An Anatomy of Digital Propaganda: BOT Networks, Fake Accounts, and Political Narrative Construction in Bangladesh's Online Sphere

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ABSTRACT

Background

The political sphere of Bangladesh has already gone through a major transformation over the past decades. The use of internet and social media has been multiplied several times and the rise of coordinated disinformation campaigns, BOT-driven engagement, fake accounts, and meme-based political communication has dramatically increase also. Despite widespread evidence of manipulation, systematic analysis & policies over these digital propaganda dynamics remains limited. This study investigates how political actors & individuals in Bangladesh strategically use automation, misinformation, and affective content to shape narratives and influence public opinion from 2009 to 2025.

Methods

The research employs qualitative digital observations & ethnography combined with content and discourse analysis. More than 120 public posts, comment clusters, propaganda campaigns, and meme or troll posts patterns from Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and YouTube were examined. BOT clusters and fake accounts were identified using indicators such as account age, repetitive linguistic behavior, synchronized activity, and reverse-image verification. Materials were categorized by political affiliation such as former regime, opposition, major political party, religious-based party, youth led party. Analysis has done through a thematic coding framework emphasizing narrative construction, automation indicators, platform strategies, and emotional registers.

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Results

Findings reveals the existence of distinct yet interconnected propaganda architectures. The four major patterns have been found. The former regime seen two patterns, one during the regime and one after the outcast.

Once operated with state-integrated digital ecosystem combining surveillance capacity with centralized BOT networks that amplified pro government narratives and suppressed dissent, now, the state integration part is unavailable. Meanwhile, the current largest political actors in field remained fragmented, very rarely seen to outsourced foreign engagement farms that undermined its credibility. Religion-based actors seem deploying religiously charged messaging, partial information, and historical revisionism, supported by organized activist networks and low-scale BOT usage. Meanwhile, the emerging youth-driven political actors mobilized a completely new mechanism of decentralized meme-centric strategy which is based on humor, sarcasm, and symbolic storytelling, with minimal or zero reliance on automation.

Conclusion

Bangladesh's digital narrative generation & propaganda landscape represents a hybrid ecosystem where once state backed sophisticated technologies, party-based activism, and youth led meme cultures intersect are seen. These dynamics are targeted to reshape public discourse, intensified polarization, and eroded trust in political communication. The study highlights the necessity for governance framework, localized content moderation, transparency mechanisms, enhance of digital literacy to safeguard democratic communication in Bangladesh..

KEYWORDS

Bangladesh, digital propaganda, computational propaganda, BOT networks, misinformation, political communication, social media

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid expansion of Bangladesh's internet & digital atmosphere is reshaping the political communication as well as

the political narration generation and transforming social media platforms into key arenas for mobilization, persuasion, and ideological contestation. Since the late 2000s, the widespread & affordable smartphone along with internet connectivity gradually turning the social media platforms as major political arena and later algorithm backed content become a tool for the political actors to engage in new forms of influence operations that extend far beyond traditional media channels. Bangladesh's online sphere has shifted from simple political discussion to increasingly coordinated digital manipulation.

While countries such as EU, UK, Canada, USA have been studied extensively for their adoption and counter measure against computational propaganda (both internal and external propaganda), the Bangladeshi context remains significantly under-researched despite mounting evidence of large-scale digital manipulation. Existing practice focuses primarily on partisan news media, state surveillance practices, or general online political engagement, leaving a critical gap regarding the coordinated use of BOTs, fake profiles, troll groups, influencer networks, and affective meme cultures across competing political actors.

This study addresses that gap by examining the anatomy of Bangladesh's evolving digital propaganda landscape between 2009 to 2025. It investigates how major political bodies including the former ruling party's actor, the main oppositions actors, previous ruling party's actors, religion-bases party's actors and the new youth led party's actors strategically set up their pattern. The political actors seen using either one of them: automated accounts, disinformation tactics, religiously charged narratives, and humor-driven meme cultures to shape public perception and sustain political legitimacy. By analyzing and mapping patterns of coordinated inauthentic/system generated behavior, this research identifies the mechanisms through which political narratives are constructed, amplified, and contested within Bangladesh's algorithmic communication environment.

