

Discussing conflict in social media: The use of Twitter in the Jammu and Kashmir conflict

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Sabrina Gabel, Lilian Reichert
and Christian Reuter 

Technische Universität Darmstadt, Science and Technology for Peace and Security (PEASEC), Darmstadt, Germany

Abstract

Social media have come to play a vital role not only in our everyday lives, but also in times of conflict and crisis such as natural disasters or civil wars. Recent research has highlighted, on the one hand, the use of social media as a means of recruitment by terrorists and, on the other hand, the use of Facebook, Twitter, etc. to gain the support of the population during insurgencies. This article conducts a qualitative content analysis of content on Twitter concerning the conflict in the Jammu and Kashmir region. The tweets following the death of a popular militant, Burhan Wani, cover three different themes: (1) criticism of intellectuals; (2) Burhan Wani's impact on the conflict; and (3) tweets referring to the conflict itself. Generally, people use Twitter to make their own point of view clear to others and discredit the opposing party; at the same time, tweets reflect the antagonism between the two parties to the conflict, India and Pakistan. The sample of tweets reflects the lack of awareness among people in the region regarding the motivations of the new generation of militancy emerging in Kashmir after 1990.

Keywords

crisis informatics, Kashmir conflict, qualitative content analysis, social media, Twitter

Introduction

New media, such as social media, accompany us throughout our lives, connect, inform and entertain us – nowadays around the world and around the clock. However, they not only play an important role in our everyday lives but have also become useful in times of conflict and crisis, such as natural disasters or civil wars, since about 2001 (Reuter et al., 2018). Although events such as the Arab Spring have triggered the emergence of an

Corresponding author:

Christian Reuter, Technische Universität Darmstadt, Science and Technology for Peace and Security (PEASEC), Pankratiusstraße 2, Darmstadt 64289, Germany.

Email: reuter@peasec.tu-darmstadt.de

enormous amount of literature on the use of social media during insurgencies and have shown the importance of Twitter, Facebook, etc. in mobilizing protesters and influencing public opinion, not all conflicts have received equal attention (El-Nawawy and Khamis, 2013; Hafez, 2014; Wolfsfeld et al., 2013). While there are some newspaper articles in different newspapers dealing with the use of social media in the regional conflict in Indian-administered Jammu and Kashmir, there is no scholarly literature on the subject. This fact is all the more surprising considering the region is in the news almost every day and, despite varying intensity levels of the conflict, the Uppsala Conflict Data Program reports battle-related deaths every year – with a rising trend from 2014–2018 (Pettersson and Öberg, 2020). Some newspapers even consider it the most militarized area in the world (Singh, 2016). Over the last 70 years since India and Pakistan gained independence in 1947, the Jammu and Kashmir region has been contested territory and became the source of four wars (Narain, 2016). Despite the partition rule, both countries claim the Kashmir region for themselves. Factors such as regional instability, increasing militarization and a lack of economic opportunities have contributed to increasing frustration among the population and alienation from the leadership, which has led local youths to take up arms in order to join the *azadi* (independence) movement from India calling for independence of the region. The dispute was fuelled after the Indian government issued a presidential decree on 5 August 2019 that repealed Article 370 of the Indian constitution, which guaranteed Kashmir, as a Muslim majority state, special rights such as the right to its own constitution.

This article aims to address this research gap by investigating the role of social media in the conflict in Jammu and Kashmir. The research question is as follows: *How do people use social media to express their position within the conflict?* In order to answer this question, a qualitative content analysis of the Twitter posts around the death of Burhan Wani, a popular fighter of the Hizbul Mujahideen who fought for the independence of the Kashmir region, will be conducted. Therefore, this article will examine how Twitter was used by various conflict-related actors to express their opinion on media coverage, on the fighter Burhan Wani and his impact on the conflict. While he mobilized youth to fight through social media during his lifetime, Burhan Wani became a contested figure in the conflict after his death, for some a hero, for others a terrorist. The tweets reflect this dichotomy and point to different narratives, some of which have long played a role in this conflict and were triggered anew by the event of Wani's death.

In the beginning, an overview of the conflict in the State of Jammu and Kashmir is given (section 2). Subsequently, the next section provides an overview of the state of research on the use of (social) media in crisis and conflict contexts (section 3). Following the methodology (section 4), the selected tweets are analysed on the basis of three thematic categories, which are then divided into sub-categories (section 5). The article closes with discussions and some concluding remarks (section 6), indicating the meaning of the case study for the overall study on media use.

Brief background of the conflict in Jammu and Kashmir

For more than 70 years, the two states India and Pakistan have been fighting over the Kashmir region. Since then, the region has been the scene of four wars – 1948, 1965,

1971 and 1999 – and, according to United Nations (UN) records, is the oldest conflict inscribed in UN resolutions (Behera, 2016; Khan and Khan, 2020). The Kashmir conflict has acquired a multifaceted character, involving national and territorial disputes between India and Pakistan, both claiming Kashmir territory and the state of Jammu and Kashmir for themselves, as well as ‘various political demands by religious, linguistic, regional and ethnic groups in both parts of the divided Kashmir that range from seeking affirmative discrimination, a separate political status within the state, to outright secession’ (Behera, 2016: 1). Thus, there is a need to recognize the deeply pluralistic character of the different communities, e.g. regarding religious and linguistic diversity in Kashmir on both sides of the Line of Control that are fundamental characteristics determining the historical and political development of the region (Behera, 2016; Nadaf, 2020). In the following, the conflict developments in the region are outlined and contextualized within the context of this article.

Early conflict developments

Going back to the end of British colonial rule and the Indian Independence Act in 1947, which attributed the predominantly Muslim-populated territory to Pakistan and the predominantly Hindu-populated territory to India, the region of Jammu and Kashmir has been a bone of contention between the two contenders ever since. Having a Muslim majority on the one hand and a ruling Hindu-leader, Maharaja Hari Singh, on the other, both India and Pakistan claimed the territory and have been at war since the first day of independence. While Pakistan’s claim on Kashmir is based on the state’s Muslim-majority population and its geographical contiguity, for India, Kashmir was at first an emblem of religious tolerance in the Indian secular state but subsequently was seen to be securing the Indian unity – the government feared Kashmir’s exit could prompt the desire for secession in other parts of the country (Ganguly, 1996). Since it acquired land in the contested region in a 1963 border agreement with Pakistan, China has been a third party in the dispute (Chang, 2017). China has repeatedly changed its policies regarding Kashmir, but since the 1980s it shifted from a pro-Pakistani stance in the 1960s and 70s to an increasingly neutral position by prioritizing the prevention of war and de-escalating the conflict over protecting Pakistani interests during various crises.

