

Reclaiming the Narrative: Deconstructing Anti-Pakistan Propaganda in the Indian Film Dhurandhar I & II

Abbas Mumtaz

M.Phil. Scholar (Faculty of Media and Mass Communication)
University of Central Punjab, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.
Email: sahibzada49@live.com

Zainab Mahnoor

M.Phil. Scholar (Faculty of Media and Mass Communication)
University of Central Punjab, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.
Email: zainabcheema60@gmail.com

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.24312/ucp-jmc.04.01.907>

Abstract

Cinema operates as a powerful instrument of soft power, shaping public perception, collective memory, and political discourse through emotionally engaging narratives. This study critically examines the Indian film Dhurandhar I & II (both parts) to explore how popular cinema constructs and circulates anti-Pakistan narratives. Employing a qualitative research design, the study integrates content analysis, narrative analysis, in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) to examine selected scenes, dialogues, cinematography, sound, character portrayals, and cultural representations. The analysis is grounded in soft power theory, media framing theory, and propaganda analysis to understand how cinematic techniques contribute to ideological messaging and national identity construction. Findings indicate systematic historical distortion, emotional manipulation, selective storytelling, and the reinforcement of political stereotypes. IDIs and FGDs revealed strong audience criticism of scenes depicting the ISI, the 26/11 Mumbai attacks, the character of Sardar Rehman and SP Chaudhri Aslam, which participants described as misleading and

factually inaccurate. Moreover, participants highlighted the misrepresentation of Liyari culture, particularly through the costumes of the lead hero and heroine, which were seen as culturally inauthentic. The study emphasizes the importance of media literacy, critical viewing practices, and the development of counter-narratives to challenge the influence of politically biased cinema.

Keywords: Cinema, Propaganda, Media Framing, Pakistan, Victimhood, Narrative Analysis, and Soft Power.

1. Introduction

Film is now more than just entertainment as it plays the role of a communication platform in creating political communication and belief systems among social groups. The perception that film is political is one of the issues that have attracted the attention of many scholars who offer their analyses on how films can be framed politically, what films are when viewed politically, and why they matter politically (Li, 2023). Films are a form of communication and expression whose influences go beyond the rational or conscious minds of spectators. From a global political perspective, films can serve as an instrument of soft power in terms of conveying political ideas and ideologies that help to construct international images and legitimate national political positions (Nye, 2004). For example, in South Asia, Indian cinema is unique in its ability to penetrate the region because of its ability to produce numerous movies and distribute them internationally.

Bollywood films are consumed all over South Asia, in the Middle East, in Europe, and North America, thereby giving their ideological content room to traverse different international borders. The past two decades have seen the growth of nationalism, internal and external security themes in Bollywood films, depicting Pakistan as a threatening other that is both insecure and morally corrupt. Many Bollywood movies were screened, and their depiction sarcastically deteriorated Pakistani people that have been credited to Lashkar-e-Taiba for promoting terror activities for religious reasons. Moreover, the Pakistani army and ISI have been perceived negatively since they direct terrorists in blowing up within the Indian borders. In short, “both the US and

Indian media have portrayed a weak image of Pakistan with respect to terror activities after the 9/11 incident” (Safwan & Razzaq, 2023).

The movie *Dhurandhar I & II* can be used to illustrate this point. Although the movie has been marketed as a patriotic thriller, the reality is that the film uses various cinematic elements to advance an ideology. Through storylines, characters, and visuals, the movie depicts Pakistan as the main instigator of terrorism and political instability in the region. This paper analyses the use of cinema in shaping an anti-Pakistan ideology.

2. Research Questions

Following are the research hypotheses of the study:

RQ1: How does *Dhurandhar I & II* reconstruct historical events and personalities?

RQ2: How does the film employ ideological and political framing of Pakistan?

RQ3: How does *Dhurandhar I & II* represent Lyari's culture and identity?

3. Literature Review

According to Nye (2004), soft power is the capacity of a country to persuade or attract others without employing coercion. Soft power differs from hard power in that while the latter is coercive, the former involves the dissemination of ideas and values through various cultural products, such as films, television programs, music, among others. In this context, soft power involves influencing international perceptions through the production of narratives by cultural industries.

Among these cultural industries is cinema whose capacity to deliver ideologically charged messages through entertainment is unmatched, according to (Nye, 2004). It should be understood that unlike hard power, soft power entails the creation of reality through the use of selective storytelling and cultural symbolism. Film-making creates meaning in addition to

presenting selected realities. In other words, ideology is packaged within entertainment, thus allowing ideological content to move around seamlessly. According to scholars, the notion of films as political artifacts may be considered one of the most important areas of research in international politics, whereby the film as a political text is becoming increasingly important rather than a cultural product per se (Li, 2023).