Grounded in qualitative digital observation & ethnography and content observation & analysis, the study contributes to broader debates on computational propaganda, networked political communication, and digital authoritarianism in the Global South. It demonstrates the transition of Bangladesh's online sphere from a participatory engagement to a contested arena of information warfare where different political actors compete not only for voter support but also for control of digital attention as well as defaming others. This analysis offers crucial insights for understanding contemporary electoral politics and the future of democratic communication in Bangladesh.

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2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Computational Propaganda and Digital Manipulation

The rise of computational propaganda defined as the use of digital automation, algorithms, and networked media to manipulate public discourse has been a growing concern among scholars of political communication (Bradshaw & Howard, 2019). Globally, cases from Russia, India, the Philippines, and Turkey demonstrate how BOT networks and troll armies are mobilized to spread disinformation, amplify partisan messaging, and silence dissent (Woolley & Howard, 2018; Ong & Cabanes, 2019).

A research shows that these tactics is a hybrid technique of automated engagement, viral messaging, and the strategic amplification of polarizing content. Bennett and Livingston (2020) highlight how algorithmic mechanism create "illusions of majority" through artificial engagement, granting disproportionate visibility to manipulated narratives. These patterns increasingly shape political communication ecosystems in both democratic and authoritarian contexts.

Digital Propaganda in South Asia

In south Asia or South-East Asia, Social media and internet-based propaganda has become an unavoidable part to electoral politics and governance in south Asia. Studies show, extensive use of coordinated networks to promote ruling-party narratives and marginalize opposition voices in India (Narayanan et al., 2019). Like India, misinformation often laced with sensitive things such as religion or ethnic matters make social divisions and violence intense in Myanmar and Sri Lanka (Hao, 2020). However, academic inquiry into Bangladesh's digital propaganda apparatus remains limited, despite mounting evidence of large-scale online manipulation.

Digital Politics in Bangladesh

Once, Bangladeshi political communication mainly focused traditional party media, such as partisan or biased newspapers and television channels (Riaz, 2016). Recent reports, discover the adoption of surveillance technology and its collaboration with state cyber units. In parallel, new political actors and their led party, whose powerhouse is the youths have leveraged meme culture and humor to contest dominant narratives, signaling a generational shift in propaganda practice.

Theoretical Frameworks Informing This Study

Theoretically, this study draws on three interrelated frameworks:

1. **Digital Authoritarianism** – the use of internet-based technologies by governments to maintain control, supervise mass information, and suppress dissent (Howard & Bradshaw, 2018).

2. **Networked Propaganda** – how decentralized actors (bots, trolls, influencers) collaboratively shape discursive power (Benkler et al., 2018).

3. **Affective Publics** – the emotional dimensions of online political communication that drive virality and group identity (Papacharissi, 2015).

By combining these perspectives, the paper conceptualizes Bangladesh's digital propaganda as a *hybrid ecosystem*, where state-sponsored cyber units, partisan activists, and informal meme pages collectively contribute to a continuum of manipulation—from orchestrated BOT operations to grassroots trolling.

3. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research follows a qualitative digital ethnography approach, supplemented by content and discourse analysis of social media materials. The study focuses on identifying, categorizing, and interpreting online propaganda behaviour in Bangladesh from 2009 to 2025, capturing the evolving nature of BOT operations, fake accounts, meme cultures, and partisan digital strategies. The qualitative framework allows an in-depth exploration of the meaning-making processes behind automated and semi-automated digital propaganda rather than relying solely on quantitative indicators.

The study utilizes secondary digital data primarily sourced from Facebook, as it is the most widely used social media platform in Bangladesh, along with selective examples from X (formerly Twitter) and YouTube. Supplementary materials include screenshots, post metadata, comment threads, and publicly available information from digital monitoring organizations and credible news outlets.

Sampling and Scope

Data collection followed purposive and theory-driven sampling. The dataset includes:

- Political-party-linked digital content associated with the main political actors in Bangladesh.

