

Investigative Analysis: Disinformation in Warfare in the Age of AI and Synthetic Media

By Seerat Khan and Nighat Dad



Introduction: War in the Age of Information Overload

The recent escalations between the United States (US), Israel, and Iran have brought the world to a standstill, accompanied by an overwhelming surge of information across online platforms. Social media feeds are flooded with updates about potential attacks, casualty counts, and circulating footage of explosions or military operations — much of which may not be occurring in real time or may lack verification altogether. Because these conflicts are unfolding in regions where censorship and restrictions on freedom of expression are already prevalent, reliable information is often scarce, allowing fabricated or misleading narratives to spread rapidly.

Adding another layer to this information disorder is the widespread use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) tools such as Flux AI, OpenAI's ChatGPT and DALL-E, Synthesia, Midjourney, Stable Diffusion, and voice cloning technologies like ElevenLabs. These tools make it easier than ever to create realistic but misleading images, videos, and audio. At the same time, the amplification and monetization incentives embedded within digital platforms reward speed and virality over verification and facts. In a time when news outlets compete to publish updates first, even credible media organizations sometimes circulate unverified information, leading to mistakes that can carry real-world consequences during active conflicts.

The Information Battlefield

How modern warfare now unfolds simultaneously on the ground and across digital platforms

Modern warfare has evolved beyond traditional battlefields to include information battles fought across digital platforms. This dynamic became visible during the India-Pakistan tensions in 2025¹, where both governments used online platforms not only to control narratives but also to censor opposing viewpoints. Similar patterns emerged during recent Pakistan-Afghanistan confrontations, where both sides actively used social media to circulate claims and counterclaims that were not always accurate.

¹ <https://digitalrightsfoundation.pk/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/Information-Controls-in-India-and-Pakistan-during-the-May-2025-Conflict-DRF-OONI.pdf>



In a post on X² on March 1, 2026, Afghan defence ministry along with multiple Afghan and Indian social media users and some Indian media outlets claimed that the Afghan Taliban had carried out coordinated drone strikes targeting Pakistan's Nur Khan Airbase and other military installations; however, fact-checking by iVerify it was found the claim to be false, confirming through keyword searches, reverse image analysis, media verification, and journalist confirmation that no such attack occurred and that the viral video used as evidence actually shows a suspected Iranian drone strike on a high-rise building in Bahrain during regional tensions.



² <https://www.google.com/url?q=https://x.com/MoDAfghanistan2/status/2028177733973614606?s%3D20&sa=D&source=docs&ust=1773046309608319&usg=AOvVaw2eFshmiDEXKBZTlqZrbkOm>

Similarly, from Pakistan on February 26, 2026, multiple Pakistani users, political figures and official ruling political party pages on social media platforms, including on Facebook³, shared a viral video claiming it showed the Pakistan Air Force launching strikes against the Afghan Taliban during the ongoing Pakistan-Afghanistan conflict; however, a fact-check by iVerify Pakistan determined the claim to be false, confirming through reverse image searches and keyword analysis that the footage was actually from the United States' 2003 "Shock and Awe" aerial assault on Baghdad during the Iraq War and was unrelated to current events.

While this information warfare evolved in recent conflicts between countries, what happens when an entire regional conflict is started? The recent Iran, USA and Israel conflict has shown that disinformation is a pivotal tool in warfare used by states to undermine each other's victories and also, in some cases, claim victory beforehand.

We've been observing a similar pattern of narrative warfare emerge in the recent Iran-US-Israel conflict, where official statements and states themselves became part of the information battlefield. On March 7, 2026, Ali Larijani, head of Iran's National Security Council, posted on X⁴, claiming that several US soldiers had been captured, alleging that Washington was falsely reporting them as killed in action. The claim quickly circulated online and was amplified by Iranian media outlets, but it was swiftly denied by the US military and officials from US Central Command, who described the statement as disinformation.



Ali Larijani | علی لاریجانی
@alilarijani_ir

It has been reported to me that several American soldiers have been taken prisoner. But the Americans claim that they have been killed in action. Despite their futile efforts, the truth is not something they can hide for too long.

2:44 AM · Mar 8, 2026 · **2.2M** Views

2.2K 8.9K 37K 1.4K

Relevant ▾ View quotes >

³ <https://www.facebook.com/reel/2148313005998490>

⁴ https://x.com/alilarijani_ir/status/2030399293173969120

Moreover, another example of how conflicting state narratives fuel disinformation can be seen in the aftermath of the February 28 strike on a school in Minab, Iran, which killed dozens of civilians, including children. While investigations and satellite imagery analysis by The New York Times⁵ suggested that the strike likely occurred during U.S. attacks targeting a nearby Iranian Revolutionary Guards naval base, U.S. officials initially avoided confirming responsibility, and President Donald Trump publicly claimed⁶, without presenting evidence, that Iran itself was responsible for the attack. At the same time, Iranian officials blamed the United States and Israel, turning the tragedy into a competing narrative battlefield. In an instance like this, when states are not only fighting on the battle grounds but also over the internet and when governments make contradictory claims or unverified accusations during active conflicts, it creates confusion and uncertainty that ordinary users and media outlets online often amplify further through speculation, reposting, and reinterpretation, accelerating the spread of misinformation across social media platforms.