In 1947, Singh signed the Instrument of Accession, thereby aligning Kashmir with India, neglecting the local population that was in favour of a union with Pakistan (Cheema, 2015; Kadomtsev, 2019). Thus, the focus of the conflict had mainly been the Indian-administrated Kashmir valley with its predominantly Muslim population (Bhat, 2019) fighting for independence or affiliation to Pakistan. The subsequent decision to include Article 370 in the Indian Constitution retains a special status of the Kashmir region within the Indian Union, legalizing a greater autonomy by including the territory’s right to a separate constitution. Since then, India and Pakistan have fought four wars – 1947, 1965, 1971 and 1999 – three of them over Kashmir (Chowdhary, 2015; Hashmi and Sajid, 2017; Narain, 2016; Wani, 2014).

During the first armed conflict in 1947, with China playing a third role by traditionally supporting Pakistan against India (Yahuda, 2002), India referred the dispute to the United Nations Security Council requesting that Pakistan should stop ‘meddling in

Kashmir' (Cheema, 2015: 49 f.). During the course of events, the negotiations in 1949 led to an agreement on a cease-fire line called the Line of Control in Kashmir, marking the limit of the two states and defining the de facto borders of Kashmir (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2020). Cheema (2015) outlined that the 1965 war was primarily driven by India's intended incorporation of all Indian-administrated Kashmir into the Indian Union as well as its increased hold upon the Indian-held part of Kashmir. In the following years, the conflict was re-ignited several times, leading to a replacement of the former cease-fire line in 1971 and the increasing presence of militant groups beginning to implement violent campaigns against the Indian government in Kashmir. Ganguly (1996) explains the rise of the so-called 'Kashmir Insurgency' with the interlinkage of two factors: political mobilization and institutional decay. On the one hand, socio-economic developments within the region, such as a growth of formal and Islamic educational institutions and a growth in literacy rates as well as the expansion of mass and electronic media, fostered a generation of Kashmiris that was conscious of its political rights and aware of global political developments. On the other hand, the suppression of the development of a political opposition in Kashmir, as well as corruption and irregularities at elections, left the people no other democratic way than to express their dissent, leading to an increase in violence.

Conflict development since 1990

Especially since 1989, the number of armed secessionist organizations increased with Hizbul Mujahideen and the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF) as the most prominent groups resisting the Indian forces' presence in Indian-held Kashmir (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2020). Against this backdrop, Bhat (2019) investigates how the 'strong base of separatist groups' is mainly guiding the 'mass mobilization and armed militancy within the region' (Bhat, 2019: 78). While, in 1989, the JKLF remained the only dominant rebel group in Kashmir, the situation changed in the course of the insurgency by early 1990 when the number had risen to as many as 40 different militant groups (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2020). They were all united by the desire to end Indian rule in Kashmir, which was considered unlawful due to the accession to India in 1947. Thus, they rejected the Indian claim to territory. Nevertheless, the aim of the groups differed significantly between pro-Pakistani groups who supported accession to Pakistan and those who fought for complete independence for Kashmir. In the course of this emergence of militant movements, the mass movement for *azadi* (independence) of Kashmir also found its beginning. It was spearheaded by a Kashmiri youth calling for nationhood and the right of self-determination (Behera, 2016). It was characterized by occasional protests and attacks on Indian territory by militant groups such as Harakat ul-Mujahideen, Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba (Tavares, 2008). However, it is clear that this Kashmiri youth – the 'Generation of Rage', as David Devadas (2018) calls them – is quite different. Statistics confirm that this new wave of activists, unlike the old militancy, was largely recruited from among the well-educated local youth (Behera, 2016; Fair, 2014). Besides differences in the social background of the recruits, there are also ideological differences between the old and the new militancy (Devadas, 2018). While the old militancy was divided over whether it fought for an independent Kashmir

(Jammu Kashmir Liberation Front) or joined Pakistan (Hizb-ul-Mujahedeen), the goals of the new militancy were more diverse and included a pan-Islamic element. Born in the new millennium, the spirit of this generation is marked by a deep sense of alienation, anger and frustration resulting from the constant military presence of the Indian army, and human rights violations as well as the lack of economic opportunities, resulting in a high rate of educated people being unemployed and without any future prospects (Guroo and Naikoo, 2018). In this context, Ganie (2020) notes that the ongoing conflict and violence by state and non-state actors has profoundly affected the psychology of today's youth and strengthened their political awareness through the experience of protracted armed conflict and human rights violations. Moreover, Devadas (2018) argues that the main reason for the new unrest in Kashmir has been the Indian government's continued counterinsurgency operations, even after the level of militancy in the region had declined significantly and protests in 2008 and 2010 were largely peaceful and solely directed against the killing of innocent civilians (p. 10). In contrast to the former militants, who never showed themselves in public, the new generation is technology-savvy and uses the internet as 'a powerful instrument of social communication, radicalization, and political mobilization' (Mattoo and Roy, 2011: 55) and began to use social media to publish pictures and videos, and recruit new members (Behera, 2016).

Contrary to the general assumption that militancy in Kashmir is an issue of law and order, the current radicalization and militancy are thus caused by 'anger, disillusionment, and frustration . . . and above all by a sense of hopelessness' (Mattoo and Roy, 2011: 55), combined with daily suffering as well as harassment and distrust from sections of the Indian state. Not least due to the coverage of the national media, which demonized the Kashmiris and called them 'Pakistani agents' or even 'terrorists' (Wani, 2018), the young people in the valley, in particular, were overwhelmed by a deep feeling of alienation from the Indian state. Thus, the media, whether printed, electronic or social, played a decisive role in steering people's perceptions due to the hostility to Pakistani. Constant media rhetoric and the spread of social media have further fuelled the unrest in Kashmir (Wani, 2018). According to Wani, the number of local young men joining the militancy has increased considerably following the 2016 riots.

Impacts of Burhan Wani's death on the conflict

One of these local young people was Burhan Wani, who was born on 19 September 1994 in Dadsara, a village in the Tral region, to an upper middle-class Kashmiri family (Khan and Khan, 2020; Mir, 2017). After an incident about which there are different reports of whether only his brother or Burhan himself was beaten, Burhan fled his home and joined the Hizbul Mujahideen, later to become a popular militant commander (Dasgupta, 2016; Mir, 2017). The Hizbul Mujahideen was founded in 1989 and is one of the largest and oldest militant groups active in Indian-administered Kashmir (Al Jazeera, 2012; Global Security, nd; Mapping Militant Organizations, 2012). The group maintained ideological and organizational links with Pakistan's religiously conservative political party *Jamaat-e-Islami* until it publicly distanced itself from the group in 1997. Some claim that the group was formed to counter the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF), which was striving for an independent state of Kashmir. In opposition to this, the Hizbul

Mujahideen's aim was to unite all territories in the Kashmir region into one entity, which would then be joined with the Pakistani state (Al Jazeera, 2012; Global Security, nd; Mapping Militant Organizations, 2012). In 2017, the US Department of State designated the Hizbul Mujahideen as a foreign terrorist organization. Unlike other militant groups active in the region, the Hizbul Mujahideen is considered to be the only one led by and composed of predominantly ethnic Kashmiris from Indian-administered Kashmir.