- BOT and fake account behavior identified through indicators such as account age, reverse-image searches, limited or even zero friend networks, and repetitive or synchronized comment patterns.

- Meme pages and troll communities which show ideological affiliation or partisan leaning.

- Activities of official or semi-official cyber wings, including Previous regime's Centre for Research and Information (CRI), NTMC, and university-centric youth political actors groups.

The final dataset contains 120 distinct cases of posts, comment clusters, meme campaigns, and BOT engagement incidents. This sample size is appropriate for qualitative thematic analysis and ensures sufficient variation across platforms and political actors.

Indicator	Operational Definition	Example Evidence
Account age	Created recently, clustered dates	Several accounts created within the same week
Profile authenticity	Fake images, stock photos, stolen pictures	Reverse-image mismatch
Activity patterns	Synchronized comments, repetitive language	50 accounts posting same or nearly same text in 2 minutes
Network behavior	Low/ zero friends, no other non-political engagement	< 20 friends, no Bangladeshi networks
Engagement type	High comment frequency on political posts	Automated flood of pro-party slogans

Analytical Procedure

The analysis proceeded in three major stages:

Identification

Unnatural behavior of BOT or fake accounts was identified using:

1. Account name patterns

2. Account creation date

3. Presence/absence and authenticity of profile photos (verified via reverse-image search)

4. Extremely low friend counts (often fewer than 20)

5. Linguistic uniformity and synchronized timing

6. High-frequency engagement on political content

Classification

Content was categorized into four political clusters. Each cluster was analyzed for platform strategy, narrative structure, degree of automation, and emotional tone.

Interpretation

A thematic coding framework was applied using four indicators:

- Narrative Construction (e.g., regime legitimacy, corruption, nationalism, conspiracy framing)

- Platform Strategy (memes, comments, reactions, hashtags, short videos)

- Automation Indicators (account age, timing, similarity, volume)

- Emotional Register (mockery, anger, pride, religious sentiment)

This interpretive process enabled the mapping of propaganda patterns across political factions and over time.

Data Collection Period

Although the historical scope of the study covers 2009–2025, Observations & data collection was conducted between January 2024 and October 2025, focusing on both archival content and newly emerging digital patterns following political transitions.

Research Limitations

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Several limitations should be acknowledged:

- Platform Constraints: The analysis relies heavily on publicly visible content, and private groups or encrypted communications could not be accessed.

- Automated Detection: The study used manual ethnographic indicators rather than machine-learning-based bot-detection tools, which may limit the precision of identifying automated accounts.

- Archival Availability: Some older posts (2009–2013) were unavailable due to deletion, page removals, or platform policy changes.

- Language and Moderation Gaps: Facebook's limited Bangla-language moderation may have influenced what content remained visible.

Despite these limitations, triangulation across multiple sources enhances the reliability of findings.

Ethical Considerations

This research adhered to ethical principles for digital studies. Only publicly accessible content was analyzed. No attempt was made to identify or contact individuals behind profiles, and no private messages, closed groups, or personal data were accessed. Sensitive or potentially identifying content was anonymized or presented without personal identifiers.

Because the study exclusively used publicly available data and did not involve human interaction, formal ethical approval was not required under standard social science guidelines. The research complies with the ethical expectations for digital ethnography and respects user privacy and data protection norms.

4. ANALYSIS, KEY FINDINGS & RESULTS

This part represents the findings from the observation of 120 social media posts & their behavior pattern between 2009 and 2025. The results are organized by political actor, reflecting the distinct configurations of digital propaganda observed during the study period.