AI and the Rise of Synthetic Media

How generative AI tools (image, video, and voice cloning) are accelerating the production of convincing false content.

The recent crisis accurately illustrates how generative AI has shifted wartime misinformation from mostly “recycled footage” to rapid, scalable production of synthetic “evidence” (images, video clips, and even convincingly altered satellite-style visuals). Fact-checkers have documented AI-generated and misrepresented visuals circulating at high volume during this conflict, including content amplified by state-linked actors and opportunistic accounts⁷ seeking attention. At the same time, organizations like WITNESS warn⁸ that in fast-moving conflict settings, synthetic visuals can spread faster than verification and platforms need stronger provenance and labeling infrastructure beyond incremental fixes.

⁵ <https://www.nytimes.com/2026/03/05/world/middleeast/iran-school-us-strikes-naval-base.html>

⁶ <https://www.politico.com/news/2026/03/07/trump-iran-girls-school-strike-00818163>

⁷ <https://apnews.com/article/iran-war-images-misinformation-russia-israel-9e495017dc5c4bf24a0b6152863dbfb1>

⁸ <https://www.witness.org/witness-submits-expert-comment-to-meta-oversight-board-on-ai-generated-video-in-the-israel-iran-conflict/>

This is not theoretical since the Oversight Board⁹ has repeatedly emphasized that policy and enforcement must keep pace with AI-enabled harms and clearer user-facing rules are essential, especially where deception or safety risks are involved.

Verification becomes dramatically harder in censored and high-risk environments because information vacuums are created by access restrictions, journalist constraints, and connectivity disruptions. During the current conflict, rights groups and reporting describe a widespread internet blackout in Iran¹⁰ that cut civilians off from safety and situational information, conditions that also make independent verification slower and more dangerous. In the past, in the Gaza Strip, fact-checkers noted¹¹ that limits on foreign journalists increase dependence on fragmented online footage, where AI-generated and miscaptioned content flourishes alongside real documentation. The verification ecosystem is further strained by “false certainty” tools¹², where one major fact-checking investigation showed an AI chatbot on X incorrectly “verified” old war footage as current, reinforcing false narratives instead of correcting them. These dynamics increase the risk of mainstream media amplification, especially when outlets are under pressure to publish quickly and when synthetic images leak into news circulation without clear disclosure.

Platform incentives can accelerate this problem. Engagement-driven distribution rewards emotionally gripping content, and monetization can directly motivate synthetic “war clips” optimized for virality. In early March 2026, X announced¹³ it would suspend creators from its revenue-sharing program for repeatedly posting undisclosed AI-generated armed-conflict videos, an explicit acknowledgment that monetization structures can subsidize deception during wartime. Meanwhile, Meta¹⁴ has moved toward labeling AI-generated or AI-altered media using “industry signals” and user self-disclosure, but its own policy notes these systems are imperfect and depend on consistent provenance markers across the ecosystem.

The real-world harms are immediate, particularly when false strike footage and fabricated damage claims can provoke panic, distort humanitarian decision-making¹⁵, and further aggravate calls for escalation.

⁹ <https://www.oversightboard.com/news/new-decision-addresses-metas-rules-on-non-consensual-deepfake-intimate-images/>

¹⁰ <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2026/mar/05/iran-internet-blackout-human-toll-war-rights-groups>

¹¹ <https://www.dw.com/en/fact-check-viral-drone-video-of-gaza-destruction-is-real/a-72968972>

¹² <https://www.dw.com/en/fact-check-ai-chatbot-grok-wrongly-identifies-old-iraq-footage-as-2025-iran-israel-conflict/a-72950293>

¹³ <https://www.dawn.com/news/1978264/x-suspends-revenue-sharing-for-undisclosed-ai-war-videos>

¹⁴ <https://about.fb.com/news/2024/04/metas-approach-to-labeling-ai-generated-content-and-manipulated-media/>

¹⁵ <https://apnews.com/article/fact-check-iran-war-khamenei-misrepresented-images-787b6a21a4fef4cc32ccca9bc59980f0>

Disinformation, Virality, and Platform Incentives

How platform algorithms, engagement dynamics, and monetization amplify misleading or unverified content during crises.

Beyond state narratives and synthetic media, the architecture of digital platforms themselves plays a critical role in accelerating the spread of disinformation during conflicts. Social media algorithms are designed to prioritize engagement, content that generates high levels of likes, shares, comments, and watch time. During wartime, emotionally charged or visually dramatic posts naturally perform well in these systems, allowing misleading or unverified content to spread far more rapidly than carefully verified information.

The current conflict depicts how these dynamics interact with emerging AI tools. Investigations by BBC Verify¹⁶ found that AI-generated videos and fabricated satellite imagery about the conflict accumulated hundreds of millions of views across social media platforms. Experts note that what once required professional editing and production can now be created in minutes using generative AI tools.

