
WHEN IS POWER JUSTIFIED? A STUDY ANALYSING AUTHORITY AND ARBITRARY RULE

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ABSTRACT

The ban on Pakistani social media accounts in India in 2025, enacted under the provisions of the Information Technology Act, 2000,¹² presents the acceptable standards between prioritising national security while upholding constitutional values. While the government's use of power under Section 69A³ is highlighted as legally justified in protecting sovereignty and public order, the nature of the ban raises controversies about proportionality, transparency, and fundamental rights under Article 19.⁴

The case study explored in the paper exemplifies the issues of maintaining digital content in an evolving geopolitical environment stirred by conflict and heightened sensitivities. The ban therefore, resonates with the state's response to security threats and harsh digital propaganda. But, it remains necessary to use power in a legitimate manner, wherein democratic principles are reinforced along with maintaining constitutional morality.

The research paper suggests simple yet effective solutions to advance with the legal framework of the IT Act. These workable solutions include the need for digital literacy, understanding misinformation at ground levels and providing transparent procedures to conduct targeted blocking of data online. Therefore, while evaluating the situation of the ban of Pakistani social media accounts, it is essential to consider the long-term transformation of the digital landscape in India.

Keywords: *Legitimacy, Power, Authority, National Security, Technology, Ban*

¹ Harvard referencing style. 2015, 20th edition, The Legal Bluebook

² The Information Technology Act, 2000 (India Code): <https://www.indiacode.nic.in/handle/123456789/1999> [online] [Accessed on 27th August, 2025; 8:09AM IST]

³ Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000 (India Code): https://www.indiacode.nic.in/show-data?actid=AC_CEN_45_76_00001_200021_1517807324077&orderno=89 [online] [Accessed on 27th August, 2025; 8:47AM IST]

⁴ Constitution Article; Article 19 in the Constitution of India (Indian Kanoon): <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/1218090/> [online] [Accessed on 27th August, 2025; 10:11AM IST]

Research Question: “To what extent does *The Information Technology Act, 2000* reflect the use of legitimate power in India in the case of banning Pakistani Social Media Accounts in 2025?”

Introduction:

The Information Technology Act, 2000 stands as a landmark legislation in India that provides the legal framework for electronic governance and cybercrime regulation in the country, which came into effect on 17th October, 2000.^{5 6} This particular act was mainly enacted with the essential aim of promoting e-commerce, facilitating electronic filing of documents, and addressing the rising concerns over cyber threats.⁷ By codifying offenses and prescribing penalties, the Act establishes a legal boundary within which digital interactions must operate, reflecting the legitimate use of power to maintain both public order and protect societal interests in the online realm.⁸

Importantly, a pivotal provision underscoring the government's legitimate authority under the Act is Section 69A⁹, which permits the blocking of public access to information on the internet in the interest of sovereignty, integrity, defence, security of the state, public order, or for preventing incitement to an offense.¹⁰

This paper will analyse the implication of one such compelling case study; which is the ban on Pakistani social media accounts in India on 3rd July, 2025, after the terror attack in Jammu & Kashmir's Pahalgam. Therefore, the researcher aims to highlight and assess the legitimate exercise of power under the IT Act, 2000.¹¹ Factually, this ban was a direct prompt by the heightened Indo-Pak tensions and calls from civil society for a digital and cultural disconnect. Hence, leading to the restrictions on access to specific Pakistani profiles on platforms including

⁶ IT Act, 2000: Objectives, Features, Amendments, Sections, Offences and Penalties; Written by Mayashree Acharya; Updated on 7th August, 2025: <https://cleartax.in/s/it-act-2000> [online] [Accessed on 8th August, 2025; 8:53PM IST]

⁷ What is Information Technology Act, 2000 (IT Act)?; Article on Geeks for geeks (Published on 15th July, 2025): <https://www.geeksforgeeks.org/ethical-hacking/information-technology-act-2000-india/> [online] [Accessed on 9th August, 2025; 10:43AM IST]