The approach allows understanding the ways in which the cinema shapes people's perception of politics in terms of how it represents global events, national identity, and interstate relations from an ideological standpoint. Films use mechanisms like repetition, the power of emotions, and simplification of the plot to make viewers accept their interpretation of the world, thus preventing any critical analysis. When it comes to the theme of South Asian films, the issue of nationalism is still widely represented in Bollywood cinema. While at the beginning of its history, Indian cinema paid attention to socio-cultural topics, since 1990s, the focus shifted to issues of national security and terrorism. It is worth noting that such tendencies correspond directly to changing geopolitical situations and evolving political discourse in which cinema operates as a tool of promoting national identity and legitimacy of a certain state.

Contemporary Indian cinema has increasingly engaged with politically sensitive historical narratives. Kumar (2025) notes that films such as *The Kashmir Files*, *The Kerala Story*, and *Veer Savarkar* reflect deeper socio-political currents within India. Although these films promote awareness of historical events and national identity, they often present simplified interpretations of complex issues and may reinforce polarized understandings among audiences. Research demonstrates that Bollywood tends to present India as being moral, virtuous, progressive, and heroic at the same time, whereas Pakistan is depicted as an ever-present destabilizer and threat (Kabir, 2019). The movies of Bollywood are not only showing the military forces and intelligence agencies of Pakistan as negative but they are also showing the religious groups of Pakistan as negative (Sial et al., 2013).

In this way, complex historical processes and events are reduced to morality and thus form a very sharp distinction between self and other. It

should be noted that this tendency applies to Bollywood in general and not only to individual movies. Indeed, specific movies made by Bollywood feature Pakistan in an unfavorable light and depict it either as extremist, militant, or politically treacherous (Atif & Shafiq, 2019). All these images rely on stereotypes rather than on history or sociopolitical realities. As a result, Pakistani figures are represented as antagonists.

Framing theory is highly effective in providing insights into meaning construction and diffusion. From Entman's perspective (1993), framing involves the selection and relative emphasis of certain aspects of reality that are to be made more salient in communication texts in order to convey a specific interpretation of a particular issue or situation. Within the cinematic context, framing takes several forms, from narrative construction and dialogue to composition, positioning, and even sound. This combination is essential as far as promoting certain meanings and downplaying others is concerned.

Another powerful theoretical framework to analyse media phenomena is represented by Herman and Chomsky's propaganda model (1988). Unlike framing theory, propaganda models explain how media systems are able to promote dominant political and ideological agendas via systematic filtering processes. As per the above-mentioned model, media content may be influenced by ownership considerations, politics, advertising considerations, and dependence on official sources. These structural forces help produce stories based on dominant ideological assumptions.

In the realm of films, such forces can be found in the form of simple good versus evil, emotionally laden narratives, and repetitions of viewpoints that align with the state. When put together, theories of media framing and the propaganda model provide a strong framework with which to examine the process of constructing ideological messages in films. This sheds light on how cinema can not only entertain but also persuade, by combining affect and politics. As a result, films can serve as powerful tools for moulding perceptions about nationhood, international affairs, and collective memory inside and outside the nation-state.

3.1 Research Gap

While there is an increasing focus on nationalist tendencies in Indian films and Pakistan continues to emerge through propagandistic frames, *Dhurandhar I & II* has been largely ignored within academic discussions. Much of the existing literature focuses on the trend in general in regards to Bollywood nationalism without examining the films themselves. This means that the ideological construction within films goes unexplored. Through this research, an attempt will be made to address this gap through a thorough qualitative analysis of *Dhurandhar I & II* and how its story construction, characters, and images reflect ideological content.

4. Theoretical Framework

The current research is based on media framing theory (Entman, 1993) as well as propaganda studies, particularly as laid out by Herman and Chomsky (1988). When combined, these theories allow for an analysis of how meanings are made through selective inclusion, highlighting, and exclusion in media texts rather than through any neutral rendering of reality. Media framing theory (Entman, 1993) suggests that media highlight some aspects of an event at the expense of other aspects. This theory can be applied in *Dhurandhar I & II* in terms of how characters are highlighted in order to generate either sympathy or legitimacy, how characters are de-emphasized and simplified and how some narratives are highlighted in order to shape the interpretation of the message that is communicated through the ideologies of the film. Finally, propaganda analysis (Herman & Chomsky, 1988) allows us to recognize some of the methods used to convey ideology through films including emotional appeal, repetition, and moral binaries where a complex reality is reduced to something as simple as good versus evil. This simplification allows for easier comprehension of the ideological message within the framework of entertainment films.