Since 2011, Burhan has been highly active in social media such as YouTube to promote the cause of freedom in Kashmir and mobilize youth to join (Khan and Khan, 2020). In his latest video on YouTube, Burhan reminded people that the Indian army is the enemy they must fight, and that society should play its part by sharing information about operations of the Indian army with the freedom fighters in order to support their cause. He also warned the local police officers to stay out of their operations if they did not want to become targets themselves. Due to his involvement, the ratio between local and foreign fighters, who usually came from other places in Pakistan, also changed; from then on, more locals joined the militants in the valley (Stavrevska et al., 2016).

On 8 July 2016, Burhan was shot dead. The deed occurred during a joint operation by the Special Operation Group of the local police and the Rashtriya Rifles, a counter-insurgency force as a branch of the Indian army under the authority of the Indian Ministry of Defence, in the Kokernag area of southern Kashmir. His body was wrapped in a Pakistani flag and buried alongside that of his brother's in his hometown. The reports differ in stating the number of mourners who actually attended the funeral and range from Indian newspapers, which speak of hundreds, to Pakistani newspapers, which speak of 50,000 people present. In absentia, funerals were held at various locations in the Kashmir region and throughout Pakistan. After his death, violence erupted in the region and clashes between Indian forces and protesters left almost 100 people dead and about 15,000 injured (Khan and Khan, 2020; Mir, 2017). The Indian government tried to bring the situation under control by imposing restrictions such as curfews, cutting off internet services and placing leading separatist leaders under house arrest (Ashiq, 2016; Khan, 2020; Narain, 2016). After the assassination of Burhan, the conflict entered a new phase in which radicalization was deeply embedded in society (Wani, 2018).

Current developments

On 9 August 2019, the Indian Parliament published the 'Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization Act', which contains the provisions for the reorganization of the Indian-administered state of Jammu and Kashmir into two centrally administered union territories administered by India: Jammu, and Kashmir and Ladakh. By revoking the Article, the Indian government placed the province under the direct rule of the central government in New Delhi and, consequently, revoked the special rights for the region and the Muslim majority in the State of Jammu and Kashmir. This decision caused and triggered unrest as well as mass protests from local Muslims (Golechha, 2019a; Kadomtsev, 2019). This measure by the Indian government was rather controversial – while the Indian government claimed it was aimed at stabilizing the situation in the region by integrating Kashmir into India and thereby fostering development (Golechha, 2019), critics suspect that it could further alienate Jammu and Kashmir from India and change the demographic

situation in the majority Muslim state by allowing outsiders to settle there (BBC News, 2018)

State of research

The increasing use of new media in crisis and conflict contexts has given rise to a new field of research, which was coined by Hagar (2007) as ‘crisis informatics’. According to Palen et al. (2009: 467–480), crisis informatics ‘views emergency response as an expanded social system where information is disseminated within and between official and public channels and entities’. Social media in particular offer a wide range of opportunities for participation (Emmer, 2017). Although a participatory media structure is not the only prerequisite for societal changes, social media can play a central role in organizing political protests, as became apparent during the Arab Spring.

Recent literature on crisis communication points out that citizens and volunteers increasingly use social media for their communication in emergency situations. Emphasizing this pattern, Reuter et al. (2018) examine how most social media activities aim to inform other citizens; implicitly, therefore, they are not particularly intended to be analysed by emergency services. Furthermore, as studies have shown, citizens in emergencies react largely rationally to crisis situations, rarely in panic, and coping takes the form of citizen reporting, community-oriented computing and distributed problem solving (Reuter et al., 2013; Vieweg et al., 2010). Moreover, organizations responsible for recovery work keep the public informed, and citizen-generated content is used, for example, to calculate the vigilance of citizens. Nevertheless, the use of social networks always carries the risk of broad publication of outdated or inaccurate information and the unequal distribution of useful information (Reuter and Kaufhold, 2018; Reuter et al., 2018).

Social media are also frequently used as mobilization tools by terrorist organizations to recruit new members, especially foreign fighters, for their cause. Online recruitment enables groups to reach people globally and offers new opportunities for interactive communication (Archetti, 2015; Weimann, 2016). While the investigation of social media tactics poses some specific methodological challenges (Parekh et al., 2018), the activities of predominantly Jihadist groups have recently attracted the attention of several scholars. The most prominent example in the literature is the Islamic State and its recruitment methods (Berger, 2015; Fisher, 2015; Gates and Podder, 2015; Lakomy, 2017; Zelin, 2015). For Pakistan, Ahmad (2014) examined the role of social networks in the recruitment of young people in an Islamist student organization and found that the connection to people already active in this organization plays a more important role in their decision to join than ideological or political reasons.

Aal et al. (2018) emphasize the importance of mutual influence of mass media and digital media as well as differences in the intensity of use of social media in different countries when analysing media use in conflict contexts. In an analysis of the framing of Boko Haram in Nigerian newspapers and Twitter, Ette and Joe (2018) show the growing importance of social media in shaping and influencing the opinions of their users. In a survey conducted in 2017 in various colleges and universities in Kashmir, Wani (2018) shows that the mainstream media contribute to further alienation and isolation of young Kashmiris from the rest of India, potentially further escalating the conflict in the region.

The failure of the media to adequately report on key issues such as the excessive use of force by state forces has widened the rift between the Indian people and the Kashmiri youth. These negative media images of the struggle in Kashmir contrast with the 'soft' images and sentiments that Burhan Wani spread via social media, which emphasizes his indigeneness (Rasool and Khan, 2016). This interplay of messages, images and sentiments is what the authors termed 'Burhanization'. As Burhan was deeply rooted in his hometown of Kashmir and had no foreign connections, Kashmiri youth could identify with him – he knew their local situation and faced similar challenges (BBC, 2016). The growing influence of social media, especially among young people in the region, has led to an increasing adoption of social media tools by conventional newspapers in Kashmir, contributing to the massive online audience of militants in the region (Bali, 2015; Gul and Islam, 2013; Hamdani and Babu, 2015; Malik and Narke, 2018).