⁸ Information Technology Act, 2000; Written by Monesh Mehndiratta & Published by Sneha Mahawar (on 24th August, 2022): <https://blog.ipleaders.in/information-technology-act-2000/> [online] [Accessed on 8th August, 2025; 9:42PM IST]

⁹ India partially lifts ban on Pakistani YouTube channels and artist accounts; Article by Storyboard18 (3rd July, 2025): <https://www.storyboard18.com/digital/india-partially-lifts-ban-on-pakistani-youtube-channels-and-artist-accounts-72776.htm> [online] [Accessed on 9th August, 2025; 9:07AM IST]

¹⁰ Union of India- Section; Section 69A in The Information Technology Act, 2000 (India Kanoon): <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/10190353/> [online] [Accessed on 8th August; 10:21PM IST]

¹¹ India Code, *supra* note 2, at page 2

Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube. These restrictions were notified as a “legal request to restrict content”,¹² leveraging the IT Act’s provisions for state-driven intervention when content poses risks to public order and security. Technological changes have necessitated legal mechanisms that safeguard the integrity of information technology infrastructure while protecting citizens from misuse of digital platforms.

But, another aspect of the ban is the violation of the basic fundamental right under the India Constitution. There is a clear violation of Article 19, which lays down the breach of freedom of speech and expression,¹³ wherein the individual’s ability to communicate and access information is restricted.¹⁴ This research paper’s objective is to compare the violation of the fundamental right against the need to protect nation’s sovereignty, integrity and security.

This case study exemplifies the critical role of the Information Technology Act in enabling state authorities to assert control over digital spaces to uphold law and order while navigating the complexities of free expression and international relations. Hence, underscoring how the Act enables the Indian government not only to protect citizens’ personal data but also to control transnational digital flows and information narratives in line with its sovereign interests.

The IT Act, 2000 and the following amendments of the act embodies the intersection of citizen empowerment, digital sovereignty, and the exercise of legitimate state authority. Its operationalization, in cases like the ban of Pakistani social media accounts, depicts how law can be deployed as a tool of personal privacy protection and national interest management.

The aims of the research paper include:

1. Examining the legitimacy of power under the IT Act, 2000 (focusing on Section 69A)- **the Indian Government’s use of** lawful authority to regulate data usage and impose restrictions for public welfare, security, and order.
2. **Understanding the Balance Between Privacy Rights and State Authority-** Analysing provisions of the Act which safeguard individual data rights while

¹² Pak PM Shehbaz Sharif, Fawad Khan, Atif Aslam, Dawn News and others: Full list of Pakistani accounts blocked in India; Published by Riya R Alex (on 4th May, 2025): <https://www.livemint.com/news/pm-shehbaz-sharif-fawad-khan-shahid-afri-di-atif-aslam-more-full-list-of-pakistani-celebs-blocked-on-instagram-11746243671774.html> [online] [Accessed on 8th August, 2025; 10:01PM IST]

¹³ Indian Kanoon, *supra* note 4, at page 1

¹⁴ Article titled ‘Social Media Accounts of Pakistani stars blocked again’; Published on 4th July, 2025, Written by ‘The Hindu Bureau’: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/pakistani-celebrities-social-media-accounts-geo-blocked-again-in-india/article69768724.ece> [online] [Accessed on 28th August, 2025; 10:27AM IST]

simultaneously empowering the state to override certain freedoms under specific exemptions (e.g., national security, public order)

3. Assessing the 2025 ban on Pakistani celebrities' online profiles- an essential case study to evaluate the application of legitimate power in a both geopolitical and national security scenario (a practical application)

Section I: Legal & Theoretical Foundation

1.1. Concept of Legitimate Power in Governance and Law Enforcement:

(a) Establishment of Legitimacy & Power:

According to Merriam Webster Dictionary, “*power*” is defined as the possession of control or influence over others (specifically a sovereign state). As a result, “*legitimate power*” is described as authority, it encompasses the power one derives from their position within an organization’s hierarchy (e.g. in this particular case the state as a whole/at large).¹⁵ Through the paper, the researcher aims to highlight the use of power by the higher authority of the Indian government, and assess the legitimacy of that power exercised.