5. Research Methodology

A qualitative research methodology was adopted for this paper to examine the ideological content of the film *Dhurandhar I & II* in a detailed and interpretive manner. The qualitative method is appropriate for textual analysis since it offers an opportunity to analyze meaning beyond quantification and statistics.

In the current study, the researcher will examine the interplay of story construction, image construction, and symbolic elements to construct an understanding of ideologies presented through the film. The qualitative method allows the researcher to delve into deeper aspects such as assumptions and beliefs expressed within the film.

The use of this approach facilitates exploration of the ways in which *Dhurandhar I & II* represents politics and culture through storytelling techniques, character development, and aesthetic construction of film scenes. In this case, the film will be analyzed as an ideological and cultural text in which meaning is constructed and communicated to the audience. Qualitative method allows interpretation of symbolic meaning and ideological tendencies of the film.

Purposive sampling was adopted to select participants directly linked to the story/plot of the film. Either they were living in Liyari and were eyewitnesses of the events depicted in the film or they covered the events as journalist. Some of them were from law enforcement agencies who participated in Liyari operation. Political figures were also part of the participants of the FGD and IDIs. Snowball sampling was subsequently used to identify additional participants possessing specialized knowledge of the subject. Data was collected until thematic saturation point was achieved, whereby substantially new themes were stopped to appear and same answers were being appeared from continuous interviews and discussions. Saturation was observed after the tenth interview and FGD. That Indicated depth and ample diversity of perspectives.

5.1 Film Analysis

Scenes in the film *Dhurandhar I & II* which are critical to the political narrative and story construction are selected for qualitative analysis. The selection criteria include their significance in the representation of ideology, development of narrative and representative aspects of the film. Rather than attempting to analyze every aspect of the film within one wide-ranging discussion, the current study highlights key points of significance politically, culturally, or emotionally and explores their contributions to the processes of

meaning-making. The following aspects of the film analysis are considered within the study:

5.1.1 Dialogues and Languages

This aspect considers how oral interactions contribute to the formation, reinforcement of political positions and meaning construction within the film, depending on the choice of words and speaking style used. For example, one such scene that is politically motivated occurs when the RAW agent and the main protagonist Hamza Ali Mazari (Ranvir Singh), informs the Pakistani woman and the heroine Yalina Jamali (Sara Arjun), “We are not enemies of your country's people, we are only taking action against those terrorists who carry out attacks in India.” This dialogue serves as a clear example of political communication and narrative building.

Though this dialogue seems to segregate people of Pakistan from being terrorists, this dialogue is meant to serve as a means for passing a certain political message. In this movie, Pakistan is shown to be sheltering or sponsoring terrorist organizations, while India is shown to take actions only in retaliation against terrorism. The analysis has found that cinema is used to convey political messages through emotionally appealing heroes.

In another important scene of the movie, the RAW agent Hamza Ali Mazari convinces Rehman Dacoit to join politics. He claims during their talk that the Baloch people have been denied of their fundamental rights since Pakistan's creation and proposes that Rehman Dacoit, a powerful voice for the Baloch community, ought to take political leadership himself instead of backing conventional political figures. The character therefore, chooses to enter politics. From the stand point of political discourse, this scene is a major illustration of narrative construction and framing.

Through the voice of an Indian intelligence officer, the movie frames themes of Baloch identity, political disenfranchisement, and representation, so projecting a certain political perspective to the viewer. Such portrayals could affect how people view the relationship between Pakistan and its province Balochistan, therefore presenting the Indian character as a kind and encouraging one. But this movie's story should also be viewed in the larger political and diplomatic background of South Asia. With arrested Indian

intelligence officer Kulbhushan Jadhav case often highlighted in this respect, Pakistan has repeatedly charged India of involvement in Balochistan and of supporting separatist groups. The scene hence captures a disputed political story and shows how film might serve as a tool of soft power and strategic communication that shapes political perceptions and affects public opinion.

5.1.2 Camera Angles and Lighting

Within this aspect, specific attention is given to the way visual strategies such as framing and illumination of certain parts of the scene contribute to power relations, emphasize emotions, and signify something symbolically.

5.1.3 Background Music and Soundscape

In this regard, it is necessary to analyze the contribution of background music to emotion creation, message perception, and emphasis on the ideological aspects of the film.

5.1.4 Character Design, Costume, and Cultural Significance

This aspect deals with the representation of identity and culture through characters' design, clothing choices, and more broadly cultural meaning. Overall, these four aspects provide an adequate framework for considering the way ideological meanings are created in the film both verbally and non-verbally.