Scholars have shown that the use of social media can be helpful in disaster management, but, as a study for the journal of the National Defence University in Islamabad, Pakistan, found, it cannot contribute to the peaceful resolution of the conflict in Kashmir (Chaturvedi et al., 2015; Zia and Syedah, 2015). This contribution has to be seen in the broader context of peace journalism, a field of study that was coined by Johan Galtung in the 1960s as a counter-proposal to war journalism (Galtung and HolmboeRuge, 1965). The idea behind this new concept was that editors and journalists should create a framework and atmosphere conducive to peace by providing comprehensive information on the context and causes of a specific conflict. This should involve all sides of a conflict in order to unite the parties and help them find a solution (Youngblood, 2017).

While there is already an extensive body of literature on some conflicts in regard to the importance of social media, not all conflicts have received the same attention. On one hand, examples such as Tunisia and Egypt during the Arab Spring (Al-ani et al., 2012; Hafez, 2014; Kavanaugh et al., 2011; Lim, 2012; Lotan et al., 2011; Starbird and Palen, 2012; Wilson and Dunn, 2011; Wolfsfeld et al., 2013) or the conflict in Israel and Palestine (El-Nawawy and Khamis, 2013; Khoury-Machool, 2007; Wulf, Aal et al., 2013; Wulf, Misaki et al., 2013) have been broadly researched and some conflicts such as those in Turkey (Tufekci, 2017), Syria (Rohde et al., 2016; Shklovski and Wulf, 2018) or Ukraine (Gruzd and Tsyganova, 2015; Rohde et al., 2016) have only recently been studied. On the other hand, conflicts such as the conflict in Jammu and Kashmir have not yet aroused the interest of scholars in this field.

By addressing the conflict in Jammu and Kashmir, this article intends to investigate a conflict that has so far received no attention in the academic literature dealing with the use of social media. The article thus complements the expanding research on the use of social media in conflict, on the one hand, and contributes to the understanding of the conflict in Jammu and Kashmir, on the other hand. The study of a hitherto under-researched conflict adds new perspectives and possibilities for further research on the use of social media in conflicts. It will be demonstrated that people use Twitter to express their position in the conflict and to show allegiance to one of the conflict parties, which highlights the importance of nationalism in the conflict. Twitter functions as a mediator to reach out to popular people from the media or political leadership and criticize their opinions. By targeting individuals through Twitter, people voice their mistrust of

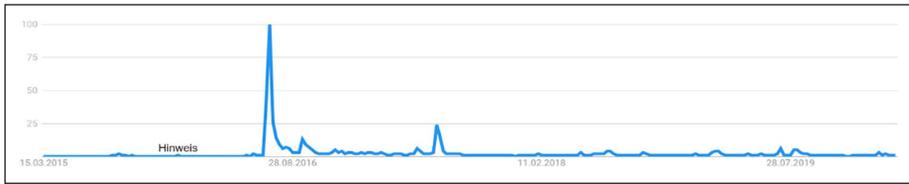


Figure 1. Historical timeline in Google Trends for the worldwide web search of 'burhan wani'.

functionaries and demand changes in the way the conflict is dealt with, such as a political solution to curb violence in the region.

Methodology

Our case study analyses the use of Twitter in response to the violent death of Burhan Wani. The value of a case study results particularly from the detailed and focused analysis of a single case to gain a more complex understanding of its characteristics and interactions with its contexts (Johnson and Stake, 1996). In this context, social media platforms offer many opportunities to conduct case studies on a wide range of topics and an analysis of its content during crises can provide valuable insights regardless of the researchers' geographical location and, thus, enables them to access data in politically unstable locations where field research could pose a danger to them.

The data was obtained by identifying all tweets containing either the keyword 'Burhan' or 'Burhanwani' that were posted on Twitter via an advanced search in the period between his death on 8 July 2016 and 15 July 2016. The historical timeline in Google Trends for the web search of 'burhan wani' (see Figure 1) shows that search activity increased sharply in the days after Burhan's death and dropped the following week. This confirms the general assumption that public attention is high after such an incisive event but decreases relatively quickly afterwards. Considering the limited period of time observed, we have only analysed a small sample, so we cannot claim to be able to represent public opinion on this matter in its entirety.

The primary objective of the article is to examine the use of social media in the Kashmir conflict on a case-specific basis. In particular, the article explores the role that the use of social media played for Burhan Wani in the mobilization and recruitment of fighters, and the impact it had on the development after his death. Consequently, the focus is exclusively on the online use of these media, i.e. how Twitter was used by the actors to position themselves online. Hence, its offline effects are not the primary subject of the article and no complete analysis of the ethnographic and other influences is given. It should also be noted that the conflict takes place in a fragile context; its further course is therefore partly unpredictable. An 'on-the-ground' approach would therefore be subject to considerable limitations. Nevertheless, a comprehensive study can be conducted, by analysing the significance of the use of social media in this conflict, both during the mobilization and in the immediate aftermath. It enables the researcher to make 'connections between online and locality-based realities' (Postill and Pink, 2012). The on-the-ground approach can therefore be seen as a valuable addition as it

helps to uncover insights that are not available online. In this way, it also helps to shed light on the social embedding of social media contributions and to examine effects and after-effects from different perspectives (Aal et al., 2018; Wulf, Aal et al., 2013).

The list of observations included both English tweets and tweets in Urdu that were translated by a native speaker. This resulted in a preliminary data set of about 620 tweets in English and about 50 tweets in Urdu. At first glance, this number might seem lower than one would expect considering the enormous importance of social media in the region. However, this may have been a consequence of suspended access to mobile services after the unrest (Krippendorff, 2004). In the first two steps of *unitizing* and *sampling*, the interesting text segments are identified and observations are limited to a manageable set of units. The third step of *recording/coding* connects the distinct image or text that you see with the situation-specific interpretation, while by *reducing*, data is reduced by using statistical methods to summarize and simplify it to a manageable size for efficient representation. Afterwards, data is *inferred* from the descriptive accounts of texts to support the *narrating* of the answers to the research questions. Drawing on Hsieh and Shannon (2005), this analysis uses the conventional content analysis which allows an explorative approach not based on preconceived categories. This study design derives its categories from the data because existing literature is scarce and there are no preconceived categories to draw from. The process of developing categories starts off by repeatedly reading the material in order to identify recurring words or themes, i.e. codes, from the data. Based on how these codes link or relate to each other, categories and sub-categories are developed to group the codes into clusters representing meaningful and distinct themes (Hsieh and Shannon, 2005).