The concept of legitimate power in governance and law enforcement must be understood as a legal and constitutional foundation for authority, governed by democratic principles and accountability. Law enforcement agencies includes specialised cybercrime units exercising power under statutes such as the Information Technology Act (IT), 2000,¹⁶ which empowers the government to regulate digital communication to protect sovereignty, public order, and security of the nation. The legal empowerment must align with constitutional rights, especially the fundamental right to freedom of speech, balanced by reasonable restrictions necessary for public order and security, in order to be enforceable and valid.¹⁷

(b) Examining Legality Within The Context of Legitimacy:

The concepts of legality and legitimacy is crucial to evaluating the exercise of state

¹⁵ What is Legitimate Power? ; Blog by ‘The Center for Leadership Studies’: <https://situational.com/blog/what-is-legitimate-power/> [online] [Accessed on 10th August, 2025; 8:23AM IST]

¹⁶ India Code, *supra* note 2, at page 2

¹⁷ Social Media Regulation In India; Published on 26th April 2024: <https://www.drishtiias.com/daily-updates/daily-news-analysis/social-media-regulation-in-india> [online] [Accessed on 10th August, 2025; 8:41AM IST]

authority in digital space. To highlight, '**legality**' refers to actions that are sanctioned by law, based on statutory provisions and constitutional backing (by a sovereign, therefore binding). Whereas, '**legitimacy**' is further advanced than mere rules; it concerns whether state action is perceived as justifiable, acceptable, and morally valid within a democratic framework. Specifically, legality derives from codified law, while legitimacy derives from broader notions of consent, fairness, and adherence to constitutional principles.

(c) Identifying Power of the Indian Government under the IT Act, 2000:

The power has now expanded, wherein the central provision is **Section 69A of the IT Act, 2000**, which empowers the Central Government to direct intermediaries to block or restrict public access to any information on computer resources. This is if deemed expedient in the interests of India's sovereignty and integrity, defence, security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, or for preventing incitement to the commission of any cognizable offence.¹⁸

A landmark judgement by the Supreme Court in **Shreya Singhal v. Union of India (2015)** upheld the constitutional validity of Section 69A,¹⁹ noting that while free speech under Article 19(1)(a) is protected, reasonable restrictions under Article 19(2) justify content regulation in exceptional circumstances.²⁰ This judgment thus legitimized state authority to impose targeted restrictions on social media platforms, provided due process safeguards such as recorded reasons and review mechanisms are observed.

Additionally, the **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021**, framed under the IT Act,²¹ impose significant obligations on intermediaries.²² They mandate grievance redressal mechanisms, compliance officers, and timely removal of unlawful content when directed by government authorities. These rules extend state oversight over domestic and foreign platforms

¹⁸ Drishti IAS; Published on 9th July 2022: <https://www.drishtiiias.com/daily-news-analysis/information-technology-act-s-section-69a> [online] [Accessed on 23rd August, 2025; 12:54AM IST]

¹⁹ Supreme Court, *Shreya Singhal vs. U.O.I* on 24th March, 2025 (Indian Kanoon): <https://indiankanoon.org/doc/110813550/> [online] [Accessed on 23rd August, 2025; 1:05AM IST]

²⁰ Indian Kanoon, *supra* note 4, at page 1

²¹ The Information Technology Rules, 2021 (Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology- MeitY): <https://www.meity.gov.in/static/uploads/2024/02/Information-Technology-Intermediary-Guidelines-and-Digital-Media-Ethics-Code-Rules-2021-updated-06.04.2023-.pdf> [online] [Accessed on 26th August, 2025; 6:09PM IST]

²² The Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 (PRS India); Published on 25th February, 2021: <https://prsindia.org/billtrack/the-information-technology-intermediary-guidelines-and-digital-media-ethics-code-rules-2021> [online] [Accessed on 23rd August, 2025; 1:15AM IST]

operating in India, thereby institutionalizing a system of accountability in line with the state's sovereign interests. This power is legitimate authority, and hence is justified in case of protection of the state.