These incentives are further amplified by platform monetization systems. On X (formerly Twitter), for example, the Creator Revenue Sharing program¹⁷ rewards users whose posts generate high engagement. Monetization concerns are not limited to individual creators. Investigations have also found that government and law enforcement social media pages have participated in platform monetization programs, raising questions about how engagement-based financial incentives may shape official communications during crises. Research by What to Fix (WTF) using the Meta Monetization Archive found numerous police and military pages, some verified and clearly labeled as government organizations, enrolled in Facebook's revenue redistribution programs despite Meta's policies prohibiting government agencies from monetizing content.¹⁸ In some cases, these pages belong to security forces with documented histories of human rights abuses, including police units involved in the Philippines' controversial "war on drugs," Israeli police pages posting content related to operations in the West Bank, and Bangladesh's Rapid Action Battalion, a unit sanctioned by the United States for alleged abuses. While there is no direct evidence that these entities monetized harmful or deceptive posts, the findings highlight a broader concern around how engagement-based payout systems risk incentivizing dramatic or sensational content, even from official institutions, potentially shaping how security forces communicate about conflict, public safety, and military operations online.

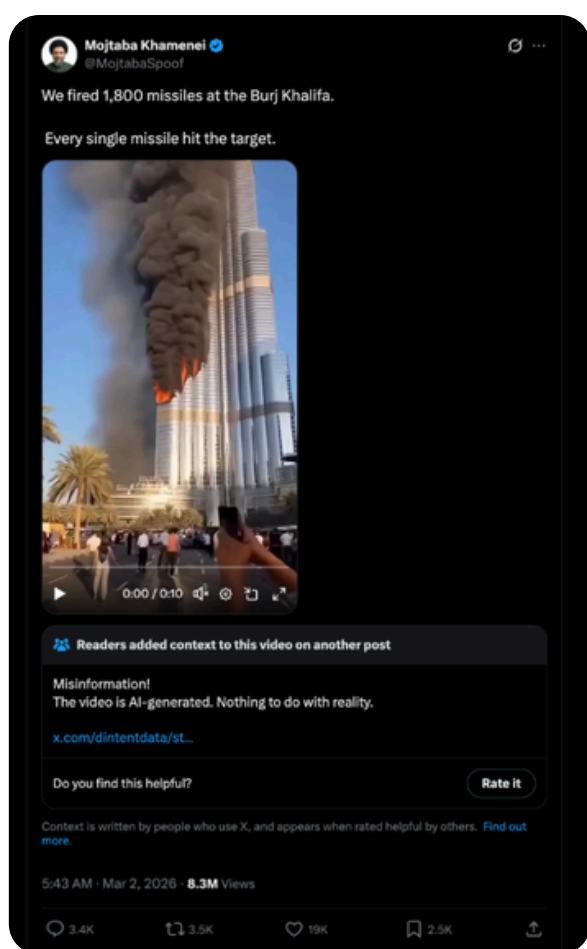
¹⁶ <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ckg8wvz427vo>

¹⁷ <https://help.x.com/en/using-x/creator-revenue-sharing>

¹⁸ <https://www.whattofix.tech/publications/who-makes-money-police-military/>

Similarly, recently, researchers found that many accounts spreading AI-generated war footage were doing so to “game monetization¹⁹,” posting sensational synthetic content optimized for virality. According to estimates from researchers, creators can earn payments once their posts reach millions of impressions, creating financial incentives to prioritize attention-grabbing narratives over accuracy. X itself acknowledged²⁰ the scale of the issue in March 2026, announcing that it would temporarily suspend creators who repeatedly posted undisclosed AI-generated armed conflict videos, a recognition that monetization structures can inadvertently subsidize wartime misinformation.

