UNIT 34 – UPSC - Role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges

In the regions of South Asia- India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Pakistan, there is intense internal turbulence and disturbances due to rebellion movements, ethnic conflicts and religious fundamentalism. Major internal security challenges are many.

Internal Security Challenges Include:

1. Terrorism / Militancy
2. Left wing extremism
3. Communal divide – it can divide us and even lead to fragmentions of nation
4. Caste and ethnic tensions
5. Organized crimes
6. Forged Indian currency notes
7. Coastal security
8. Cyber crime
9. Mushroom growth of Madrasas and religious fundamentalism [growth of deobandis /Madrasas along Indo-Bangladesh border], they are not recognized by government.
10. Illegal immigration, 12.5 lakh Bangladeshis have not gone back, entered India and staying illegally. Reduction in illegal migration, though it is going on through West Bengal.
11. Narcotics trade – smuggling and trafficking – unproductive lifestyle of people.
12. Hawala transfers (illegal money transfers)

There are several reasons for these internal security issues such as Unfriendly neighbor, weak state structure like poor governance, hopeless poverty in large numbers because of deforestation, sustenance has decreased, political insecurity like secessionism, revolutionary movements, Polarisation of society, Hardening class barriers, drug trafficking and arms, smuggling, rise in intolerance and fundamentalism [despite rise of literacy, intolerance is increasing. It has been well documented that mass media pose internal security challenges through various means such as

terrorism which makes uncertain future of nation. Social media sites are very convenient, affordable and people can reach huge number of audience through these sites such as you tube, twitter, Facebook. It has been observed that terrorists normally use social networking sites to transmit messages and accomplish their dangerous targets. All anti-government groups use internet technology such as email, chat room, e group, forums, and virtual message boards to live their communication.

Role of Media

Media is considered as influential channel for effective communication. It supports in promoting the right things on proper time. It provides a real exposure to the mass viewers about right or wrong process. Media is the source of information for a culture for any societal or political issue. Whether the issue is local, regional or global, people rely and even trust on information provided to them by media. Therefore, this dimension / value of media increases its significance as an influential and instrumental tool with regards to building confidence or promoting mistrust among people on issues related to national security. This importance of media can be observed at the times of disaster of national level. Even though, sometimes, media is related with spreading false news but it is a fact that it helps to inform people about the realities as well. Media, the means of communication that reaches or influences people broadly has a significant position in the statecraft mechanism especially in period of information rebellion.

The huge influence of media in creating popular image was used subsequently by states to counterbalance their enemies and foes, internally and externally. But irrespective of the degree of independence and fairness available to the media, it has been extensively observed that media follows the nationalistic principles when dealing with matters of national security and interests. Progressively, nation states and non-state political actors have well identified the great influence of media and its use for their objectives. However, the dynamics of media impact are quite different, varying and diversified in different countries. When discussing about the Indo Pakistan security relations, media has adopted a nationalistic approach forwarding and pushing the national interests such as in wars (1965, 1971), crisis (1990 nuclear alert), border skirmishes (Kargil) or the low-intensity war (LIW) in Kashmir.

Media is considered as strong support which helps the state to promote its interests, objectives and goals. Since the beginning of information uprising and the use of media for attaining war objectives by other means, media is vital component in opinion making or building, creating leaders and anti-heroes, and creating monsters and enemies. Regardless of the compromise on 'independence and integrity', media has been used by both the states to encourage their national cause at the cost of growing hatred and acrimony. The coverage of nuclear explosions carried out by India and Pakistan in 1998 is one of the major examples in this regard where popular sentiments were emphasised and media had major role to push forward the national program. During that period, media used a nationalistic approach to highlight the state standpoint.

It has been established that Media and politics have a strong link in modern strategic environment. Previously, media has played the role to provide extensive information and communication between people and state, and between states but in contemporary situation, media has been transformed and broadened. Now the political actors work in the environment shaped by the media. Media shapes the perceptions of leaders and people. On the basis of these observations,

the political leaders formulate the policies, especially during the situations of crisis or political changes such as in elections. Conversely, media can never be independent. Sometimes it works under the government pressure imposed through laws and media can also work under the influence of financer, as it has become a commercial industry. The role of media is mainly determined by its relationships with the state.

There are three important theories related to media

1. In the Authoritarian system, the government in power controls the media. The main aim of media is to support and improve the government policies and serve the state. The criticism on government mechanism is banned.
2. Second is the Libertarian system in which media is owned by whoever has economic means to do so. Under this theory media work with three aims such as to inform, to discover truth and accountability of the government.
3. In the Social Responsibility system, media is controlled by anyone who wants to say something. The major responsibility in this theory is to inform, entertain, sell but also raise the conflict to the plane of discussion.