According to statistics, India had approximately 491 million active social media user identities in early 2025²³, demonstrating the vast reach and impact of digital platforms. The government's regulation, including the 2025 ban on Pakistani social media accounts, thus represents an effort to assert sovereign control over digital content affecting national security, while also navigating the complex interplay of rights, law, and governance in an expansive digital society. Hence, the paper aims to explore and analyse the extent to which this exercise of power is legitimate, while aligning the fundamental rights in the country.

Section II: Analysing Case Study of 2025- Ban of Pakistani Social Media Accounts by the Indian Government

2.1. Backdrop & Exercise of Power:

(a) What led to the ban & how was the power exercised?

To begin with, this ban of Pakistani social media accounts took place in the early 2025, on Thursday on 3rd July, 2025.²⁴ As the political unrest in the Pahalgam incident in Kashmir, there was turmoil between India and Pakistan which created a war-like situation (blackouts, use of drones, etc.); wherein cross-border terrorist groups allegedly orchestrated an attack on civilians resulting in significant casualties.

Further, due to the constant conflicts between the neighbouring countries, a series of misinformation and rumours were spread online. An example of the same was conveyed in the news of Firstpost, wherein pro-Pakistani channels claimed to “show a crashed flight jet” (called it the Indian Rafale). However, it's an old image of a 2021 jet²⁵. Therefore, clearly a result of fake spread of information to lead to a surge in online propaganda campaign, which could destabilizes public order in Kashmir and other sensitive regions.

²³ Digital 2025: India; Statistics by Simon Kemp; Published on 25th February, 2025: <https://datareportal.com/reports/digital-2025-india> [online] [Accessed on 10th August, 2025; 8:57AM IST]

²⁴ The Hindu Bureau, *supra* note 14, at page 3

²⁵ Pakistan Peddles Fake News After Operation Sindoor | Vantage with Palki Sharma | N18 (Firstpost): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q7TZULxjRug> (Premiered on 7th May, 2025) [online] [Accessed on 25th August, 2025; 7:55PM IST]

Responding to these developments, the Government of India invoked its powers under Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, which empowers the executive to block online content in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India, national security, and friendly relations with foreign states. By directing intermediaries and platforms to ban Pakistani-linked social media accounts, the state sought to neutralize digital threats that extended beyond physical borders.

(b) What the use of power justified?

After the terrorist attack at Pahalgam, the political and economic tensions between India and Pakistan escalated. This acceleration in unrest, triggered to the ‘Operation Sindoor’ which is the strategic campaign concerning the military retaliation and aggressive moves to control the digital narratives associated with Pakistan.

YouTube channels like Dawn News Pakistan, Samaa TV, Irshad Bhatti, Ary News, Bol News, Geo News, Samaa Sports, GNN HD official, were banned by the Government under the April 27 order. The official justification shown online read, “This content is currently unavailable in this country because of an order from the government related to national security or public order.”²⁶

The rationale behind the ban was quite planned and calculated. Firstly, the presence of cross-border hostility which extended beyond just borders, and into the cyberspace. During this sensitive time, Pakistani-linked accounts were accused of spreading hostile portrayals, misinformation, and anti-national propaganda. Therefore, this ban is a depiction of the government’s pre-emptive measure towards ensuring to avoid disruptions in public order. The concern or threat to the India government is valid, due to the risk which the influence of false narratives bring like public apprehension and chaos. The India Government perceived it as a threat to national unity and an ideological support for extremism at a period of heightened sensitivity. Hence, the ban was one step towards regulating national unity and harmony.