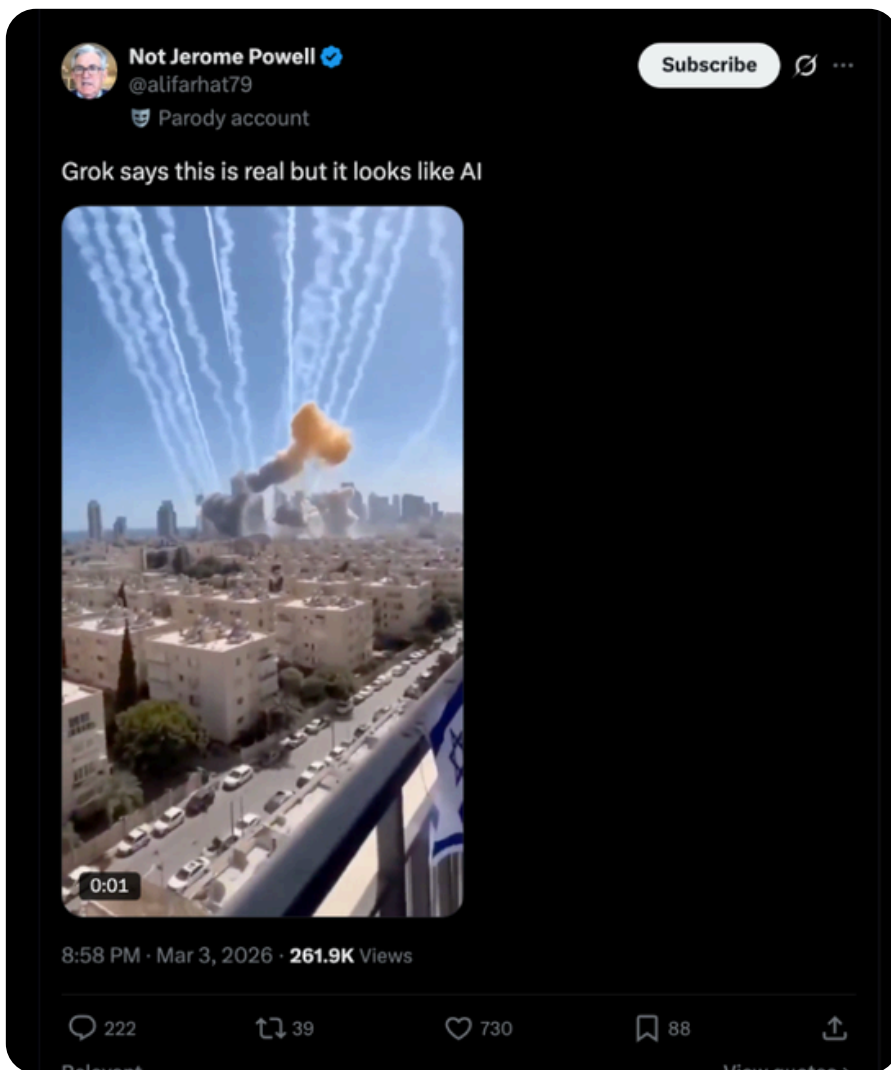
The spread of such content is not limited to obscure accounts. Fact-checkers documented cases where AI-generated footage showing missile strikes on Tel Aviv or fabricated scenes of Dubai’s Burj Khalifa engulfed in flames circulated widely online, accumulating tens of millions of views and causing confusion among residents and observers attempting to understand the rapidly evolving conflict.



<https://web.archive.org/web/20260302230326/https://x.com/MojtabaSpooF/status/2028466140910080369>

¹⁹ <https://www.bbc.com/news/articles/ckg8wvz427vo>

²⁰ <https://techcrunch.com/2026/03/03/x-says-it-will-suspend-creators-from-revenue-sharing-program-for-unlabeled-ai-posts-of-armed-conflict/>



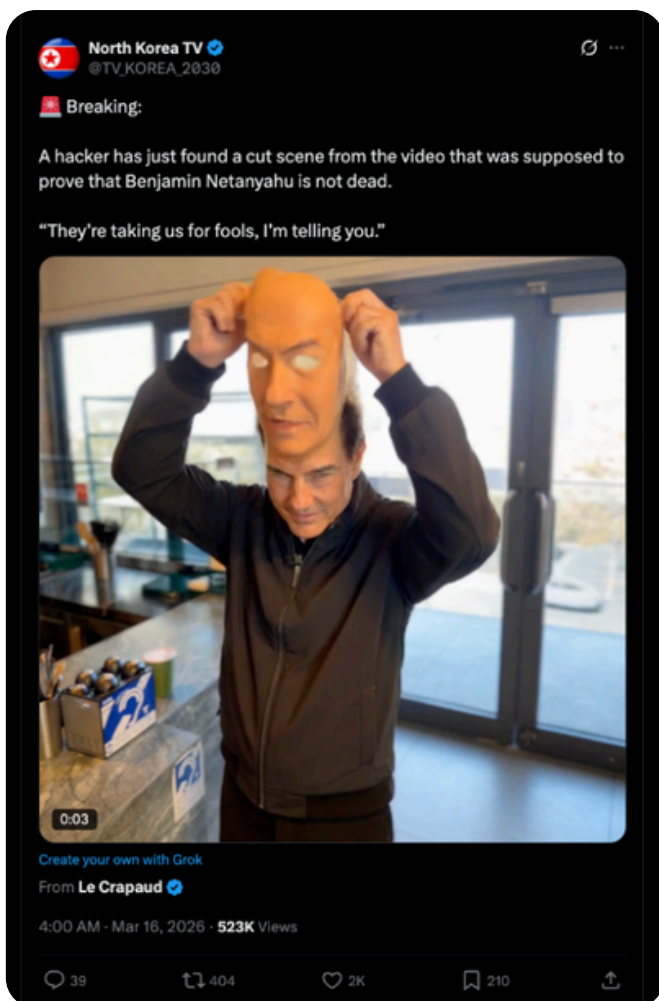
<https://x.com/alifarhat79/status/2028862645739127246?s=20>

At the same time, platform verification systems themselves can unintentionally reinforce misinformation. BBC Verify observed instances where users asked X's AI chatbot Grok to verify whether viral videos were authentic²¹, only for the chatbot to incorrectly confirm that synthetic footage was real. This hasn't been happening just now; it has also happened in the past, when during the Iran-Israel conflict in 2025, AI chatbot Grok²² produced inaccurate and contradictory responses when users sought to fact-check the Israel-Iran conflict. In fast-moving crises where users increasingly rely on automated tools for verification, such errors can amplify false narratives rather than correct them.

