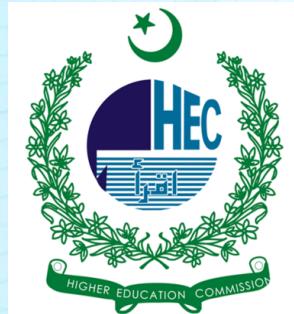


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**ANALYZING MEMES WARFARE ON SOCIAL MEDIA  
DURING THE 2025 INDIA-PAKISTAN CONFLICT**



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**Abstract**

*The May 2025 India–Pakistan standoff marked a rapid digital transformation of warfare. Memes created and shared on social media served as novel instruments of narrative influence and emotional resilience. Existing scholarship has largely overlooked memes as strategic weapons in South-Asian hybrid conflicts. This study employs a qualitative, interpretive design to analyse a dataset of 219 publicly-available memes sourced from X, Instagram and TikTok. The study applies Thematic Discourse Analysis to uncover recurring patterns. Three dominant themes were identified: (1) Digital Patriotism, where memes replicate the morale-boosting function of historic war songs and construct a shared Pakistani identity, (2) Meme Warfare as Counter-Narrative, featuring satire, ridicule and debunking of Indian military and media narratives to undermine adversary credibility, and (3) Humor and Satire as Emotional Coping, which normalise the conflict, reduce public anxiety and provide collective psychological relief. The findings demonstrate that memes operate simultaneously as tools of propaganda, counter-propaganda and non-kinetic psychological warfare. The research concludes that scholars and strategists must recognise memes as an evolving dimension of hybrid warfare and suggests systematic monitoring of cross-border digital propaganda to mitigate escalation risks.*

**Keywords:** *Pak-Indo Conflict, Memes War, Narrative Warfare, Social Media, Propaganda, Thematic Discourse Analysis*

## Introduction

### Background

The nature of war and conflict has undergone digital transformation over the last two decades and a half. This transformation is driven by the rise of social media and has become an important part of irregular warfare (Schlingh, 2024). Information warfare has become a defining element of modern conflict. In 2022, memes were used as a strategy during the Russia–Ukraine war. The defensive memetic warfare by Ukraine comprised the use of humour, irony, and satire in memes to challenge disinformation, shape public perception, and strengthen media literacy (Munk, 2025).

During the conflict that happened between India and Pakistan in May 2025, social media platforms such as X, Instagram, and TikTok saw an increase in user-generated content. During the brief standoff between the two countries, coordinated misinformation and disinformation campaigns escalated on both sides. Both nations circulated recycled footage, video game clips, and AI-generated images or videos to construct false military victories and humiliations. All of this was done through social media, especially X (Khan et al., 2025).

Resistance music in Pakistan has evolved for decades as a powerful cultural response to political oppression, social injustice, and authoritarian rule. Rooted in the poetry of icons like Faiz Ahmed Faiz, Habib Jalib, and Ahmed Faraz — and later carried through film, qawwali, pop, satire, and rock — it has continuously reinvented itself in each era, from anti-colonial verses of the 1940s to the protest anthems of the 2000s. Despite censorship, imprisonment of artists, and shifting political climates, these songs and poems have persisted as symbols of defiance, collective memory, and hope for change in Pakistani society (Rebel Anthems, 2024). In the 1965 war between India and Pakistan, singer Noor Jahan played an important role as the emotional and cultural voice of Pakistan with her patriotic songs profoundly

boosting public morale and inspiring youth to join the military (Ahmed, 2017). In 2025, memes became the digital successor to these patriotic songs.

## Research Questions

**This study addresses the following research questions:**

**RQ1:** How did meme warfare serve as a strategy to undermine the adversary (India) and boost domestic morale in Pakistan?

**RQ2:** How were memes used as a tool of propaganda and counter-propaganda during the conflict?

**RQ3:** What is the role of social media in amplifying public anxiety and panic and normalizing the conflict through humor and satire?