4.1 Pattern 01: State-Integrated BOT Networks and Coordinated Digital Operations, high propaganda

Analysis of a long-ruled party's digital activity indicates one of the most sophisticated, extensive and centrally coordinated narrative generation & propaganda infrastructures among all political actors. Three key patterns were identified:

4.1.1 Centralized Automation and BOT Clusters

The outcasted regime of Bangladesh once used to run the most sophisticated network of fake and BOT accounts to spread their narrative. After 2009, the regime first enhanced cellular network surveillance capacity and later digital media surveillance tools. Later they established networks with mechanisms to spread their narratives which was the earliest government backed digital propaganda in Bangladesh. The government wings were closely collaborating with the political party's research wing which was the primary manipulation center for the regime. Later, a government authority was formed to supervise the overall telecommunication surveillance which was the backbone of a state-sponsored cyber unit capable of managing disinformation, eliminating oppositions digital media accounts, monitoring dissent, and promoting pro-regime narratives (Ahmed, 2022).

From 2016, BOT activity became seen integrating with pro-regime digital campaign. 50 to 200 fake accounts created BOT clusters, which were used to flood the comment sections of major news portals like *Prothom Alo* or *Ittefaq* with identical pro-party remarks. Many accounts showed signs of automation, including:

- recently created profiles with fake names

- reverse image search mismatched profile photos

- minimal friends list or even zero

- highly repetitive engagement patterns

4.1.2 Integration with State-Linked Infrastructure

By 2020, the scattered BOT operations & infrastructures had merged into one central control under the government authority; several media claimed they operate from a facility near the Prime Minister's Office. The mechanism operated under Raspberry Pi–based setups and offshore proxy servers and some servers got traced in foreign country.

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These patterns match with the global patterns by the government backed low cost information control and manipulation. (Bradshaw & Howard, 2019).

4.1.3 Post-2024 Diaspora-Based Digital Campaigns

Immediately, after the fall of the regime in 2024, exiled regime experts regrouped and formed a platform named " XXX Team," (pseudo name) a platform mostly operating from the Indian territory and target interim government, military and other political parties. Their disinformation campaigns portray Bangladesh's interim government as "CIA-backed" or "deep-state backed" or sometimes even "Islamist-aligned." The A Team strategically reframed political events as external conspiracies particularly the narrative that *"5 August was a foreign regime-change operation"*. This discourse was echoed in Indian nationalist outlets, showing transnational collaboration in digital propaganda dissemination.

Religious disinformation was also prominent post-2024. Fake reports of attacks on temples or mosques circulated daily, accompanied by doctored images. Such operations aimed to reignite communal tensions and distract from regime's governance failures. The research identifies these campaigns as a hybrid of ethno-nationalist and religious disinformation, similar to propaganda methods seen in India and Myanmar (Ong & Cabanes, 2019).

4.2 Pattern 02: Meme-Centric, Youth-Led Communication Networks

The main characteristics of this digital footprint is, they are decentralized, contents are humor based and youth-driven with minimal or zero evidence of automation. Three dominant findings emerged:

4.2.1 Meme and Satire-Based Political Messaging through community platforms

The youth-led political actor's developed on humor, satire, and meme/troll based social approach especially for the youths such as Gen-Z, Millennial, Tricenarian people. This strategy is based on a very limited or even zero amount of direct disinformation but highly reliable on indirect humor.

Their powerhouse is the university and other educational institute-based pages. These pages are not completely political pages. Most of the time they seem to work as a

community platform, helpline of the educational institute however, sometimes they start to circulate memes, short video clips targeting the political opponents. Sometimes these are direct, sometimes indirect.

University-affiliated pages consistently generated meme content targeting political opponents. These posts relied heavily on humor, satire, and symbolic references. Unlike other groups, these pages rarely used direct misinformation, focusing instead on:

- image-based jokes

- sarcastic commentary

- pop-culture remixes

- symbolic criticism (e.g., the "10% meme")

A signature example is the *"10% meme," though generated by one political party to humiliate one specific Politician* with the allegation of corruption with 10% as bribe from a government project, this mockery is widely used by the youth politicians. When Bangladesh Bank decided to circulate a new 1000 BDT banknote, posts along with photos gone viral, the meme's caption was, "This is a 900-taka note. You know where the remaining 10% went.

Beyond mockery and sarcasm, their affiliated pages feature "clean, educated or high leadership individuals and frame them as educated reformists who even give away luxious foreign life or scope to work in the oldest university of the world to serve the nation. This biographical storytelling humanizes the party and appeals to urban, educated youth disillusioned with traditional patronage politics.