Many scholars have recognized that media has powerful role in politics. It has pushed the process of rapid globalization as well as summarized the international politics. Information is a major resource in the current global environment. Media is the major source of information and has become political, therefore, it has capability to influence the global structure and it may bring a change in the structure. Although the role of media in international politics is positive, sometimes it is influenced and used by the major actors as a source of publicity to promote their interests and bring desired changes in the prevailing system.

Preferably, it has general perception that media must be unbiased and free from the publicity mechanisms. It should provide balanced account to the people. Media educates and keeps the public informed about the national and international political and other human realities taking place in everyday life. The main aim of media is to highpoint the trouble issues in the society and pressurize to the government and public to formulate suitable mechanisms to eliminate those troubles. At the national level, the responsibility of media is to build a bond between people and governments. Media serves as a frontier by ensuring that the government is working within its mandate. However, following the globalization, the responsibilities of media have also extended. It has to play a role for preserving and pursuing the national interests of the state and highlighting its perspective along with the global issues. It has to scrutinise the conduct of international relations and emphasize the social issues at global level in lieu of global security.

The media agenda has the following effects:

a. Mass media influences the public agenda directly, presumably by weight of attention and media authority.
b. The public agenda (public opinion) influences the policy agenda.
c. The media agenda also has independent direct influence on the policy agenda.

Media and National Security

National security is prime importance of any nation to maintain peace and harmony. Nations face numerous internal security challenges. Threat posed to any element of national power creates security problems. The role of media in war is not just to project the developing activities in a particular area but to offer a wide-ranging image, encompassing all aspects of the policies of the country. Presently, the war is not only fought by the armed forces but the whole nation is engaged in the economic, scientific, political and social endeavours and production in all possible fields. It is a practical objective, which is accomplished through the information and distribution process of the media. When the two institutions military and media meet during a conflict, it is expected to have clashes. The media wants to articulate the story and the military wants to win the war and keep casualties to a minimum. The media wants freedom, no censorship, total access and the capability to get to their audience quickly. The military on the other hand, wants control. The greatest fear of a military commander in a pre-invasion scenario is that something might leak out that would tip off the enemy.

In current scenario, the role of electronic media is the most effective and powerful to persuade masses. Strong motivated people cannot be forced to abandon their struggle against heavy odds. It is for this aspect of unique coverage and impact that the electronic media can be geared up effectively to promote and expand security awareness among the people at large. The media has been conducting the war of its own to counter the hostile propaganda from across the borders. The electronic media is a morale-building factor. In the military jargon, morale is the will to fight for the national cause to the last.

To summarize, media is visualized as powerful mechanism in technically driven global society. Media plays vital role in persuasion of national policies and interests. It becomes obvious that governments greatly need enhanced media support for projection of their clear stand and moral dominance. In thorough review of significance of media in internal security, it can be established that it followed the nationalistic approach and highlighted the popular and mass perception to help the state fulfil its national security obligations. Media has a positive role to play for the society. Today, News Channels and even some Newspapers are representative of some social issues, which assists people to estimate the realities of lives. Media has great importance in highlighting social issues in almost every era. It is the fact that in most of the periods, media were not being given free and fair chances to discover the issues of society more openly than it is being given now but it has positive function to raise issues in order to provide justice to the people. It is assumed that there is an association between the development of mass media and social change.

Social Networking Sites

In today's highly advanced technical climate, social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter have remarkable eagerness among businesses and enterprises and it is also adopted by security officials to convey messages to distant officials. In social networking sites like Facebook, any institute can freely advertise and conduct focus group research. It can draw traffic to a website and effectively engage with a loyal consumer base. It can create communication opportunities between employees, partners, and affiliates. Many companies embraced social media to such a degree that they seek to implement a social networking platform of their own. These internal social

networks are accessible only to employees and include message boards, profile pages, file sharing software, and private communication applications not different from a public social media system. Internal social networks offer numerous partnership benefits for the average enterprise. They allow for quick, fluid, and constant communication, thereby making it easier for employees to synchronise at all times. They encourage feedback, proposals, and ideas from all workers, thus opening the door for innovation in any shape or form. They also participate well with cloud computing platforms and allow files to be shared and transmitted in a secure manner. And, finally, they can contribute to the culture and sense of community that a company seeks to foster.