## Significance and Scope

The study contributes to the already existing scholarship on social media, digital propaganda, and hybrid warfare by exploring the use of memes in a brief conflict between India and Pakistan. In addition, this research builds an understanding for media scholars about humor and satire in the form of memes in narrative warfare. The study focuses on Pakistani social media content (memes, hashtags) during the 2025 India–Pakistan conflict. It does not include data from private messaging platforms (WhatsApp, Telegram).

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Empirical Review

#### 2.1.1 Songs as a Tool of Hybrid Warfare

One of the most relevant studies for understanding digital meme warfare is the work of Saeed, Bukhari, and Rasool, who examined ISPR's patriotic songs as strategic tools of hybrid warfare. Their content analysis of eight patriotic songs (2014–2019) revealed systematic deployment of motivational discourse, willingness to sacrifice, national unity, and religious-symbolic messaging (Saeed et al., 2021). Patriotic songs mobilize through melody and emotion. On the other hand, memes mobilize through humor, satire, and rapid virality.

Ali et al. investigated the role of language in constructing Pakistani national identity through national songs. Drawing on sociolinguistic theory and propaganda-informed cultural nationalism, the authors explore how national songs have unified Pakistanis during pivotal moments. The study referred to the 1965 and 1971 wars. Their analysis reveals that Urdu functions as the symbolic linguistic glue (Ali et al., 2025). National songs have historically served as state-supported ideological tools.

#### 2.1.2 Memes in the 2025 India Pakistan War

One of the earliest attempts to explore how memes shaped political discourse and emotional reactions during the 2025 Pakistan–India conflict by Bashir and Shahid used a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) framework grounded in Fairclough and supported by memetic theory. The authors found that memes did not merely entertain—they acted as alternative political commentaries, resisting state narratives, undermining Indian nationalism, and allowing citizens to cope with fear through humor, irony, and satire. In case of Pakistan, memes became counter-hegemonic tools through which ordinary Pakistanis critiqued political leadership, militarism, and media sensationalism in India. The study established meme warfare as both propaganda and emotional management. However, their study is limited by a small dataset and a focus on English-language memes only (Bashir & Shahid, 2025).

The scope of the memetic warfare between Indian and Pakistan in 2025 was expanded by Ghilzai (2025) as she analysed nearly 90 memes produced by Pakistani Gen Z during the same conflict. She introduced an innovative “Meme Frame Analysis” that blends framing theory, multimodal communication, and humor studies. Ghilzai's work shows how memes performed diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational

functions: they diagnosed the conflict (e.g., blaming Indian aggression), prescribed emotional responses (e.g., patriotic humor), and mobilized morale through satire and mockery. Ghilzai supplemented discourse analysis with audience engagement metrics using NVivo coding, revealing how emojis, shares, and comments shaped reception. Her findings demonstrate that self-deprecating humor helped normalize fears, while mockery of India strengthened digital nationalism (Ghilzai, 2025).

Mohib Ullah and fellows also approached India Pakistan meme warfare of 2025 from a multimodal discourse perspective. Their sample was small—ten Instagram memes—but their theoretical triangulation of Entman's framing theory, Kress and van Leeuwen's multimodal CDA, and Attardo's General Theory of Verbal Humour produced very rich insights. The authors showed how Pakistani youth reframed the seriousness of war into everyday, relatable jokes: war became equivalent to exams, household chores, cricket matches, or Bollywood scenes. This trivialization normalized conflict and reduced public anxiety, supporting the RQ2, while also ridiculing India's military and political leadership. Their contribution lies in showing how verbal humor (irony, exaggeration, code-switching) interacts with visuals to create political meaning. However, the small and platform-specific dataset restricts generalizability (Ullah et al., 2025).

Noor et al. (2025) also examined the broader media environment surrounding the conflict in Conflict and Narratives. While their study does not analyze memes in depth, it documents how both Pakistani and Indian mainstream media contributed to escalation through framing and agenda-setting. They show that Indian media relied heavily on revenge and militaristic frames after the Pahalgam incident, whereas Pakistani media framed India as an aggressor violating sovereignty. Social media, including memes, amplified misinformation and emotional content, feeding public anxiety and polarizing audiences. Their study is particularly relevant to the RQ2 because it contextualizes the narrative environment in which memes circulated: an environment marked by sensationalism, misinformation, and emotional overload. Their main limitation is the lack of micro-analysis of memes, but their macro-level insights help explain why humor-based content gained traction (Noor et al., 2025).