From this process, three broad categories have been identified, each containing several sub-categories. These categories are: (1) criticism of intellectuals; (2) the impact of Burhan Wani on the conflict; and (3) the tweets that refer to the conflict itself. By eliminating all tweets that did not fit into the categories because they were lacking in content or incomprehensible, the preliminary set of data was then reduced to a final set of 445 tweets. This final set of data included 405 English language tweets and 40 tweets in Urdu. Table 1 illustrates the distribution of the tweets along with the categories and sub-categories. It is apparent that almost half of all tweets dealt with Burhan Wani's impact on conflict perception, while the other half either criticized the individual opinions of intellectuals or directly targeted the way the conflict parties dealt with the conflict.

All tweets in the sample were coded according to the coding rules specified in the codebook for the content analysis shown in Table 2. Coding rules were only defined for the categories, not for the sub-categories. Since some of the tweets referred to more than one of the categories, the classification was made according to the perceived focus of the tweet's statement. In addition to the coding, all tweets were checked for the following criteria: gender, age, location, religion, political affiliation, media exposure (if applicable) and arranged in a table sorted by sub-category. This allows a deeper analysis of the background of people's opinions.¹ While this showed that the sample is rather diverse, including tweets from Indian and Pakistani nationals resident both in their respective home countries and overseas, as well as from indigenous Kashmiris, it also showed that the majority of tweets came from India and most Indian tweeters had a more nationalistic, pro-government point of view. As reliable background information on tweeters is

Table 1. Overview of the number of assigned tweets by category.

Category	Number of assigned tweets	Sub-categories	Number of assigned tweets
1. Criticism of intellectuals	132	Journalists	85
		Social media	9
		Politicians and political activists	38
2. Burhan Wani's impact	210	Freedom fighter	70
		Terrorist	37
		Funeral	23
		Army	37
		Comparison	30
		Burhan's father	13
		India vs Pakistan	22
3. Conflict in Jammu and Kashmir	103	Conflict background	28
		Authorities dealing with the conflict	53

only accessible if people share it in their profile description, any further judgement or deductions from tweets or retweets are speculative. A focus on either the Indian, Pakistani, or local Kashmiri perspective would not only be one-sided, but also difficult to manage, as the information available on the geographical location of the account is rather scarce.

Analysis of sample of units

The following analysis is based on a category system mentioned above. Thus, the first part of the analysis focuses on the criticism of the opinions of intellectuals expressed in the tweets. The second part concentrates on Burhan Wani's impact on the conflict and the people living in it. Eventually, the third part deals with people's opinions on the conflict in Jammu and Kashmir, and the behaviour of the responsible conflict parties.

Opinions on intellectuals

A large proportion of the tweets that dealt with the conflict in Jammu and Kashmir itself referred to opinions and statements by intellectuals concerning Burhan's impact and the handling of the conflict. In this case, the term 'intellectuals' referred to the media, such as the *Indian Express*, and social media in general, as well as to individual journalists, but also to politicians and political activists. Indian tweeters, in particular, accused popular Indian journalists such as Barkha Dutt and Rajdeep Sardesai of being biased and supporting terrorists rather than reporting objectively. The main criticism levelled at individual journalists was their failure to explicitly call Burhan a terrorist, which, according to many tweets, downplayed his violent actions and demonstrated their allegiance to the terrorists. According to some tweets, Barkha Dutt, at the time a news anchor for Indian news channel NDTV, was accused of providing Burhan with confidential information on Twitter about the movement of Indian troops, which enabled him to plan his

Table 2. Codebook content analysis.

Category	Sub-categories	Definition	Example	Coding rule (inclusion exclusion criteria)
1. Criticism of Intellectuals ^a	Journalists Social media Politicians and political activists	Remarks referring to intellectuals' opinions (media, journalists, politicians, activists)	'Thousands like Burhan Wani seem to be brain child of @abdullah_omar who wants riots for power. #OmarRuins-Kashmir' (9 July 2016; 125 retweets, 62 likes)	Including all comments that express a positive or negative opinion about individuals' opinions or the media's reporting
2. Burhan Wani's impact	Freedom fighter Terrorist Funeral Army Comparison Burhan's father	Utterances that describe Burhan Wani's role in the conflict	'#KashmirNow Burhan Wani has instilled a new hope in Kashmiris. If we help them Kashmir can be free' (13 July 2016; 61 retweets, 53 likes)	Including all positive and negative utterances referring to Burhan Wani as a person
3. Conflict in Jammu and Kashmir	India vs Pakistan	Remarks referring to the conflict parties, underlying conflict lines and the authorities dealing with the conflict	'Killing a 22-year-old Burhan can't be justified by India. Kashmir is an unfinished agenda of partition and a solution has to be found' (15 July 2016; 27 retweets, 55 likes)	Including all remarks focusing on the conflict itself including mutual recriminations between supporters of one or the other conflict party

^aThe term 'intellectuals' refers here to members of the media as well as politicians and political activists. Tweets contain opinions on certain individuals or the media in general, but do not refer to the conflict overall.

the role of Indians, and especially Indian soldiers, who also died but did not receive as much attention from the media.

In addition to journalists, politicians and political activists were also heavily criticized for their personal opinions on the conflict and its handling by the decision-makers. For example, Kavita Krishnan, secretary of the All India Progressive Women's Association (AIPWA) and a member of the politburo of the Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist) (CPI-ML), condemned the killing of Burhan Wani as extrajudicial and criticized the killing of protesters and mourners at his funeral. Omar Abdullah warned that Burhan's supporters would rise up. This demand reflects the calls for a political solution on behalf of the Indian State, which were also put forward by the new militancy. As police brutality and the crackdown on demonstrators is one of the main reasons for the resurgence of militancy in the region, Krishnan points to the danger of fuelling further violence by treating demonstrators at the funeral in the same way. Strongly opposing opinions like these, many Indian tweeters frequently used the hashtag #WhiteCollaredTerrorists to accuse members of the political elite of being terrorists themselves by openly supporting terrorists like Burhan Wani. In one of the tweets, it was considered 'important to arrest @kavita_krishnan's of the world for supporting #Burhan and condemning security forces. #WhiteCollaredTerrorists' (tweet by AshokePandit, 10 July 2016), and referred especially to Indians who condemned the killing of Burhan.

By replying to the original tweets by the politicians, many tweets remind them how dangerous Burhan was in their eyes and that, if militants do not stop using violence, the Indian army will also shoot any man like Burhan who shows up. Although being a political activist and not a politician, Umar Khalid, a student activist accused of sedition, was criticized for expressing solidarity with the Kashmiri cause and comparing Burhan Wani to Che Guevara, a leading figure in the Cuban revolution. It is clear that supposedly everyone supported Burhan Wani by not condemning him, and so this absence of condemnation was seen as an act of terrorism and the alleged supporters were seen as enemies.