Social connectivity of users (Source: Scaife, 2014)
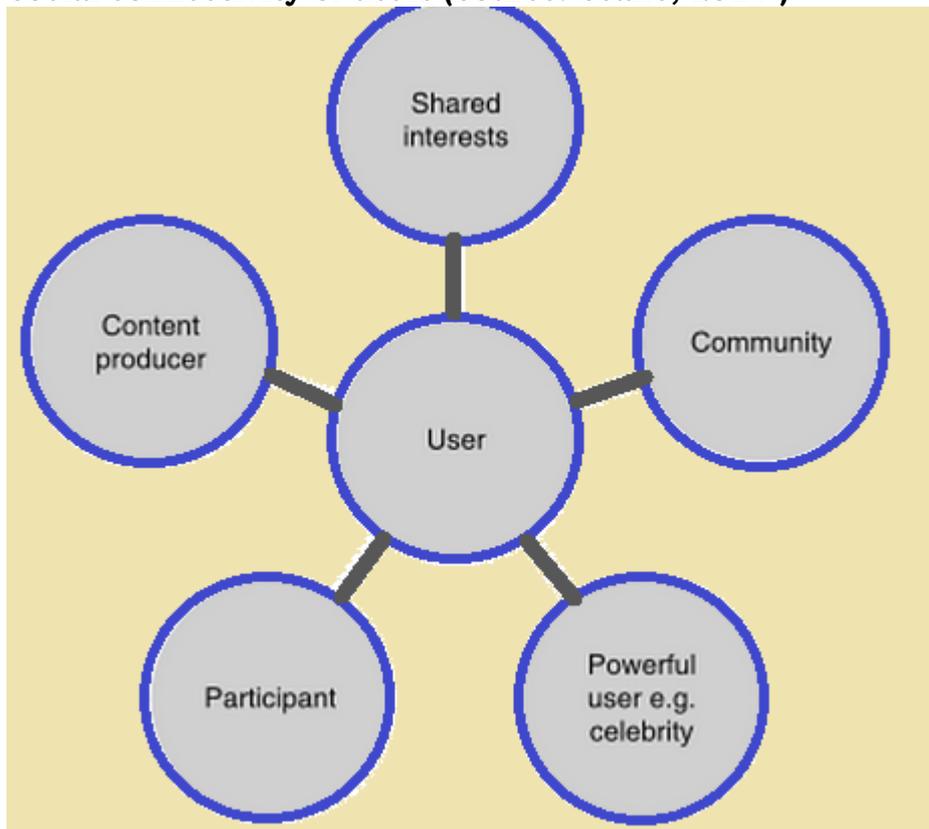
When reviewing the scene of India, it is found that majority of Indian populace use different social networking sites like Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest. Even the trend of sending personal emails seems to have become obsolete as compared to social media. By December 2012, the number of social media users in urban India had reached 62 million. A sudden availability of smartphones and mobile Internet has led to a spurt in the use of social media. India has been struggling to make the foreign websites, especially the social media websites, to fall in line with Indian laws. However, foreign websites are not interested to comply with the rules of Indian government. Foreign websites operating in India must comply with Indian laws and not the laws and policies of their native nation. User friendly, social networking sites can be accessed with basic Internet literacy. It is a virtual world in itself with a virtual community which links individuals beyond borders.

Social networking sites has immense role in recent developments across the globe with special reference to incidents in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. There have been panic reactions on the part of governments regarding social media, an issue that India has faced. However, social media is more independent than electronic or print media because of its interactive nature and less gatekeeping. The power of the individual to create and transmit content over social networking sites empowers

the ordinary citizen. The growing voice of the marginalized sections having access to Internet through these sites has led to governments asking for greater control and scrutiny. In social networking sites, several types of data are shared.

Table: Taxonomy of social networking data (Source: Scaife, 2014)

Type of data	Description
Service data	Data a user may provide to a social networking site in order to set up an account. Such data might include a user's legal name, age, home address, gender, and email address.
Disclosed data	Data which the user posts on their own page, e.g. status updates, tweets, blog entries, photographs, messages, comments, and so on.
Entrusted data	Data posted on other account holders' pages, often similar in content to disclosed data, expect that the user relinquishes a degree control over the data once it has been posted. Although such data may be deleted, the replication or re-sharing the data, who views it, or the comments which are posted next to it may not be so easy to control.
Incidental data	Data posted by other users, e.g. comments, photographs taken by others that a user is tagged in. The user does not control this data and it is not created by the user who is the subject matter of the posting.
Behavioural data	Data collected by the social networking site which concerns a user's habits and preferences. The data is gathered by recording user activity and interactions with other users. It might include games played, topics the user writes about, news articles accessed, etc.
Derived data	Data about a user that is derived from all other sources of data.