Focusing on 20 viral Instagram memes after the Pahalgam attack, Irshad (2025) argues that humor and hostility coexisted in Pakistani digital discourse. Her thematic analysis shows how memes mocked Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and used satire to channel collective anxiety into national pride. Her work emphasizes “digital resistance”. This indicated that memes act as a grassroots political response to state and enemy propaganda. However, her one-week timeframe limits the temporal depth of her findings.

Khan et al. (2025) conducted a mixed-method nationwide survey that examined how different societal groups in Pakistan perceived the 2025 conflict. The authors found that public opinion during the India Pakistan conflict in 2025 was shaped by patriotism, unity, and media narratives. In addition, Nasir et al. (2025) used propaganda theory, framing theory, and digital diplomacy literature to show how influencers, journalists, and ordinary users engaged in information warfare by circulating hashtags, countering propaganda, and constructing nationalistic narratives. Although not exclusively meme-focused, their findings highlight the strategic use of digital content—including memes—as soft-power tools.

## 2.2 Theoretical Framework

### 2.2.1 Imagined Communities & Emotional Glue

Benedict Anderson's seminal work *Imagined Communities*, presented in 1983, argues that nations are not natural or timeless entities but socially constructed groups—“imagined” because members will never know most of their fellow citizens, yet they envision themselves as part of a shared community. Anderson explains how print capitalism, shared languages, media, and cultural narratives allow people to imagine this collective identity (Goswami, 2020). National songs, part of media, act as “emotional glue” that binds people who never meet. Media content creates national unity, especially in wartime.

Propaganda is a type of persuasion that uses coordinated mass messages to obfuscate evidence and discourage critical thought. A single convincing message can also be described by this phrase. One

audience or several audiences at once, such as a domestic population and an opposing side, may be the focus of propaganda campaigns. Typically, distinct campaigns with customised message strategies are used to reach these populations. In any audience, some people already agree with the propagandist's goals, some disagree, and many are indifferent. Propaganda's main goals are to convert opponents to neutrality or doubt, which lowers the possibility that they will take action; to convert neutrals to support; and to keep supporters loyal by encouraging a sense of readiness and drive to take action (Steinfatt, 2009).

Harold Lasswell's Propaganda Theory, presented in 1927, looks at how communication shapes public opinion and governs mass behaviour. Propaganda, according to Lasswell, is a type of communication intended to change people's views and behaviours. Lasswell (1927) maintained that governments, political parties, and media outlets frequently employ propaganda to sway public opinion and accomplish particular goals. A straightforward real-world example of propaganda is found in political campaigns, when candidates utilise speeches and ads to sway voters' beliefs by highlighting some topics and downplaying others in order to affect public perceptions of their plans.

Applied to the present study, these concepts illuminate how memes functioned as propaganda and counter-propaganda tools during the 2025 India–Pakistan conflict. Pakistani digital users strategically deployed memes not simply as humor but as persuasive messages that targeted both domestic and adversarial audiences.