The impact of Burhan Wani

Burhan Wani's influence on people's views on the conflict in Jammu and Kashmir is still controversial – in the tweets, he was compared to several (famous) people, thus ascribing him different features and personality traits. These comparisons were mostly used in tweets by Burhan's opponents, who emphasized that other people have endured hardships and still have not chosen violence to achieve their goals. They wanted to show that Burhan's fight was unjustified and that he should have opted for more peaceful means. Apart from being associated with Islamic preachers, one tweet by a supposedly Hindu-nationalist tweeter explicitly claimed that 'Islamist #BurhanWani calling for Islamic Caliphate was doing work of #ISIS while claiming to liberate Kashmir' (tweet by SengeHSering, 13 July 2016). Some Indian tweeters said that Burhan's father was training terrorists to fight, and the mosques in Kashmir were inciting people to join the jihad against the Indian army and security forces.

It became apparent that not only Burhan's actions during his lifetime but also the circumstances of his death were controversial issues for the population. The majority of

people posting about the Indian army claimed that the killing of a terrorist was not extrajudicial and praised the Indian army for ‘keeping us safe’ (tweet by Abhijit Majumder, 10 July 2016) and making India strong and secure. The killing was considered a success for the Indian security forces and the country’s intelligence apparatus (tweet by Aditya Raj Kaul, 8 July 2016). This suggests that the majority of Indians perceive the new militancy in Kashmir as a consequence of the lack of law and order in the region, and thus as an issue that should be dealt with by security forces such as the Indian police and military. It is clear that the necessity of a political solution in Jammu and Kashmir is rarely mentioned. The people who tweeted on behalf of the Indian army were all Indian, most of them identified as Hindus, some of them even as nationalists, and their posting could generally be classified as pro-government, i.e. supporting the Hindu nationalist party of the President of the current government. Furthermore, the people congratulated and saluted the Indian army and expressed both their gratitude and pride in the Indian forces by calling them ‘bravehearts’, as opposed to Burhan. Burhan Wani and his followers were not even regarded as human beings but were insulted as dirty and despicable animals such as ‘rats’ or ‘pigs’. Tweets frequently mocked Islam and directly connected it to terrorism, pointing out that the vast majority who attended Burhan’s funeral were Muslims demonstrating their support for terrorism. Referring to the ordinary population as well as to journalists and politicians who did not convincingly denounce the actions of the terrorists as ‘terror facilitators’, they warned all people not to follow in Burhan’s footsteps. The term ‘terrorist’ and the suggested connection to Islamism underline that people tend to see the goal of the new militancy as rather one-dimensional and see Burhan and his followers as part of an Islamist movement. Thus, they often fail to recognize the situation on the ground and especially the hopelessness of Kashmiri youth as the underlying reason for the ongoing militant activities. Burhan’s funeral, in particular, was a point of annoyance for many who claimed that a terrorist should not be glorified like this and did not deserve a public funeral. In contrast, Burhan’s proponents spoke of tens of thousands to hundreds of thousands of attendees at his funeral and took this as proof of people’s support for Burhan and the desire to end Indian occupation. By denouncing the actions of the Indian forces as dishonest and extrajudicial, many people across Pakistan and partly in India expressed their solidarity with Burhan’s cause and assured the Kashmiri people that #PakistanStandsWithKashmir. One tweet in Urdu recited famous poetry lines frequently used when someone is martyred, saying that ‘the death of a martyred is a lifeline for the whole nation’ (tweet by Farid Razzaqi, 9 July 2016). This underscores the significance of Burhan Wani for all of Pakistan.

While the majority of Burhan Wani’s supporters no longer seemed to see him as an individual, but rather a figure representing their struggle, the commonly used hashtag #IAmBurhan suggests that people simultaneously felt an individual sense of belonging to the movement. For example, in a tweet by Ajmal Khan Wazir, Advisor to Chief Minister Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Spokesperson to the Provincial Government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, it was clearly stated: ‘#BurhanWani is not an individual, he is an ideology and ideologies never die’ (15 July 2016). This metaphor portrays Burhan’s importance for the new militancy movement. His background and the way he became a militant activist represent a whole generation of young Kashmiris. He has been depicted as a catalyst for the awaking of a new generation that shares his own grievances to follow

his path and join the struggle for freedom in their region. His portrayal as the 'son of Kashmir' was intended to show that Kashmir has lost someone who was as important to the community as a son to a family. Comparable to the pride of the Indian people in their army, several tweets declared their pride in Burhan and thanked him for his bravery and sacrifice. On several pictures enclosed with the tweets, the Pakistani flag was shown, or it was shown that Burhan Wani's body was wrapped in a Pakistani flag for the funeral. Again, this underlines their clear allegiance to Pakistan as one of the parties to the conflict. As some of the tweets stated, 'this is how Kashmir [shows] love for Pak[istan]' (tweet by Bilal Asghar Bhatti, 15 July 2016).

The conflict

This proclaimed nationalism was evident in many of the tweets, but opinions differed about how to deal with the conflict as a whole or the impact of Burhan Wani's death on the course of the conflict. However, both Pakistani and Indian tweeters expressed concern about the frequent outbreaks of violence and the way the authorities were dealing with the conflict. They agreed that a peaceful political solution is needed to prevent the re-emergence of new militant leadership. Several tweets also referred to the political level of dealing with the conflict. According to some tweets, the ongoing conflict in Jammu and Kashmir could be attributed to the partition rule, which leaves unresolved issues. A tweet by the former governor of Sindh, Pakistan, traced the escalation of the conflict in those days to the separation of India and Pakistan in 1947. According to him, since then, 'Kashmir [has been] an unfinished agenda of partition and a solution has to be found' (tweet by Mohammad Zubair, 15 July 2016); according to tweeters like Omar Abdullah, as a political problem, the Kashmir conflict requires a political solution. These positions have been criticized by both the Indian and Pakistani political leaders since the partition and their inability to resolve the problem in Kashmir.