²¹ <https://www.msn.com/en-ca/news/canada/fact-check-grok-tells-users-fake-tel-aviv-video-is-real/vi-AA1Xxndy>.

²² <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20250624-grok-shows-flaws-in-fact-checking-israel-iran-war-study>.


Recently, news about the death of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has been making the rounds on social media, after the Iranian media made the claim²³ that he had been killed in a strike. Social media users quickly jumped to conclusions about the theory, sharing their own verdict. On 15th March, Israel's Prime Minister Netanyahu posted a video²⁴ in a coffee shop, sipping coffee and mocking users that he's still alive. However, the internet remains unconvinced, with many social media users asking Grok if the video is real and also saying that the video is allegedly AI. Users have also been posting screenshots of unverified AI tools, claiming that the AI tools have labelled the video as generative AI, which is further adding to the disinformation on platforms.



https://x.com/TV_KOREA_2030/status/2033317415258304878?s=20

²³ <https://www.msn.com/en-in/news/insight/israel-denies-netanyahu-death-rumours/gm-GMF06CE1BA?gemSnapshotKey=GMF06CE1BA-snapshot-3&uxmode=ruby>.

²⁴ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/netanyahu-posts-video-response-iran-rumours-that-he-is-dead-2026-03-15/>

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An app for detecting artificial intelligence showed that the video of Benjamin Netanyahu was 96.9% created with AI and is not real. So the question arises: where exactly did Netanyahu drink this coffee in Tel Aviv?



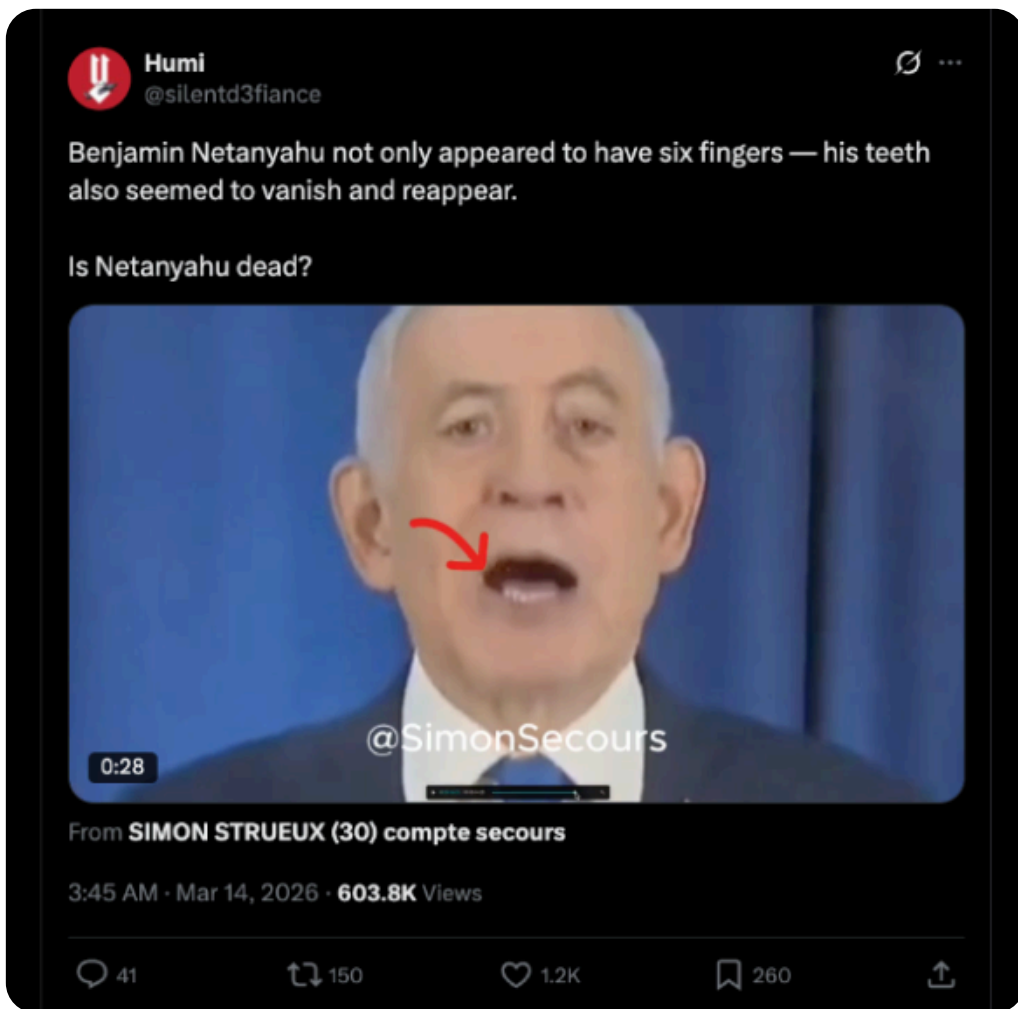
Category	Percentage
ai_generated	0.97
sora2	0.53
none	0.33
cosmos	0.04
ltx	0.03
not_ai_generated	0.03
higgsfield	0.02

12:30 AM · Mar 16, 2026 · **1.1M** Views

661  4.6K  17K  1.3K  

<https://x.com/SprinterPress/status/2033264630563229826?s=20>

Moreover, during this period, another video circulated on social media claiming that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had six fingers on one hand and missing teeth, presenting this as “evidence” that he had died. Netanyahu later responded to the rumours in the coffee shop video shared online, raising his hands toward the camera to show that he has five fingers on each hand, seemingly addressing the viral claims.