### **2.3 Research Gaps**

While existing scholarship has offered valuable insights into how memes shaped political commentary and emotional responses during the 2025 India–Pakistan conflict (Appendix 2), there are a number of gaps that this study aims to fill. Most of the studies that are reviewed rely on small, platform-specific, or English-only datasets. Therefore, these studies limit the generalizability and representativeness of their findings. Previous studies have focused either on humor (the study by Mohib Ullah) or nationalism and mockery (the study by Ghilzai), but not on the broader information-warfare context. In addition, macro level works like that of Noor et al. and Nasir et al. explore narrative warfare. However, these studies do not conduct micro-level meme analysis. Therefore, there is a gap in understanding how individual memes operate as tactical units of counter-propaganda or otherwise. The study by Irshad highlights "digital resistance" and Khan et al. provide sociopsychological context. However, none of these studies examines how meme circulation simultaneously amplified anxiety, normalized conflict, and boosted national morale in Pakistan during the 2025 crisis. Therefore, this study addresses these gaps by analyzing a broader dataset of Pakistani meme content and situating it within the landscape of hybrid and narrative warfare and examined traditional propaganda tools. However, limited scholarship exists on the role of **memes as digital weapons of narrative warfare** in contemporary South Asian conflicts. The focus of this research is to explore how humor, satire, and participatory creativity creates an impact on the morale of the public. This area remains particularly underexplored in the context of South Asia. The shaping of public sentiment and functioning of psychological and strategic influence by memes during the India–Pakistan conflict in May 2025 is explored in this study.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Research Design**

This study adopts a **qualitative, case study research design**. Given the inherently visual, textual, and culturally embedded nature of memes, a qualitative approach is most suitable for uncovering the **social, emotional, and ideological meanings** embedded within them. Qualitative research acknowledges the complexity of social life, which is affected by networks of meaning, language, symbols, and culture, and rejects the notion of a fixed, predefined social reality (Kruger and Mitchell, 2022). According to a social constructionist viewpoint, concepts of truth and accuracy are malleable, subject to debate, and open to

interpretation. There is not a single, conclusive, or impartial explanation for what happened. Rather, a number of viewpoints coexist, each representing the perspectives and experiences of many people and groups. There are many other ways to be, know, and think at the same time, and none of them is regarded as the ultimate truth (Phillips, 2023). Therefore, this study focuses on the case study of India and Pakistan war.

This study uses a deductive approach. According to this approach, specific conclusions are drawn from a general phenomenon (Kruger and Mitchell, 2022). Using Lasswell's general idea of propaganda, this study explores India-Pakistan war of 2025 to derive specific conclusions.

### 3.2 Data Collection

The dataset consists of **219 memes** ([link to the dataset is mentioned in Appendix B](#)) related to the 2025 India–Pakistan conflict. Memes were sourced from platforms like X. The primary data is collected from May–June 2025. The inclusion criteria for memes were:

- 1 Content directly related to the conflict, military events, or national identity.
- 2 Memes in Urdu, English, or bilingual formats.
- 3 Publicly available content shared by users in Pakistan.

After initial coding, memes were grouped into **categories**:

- **Mocking-India / Counter-Propaganda**
- **Patriotic & Morale-Boosting**
- **Humor & Satire / Comic Relief**
- **Pop-Culture & Reaction Memes**
- **Everyday-Life & Emotional Coping**

### 3.3 Data Analysis

Thematic Discourse Analysis (TDA) was applied to identify **patterns, clusters, and themes** across the dataset. This was done in order to categorize the memes that presented similar pattern together. The Braun and Clarke framework is a six-step process for conducting thematic analysis in qualitative research (Goddard & Melville, 2021). Thematic analysis was important to drive findings for this study. The steps for TDA included:

- **Familiarization:** Thorough review of all 219 memes to understand content, context, and audience cues. It involved getting the idea of dimension that the memes were pointing towards and recognizing whether there is coherency.
- **Initial Coding:** This step involved assigning descriptive codes to textual and visual elements. For example, a set of memes were categorized under “PAF pride,” some under “Indian media mockery,” or under the term “biryani joke.”
- **Pattern Identification:** Grouping similar codes to form categories (e.g., humorous coping, counter-propaganda). This step was the most important for this research because it included making a direction or a category for each set of memes so that collectively they point towards a similar direction.
- **Theme Construction:** Abstracting categories into higher-order themes that showed social and emotional functions:
  - **Theme 1:** Digital Patriotism & National Identity
  - **Theme 2:** Meme Warfare as Counter-Narrative & Strategic Resistance
  - **Theme 3:** Humor, Satire & Emotional Coping During Conflict

# FINDINGS

## 4.1 Theme 1: Digital Patriotism & National Identity Construction

The first theme captures memes that construct a narrative of **national pride, unity, and military competence**, reflecting **digital patriotism**. This theme includes **Patriotic & Morale-Boosting Memes** and certain **Mocking-India Memes** that indirectly enhance Pakistani identity. These memes replicate the historical role of war songs, anthems, and state narratives, translating them into the digital domain.

