus permeates daily discourse and molds societal awareness without viewers being completely aware of its impact. Additionally, Jackall highlights the propaganda's emotional component. He clarifies that instead of depending only on logical reasoning, propaganda frequently plays on feelings like fear, nationalism, patriotism, hope, and insecurity (Jackall, 1995). Propaganda increases public support, reduces opposition, and legitimizes the aims of powerful organizations by emotionally involving audiences. Because visual storytelling, symbolic representation, and emotional framing are commonly employed to support ideological themes and sway public opinion, Jackall's theory is especially pertinent to modern media and film studies. Overall, the research on propaganda shows that it is a sophisticated communicative process that uses ideological framing, emotional persuasion, repetition, and selective representation rather than just being a tool for spreading incorrect information. Together, academics like Lasswell, Ellul, Lippmann, Gramsci, Herman and Chomsky, and Jackall emphasize how propaganda shapes public opinion and creates social reality in a variety of political, cultural, and media contexts. Propaganda is pervasive in today's mass media and internet platforms, where it quietly sways people through story construction as opposed to overt compulsion. This corpus of work offers a solid theoretical framework for examining propaganda in contemporary media texts, especially in visual culture and film.

Research methodology

Research Design

The propagandistic components contained in the movie *Dhurandhar* are examined in this study using a qualitative research design. Because qualitative research emphasizes meanings, representations, ideologies, and interpretations over numerical data, it is

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

especially well suited for the analysis of media texts. The study looks into how narrative structures, visual representations, and cinematic techniques are employed to create ideological messages and affect audience perception.

Research Approach

The study uses an analytical and interpretive methodology. The research focuses on comprehending how propaganda functions within the movie through visual and narrative techniques rather than statistically assessing audience reactions. The approach is predicated on the idea that movies are cultural artifacts with the power to influence public opinion and uphold ideological beliefs in addition to being sources of entertainment.

Data Collection

The movie *Dhurandhar* served as the study's main source of data. Textual evidence for analysis includes dialogue, visual images, character depictions, narrative developments, symbols, and cinematic approaches. Books, journal articles, and academic research on propaganda theory, film studies, media influence, ideology, and New Historicism have all provided secondary data.

Theoretical framework

The study is based on New Historicism, Cinema Studies, and Propaganda Theory. A framework for comprehending how media texts alter facts, feelings, and perceptions to further particular ideological objectives is provided by propaganda theory. Examining how visual language, cinematography, mise-en-scène, sound design, editing, and narrative building convey ideological implications is made easier with the help of cinema studies. By underlining the connection between power, discourse, and representation, New Historicism allows the researcher to contrast cinematic representations with historical and political realities.

Method of Analysis

Qualitative textual and cinematic analysis is used in the study. Propaganda strategies including emotional manipulation, selective representation, enemy building, nationalism, stereotyping, and ideological framing are identified by analyzing certain scenes, dialogues, and visual representations from *Dhurandhar*. The study also looks at how the movie reconstructs historical events and how cinematic devices help spread specific political narratives. By using this method, the study aims to uncover the connection between propaganda, ideology, and film.

Analysis and Discussion

Nationalism and construction of the Enemy

The development of nationalism through the establishment of a distinct enemy is one of *Dhurandhar's* most significant propagandistic features. Throughout the movie, national identity is portrayed as a defensive force that must continuously defend itself against outside dangers rather than just as a cultural or political idea. The narrative creates a binary opposition between the heroic self and the menacing other by

Annual Methodological Archive Research Review
http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about
Volume 4, Issue 3 (2026)

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189
http://amresearchreview.com/index.php/Journal/about

frequently linking Pakistani personalities and institutions to danger, instability, and terrorism. This split is a reflection of a popular propaganda tactic that reduces complicated political realities to a struggle between "us" and "them."

To support this impression, the movie uses both narrative and visual techniques. While Indian protagonists are portrayed as brave, patriotic, and morally justifiable in their conduct, Pakistani characters are often associated with criminal activity, secret operations, and acts of terrorism. By fostering an emotional commitment to one national identity while arousing skepticism against another, these depictions influence the audience's perception. Nationalism is one of the most potent symbols in the movie, and propaganda, according to Lasswell (1927), works by manipulating symbols and collective sentiments. From a New Historicist standpoint, these depictions show how film does more than just record historical truth; it also contributes to the creation of political meaning. *Dhurandhar* advances a specific ideological interpretation of nationalism by presenting specific events and identities in a chosen manner. As a result, the movie reinforces a narrative that is consistent with particular nationalist discourses by turning political conflict into a moral war between heroes and adversaries.

Emotional Manipulation and Fear Appeals

Fear-based emotional manipulation is another significant propaganda tactic used in *Dhurandhar*. To establish a sense of perpetual threat, the movie frequently depicts scenes of bloodshed, terrorism, national insecurity, and public anxiety. Instead of encouraging viewers to react critically to the concerns being portrayed, such portrayals encourage viewers to react emotionally. According to Jacques Ellul (1965), propaganda works best when it appeals to feelings rather than reason. In *Dhurandhar*, audiences are persuaded to accept specific political narratives by using terror. A story where danger seems imminent and inevitable is constructed through suspenseful scenes, dramatic confrontations, and emotionally charged conversation. By using these strategies, the movie aims to inspire fear, patriotism, and support for governmental institutions.