<https://x.com/silentd3fiance/status/2032588979439083622?s=20>

These dynamics highlight a deeper structural challenge that engagement-driven platform economies are fundamentally misaligned with the slow and cautious process of verification. As generative AI makes the creation of convincing misinformation easier and cheaper, social media platforms face increasing pressure to redesign incentive structures, improve detection systems, and strengthen provenance mechanisms that can distinguish authentic documentation from synthetic content. Until such safeguards are widely implemented, the combination of virality, monetization, and synthetic media will continue to make digital platforms fertile ground for wartime disinformation.

When Newsrooms Get It Wrong

Pressure on journalists to publish quickly and how misinformation can enter mainstream media reporting.

In fast-moving conflicts, the pressure on journalists and newsrooms to publish updates quickly can create conditions where unverified information slips into mainstream reporting. When social media becomes the primary source of breaking news updates, newsrooms may struggle to independently verify information before publication. The competition to report first, combined with the viral spread of unverified content online, can lead even credible outlets to circulate misleading claims that later require correction or clarification.

An example of this is when on 3rd March 2026, Al Jazeera issued a correction²⁵ on X after initially reporting that Pakistan had partially closed its airspace amid rising regional tensions. The network later clarified that the report was incorrect, stating that Pakistan had confirmed there were no restrictions on its airspace. The clarification followed an official statement from the Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA), which explained that the country's airspace remained fully open for commercial operations and that the referenced aviation notice (NOTAM A0134/26) only indicated the temporary unavailability of certain air traffic service routes during specific hours within the Karachi and Lahore Flight Information Regions. The PAA emphasized that alternative routes and airports remained operational and that commercial flights, arrivals, departures, and overflights were continuing normally, warning that misinterpretations of technical aviation notices and unverified reporting had contributed to confusion about the situation.

²⁵ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2595607/pakistan-airspace-fully-open-paa-clarifies-amid-false-reports-of-partial-closure>



Al Jazeera Breaking News 🚨

@AJENews



CORRECTION: We previously reported that Pakistan had temporarily closed its airspace That is incorrect. Pakistan says 'no restrictions' on airspace

● LIVE updates: aje.news/xgc2gx?update=...