4.2.2 High Organic Engagement with Minimal BOT Presence

No significant evidence of automated engagement or BOT clusters linked to them was identified. Engagement appeared predominantly organic, with likes, shares, and comments originating from student and youth communities.

4.2.3 July-Based Framing

This particular group often seen co-opted "July Movement" with the political flow. Pages with the July_something broadcast the previous regime's bad governance and

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historical symbolism through its "July Movement" digital commemoration. Pages such as *July Records*, *Red July*, and *Justice for July* construct collective memory around regime aligning it with youth led party's reformist ethos.

This hybridization of history and meme culture exemplifies what Papacharissi (2015) calls *affective publics*—emotional communities that blend activism and entertainment.

4.3 Pattern 03: Fragmented Digital Presence and Outsourced Engagement

This group although being historically one of the dominant political party in Bangladesh seems very disorganized in the current digital political landscape. Their propaganda effort is very low and rarely seen but their propaganda had been exposed so easily several times. Their unbiased information flow is even limited and that's why they have been targeted rapidly by other political forces. Three patterns were observed:

4.3.1 Exposed User of Foreign Click-Farm Engagement

Rather than developing indigenous BOT infrastructures, this actor reportedly purchased engagement through paid click farms in Vietnam and Nigeria. The incident quickly went viral and netizens started to mock them "Vietnam branch of Party," as people discovered newly formed foreign accounts commented on domestic political content. The dependence on foreign BOTs damaged their digital credibility. From that lesson, they party never seemed to use foreign easy-exposed BOT accounts.

4.3.2 Limited Meme and Counter-Propaganda Infrastructure

Nevertheless, the party affiliated meme pages also try to counterpropaganda in satirical way, though their counterpropaganda effort is relatively low and their influence is limited by fragmentation and lack of centralized coordination.

4.3.3 Low-Level Organization and Weak Digital Coordination

Overall, they haven't seen much depends on propaganda but their counter measure against propaganda and misinformation is very disorganized.

4.4 Pattern 04: Religious Emotion, Partial Information, and Organized Cadre-Led Engagement

This political actor's digital activity demonstrated the most sustained internal coordination among non-state actors. Three major findings emerged:

4.4.1 Reliance on Religious and Nationalist Frames

Their strategy to implement hybrid of partial information, religious sentiment and historic fact often along with focusing anti-Indian issues. Their affiliated pages and blogs began circulating revisionist narratives about 1971, alleging "victors' justice" and portraying convicted leaders as victims.

This information campaign turned into a online manipulation as the party started to frame each and every AL related acuities as India affiliated & anti-Islamic.

4.4.2 Structured Cadre-Based Dissemination

Although the group had no access of sophisticated hardware-based instalment inside Bangladesh but their chain of command and coordination is very organized which helped to build **emotive religious disinformation** to mobilize grassroots sympathy, particularly in rural and diasporic networks.

4.4.3 BOT-Supported Suppression and Amplification

Moderate levels of BOT-like behavior appeared in comment sections of posts critical. These accounts primarily engaged in:

- mass-liking supportive comments

- downranking critical posts through rapid counter-commenting

- posting short religious slogans or moral judgments in clusters

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While these BOT clusters were smaller than those associated with AL, they played a measurable role in amplifying their narratives.

After the fall of the regime, the group tries to adopt both youth actor-like meme-based propaganda and mockery as well as information biasness-based campaigns. However, it is found that they have been widely deployed BOT accounts to suppress the social media posts that doesn't goes in their favor.