5.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and In-Depth Interviews (IDIs)

The interview sessions carried out through the aid of a semi-structured interview guide. Questions asked included cinematic representation, ideological perspective, character representation, cultural representation, and interpretation of the movie by viewers. The interviews were carried out either face to face or through telephone and internet depending on participants' availability. All information provided by the participants was later transcribed, documented and later analysed. Confidentiality of participants' identity was maintained for ethical and academic purposes, but at some places participant's sentences were quoted with their identity after proper prior permission.

5.2.1 Focused Group Discussion (FGD)

Only one focused group discussion was carried out, involving six participants. Duration of the FGD was 90 minutes. The participants selected for participation in the discussion were purposely sampled from the locals of Liyari, journalists who had covered the events depicted in the film, academia/professionals working in media industry and having expertise to critically analyze media texts as these individuals had worked on covering the real life of characters portrayed in Dhurandhar I & II. FGD allowed the development of common understanding as well as diverse opinions about the ideological stance taken in the movie, the way characters are framed and the way stories are visually presented.

5.2.2 In-Depth Interviews (IDIs)

Ten in-depth interviews were carried out among the participants who were purposively sampled and highly relevant to the theme under study. These included people who possessed contextual knowledge about the topic of interest, i.e., people aware of the social and occupational environment of the area (Liyari), political and police officials, characters themselves or those knowing them in and out and journalists who have worked on covering the real stories of these characters. All these differences helped create a deeper understanding of the film and how it reflects or recreates the ideological and institutional power dynamics that exist in the real world.

5.3 Sampling

In this research, participants were recruited through purposive sampling, while for the purpose of deeper analysis, some participants were selected using snowball sampling. It is worth noting that some participants have experience covering the events and public performances of the historical figures depicted in the film; for instance, Sardar Rehman (Dhurandhar I & II Rehman Dakait), SP Chahdri Aslam, Nabeel Gabol (who is known as Jameel Jamali in the movie), among others. Such hands-on expertise made their contributions meaningful and credible. Participants analyzed the whole storyline of Sardar Rehman as depicted in the movie and its closeness to historical events and news reports. They talked about their audience's

interpretation of politics in the movie, historical accuracy, narrative realism, and cultural authenticity.

6. Findings & Results

The data was subjected to thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-stage model. First, the researchers got acquainted with the data including the interview transcripts, focus group discussions, and excerpts from the film. Second, codes were developed based on the repeating patterns within the data. Third, codes were grouped under certain themes. Fourth, themes were validated according to the research questions and theoretical framework. Fifth, themes were described and given names. Sixth, the results were reported through connecting the participants' answers, film excerpts, and theoretical constructs. In order to increase the validity of the analysis process, triangulation was performed through the use of three sets of data. Film content analysis, FGD, and IDIs.

6.1 Phase-1: Getting Acquainted with the Data

In this phase, the researcher went through an extensive review and reading of all the materials provided. They involved the interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), fieldnotes, and particular scenes from the movie titled *Dhurandhar I & II*. The main concern of the phase was the complexities of the dialogues, the visual depiction of the characters, the choice of costume, the background music, and the emotions of scenes. Moreover, the depiction of Pakistan, ISI, Lyari, Sardar Rehman, and SP Chaudhry Aslam had to be critically analyzed. In this regard, the researcher read, observed and watched the material to gain familiarity with the content and develop ideas.

During this phase, there were specific recurring issues that the participants raised during their responses and point of views. The major recurring issues included the selective historical reconstruction of events, perceived anti-Pakistan narrative portrayal, partial and reconstructed representations of Lyari, and the use of emotional cinematic techniques. All these recurring themes and issues became the basis for the development of the codes in the next phase.

6.2 Phase-2: Developing Initial Codes

Once the researcher was familiar with the data, he developed initial codes drawn from the significant statements and observations made. The coding process took place manually in an effort to identify the repeated words and concepts from the data. It was specifically focused on some central aspects such as ideological and political framing of the movie, emotional manipulations of the movie, and cultural representation among others.

Table 6.1 *Examples of Initial Codes Generated from the Data Included*

Data Extract	Initial Code
“Film Dhurandhar I & II mein ghalat dikhaya gaya hai”	selective historical reconstruction
Lyari shown only through gang violence	Negative stereotyping
ISI & political leaders shown as linked with terrorism	Demonization of state institutions & Leadership
Actors dress does not represent Baloch culture	Cultural inauthenticity
Slow-motion shots and dramatic music	Emotional manipulation
Indian suffering is foregrounded	Victimhood framing
The film supports anti-Pakistan discourse	Ideological framing

These codes were repeatedly compared and refined throughout the analysis process.