**NEWS
UPDATE**



ALJAZEERA

|| GIF

6:42 PM · Mar 3, 2026 · **263.3K** Views

263,308

241

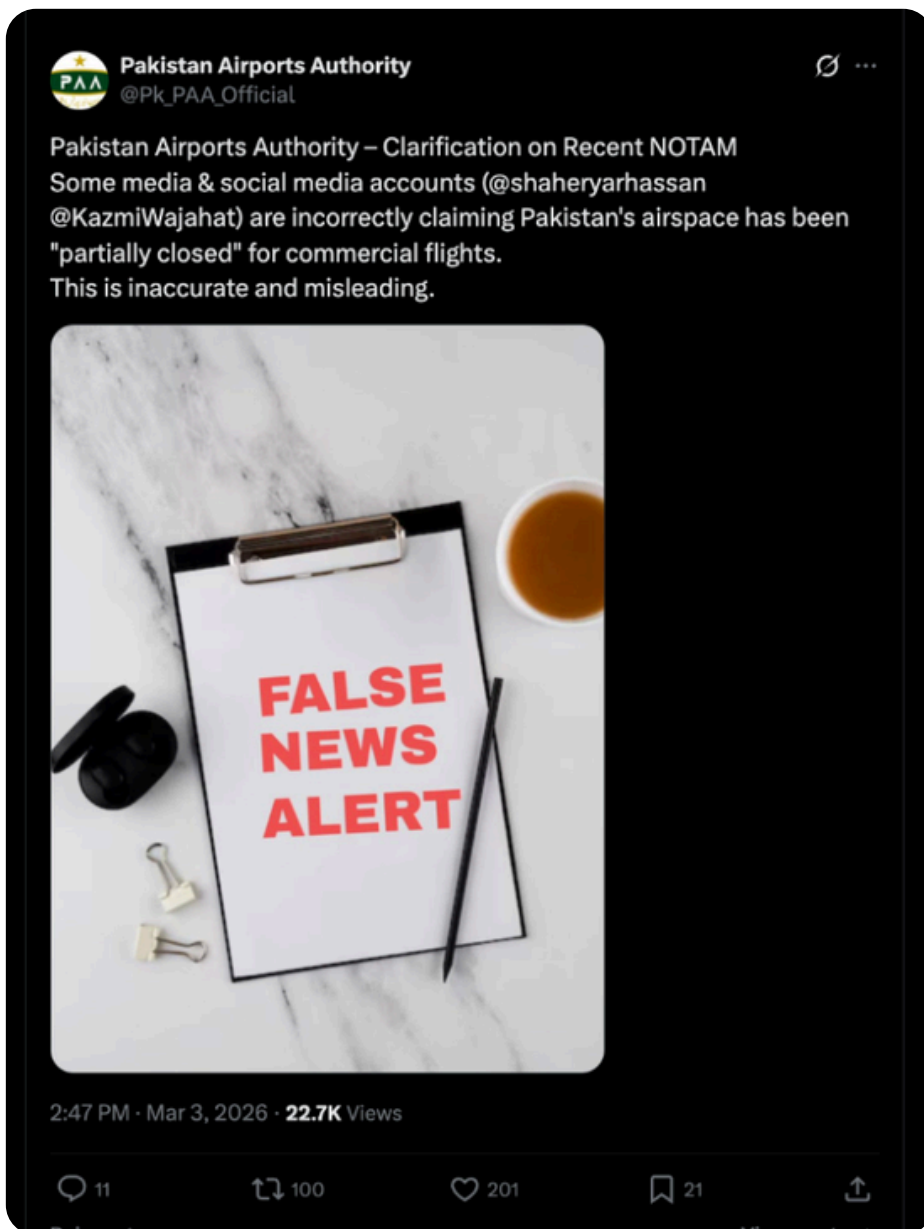
268

910

28



<https://x.com/silentd3fiance/status/2032588979439083622?s=20>



<https://x.com/silentd3fiance/status/2032588979439083622?s=20>

Incidents like these illustrate how misinformation originating online can quickly gain credibility and enter the broader information ecosystem, particularly during periods of geopolitical crisis when audiences, journalists and credible media outlets alike are searching for rapid updates.

Censorship, Information Vacuums, and Verification Challenges

Why conflicts in regions with existing censorship make verification harder and allow fabricated narratives to flourish.

In conflict situations as we're witnessing right now in the middle east, access to accurate and reliable information is often severely constrained due to the chaotic and rapidly evolving nature of events. Journalists and researchers frequently struggle to verify facts amid conflicting reports, deliberate misinformation, and attempts by state and non-state actors to control the narrative. Official sources may be inaccessible, eyewitness accounts may be incomplete or contradictory, and access to affected locations is often restricted. These challenges are further intensified when governments impose communication blackouts, restrict journalists' movement, or block internet services which we've been witnessing in recent times across the region. In such environments, the absence of dependable information makes careful verification and cross-checking even more critical, as inaccuracies in reporting can escalate tensions, spread panic, or distort public understanding of the conflict.

In such information vacuums, fabricated narratives can flourish. Governments and political actors may circulate propaganda to influence domestic and international perceptions of the conflict, while social media users often amplify emotionally charged or sensational claims without verification. Generative AI has further complicated this landscape by enabling the rapid production of highly convincing synthetic images, videos, and audio, adding layers of "noise" to already fragmented information ecosystems. Old footage is also frequently repurposed as evidence of new events.

Another example of wartime misinformation involved a viral image shared by Tehran Times, a state-aligned English-language newspaper in Iran, which posted a "before vs. after" satellite image on X claiming it showed U.S. radar equipment at a military base in Qatar completely destroyed by Iranian strikes. The post quickly circulated across social media and was widely interpreted as visual evidence of successful Iranian attacks.

However, researchers later determined that the image was AI-manipulated and based on a Google Earth satellite photograph from the previous year showing a U.S. base in Bahrain, not Qatar. Analysts identified subtle visual clues revealing the manipulation, including a row of vehicles appearing in identical positions in both the authentic satellite image and the altered version. Despite these discrepancies, the fabricated image amassed millions of views as it spread across platforms in multiple languages, highlighting how AI-generated visuals can easily blur the line between real and fabricated evidence during conflicts.



Tehran Times @TehranTimes79 · Feb 28



#BREAKING

Before vs. after

An American radar in Qatar was completely destroyed today in an Iranian drone strike.



138

994

4.1K

950K



<https://x.com/silentd3fiance/status/2032588979439083622?s=20>

Real-World Consequences of Wartime Disinformation

Impact on civilian safety, international perception, and escalation of conflict.

Wartime disinformation is not merely a digital phenomenon it can have immediate and serious real-world consequences for civilians, policymakers, and the trajectory of conflicts themselves. False or misleading claims about military strikes, casualties, or troop movements can trigger panic among populations already living in fear and uncertainty. The recent conflicts fabricated videos circulating online falsely claimed to show missile strikes hitting major cities such as Doha, Tel Aviv or Dubai, has been causing widespread confusion and anxiety among residents and observers have been trying to assess the situation in real time.

In a crucial time like this disinformation can also shape international perception and diplomatic responses to conflicts. Misleading narratives about military success, civilian casualties, or alleged war crimes can influence global public opinion, potentially affecting humanitarian aid decisions, sanctions, or diplomatic pressure. With conflicting claims surrounding the strike on a school in Minab, Iran, led to competing narratives about responsibility for civilian casualties, with different governments and actors blaming opposing sides before investigations could establish facts. These narratives are only deepening the mistrust between parties, fuel nationalist sentiment, and complicate efforts toward de-escalation. In the digital age, where governments, media outlets, and ordinary users all participate in the information ecosystem, wartime disinformation can therefore become a powerful force capable of shaping not only public perception but also the course of geopolitical conflicts themselves.