Furthermore, the public sentiment of Indians strongly asserted, with organizations like the

²⁶ Article titled “After restoration due to ‘technical error’, govt blocks Pak social media accounts”; Updated on 3rd July, 2025; Written by Sejal Sharma (Hindustan Times): <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/after-restoration-due-to-technical-error-govt-blocks-pak-social-media-channels-101751520347607.html> [online] [Accessed on 23rd August, 2025; 4:50PM IST]

All Indian Cine Workers Association (AICWA) vocally demanding an immediate and permanent “*digital blackout*” of Pakistani accounts and future collaborations.²⁷ The association illustrated the presence of these accounts as an insult to the sacrifice of families, referring to it as “an emotional assault” affected by terrorism. Their assertions urged for a complete cultural disconnect as a mark of respect to armed forces and martyrs. The widespread demand for a “digital disconnect” reflected a collective public expectation for insulating India’s information space from perceived adversarial influence.²⁸

Additionally, the government viewed these accounts as potential vehicles for systematic influence operations that could manipulate public opinions and incite civil unrest. Prominently, the fear was that sovereign control extends into cyberspace, and digital infiltration through misleading external narratives can significantly impact domestic security and cohesion. Influencers and media outlets with large Indian followings were particularly targeted for their perceived ability to provoke street-level disorder, escalate tensions, and trigger real-world conflict which could be disastrous. Therefore, the ban necessitated limitations to consume data which aligned with national interests.

The legal aspect conveys that the Indian government invoked Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000, which authorizes blocking access to online content in the interests of sovereignty, security, and public order. The bans were implemented via advisory orders and the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, compelling intermediaries and platforms to comply with government directives and restrict Pakistani-origin content. However, the legitimacy of this exercise has been evaluated in light of constitutional rights and procedural standards established in the Supreme Court’s landmark *K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India* judgment.²⁹ This judgment requires that any restriction of a fundamental right, including digital access and privacy, meet a three-tier test: legality, legitimate aim, and

²⁷ Article titled ‘Government Reimposes Ban on Pakistani Celebrities’ Social Media After Brief Glitch’; Published on 3rd July, 2025; Written by Harishanker R P (tfipost): <https://tfipost.com/2025/07/digital-ban-returns-government-reimposes-ban-on-pakistani-celebrities-social-media-after-brief-glitch/> [online] [Accessed on 28th August, 2025; 7:00PM IST]

²⁸ Article titled ‘AICWA urges PM Modi to enforce ban on Pakistani artists’ digital presence in India’; Published on 2nd July, 2025 (The Economic Times): <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/india/aicwa-urges-pm-modi-to-enforce-ban-on-pakistani-artists-digital-presence-in-india/articleshow/122208075.cms?from=mdr> [online] [Accessed on 29th August, 2025; 7:07PM IST]

²⁹ ‘The Journey of India’s Data Protection Jurisprudence’- Khaitan Legal Associates; Authored by *Shruti Dvivedi Sodhi (Partner), Bansari Samant (Consultant), Tushar Sinha (Associate)*: <https://khaitanlegal.com/the-journey-of-indias-data-protection-jurisprudence/> [online] [Accessed on 8th August, 2025; 8:59PM IST]

proportionality. While the government's actions satisfied the legality requirement under the IT Act and had a compelling target so as to protect integrity and security of the nation, critics question the proportionality. This pivotal ruling catalysed that fundamental rights, including privacy and expression, are subject to reasonable restrictions because they are not absolute in nature but must not be arbitrarily curtailed; any limitations need to be narrowly tailored and open to judicial scrutiny.

All in all, the Indian government's actions reflected both instant impulses (responding to public outrage and a terror event) and strategic statecraft (aimed at managing influence during conflict). Operation Sindoor sought to prevent the spread of potentially influential content and ensured internal stability. Hence, suggesting that due to the enduring tension between state security imperatives, individual rights under Indian law is reasonable to restrictions because legitimacy is a broader term to ensure responsibility and uphold integrity of the state.

Importantly, the Pahalgam incident is a testament, wherein there is legitimate use of power by the Indian Government to eliminate potential commotion, aggression and tension between citizens of India which would have otherwise led to a much major controversy in middle of war and a politically-charged situation.

Beyond the Ban

Furthermore, the researcher would like to further analyse the government's decision to ban Pakistani social media accounts. Personally, this analytical perspective unfolds deep complexities and far-reaching consequences beyond the immediate and temporary aims of security and sovereignty. Earlier analysis highlighted national security imperatives, public sentiment, and legal justifications, but it is essential to ask the long-term implications of India's digital society and for cross-border relationships.