6.3 Phase-3: Searching for Themes

In the third phase, related codes were grouped together to form broader themes. The researcher identified connections between the codes and organized them into meaningful thematic categories. This process helped identify major patterns emerging from the data.

The following broader themes emerged from the analysis:

Table 6.2 *Developed Themes*

Codes	Developed Theme
Historical distortion, exaggeration, fictionalization	Selective Historical Reconstruction
Demonization, anti-Pakistan discourse, nationalism	Ideological and Political Framing
Stereotyping, cultural mismatch, omission of identity	Cultural Misrepresentation and Erasure
Dramatic music, emotional scenes, victimhood narrative	Emotional Cinematic Persuasion

These themes reflected the dominant concerns raised by participants and observed in the film narrative.

6.4 Phase 4: Examination of Themes

During this phase, the researcher thoroughly checked all themes for their accuracy regarding the data that had been gathered. Themes were also matched up with what was found during the interviews, FGDs, and in scenes from films. There were some overlapping codes that were re-evaluated. An example of two overlapping codes were selective historical reconstruction and ideological framing since these two had similar ideas but were different in terms of the message that they wanted to send. One was focused on misinformation about facts while the latter was political in nature.

6.5 Phase 5: Defining and Naming of Themes

All four themes had been analysed, so in this phase, they were all defined and named according to what they entailed. Below is the table:

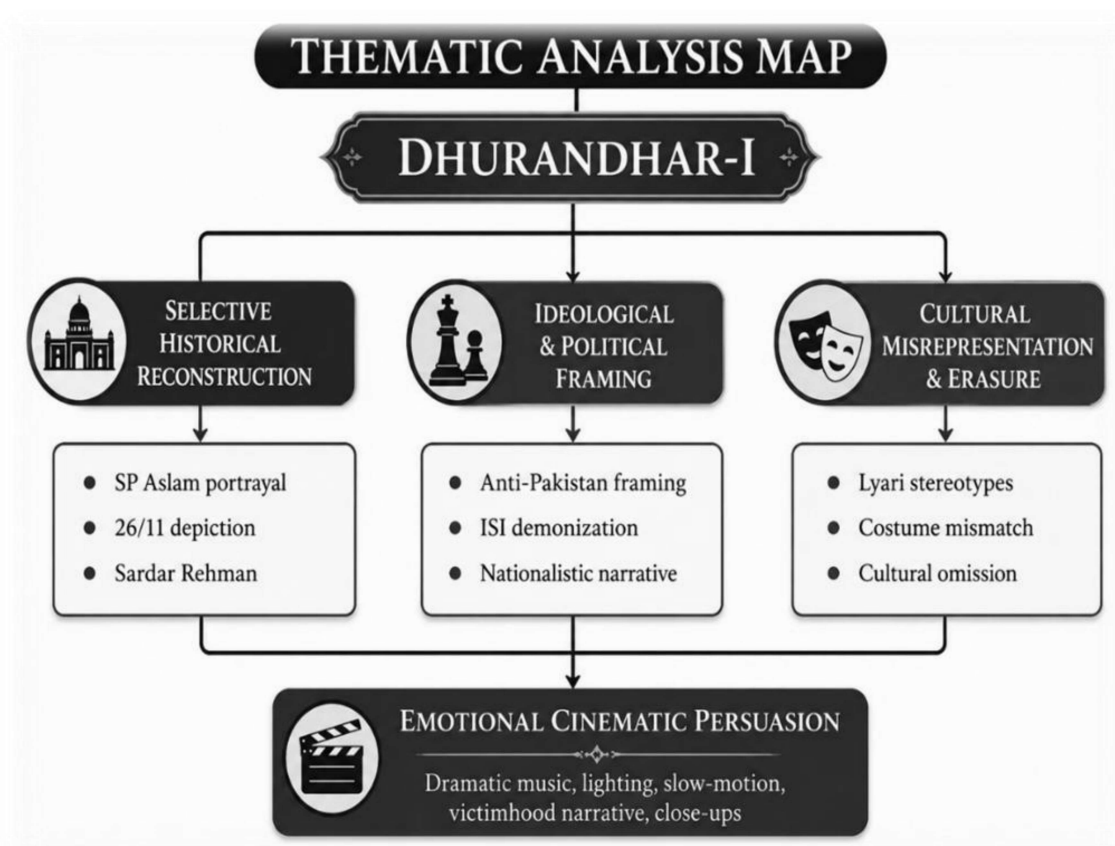


Figure 6.1 Thematic Analysis Map

6.5.1 Theme 1: Selective Historical Reconstruction

The participants discussed the selective and exaggerated representation of historical events and people in the film Dhurandhar I & II, especially regarding Rehman Dakait (Sardar Rehman), SP Chaudhry Aslam, Aqib Ali Zarwari (Asif Ali Zardari), Nawab Shafiq (Nawaz Sharif), Khanani Brothers, Jameel Jamali (Nabeel Gabol), and Major Iqbal, among others, including references to 26/11 Mumbai attacks. There is a recurring point among the participants that the movie represents history very selectively and through dramatic exaggerations, putting drama before facts. It seems that rather than giving balanced presentations, the film reinterprets the actual events of history in a way that fits its preconceived structure. The concerns regarding this theme are well-founded, since they come from journalists who have personally met the relevant personalities during their professional activities.

For example, senior journalist Shahid Anjum pointed out inconsistencies regarding SP Chaudhry Aslam in the film, saying that: “*Film*

Dhurandhar I & II mein ghalat dikhaya gaya hai. Main SP Ch. Aslam ke saath kai baar operational halat main bhi mila hoon. Unhon ne kabhi bulletproof jacket nahi pehni.” The movie Dhurandhar I & II portrays it incorrectly. I have met SP Ch. Aslam multiple times, even during operational conditions. He never wore a bulletproof jacket.” As can be understood, there was obviously a difference between the real-life event of this person's behavior and how he was portrayed in the film. Similarly, there were participants who were personally aware of Sardar Rehman's activities during his life.

In conclusion, it appears that Dhurandhar I & II is an ideologically-biased reconstruction of history in the form of a movie, rather than being an objective presentation of facts.

6.5.2 Theme 2: Ideological and Political Framing

One major theme that comes out of this film revolves around the politicization of narratives where the filmmaker attempts to construct a narrative based upon politics and the role played by various intelligence and leadership roles, including ISI. In the film, India is always shown to be virtuous and heroic whereas Pakistan is viewed as the cause of all violence and terrorism in India. Throughout discussions carried out via Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews (IDIs), participants commented extensively on the narrative style of Dhurandhar I & II that tends to make use of a dichotomous ideological representation of “good” and “evil.”

As per the data obtained via FGD and IDIs, these narrative styles are intentional in nature and form an intrinsic part of the film's narrative, dialogues, and cinematography. Various scenes dealing with intelligence operations, border clashes, and terrorist attacks on Indian soil during 26/11 in Mumbai were particularly criticized for the depiction of only one political stance. The participants maintained that such representations lack balance and focus more upon certain events and individuals, leaving out other alternatives. The process of selectivity in depicting events results in the construction of an ideological narrative through hyper-nationalistic discourse.

In this regard, journalists who were interviewed about the issue provided some further evidence. For instance, a senior journalist in Karachi who has covered events of real life and lives of the main protagonist in Dhurandhar I & II, Alauddin Hamdam Khanzada stated that the film's

narrative construction restricts Lyari and Pakistani socio-political scenario to the framework of crime and violence alone. According to him, this is what is called selective framing where reality gets distorted and hence India cannot win on the battleground; this is why such films are made. Likewise, a broadcast journalist, Zohail Shah, mentioned that there was exaggerated depiction of gang war in the film where the overall political environment is also criminalized (Names and their statements are mentioned after the prior permission).

Taken together, all of the above observations suggest that the Dhurandhar I & II movie works through ideological frames characteristic of media framing theory – emphasis, selection, and exclusion. Instead of providing an unbiased geopolitical portrayal, the film creates a simplified moral geography in which one particular national identity gets validated, while another is delegitimized. Consequently, participants interpreted the movie as an ideologically loaded text, reinforcing their politically biased views of regional conflicts and security narratives.

6.5.3 Theme 3: Cultural Misrepresentation and Erasure

This theme addresses the problem of a stereotypical and highly inaccurate depiction of Lyari as a social and cultural entity in the Dhurandhar I & II movie. The participants agreed that the film presents a one-dimensional and oversimplified view of Lyari as a locality associated exclusively with violence and criminal behavior, ignoring its deeper cultural, social, and historical layers. Such a selective presentation of Lyari's identity can be interpreted as an attempt at cultural erasure, excluding positive elements of its social reality.

The major issue mentioned by journalists in relation to the Dhurandhar I & II movie was that it ignores Lyari's long tradition of sports, including football and boxing, as well as arts, literature, music, and culture. Specifically, journalists pointed out that Lyari is, "a vibrant center of sport, culture, football, boxing, cycling, skating, music, literature, and arts"

It was stressed, however, that this complex picture of Lyari's culture and social life is completely missing in the film, focusing instead on the image of a locality associated predominantly with violent gangs and criminal behavior.