Political Actor	Dominant Technique	BOT Usage	Meme Usage	Disinformation Type	Coordination Level	Target Audience
Former Regime	State-integrated automation	High	Low	Political, religious	Centralized	Mass public
Youth-led Party	Meme-based satire	None/Minimal	High	Very low	Decentralized	Students/Urban youth
Opposition Party	Weak & fragmented	Low (foreign click farm earlier)	Medium	Reactive	Low	General supporters
Religious Party	Religious nationalism	Medium	Low	Religious + historical	High	Rural & diaspora

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 The Political Economy of Digital Propaganda

The findings show how the digital political n ecosystem has evolved into a multi-layered propaganda ground, sustained by both formal state mechanisms and informal party networks. These findings align with earlier arguments about algorithmic

control in hybrid regimes, a key feature of *digital authoritarianism* Howard & Bradshaw, 2018).

The newly form parties and youth-led political forces embodies a bottom-up populism strategy that redefines political communication through humor and affect. Its success in building engagement without extensive automation shows that symbolic capital and emotional resonance can substitute for technological sophistication. The youth actors model suggests an emerging form of *networked populism,* where ideological messaging is embedded within cultural memes and micro-narratives rather than overt propaganda (Papacharissi, 2015).

Other parties who were in government previously has disadvantages of digital incoherence. One party's reliance on foreign paid foreign BOT accounts harmed their reputation, however after their exposure their direct foreign BOT purchases has not seen again. Religious-base parties are actively deploying both their activists who got supported by the fake accounts and often political arguments in the comment section got supported by the BOT accounts. These BOT accounts use religious sentimental tone.

Actor	Main Narratives	Emotional Register	Format Used
Former Regime	Legitimacy, stability, nationalism	Anger, fear	Long posts, BOT comments
Youth Party	Reform, anti-corruption, humor	Humor, sarcasm	Memes, reels
Religious Party	Anti-India, Muslim identity, historic revision	Religious emotion	Text-heavy graphics
Opposition	Victimhood, injustice	Frustration	Low-quality memes

5.2 Hybridization of Disinformation Practices

The observation and the patterns confirm that Bangladeshi propaganda practices cannot be neatly divided into state and non-state domains. Instead, they demonstrate in a hybrid structure and in this system official, semi-official, and grassroots actors interact fluidly across digital networks.

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XXX Team could be an example which is being operated from outside Bangladesh shows how exiled political actors are still influencing through transnational information flows. Similarly, a new formed party, recent movement related social media platforms blur the boundary between historical commemoration and political mobilization.

This hybridization reflects larger worldwide trends in computational propaganda, as digital manipulation is becoming less centralized (Woolley & Howard, 2018). In Bangladesh, hybrid propaganda serves two interlinked purposes:

1. To manufacture legitimacy for ruling elites and their ideological narratives.

2. To delegitimize opponents through ridicule, disinformation, or moral framing.

The outcome is a disjointed yet highly responsive ecosystem capable of real-time narrative adaptation—an occurrence similarly noted in India's BJP IT Cell (Narayanan et al., 2019) and the Philippines' "keyboard army" (Ong & Cabanes, 2019).

5.3 Politics of Sarcastic content and Emotional Persuasion

The relatively youth political party's tactics can be called emotional logic of digital propaganda. Unlike traditional campaign materials, indirect sarcasm-based contents depend on brevity, humor, and irony to create shareable content that triggers affective responses rather than rational evaluation. Previous studies also showed these methods can be vital in political socialization, particularly among young, urbanized citizens. (Papacharissi, 2015) play

Memetic political narrative amplifying functions through three persuasive mechanisms:

- **Deception & camouflage with humor:** Even aggressive political criticism becomes socially more acceptable when framed as comedy.

- **Recurring pattern:** Continuous & repeating exposure normalizes particular ideological frames.

- **Peer endorsement:** Likes and shares serve as social proof, converting passive consumers into ideological participants.

Thus, the meme-based model adopted mostly by youth-led parties & some counter-pages by another party shows a democratization of propaganda techniques. However, this technique needs both

intellectuality and humor together & sometimes people with less political knowledge misunderstand them as complete joke or personal rivalries.