**Table 1. Key Patterns and Examples in Digital Patriotism Memes**

Pattern	Description	Example Meme Numbers
Patriotic Imagery & Symbols	Use of green hearts, national flags, and slogans such as "Pakistan Zindabad."	#28, #36, #54, #91
PAF and Military Pride	Emphasis on JF-17 and J-10C fighter jets to project military strength.	#49, #56, #68
Unity and Emotional Solidarity	Memes promoting collective resilience and national unity, e.g., "We Stand Together."	#112, #142
Religious-National Sentiment	Blend of spirituality and patriotism, such as "Allah Pakistan Ka Hafiz," boosting moral support.	#101, #201

**Source:** Author's own

**Figure 1 meme 28**



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Figure 2 meme 36



Figure 3 meme 49

Memes under Theme 1 highlight how social media platforms recreate patriotic emotions. These emotions were historically produced by war songs, national anthems, and state narratives. These memes construct a shared identity (“We are Pakistan”). They performed a function similar to wartime songs of 1965 sung by Noor Jahan.

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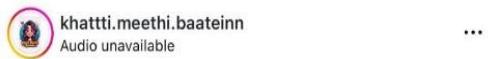
Figure 4 meme 56

**Table 2. Summary of Theme 1 — Digital Patriotism & National Identity Construction**

Meme Numbers	Category	Description	Relevant Research Question(s)
<b>11, 20, 28, 29, 33, 36, 41, 45, 48, 49, 53, 54, 56, 59, 61, 68, 74, 78, 82, 91, 97, 101, 112, 120, 142, 151, 166, 173, 187, 201</b>	Patriotic, Morale-Boosting, National Identity Memes	These memes promote digital patriotism through symbols, military pride, unity, emotional solidarity, religious-national sentiment, humor, and national composure. They collectively construct a shared Pakistani identity and reinforce national resilience during conflict.	<b>Primarily RQ3</b> (boosting domestic morale); <b>Sometimes RQ2</b> (reducing anxiety, normalizing conflict)

Source: Author's own

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**Figure 5 Meme 11**



**Figure 6 Meme 20**

#### 4.2 Theme 2: Meme Warfare as Counter-Narrative & Strategic Resistance

Theme 2 represents memes employed to **mock India, its government, military, and media**, acting as tools of **citizen-led narrative warfare**. This theme demonstrates how **humor, sarcasm, and ridicule** became a mechanism for **counter-propaganda**.

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**Figure 7 Meme 2**



**Figure 8 MEME 22**

**Table 3. Key Patterns and Examples in Meme Warfare as Counter-Narrative & Strategic Resistance**

Pattern	Description	Example Meme Numbers
<b>Mocking Indian Military</b>	Satirical portrayals of IAF jets, Rafale malfunctions, and Abhinandan memes	#2, #7, #22, #86, #195
<b>Mocking Indian Media</b>	Memes ridiculing sensationalist anchors and fake news	#3, #5, #38, #117
<b>Mocking Modi / Indian Government</b>	Political incompetence humor and satire	#31, #35, #93, #184
<b>Exposing Fake News</b>	Memes debunking misinformation and contrasting exaggerated claims with reality	#8, #12, #44
<b>Calm Pakistan vs Panicked India</b>	Memes showing Pakistanis calm and composed while Indians panic	#1, #10, #16, #152
<b>Pop-Culture Warfare</b>	Use of Bollywood clips, Pakistani dramas, and international reactions to ridicule Indian claims	#21, #66, #148

**Source:** Author's own

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Figure 9 meme 117



Figure 10 meme 5

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Theme 2 highlights how Pakistani memes operated as a form of citizen-led narrative warfare. The dataset shows how memes were used as counter-propaganda and strategic resistance against India. Memes under this theme employed humor, sarcasm, and ridicule to mock the Indian military, government, and media.