On the one hand, the Indian tweeters insisted that the conflict between India and Pakistan in Kashmir was an internal Indian affair and that the Pakistani side should not interfere in India's handling of the situation in Kashmir. By taking Pakistan's declaration of celebrating a Black Day to honour Burhan's death as proof, Burhan's opponents accused Pakistan of being a terrorist state that promotes militancy in Kashmir. These allegations of a concealed connection of militants to Pakistan can be seen against the backdrop of earlier support by the Pakistani state for insurgency activities in Kashmir. Devadas (2018) points out, however, that accusations such as these fail to take into account the whole picture and do not recognize the differences between the old militancy and the new generation. People were demanding that the world community, and India itself in particular, officially declare Pakistan a terrorist state: 'Pakistan declares Burhan Wani a martyr. July 19 to be observed as a Black day. It's high time the world declares Pakistan a terrorist state' (tweet by Amit A, 15 July 2016). They hold the protesters, i.e. militants like Burhan as well as people who take part in stone throwing or other submissive actions against the Indian army, responsible for the violence done to them by the Indian army. When Burhan took up arms against India, he left the Indian army no choice but to shoot him, an Indian tweeter said. Meanwhile, Burhan's proponents condemned India's unlawful occupation of Kashmir and claimed that others would continue the fight

for freedom. This seems to refer back to a deep sense of Kashmiri victimhood – as Mattoo and Roy (2011) call it – and an anti-Indian sentiment following a decade-long period of perceived occupation, including discrimination and injustice (Mattoo, 2011). It is interesting that not only Pakistanis, who would be the more obvious supporters of Burhan's cause, but also some Indians denounce the killing, for example, Kavita Krishnan tweeted 'Shame on the extrajudicial killing of Burhan Wani, and the killing of 8 protesters/mourners in his funeral.' However, she was not the only one who tried to look beyond the killing of Burhan Wani and draw attention to the impact on Kashmiris and the chain of reactions it caused and might cause.

While some Indians denied that the assassination of Burhan Wani could rekindle terrorism in Kashmir (tweet by SunandaVashisht, 8 July 2016), others find the people's reaction to the death of the militant alarming and consider it as a sign that 'we [i.e. India] are not winning hearts & minds in K[ashmir]' (tweet by Prashant Bhushan, 9 July 2016). As an Indian liberal journalist noted, this was shown by the mass of people who attended Burhan's funeral. According to her, by denouncing the fact that the majority of these people were not journalists, the Indian government under Modi denied the true scope of the situation in Kashmir. One tweet blamed the Indian government and especially the army for the creation of resistance in Kashmir. The tweeter combined the words 'end' and 'India' to 'Endia', thereby pointing out that the atrocities committed by India were responsible for the resurgence of conflict and the flourishing culture of stone pelting in the region. Some tweets criticized the alliance between the Jammu and Kashmir People's Democratic Party (PDP), which calls for self-government of Jammu and Kashmir, and the Indian right-wing and anti-Muslim party Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) at the local level in Kashmir (Jaleel, 2016). For example, a tweet by Mazhar Jafri, the spokesperson of the Madhya Pradesh Congress Committee, said that 'Burhan's death has exposed the deep rot in the PDP-BJP alliance' and calls into question the Indian government not only at the local level but, since the BJP is the governing party at the national level, also the government of the whole country (tweet by Mazhar Jafri, 10 July 2016). These aspects mentioned in the tweets clearly underscore what scholars such as Narain (2016) and Devadas (2018) consider the main reasons for the upsurge of militancy in Kashmir. They emphasize that the Indian state's refusal to recognize the people's demand to put the situation in Jammu and Kashmir on the political agenda further alienates the people from the political elite and the Indian government as a whole. The continuing high presence of security forces as a means of dealing with the situation on the ground adds to people's anti-India resentment.

In addition to criticizing the Indian President and his party, Indian tweeters also criticized Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi's current Chief Minister since February 2015, for not releasing any tweets about Burhan's killing and his alleged connection to Zakir Naik, a controversial Indian Islamic televangelist and Islamic preacher who is sometimes accused of promoting terrorism. Although it must be acknowledged that the Indian Prime Minister received more attention than the Pakistani Prime Minister, he too was criticized for his conduct in this matter. One tweet states that, since the Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif had not expressed his opinion on Burhan's assassination, he could not represent the Pakistani people (tweet by MaleehaManzur, 10 July 2016). While the Pakistani flags raised during Burhan's funeral indicated that the Kashmiri people were loyal to Pakistan, he had not taken the chance to cherish this act or condemn the killing. As a result, the

tweeter does not feel well represented by her government. As Nawaz Sharif showed no interest in his people, she denied him as her Prime Minister.

All in all, the tweets painted a clear black-and-white picture between people who shared their own opinions about Burhan Wani and the conflict in Kashmir in general, and others who disagreed with them. Although Burhan Wani's emergence as a leading militant in the region constituted only one small aspect of the complex history and current situation in Kashmir, the opinions expressed in the tweets reflect the respective strategies currently being observed in the Indian and Pakistani governments. After the last escalation, India continued to insist on treating the conflict in Kashmir as an internal matter, while Pakistan was looking for external help and appealed to the UN for a Security Council verdict (Hashim, 2019; Nagourney, 2019).

Limitations

The analysis of the data provided has some limitations which should be considered with regard to its validity. Since the analysis of the Twitter posts did not include a specific analysis of the validity of the posts, it cannot be said with complete certainty that the posts were not posted by bots or fake profiles. Based on research, however, it can be stated that an extremely high number of bots is unlikely. Those can be identified in particular by their frequency of user activity (Gilani et al., 2017). An average automated posting account, for example, posts at least 12 times a day within precisely defined time periods. Furthermore, the tweets are usually only available for a short time, about seven days after publication. In general, the literature also agrees that people create far more novel content, while bots are more receptive to retweeting and more inclined to tweet more URLs and upload large media (e.g. images). In contrast to automated bot-postings, a legitimate Twitter user often follows a random usage pattern with long inactivity breaks (Chavoshi et al., 2016; Gilani et al., 2017; Inuwa-Dutse et al., 2018). While the background check was not carried out with regard to the validity of the profiles in the context of bots and fake profiles, it can nevertheless be assumed that the data collected, on the basis of the criteria listed above, are adequate and useful for the results of this research.

A case study is always exemplary and highlights a specific part of the field of interest. After all, the analysis focused on a person popular within the conflict and did not include other social media despite Twitter. Given that the use of social media such as Twitter requires a stable internet connection, the sample could have been affected by the Indian government's decision to cut internet services as a means of trying to keep in check the resurgence of violence following Burhan's death (Ashiq, 2016; Khan and Khan, 2020; Narain, 2016). Therefore, many people residing in the region might not have been able to access the internet and thus might have been excluded from the discourse.