In India, more freedom of expression in social networks has made governments in different States as well at the Centre jittery. Indian government in a highly controversial decision has urged Google, Facebook and Microsoft to pre-screen data before it goes up on the website. According to the Google Transparency Index Report published in The Hindu newspaper the Internet search giant received requests from Indian government and various authorities for removal of 358 items of which 255 are in the category of government disparagement. This sounds threatening for freedom of speech and expression in digital space. Social networking sites are influential, empowering and to some extent more democratic. Nonetheless, there are problems when using these sites. Social networking sites are being used to transmit hate speech. There are groups who are judging event development with a lot of scepticism and are serving vested interests. There is a trick from some sections to evoke lot of sarcasm about the democratic setup leading to its breakdown. The addictive nature of social networking sites also create problem. Most of the activity that happens on a Facebook page is self-promotion, sharing of thoughts and liking content posted by friends. Many of the pages shared are meaningless and much of the conversation is not of high social value.

The biggest challenge for internal security of nation through social networking site is cyber terrorism. Social networking sites also invite fraudsters to take excellent opportunity to become wealthy by applying deceiver schemes. Internet media is a major resource for developing serious crime. As Internet is growing explosively, online criminals try to present fraudulent plans in many ways. Cyber terrorism is simply the use of computer network tools to damage vital national infrastructures, for example transportation, government process (Janczewski, 2008). Many theorists' scholars raised concern that cyber terrorism is growing at high speed due to dependency of nations and critical infrastructure on computer networks for their procedures (Lewis, 2002). Today terrorists select cyber terrorism as a practical alternative to disturb the function of nations

and other business activities because this technique has potential to cause huge damage. It poses enormous threat in international system and attracts the mass media, the security community, and the information technology corporation. The devastating incident of September 11th on twin tower frightened the whole world and created international terrorism.

Social networking sites also pose major challenge in financial and organized crime which destabilizes the system. The organized criminal groups have found in social networks a forum to position themselves in the popular culture as an alternative lifestyle. Nowadays, the Internet reveals all the things that used to be hidden, and has become the platform of organized criminal groups to prove their power and profits with impunity. Twitter accounts of presumed Mexican drug traffickers have attracted the attention of international media as they give the opportunity to take a look at the lifestyles of the so-called "narcojuniors", that is second generation of drug traffickers that have inherited the leadership of large criminal organizations. Social media sites generate revenue with targeted advertising, based on personal information. As such, they encourage registered users to provide as much information as possible. With limited government oversight, industry standards or incentives to educate users on security, privacy and identity protection, users are exposed to identity theft and fraud. Additionally, these platforms have huge confidential user information, and are likely vulnerable to outside or inside attack. The following organized groups pose potential threat using social networking sites:

1. National subversive groups (Marxist-Leninist groups, anarchist-insurrection list groups).
2. National criminal organizations (mafia)
3. Opposing movements/extra-parliamentary forces (no global movement, environmental associations, anti-nuclear groups, xenophobic groups, extremist supporters, far right groups)
4. Cracker groups (predominantly acting within a state).
5. Religious sects.
6. Companies (with national capital stock).
7. Hacker groups.
8. Associations/foundations/ non-profit organizations.
9. Political parties/labour unions.
10. Public institutions (national security agencies included).

It has been established that national and international users such as political parties, labour unions, companies with national capital stock as well as NGOs, international organisations, hackers, allied foreign states with political, military and economic alliances have the opportunity to pose a threat using social media, although they are not considered generally as groups that create threats to national security. Plentiful evidence demonstrates the way groups used social media to pose threats to national security. A predominant framework of India's national security has to take cognisance of military and non-military dimensions in term of both external threats and internal challenges to its regional integrity and national unity. Threats to a nation originate as much from external aggression as from internal trouble but at times internal factors can corrode national security more critically than any external threat. National power based on political stability, societal cohesion and economic development would thus remain central to the future of India's National security.

Social media is explained by a number of tools, which includes blogs, Wikis, discussion forums, micro-blogs, twitter and social networking sites Facebook. It has been observed that twitter is an effectual coordination mechanism for instigating riots and trying to initiate negative publicity. Since the number of internet users in world is growing, no doubt, the number of social media users is also on the increase. It was revealed that Social networking sites permit for information to spread very quickly amongst the public. Social networking sites enable users to exchange ideas, to post updates and comments, or to partake in activities and events, while sharing their interests. From general chit-chat to propagating breaking news, from scheduling a date to following election results or coordinating disaster response, from gentle humour to serious research, social networks are now used for a host of different reasons by various user communities. At same time, social networking sites make secret information all the more insecure.