Besides structural omission, visual and stylistic representations were also mentioned as problems in Dhurandhar I & II film's production. In this regard, the characterization and costume design associated with the leading female figure, Yalina Jamali, were repeatedly criticized for being culturally unrealistic. According to participants, such representation is: not representative of the traditional clothes that one would wear in Lyari and Karachi. It is perceived as aesthetically disconnected with the socio-cultural reality of the film's setting. Taken together, this theme reveals that, besides representing a flawed perception of reality, Dhurandhar I & II also contributes to silencing the richness of local cultural heritage negatively.

6.5.4 Theme 4: Emotional Cinematic Persuasion

This theme explains how Dhurandhar I & II employs cinematic techniques to emotionally persuade viewers. As opposed to pure facts, emotional persuasion is said to emerge from dialogue, visual imagery, sound design, and character depiction. Background musical accompaniment, extreme lighting contrasts, the use of slow motion effects, and close-ups were pointed out as the primary mechanisms through which Dhurandhar I & II evokes emotions such as fear, anger, compassion, and nationalism.

Participants of FGD and IDIs indicate that, in this context, cinematic means serve as guides towards emotional engagement with the selected character and storyline. Specifically, background sound is believed to enhance narrative tension, lighting and camera angles underscore power relations, and character portrayal and dialogue contribute to predetermined ideological outcomes. For Example, the scenes starring Pakistani politicians and ISI officials usually use particular cinematic techniques, including background music, lighting effects, camera angles, and visual framing. Often linked with suspicion, hostility, or moral complexity inside the story, these components seem to help to create a certain portrayal of these people.

Thus, participants perceived such cinema tactics as emotional manipulation that suppresses rational analysis by promoting feelings over reasoning and, therefore, reinforces the power of ideology within the film.

6.6 Phase 6: Producing the Report (Braun & Clarke Thematic Analysis)

The last step in thematic analysis according to Braun and Clarke (2006) involves generating a well-written analytical narrative report on the identified themes. In this step, the analyzed data are systematically converted into a report that presents the themes in a meaningful and logically organized way based on sound theory. Thus, unlike in earlier phases when only coding was performed, at this step of thematic analysis, researchers develop an interpretative story about the data collected for meeting the study objectives.

In the current study, this reporting stage involved providing the identified themes, namely selective historical reconstructions, ideological and political framings, cultural misrepresentation and elimination, and emotional cinema persuasion. All the themes were presented using information gathered during Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and In-Depth Interviews (IDIs). Special emphasis was placed on including quotes from the journalists who provided insights about their experiences based on their involvement with related figures or events in life.

The report was additionally strengthened by continuing linking it to theoretical ideas and concepts from media framing and propaganda theories. Such an approach enabled not only describing the findings but analyzing how they were constructed, formed, and conveyed via the use of cinematic techniques. The report therefore represents a comprehensive analysis of Dhurandhar I & II as a film that constructs ideological meaning via its narrative, visual and emotional tactics.

In conclusion, this stage involved making sure that the findings were reported systematically according to the principles and style of academia. Readers would be able to understand, analyze, integrate, and contribute to the scholarly debate about media framing, ideology, and cinematic propaganda..

7. Discussion

It turns out that the results of this research demonstrate that Dhurandhar I & II is a highly framed cinematic text, which generates ideological meanings through the use of selective representation, emotionally charged narration,

and targeted cultural positioning. Through the analysis of four themes mentioned above, selective historical reconstruction, ideological and political framing, cultural misrepresentation and erasure, and emotional cinematic persuasion. The findings reveal that the film was found by the participants to be reinforcing narratives against Pakistan and selective reconstruction of history.

Firstly, research unveils that the selective historical reconstruction of events is in compliance with Media Framing Theory, according to which media texts selectively emphasize or omit certain parts of reality in order to direct interpretation in the intended manner. Participant accounts, particularly of journalists covering SP Chaudhry Aslam and Sardar Rehman, confirm the idea that *Dhurandhar I & II* is characterized by dramatization rather than realistic approach. This means that historical figures are reconstructed through cinema.

Secondly, the film displays the phenomenon of ideological and political framing, the mechanisms of which are described in the book *Manufacturing Consent*. Its dichotomous depiction of heroes and villains, Indians vs. Pakistanis, corresponds with the media ability to simplify geopolitical realities in accordance with dominant moral and political narratives. Moreover, the film frames such controversial issues as the activity of intelligence agencies (ISI) and the event of 26/11 in favor of the dominant discourse.