**Table 4. Summary of Theme 2**

Sub-Category	Description	Example Numbers	Meme	RQ Link
Mocking India Military	Satire on IAF failures	#2, #7, #15		RQ1, RQ3
Mocking Indian Media	Arnab / Republic TV roasting	#3, #4, #5		RQ1, RQ2
Mocking Modi/Govt	Political satire	#31, #35, #69		RQ1, RQ3
Exposing Fake News	Debunking & parody	#8, #24, #44		RQ1, RQ2
Calm Pakistan vs Panicked India	Psychological pressure reversal	#1, #10, #16		RQ2, RQ3
Pop-Culture Warfare	Using entertainment to mock India	#21, #66, #148		RQ2, RQ1

**Source:** Author's own

4.3 Theme 3: Humor, Satire & Emotional Coping During Conflict



**Figure 11 MEME 55**

The third theme represents memes that were used to **normalize the conflict**. This set of memes helped **reduce anxiety, and provide comic relief**.

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Figure 12 meme 88

**Table 5. Key Patterns and Examples in Humor, Satire & Emotional Coping During Conflict**

Pattern	Description / Example Focus	Example Meme Numbers
Pure Humor & Comic Relief	Absurd jokes about missile updates, "akhri update kab ayegi"	#12, #55, #201
Pop-Culture Reaction Memes	Celebrity faces, drama clips, Bollywood scenes used for humor	#18, #27, #66, #145
Everyday-Life Humor	Memes about eating, sleeping, university, and other mundane routines	#11, #28, #68, #166
Sarcasm & Sharp Commentary	Dark humor and sarcastic critiques of fear-mongering	#22, #35, #88, #103

**Source:** Author's own

Figure 13 meme 18

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Figure 14 meme 18



Figure 15 meme 27

Theme 3 demonstrates that humor through memes created by ordinary social media users functioned as an emotional coping mechanism for Pakistanis during the May 2025 conflict. Memes in this dataset helped reduce fear, normalize the experience of war, and provide psychological resilience to the general public. Conflict updates were framed as casual and entertaining by using these memes. This allowed users to emotionally distance themselves from the crisis. As a result, people all across the country collectively bonded over shared laughter.

## **DISCUSSION**

Theme 1 dataset shows that memes used patriotic symbols, green aesthetics, military references, religious-national messages, and unity-driven language to cultivate a sense of collective strength and emotional composure. National resilience was celebrated as a result of these memes. A psychological sense of protection and communal identity was reinforced during the India Pakistan conflict of 2025 as many memes in the dataset of Theme 1 also combined spirituality with nationalism.

The digital content served as an important tool for constructing Pakistani national identity and fostering patriotic sentiment. These memes recreated the mobilizing functions historically associated with patriotic songs and anthems (Ullah et al., 2025). The findings from theme 1 dataset advocate Benedict Anderson's concept of imagined communities. During the war between India and Pakistan, memes allowed citizens who would never physically meet to envision themselves as part of a shared collective, reinforcing solidarity and emotional resilience just as Anderson explained it in 1983 (Goswami, 2020).

The use of humor and relatable content in the memes shared on social media platforms in Pakistan further amplified engagement, normalizing tension and mitigating fear. Therefore, the use of memes during the India Pakistan conflict of May 2025 reduced public anxiety and boosted domestic morale in Pakistan. Thus, digital patriotism through memes acted as a cultural continuation of historical wartime mobilization in Pakistan. This digital tool also acted as a modern non-kinetic strategy to sustain public confidence (Bashir & Shahid, 2025).

Theme 2 results align with previous studies conducted on the subject specifically the study of Ullah et al. (2025). The memes under Theme 2 exemplify the theory of propaganda by Lasswell (1927). This is because memes were strategically deployed to shape perceptions. Memes in this dataset undermined enemy credibility. In addition, they also mobilized nationalistic sentiment and made the nation come together to troll enemy country. In addition, these memes also exposed fake news and highlighted how panic was created by Indian news channels during the time of the conflict. Pop-culture content like Bollywood clips and international reactions was used as a humor to ridicule Indian claims of victory.