The Urgent Need for Platform and Media Responsibility

Role of tech companies, newsrooms, and fact-checking institutions in mitigating harm.

1. Treat synthetic conflict media as high-risk content

Platforms should classify AI-generated or manipulated media depicting military strikes, troop movements, or civilian casualties as high-risk, high-velocity content. Such posts should trigger rapid human review, reduced algorithmic amplification, and prominent disclosures when manipulation is identified.²⁶ Durable labeling and detection systems should be paired with authentication-before-amplification safeguards, slowing the spread of content claiming to show real-time attacks until verification checks are completed.

²⁶ https://www.gen-ai.witness.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/08/WITNESS-Report_Audiovisual_Generative_AI_and_Conflict-1.pdf

2. Build stronger media provenance and verification infrastructure

Technology companies and media platforms should adopt content provenance standards, such as the C2PA framework²⁷, that allow journalists and users to trace the origin and editing history of images and videos. These systems should go beyond basic labeling and enable cross-platform verification of authentic media while flagging manipulated or synthetic visuals circulating during conflicts.

3. Establish rapid escalation channels for trusted fact-checkers

Platforms should create dedicated crisis escalation channels for accredited fact-checking organizations, civil society groups, and independent investigators.²⁸ These channels should allow verified partners to flag synthetic media or coordinated disinformation campaigns quickly, with clear service-level response timelines. Cross-platform cooperation, similar to the Tech Coalition's Lantern model²⁹ for signal sharing, should also be explored to prevent harmful content from migrating between platforms.

4. Remove financial incentives for synthetic war misinformation

Monetization systems should not reward deceptive or undisclosed AI-generated conflict media. Platforms should demonetize accounts that repeatedly post synthetic war content without disclosure, expand penalties for manipulation designed to generate engagement, and publish transparency data on enforcement actions, including report volumes, response times, and error rates.³⁰

5. Strengthen newsroom verification protocols

Newsrooms should adopt conflict verification standards that prioritize geolocation checks, reverse-image searches, source triangulation, and transparent labeling of unverified material before publication. AI chatbots and automated tools should not be treated as authoritative verification sources during active conflicts, particularly when synthetic media is circulating at scale.³¹

6. Invest in verification capacity in the Global South

International donors, platforms, and media organizations should invest in local fact-checking networks, investigative training, and digital verification tools, particularly in regions where conflicts frequently unfold and access to reliable information is limited. Supporting local-language verification initiatives and low-bandwidth reporting systems can help counter misinformation in environments affected by censorship, shutdowns, and restricted journalist access.³²

²⁷ <https://c2pa.org/>

²⁸ <https://www.gen-ai.witness.org/deepfakes-rapid-response-force/>

²⁹ <https://technologycoalition.org/news/announcing-lantern/>

³⁰ https://www.oecd.org/en/publications/2024/03/facts-not-fakes-tackling-disinformation-strengthening-information-integrity_ff96d19f.html

³¹ <https://www.bellingcat.com/resources/2024/09/24/bellingcat-online-investigations-toolkit/>

³² <https://www.oecd.org/en/events/public-consultations/2024/11/oecd-draft-recommendation-on-information-integrity.html>

Conclusion: Navigating War in the Age of Synthetic Reality

The evolving nature of modern warfare grows to show that conflicts are no longer fought solely on physical battlefields but also across digital information ecosystems. As the instances throughout demonstrate, from recycled war footage during regional tensions to AI-generated satellite imagery and fabricated strike videos, misinformation now spreads at unprecedented speed and scale. Generative AI tools have dramatically increased the accessibility to produce convincing but misleading visuals, while platform algorithms and monetization structures amplify sensational content regardless of its accuracy. In an environment like this, state actors, opportunistic creators, and ordinary users alike become participants in an information war where narratives compete as fiercely as military forces.

The consequences of this information disorder extends far beyond online spaces. False claims can provoke panic among civilians, distort international perception of conflicts, and complicate diplomatic efforts towards de-escalation. At the same time, censorship, connectivity disruptions, and restrictions on journalists create information vacuums that make independent verification increasingly difficult. As synthetic media becomes more sophisticated and accessible, the challenge of distinguishing authentic sources from manipulated evidence will only grow more complex.

Addressing this challenge requires a coordinated response across multiple actors in the information ecosystem. Platforms must redesign and reevaluate their incentive structures that currently reward virality over accuracy and invest in stronger provenance, labeling, and detection mechanisms for synthetic media. Newsrooms must strengthen verification protocols and resist the pressure to prioritize speed over accuracy in crisis reporting. At the same time, governments and civil society organizations must support independent fact-checking networks, particularly in regions where censorship and shutdowns limit access to reliable information.

In the end, navigating conflict in the age of synthetic media demands a renewed commitment to transparency, verification, and accountability by all actors alike. Without meaningful reforms in how digital platforms govern content and how information is verified during crises, the line between reality and fabrication will continue to blur, making disinformation an increasingly powerful weapon in modern warfare.



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