Even today, a significant period after the tragic incident at Pahalgam, the ban still continues. As stated in an article by 'The Indian Express', the ban was implemented twice, once again last month in July. This is clearly expressed as the accounts were made "inaccessible in India again on Thursday, days after they were restored".³⁰ For that reason,

³⁰ Article titled 'Social Media Accounts of Pakistani cricketers, actors blocked again'; Written by Express News Service, Published on 4th July, 2025: <https://indianexpress.com/article/delhi/social-media-accounts-of-pakistani-cricketers-actors-blocked-again-10105710/> [online] [Accessed on 25th August, 2025; 5:01PM IST]

providing a thought of the long-term intention of the restrictions, because Pakistan still continues to be India's "enemy state", and this persistent rivalry has only seen to grow. The planned actions of the Government impart the wider outlook to shape and safeguard the national opinions and interests of the masses. From a wide lens, long-term perspectives do support to cater to the betterment for the future, by fostering towards togetherness and patriotism as opposed to anti-national sentiments.

Through this introspective ban, the Indian Government invokes the Section 69A, under the IT Act, 2000 to legally and constitutionally justify the block of Pakistani social media accounts. These blocks included restrictions on entertainment and celebrity accounts including 'Instagram accounts of actors like Mawra Hocane, Saba Qamar, Ahad Raza Mir, Fawad Khan, Mahira Khan, Yumna Zaidi and Danish Taimoor'. Plus, there were bans on the 'YouTube channels of cricketers including Shahid Afridi and Shoaib Akhtar'.³¹ Due to the severity of the circumstance, several Pakistani films were also banned, including Fawad Khan's upcoming film, 'Aabeer Gulaal'.³² This film was denied to release in India due to the tensions presence between the two nations. Therefore, the Indian digital world sought insulation from these manipulative campaigns, which imparted immoral, anti-state, or threatening content towards national cohesion.³³

According to an article from NDTV, the government directed all Over-the-Top(OTT) platforms, media streaming services and digital intermediaries to discontinue web series, songs, films, podcasts and other media content from originating from Pakistan.³⁴ The advisory, dated May 8, 2025, issued under Part II of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021, reminded publishers and intermediaries of their obligation to ensure that content hosted or streamed

³¹ Article titled 'Ban on several Pak YouTube channels, social media accounts of celebrities lifted'; Written by Vivek Kumar, (India Today): <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/ban-on-several-pak-news-websites-and-social-media-accounts-of-celebrities-imposed-during-op-sindoor-reversed-2749644-2025-07-02> [online] [Accessed on 23rd August, 2025; 4:56PM IST]

³² India Cracks Down On Pakistani Artists: Instagram Handles Blocked, Films Banned | India Today: https://youtu.be/H4eU5g_ejhA?feature=shared (Premiered on 1st May, 2025) [online] [Accessed on 25th August, 2025; 7:23PM IST]

³³ Article titled 'Fawad Khan and Vaani Kapoor's controversial Abir Gulaal set for global release on August 29...but India won't see it'; Written by HT Entertainment Desk; Published on 11th August, 2025 (Hindustan Times): <https://www.hindustantimes.com/entertainment/bollywood/fawad-khan-and-vaani-kapoor-s-controversial-abir-gulaal-set-for-global-release-on-august-29-but-india-won-t-see-it-101754898043136.html> [online] [Accessed on 23rd August, 2025; 9:06PM IST]

does not threaten India's sovereignty, integrity national security, or public order.”³⁵ Hence, further strengthening and justifying the legitimacy of power over the Indian digital forum throughout this sensitive war-like situation and fragile relations with Pakistan.

Overall, the ongoing ban focused at controlling and regulating affected platforms and intermediaries to ensure that India navigates this scrutiny and control effectively. The sustained restrictions served as a case study in demonstrating how India's emphasis on digital sovereignty intertwined with changes in cultural engagement and information access, helping to shape long-term public opinion.