Selective Representation of Historic Events

The movie makes several allusions to political disputes and historical occurrences, but it does so through a selected narrative framework. *Dhurandhar* frequently favors one perception of political reality over several. Because it directs viewers toward a preconceived interpretation of events, this selective portrayal is one of the hallmarks of propaganda. According to New Historicists, history is a collection of conflicting stories influenced by ideology and power rather than a static set of facts. By highlighting some elements while downplaying or excluding other points of view, the movie reconstructs historical events. As a result, despite being influenced by specific ideological presumptions, viewers are shown a version of history that seems genuine and objective. This procedure shows how narrative selection and framing in movies can affect how the general public perceives political events.

Cinema as a Tool of Propaganda

Cinema has a special capacity to blend sound, story, emotion, and visual picture into a

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

single powerful medium. Films have the ability to indirectly influence viewers through amusement, in contrast to traditional political communication. *Dhurandhar* shows how cinematic devices can be used to uphold the look of a commercial entertainment product while reinforcing ideological messages. The film's persuasive force is enhanced by elements including character portrayal, editing patterns, background music, and camera angles. The dramatic sound design, emotionally charged images, and heroic framing of specific actors all influence viewers' interpretations of events. As a result, propaganda is conveyed throughout the full cinematic framework of the movie rather than just through words. This illustrates how important movies are in influencing attitudes and creating political meaning.

Blurring the lines between Reality and Representation

Dhurandhar's propensity to conflate historical fact with fictional narrative is among its most remarkable features. In addition to using fabricated narratives and dramatic representations, the movie makes references to actual political events, institutions, and conflicts. Ideological communications may seem more credible as a result of this combination's appearance of authenticity. According to New Historicism, literary and cultural works actively contribute to the creation of reality rather than just reflecting it. It is challenging for viewers to discern between recorded history and cinematic interpretation in *Dhurandhar* since reality and fantasy blend together. By doing this, the movie turns historical occurrences into gripping stories that uphold specific ideological viewpoints. As a result, entertainment turns becomes a potent medium for the creation and dissemination of political meanings.

Discussion

The investigation shows that *Dhurandhar* employs a number of propaganda strategies, such as ideological framing, nationalism, emotional manipulation, and selective depiction. Together, these strategies influence audience perception and advance particular interpretations of political reality. The movie often uses simplistic tales to persuade audiences to embrace specific points of view rather than depicting political problems in all of their complexity. It is clear from applying Propaganda Theory, Cinema Studies, and New Historicism that the movie serves as a cultural text with the power to shape public opinion in addition to being a source of amusement. The study emphasizes how important movies are to the creation of stories, the formation of collective memory, and the maintenance of ideological discourses in modern society.

Conclusion

In order to comprehend how cinema might serve as a vehicle for ideological communication, the current study looked at *Dhurandhar* from the viewpoints of Propaganda Theory, Cinema Studies, and New Historicism. The investigation concludes that the movie used a number of propaganda strategies, such as ideological framing, nationalism, emotional manipulation, fear appeals, and selective depictions of historical events. By using these strategies, the movie creates certain political narratives and directs viewers' perceptions of social and political realities. The study also showed that Dhurandhar actively reconstructs political events through cinematic representation

Online ISSN 3007-3197
Print ISSN 3007-3189

rather than just presenting them. The film crafts a compelling story that blurs the lines between fact and fiction by fusing historical allusions with fictitious parts. From a New Historicist standpoint, this emphasizes how cinema does more than just represent objective truth; it also shapes historical understanding and creates cultural meanings. In conclusion, *Dhurandhar* can be seen as both an ideological text and a cinematic product. The movie serves as an example of how narrative structure, visual storytelling, and emotional engagement may be employed to sway public opinion and support specific points of view. In order to comprehend the connection between film, propaganda, and the creation of political narratives in modern society, the study highlights the significance of critically analyzing media texts.

References

Ellul, J. (1965). *Propaganda: The formation of men's attitudes* (K. Kellen & J. Lerner, Trans.). Vintage Books. (Original work published 1962)

Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks*. International Publishers.

Greenblatt, S., & Gallagher, C. (2000). *Practicing New Historicism*. University of Chicago Press.

Herman, E. S., & Chomsky, N. (1988). *Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass media*. Pantheon Books.

Jackall, R., & Hirota, J. M. (1995). *Propaganda*. New York University Press.

Lasswell, H. D. (1927). *Propaganda technique in the World War*. Alfred A. Knopf.

Lippmann, W. (1922). *Public opinion*. Harcourt, Brace and Company.

Reeves, N. (1999). *The power of film propaganda: Myth or reality?* Continuum.