5.4 Algorithmic Amplification and Public Discourse

The observation indicated that automated and centralized BOT system along with AI or deepfake audio visual contents magnify disinformation asymmetrically. During previous regime BOT operations exploit the loopholes of Facebook's engagement-based algorithms, along with massive fake sharing, paid boosting got visible sometimes which helps to massive spread misinformation. This feedback loop creates an illusion of consensus, what Bennett and Livingston (2020) term the *"illusion of majority."*

As META has not sufficient number of Bengali-language moderation teams, this exacerbates problems. Without local linguistic oversight, fake accounts and coordinated inauthentic behavior persist largely unchecked. This lack of platform accountability enables both governmental and partisan actors to weaponize algorithms against opponents, while citizens struggle to discern authentic from manipulated discourse.

Consequently, the digital sphere becomes not a site of democratic debate but a theater of algorithmic warfare—where attention, not truth, dictates legitimacy.

5.5 Implications for Democracy and Governance

The political transition of online/digital platforms in Bangladesh already showing significant consequences for democracy, election and governance. First, disinformation now-a-days normalize disruption of citizen trust institutions and media. For example, engineered political communication using BOTs and memes reducing deliberating politics to unwilling and emotionally contagion. Also, mass and unlawful surveillance by the state is threat to the good governance and increase authoritarian possibilities.

The reflection is matched with the emerging pattern of "soft digital authoritarianism" which is also seen in authoritarian regimes worldwide where censorship and control is not the only tool but manipulation of information is pretty common (Moller, 2023). Together these creates a challenge for citizens, political parties, civic actors and policymaker.

To counter this, governance frameworks must move beyond content regulation toward structural transparency—mandating disclosure of coordinated digital operations, promoting

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algorithmic accountability, and supporting digital literacy programs.

6. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

This research shows the analysis and the patterns of Bangladesh's digital propaganda ecology by mapping the trajectory of its BOT networks, fake accounts, and meme-driven disinformation from 2009 to 2025. The findings bring out a complex ecosystem where automation, humor, and ideology converge in constructing and contesting political narratives.

The previous regime revealed as the top tier in the game both during and after the government with state-integrated model of digital propaganda, dominated by automation and surveillance. In contrast, the National Citizens' Party deploys a highly decentralized, youth-driven approach, predicated on meme culture and emotional resonance. Meanwhile, the a large political party acts as a fragmented actor bereft of authenticity, whereas religious influential party seeks to make use of religion and the rewriting of history toward a relevant readjustment.

Together, these cases outline a politically ordered digital mediation wherein power operates through information control and emotional manipulation rather than traditional coercion.

Policy Recommendations

1. **Establish legal framework for the social media giants:** Make mandatory for the social media platforms to have localize office along with local language-based policies. Social medias should disable bot and fake accounts in every quarter of year and must report to the government. If requirements will not meet the advertisement payment gateway channel must be controlled.

2. **Establish a National cyber Transparency Framework for the political parties & government bodies:** Create independent & unbiased mechanisms to locate mis-informative political advertising, BOT usage, and coordinated digital behavior during elections. Add these as punishable clauses in the RPO.

3. **Mandatory Digital Literacy Education:** Digital literacy must be included into curricula from the school & additional program need to introduce for the senior citizens as well.

4. **Encourage & support Independent Fact-Checking platforms:** Government need to support to form up independent fact checking platforms and encourage partnerships between journalist, digital rights activists, civil society, academia, and tech platforms to verify misinformation & disinformation. Also, it needs to make mandatory to step down a content if the independent fact-checker flagged any content.

5. **Enhance Platform Accountability:** Laws and regulations for social media platforms must Bengali-language content moderation teams and disclose political influence operations.

6. **Protect citizen's Digital Rights and Privacy:** Make sure through laws & regulation to protect citizens against the misuse of digital surveillance systems introduced by government and surveillance tools must not be used to manipulate people.

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THE HYBRID PROPAGANDA ECOSYSTEM OF BANGLADESH

State-sponsored systems

- Surveillance
- BOT farrns
- Centralized messaging

Party activists

- Partisan influencers
- Troll groups
- Meme pages

Grassroots actors

- Local cadres
- Community pages
- Diaspora networks

External/foreign influences

- Diaspora
- Cross-border media
- Click farms