Moreover, tweets in languages other than English and Urdu were not included in the analysis, although an investigation of tweets in Hindi language could also provide some interesting insights. While there have been contacts with Urdu-speaking persons, this was unfortunately not the case for Hindi-speaking people; a translation via Google Translator was started but did not yield useful results. These shortcomings could be addressed in future research to broaden the understanding of the use of social media in this conflict. Future research could, for example, include a comparison of the

use of different social networks or look at another person relevant to the conflict in order to bring in new perspectives. The results of the study can be examined in greater detail and developed further by extending the study to other types of events, which may have a more peace-oriented influence than the case in this article. This would allow for a deeper understanding of the effects of social media use in conflict regions. Moreover, a comparison with other conflicts may allow a deeper understanding of the impact of social media and its influence on people's perception of conflict. An example of this could be the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories, which, according to some, bears a striking similarity to the Indian occupation of Kashmir (Akhtar, 2018; Osuri, 2016).

In addition, although online research can certainly be regarded as a starting point, some studies suggest that some information, such as the role of social media in political activities in practice, can only be obtained through field research on the ground (Shklovski and Wulf, 2018). Therefore, it would certainly be interesting for future projects to include field research on the ground and to combine the results with other academic methods such as content analysis in a mixed-methods approach. Apart from that, future research could focus on a visual analysis of the pictures and videos included in the tweets.

Discussion and conclusion

In this article, qualitative content analysis was used to analyse how people use Twitter to respond to the violent death of a militant fighter in the conflict in Jammu and Kashmir. The set of data was clustered into three categories highlighting the use of social media in this conflict: (1) criticism of intellectuals; (2) the impact of Burhan Wani on the conflict; and (3) tweets referring to the conflict itself. First, in all categories, the mere fact that people are tweeting about the conflict in Kashmir shows that they attribute importance to the topic. They harness the benefits of a low-threshold portal like Twitter to reach many people at the same time, without any geographical restrictions, to raise awareness of the situation in Kashmir. By using hashtags, retweets, or replies to tweets, people connect and engage in discussions. Tweets show a great variety by containing not only texts but also pictures, videos, links to newspaper articles and caricatures. Especially remarkable is the poetry with which Urdu-speaking people expressed their sentiments towards the conflict.

People criticize intellectuals such as journalists and politicians or political activists for their opinions. Although the tweets refer to the intellectuals' statements on Burhan Wani's death, this criticism reveals more profound lines of conflict in the mostly Indian society. There seems to be a general mistrust prevalent between the people and India's intellectuals, which leads people to consider them as enemies of the nation. Therefore, Twitter is used by people to express this mistrust and to discredit the targeted individuals. Moreover, people use Twitter to show their loyalty to each side – either in support of Burhan Wani or against him and his actions. This clear distinction between opponents and supporters of Burhan Wani reflects the dichotomy between India and Pakistan, between Hinduism and Islam. Thus, tweets usually separate people into 'friends' – those who share the own opinion – and 'foes' – those who disagree with you. Using Twitter shows that people support and express this nationalism in social media. This dichotomy

is also reflected in the criticism voiced against the opinions of politicians and journalists and against the challenged leadership of India and Pakistan in dealing with the conflict in Kashmir. The frequent mutual accusations between the two conflict parties, India and Pakistan, showed the deep divisions between the two countries that are responsible for continuing frictions. These tendencies reflect, on the one hand, the nationalism promoted by the Indian government under Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the general upsurge of nationalism in almost all parts of the world, on the other hand (Associated Press, 2018; Singh and Park, 2014; Tamkin, 2020). This anti-elite sentiment can be seen as one of the characteristics of Modi's discursive strategy: the portrayal of 'the elite' as opposed to 'the people' who are deprived of their sovereignty (Wojczewski, 2019) Being part of this elite, the Indian media are in a crisis of credibility – according to *Deutsche Welle* (DW), actions and events are seen through the lens of nationalism, separating state narrative-conforming from 'anti-national' (Krishnan, 2017). Under the Modi government, freedom of the press has declined and newspapers increasingly report on India's media that fail in their democratic duty (Goel and Gettleman, 2020; Varadarajan, 2020).

To conclude, this case study shows that some Twitter users take the opportunity to reflect not only on the current issue at hand, i.e. an event heavily broadcast in the media, but also on questions or issues that have been smouldering in society for some time. Issues addressed were, for example, the impartiality of the press or the suitability of some leading political figures. For many people, Twitter acts as a mediator between the people on the ground and intellectuals or the 'political elite'. Thus, Twitter is used as a political mouthpiece to inform not only those affected but also all those interested in their opinions – even if these might be critical in some cases.

This article contributed to the vast body of research on the use of social media in conflict by investigating a conflict that has not yet attracted academic attention. While being set in the context of the conflict and research on the use of social media, the article also highlights different perspectives on the causes and handling of the conflict in the region of Jammu and Kashmir. The analysis has shown that the majority of people in the conflict region do not recognize the differences between the old militancy and the new generation of Kashmiris turning to militant means. The conflict is based on an intergenerational sense of neglect by the Indian state, which seems to be unwilling to abandon the present strategy of counter-insurgency measures to preserve law and order in the region on behalf of pursuing a political solution. As a representative of this new wave of local militants fighting against insecurity and police brutality, Burhan Wani seemed to express the aspirations of a whole generation. Using the new generation's affinity to technology and especially to social media, Burhan Wani was able to win broad support for his cause in the local region.

From a methodological point of view, our study can provide insights into how online studies can be designed and conducted in conflict and instability contexts where research in the field is not feasible without proper security precautions. It showed that Twitter or social media in general can be important instruments for identifying different perspectives in a conflict, in particular, for capturing the wishes of young people who are used to expressing themselves via digital channels. Adding to a growing number of Twitter analyses on various topics, our study shows that Twitter proves to be a valuable tool for different kinds of research designs.

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ORCID iD

Christian Reuter  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1920-038X>

Notes

1. For example, the Indian intelligence agency Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) is known for using trolls on social media for propagating its agendas.
2. The Urban Dictionary defines the term as a ‘world leader who sells out and goes against what is right and should be done to gain personal wealth and status’ (Urban Dictionary, 2013).

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Author biographies

Christian Reuter is Full Professor and Head of PEASEC (Science and Technology for Peace and Security) in the Department of Computer Science at the Technical University of Darmstadt. His research focuses on interactive and collaborative technologies such as social media in the context of crises, security, safety and peace.

Lilian Reichert is a student research assistant at PEASEC (Science and Technology for Peace and Security) at the Technical University of Darmstadt. She is currently a MA student of Peace and Conflict Studies at the University of Frankfurt.

Sabrina Gabel is supporting research on social media in the context of crises at PEASEC (Science and Technology for Peace and Security) at the Technical University of Darmstadt. She is also an advisor for population dynamics at the German Corporation for International Cooperation GmbH (GIZ).