Thirdly, study suggests cultural misrepresentation and erasure are worth paying attention to. One might see how the process of selective representation works at the level of cultural visibility through *Dhurandhar I & II*'s neglect of the social, sport, and art culture of Lyari. By ignoring these features of local culture, the film creates a narrowly focused image of the region, which might be described as cultural erasure, when positive aspects are ignored and replaced with negative ones. Theme Four: Emotional Cinematic Persuasion

Theme four describes how the audiovisual features of the film are used to persuade and construct the viewers' emotions. Instead of relying on rational

analysis of information, the film uses music, lighting, editing, and close-ups to induce an already set emotion in the viewer.

8. Conclusion

Based on the results presented above, research concludes, that Dhurandhar I & II is not just a cinematic representation but rather an ideological product whose creation process involves selective story-telling, emotional persuasion and cultural framing. The film creates a one-sided view of the world in which certain political parties, events, and spaces are selected to form a coherent narrative. Using perspectives such as framing theory and propaganda analysis, it becomes evident that the construction of meaning in the film is done through selective processes of including/excluding certain information. Responses provided by participants, especially those having journalistic experience, confirm the fact that several depictions in the film can be viewed as distorted and historically inaccurate. What is more important, the film's cultural representation is severely flawed since genuine cultural diversity of Lyari is reduced to stereotypes. Finally, audio-visual features play a vital role in emotional persuasion.

9. Implications of the Study

In terms of theoretical contributions, this study is relevant as it contributes to the understanding of media framing by providing an example of how multiple framing techniques are used in one movie from a historical, political, cultural, and emotional perspective. This study also sheds light on the problem of propaganda in modern films as it shows how ideology can be conveyed through mainstream films rather than overtly political movies. Practically speaking, this study draws the attention of the filmmakers towards their obligation of presenting politically and culturally sensitive issues accurately, balanced, and nuanced. This study also underscores the importance of media literacy in helping the audience analyse cinematic works critically rather than accept them as facts. At a more general level, this study draws attention to the soft power potential of cinema as an art form that shapes the national image and geopolitics.

10. Limitations of the Study

It has to be acknowledged that the scope of this study is relatively narrow as it only examines one film. Therefore, generalization of findings beyond the examined film becomes complicated. Qualitative nature of the study is another limitation that makes its results non-conclusive as they rely on subjective interpretation of findings and cannot be statistically verified. Finally, while sufficient in terms of reaching saturation, the sample size limits generalizability due to the nature of FGDs and IDIs.

11. Recommendations for Future Research

In the context of future research in this area, it is possible to suggest several directions for studies. First, a comparative analysis of various South Asian films would contribute to uncovering of the patterns of ideological framing in these movies. Further, future research would benefit from examining large-scale audience perception in order to verify the role played by films in shaping public opinion. Also, it would be helpful to examine long-term political and psychological consequences of cinematic propaganda. Cross-border representation of South Asia (India-Pakistan relations in particular) in cinematic works may be explored further. Finally, the potential of online and streaming media platforms would be worth investigating.

References

- Atif, K., & Shafiq, Z. (2019). Discourse on terrorism: Image of Pakistan in Bollywood film *Phantom*. *Pakistan Journal of History & Culture*, 40(1), 164.
- Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51–58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x>
- Herman, E. S., & Chomsky, N. (1988). *Manufacturing consent: The political economy of the mass media*. Pantheon Books.

- Kabir, A. J. (2019). Territorial narratives and the politics of representation in South Asian cinema. *South Asian Popular Culture*, 17(2), 123–137. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14746689.2019.1602475>
- Kumar, R. (2025). The role of propaganda in cinema: A historical and contemporary analysis. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Engineering and Management*, 9(4), 1–9.
- Li, Y. (2023). *The political nature of films: Characteristics and functions*. *Journal of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 23.
- Nye, J. S. (2004). *Soft power: The means to success in world politics*. PublicAffairs.
- Safwan, A., & Razzaq, A. (2023). *Exploring post-9/11 media narratives: A review of Pakistan's portrayal in the context of terrorism*. *International Research Journal of Social Sciences and Humanities (IRJSSH)*, 2(2), 181–197.
- Sahani, S. (2024). The role of propaganda in cinema: A historical and contemporary analysis. *International Journal of Scientific Research in Engineering & Management (IJSREM)*, 8(05), 1–5.
- Sial, N., Arafat, Y., & Zafar, A. (2013). Pakistan in the Bollywood movies: A discourse analysis. *Journal of Indian Studies*, 5(1), 125–144.
- Virginia Braun, V., & Victoria Clarke, V. (2006). *Using thematic analysis in psychology*. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>