Summary

The research paper analysed the exercise of legitimate power, under the provisions of the Information Technology Act, 2000 which was in context to the Indian government's decision to ban Pakistani social media accounts in 2025. Primarily, Section 69A of the Act created the central legal basis, therefore empowering the state to restrict access to online content in the interests of sovereignty, integrity, and public order. The paper distinguishes between legality, which follows from a statutory authority, and legitimacy, which encompasses mass acceptance, unbiased approach and linked to constitutional morality. Importantly, judicial precedents, most notably '*Shreya Singhal v. Union of India*', were considered for evaluation.

To add on, there was an insight provided on the 2021 Intermediary Guidelines which further extended state oversight and accountability of platforms. The 2025 case study of the ban of Pakistani social media accounts exemplifies how the Pahalgam terror attack in India, the misinformation campaigns, and the public calls for a digital and cultural conflict shaped the government's response. The Indian Government's decisions to target Pakistani-linked news avenues, influencers, and celebrities, neutralised hostile propaganda and prevented political and economic unrest. Although the state's action satisfied legality and pursued a legitimate aim under constitutional tests, questions of proportionality raised. Thus, the paper showcases the lawful authority of the IT Act to protect national interests, while ensuring that its exercise must be consistently balanced between fundamental rights

³⁵ Article titled 'Stop Airing All Pakistani Shows, Films, OTT Series, Songs in India': Government After Operation Sindoor, Written by NDTV Movies News Desk, Published on 8th May, 2025 (NDTV); <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/social-media-accounts-of-many-pak-actors-cricketers-banned-again-8816638> [online] [Accessed on 25th August, 2025; 4:47PM IST]

and democratic accountability in India's changing digital surroundings, from a long-term perspective.

Conclusion

The social media bans on Pakistani accounts is a 2025 case study, which revolved around the ban on Pakistani social media accounts in India, enacted under the provisions of the Information Technology Act, 2000³⁶, elucidates the balance between maintaining national security while upholding constitutional freedoms and rights. Although, the government's use of power under Section 69A is legally justified in protecting sovereignty and public order in India for national security, the broad nature of this action raises doubts about aspects like proportionality, transparency, and fundamental rights as articulated in the Supreme Court's *Puttuswamy* judgement.

India is a country which needs to cater to the dynamic needs of the digital arena, wherein there must be guidelines to conduct evidence-based blocking to restrict only those manipulative accounts. This target-based blocking will ensure transparency in governance along with traceable solutions, further setting fact-based counter-narratives. Additionally, digital literacy must be strengthened to address the issue with counter-narratives at an individual level. Therefore, the Indian Government must issue plans to raise investments in the public awareness initiatives, and fast-checking mechanisms to reduce the circulation of hostile and misleading content online. Hence, objectively promoting resilience alongside the regulation of free speech and expression.

To encapsulate, India must create space for digital diplomacy and worthwhile engagement even during political tensions, so as to maintain a robust information ecosystem which is open to reconciliation. Protection and regulations measures are crucial, but simultaneously the values of dialogue, diversity, and democratic debate must not be compromised.

Lastly, this war between the two nations is not just for territory or power but for truth. And in this war of disinformation and malignant intents, India stands tall by taking such effective measures like the ban of the Pakistani social media accounts. Hence, resulting in

³⁶ Through the amendment of the Information Technology Act, 2008, the Section 69A was introduced (as per the Indian Constitution)

an informed, united, and bold nation like India.³⁷ Thereafter, proving that a nation like India, laid a strong front by implementing the stringent ban against Pakistan, to safeguard sovereignty and security of the country.

³⁷ Article titled 'Weaponising the Narrative: Social Media Propaganda post-Pahalgam Attack'; Published on 13th May, 2025; Written by Soumya Awasthi (Observer Research Foundation- ORF): <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/weaponising-the-narrative-social-media-propaganda-post-pahalgam-attack> [online] [Accessed on 29th August, 2025; 11:18PM IST]