The digital humor under theme 3 mitigated anxiety and panic. In addition, it also reinforced national morale and confidence. The conflict was reframed as manageable and even entertaining. This finding aligns with previous literature that argues psychological resilience and collective stress relief was provided by memes during the conflict (Irshad, 2025).

In 2025, memes performed the same cultural, emotional, and ideological function that once songs used to perform in the 20<sup>th</sup> century for Pakistan. Just like the role that songs played during the India Pakistan conflict of 1965, memes rallied public support, fostered unity, and contributed to narrative warfare against India during the May 2025 conflict between India and Pakistan. These digital tools transformed anxiety into humor and strengthened collective identity.

## **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **6.1 Conclusions**

The 2025 India–Pakistan conflict shows the transformative role of social media memes in modern warfare. Memes function as the tools of narrative influence as well as the mechanisms for emotional resilience. This research shows that memes in Pakistan served multiple purposes. One of the most important function that memes play during war and conflict is the creation of digital patriotism. Memes, during the India Pakistan conflict of 2025, played an important role in citizen-led counter-propaganda and strategic resistance against the enemy country. In addition, this digital tool provided the citizens with humor. In addition, it provided emotional coping to the citizens of Pakistan during periods of heightened anxiety during the India Pakistan conflict in 2025. Memes under Theme 1 performed the same functions as patriotic songs have performed in the war history of Pakistan with India. They fostered solidarity, military pride was reinforced, and collective morale was increased just as historic patriotic songs used to do. This aligns with the concept of imagined communities by Anderson. On the other hand, Theme 2

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highlighted the digital hybrid warfare that is participatory in nature. It shows that humor and ridicule can undermine the narratives created by the enemy country. This theme reflects the principles of the concept of theory of propaganda provided by Laswell.

## **6.2 Recommendations**

Based on these findings, it is recommended that state institutions across the world recognize the strategic potential of digital memes. This is because memes are important in shaping public morale and narrative influence during war and conflict in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. It is important to understand viral humor as a tool of non-kinetic warfare. Therefore, institutions must support responsible citizen participation in counter-propaganda. In addition, they can also safeguard the citizens against misinformation. In addition, social media platforms and civil society organizations could collaborate in order to monitor cross-border digital propaganda. This helps in the identification of both opportunities for cultural resistance and risks of escalation.

It is also recommended that scholars and military strategists consider memes as an evolving dimension of hybrid warfare. Memes could be strategically used as they combines culture, humor, and strategic messaging. It is likely that future conflicts might witness increased memetic activity. Similarly, integrating humor, satire, and participatory content into official communications could enhance national cohesion and psychological preparedness.

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Nasir, T., Bhadur, A., Javed, S., & Sabir, S. (2025). Digital Battlegrounds: The Role of Social Media in the Indo-Pakistani Media War – Analyzing Narratives, Propaganda, and Public Perception. *Journal of Media Horizons*, 6(3). <https://jmhorizons.com/index.php/journal/article/view/452>

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**APPENDICES**

Appendix 1

**Literature Review Matrix**

Sr No.	Author(s), Year	Title / Focus of Study	Theoretical Frame Work	Methodology	Key Findings	Relevance to The Study	Notes and Critic
1	Umm-e-Laila Naqvi (PhD Scholar), Dr. Waqas Naeem (Associate Professor), Minhaj University Lahore. Published in Journal of Applied Linguistics and TESOL (JALT), Vol. 8, No. 3, 2025.	"Laughing Through Crisis: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Social Media Memes During the Pak-India Conflict (April–May 2025)."  <b>Focus:</b> Examines how memes shaped political discourse, humor, and national identity during the conflict.	Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1992)  Memetics & Digital Media theories (Shifman, 2014; Milner, 2016).  Framework highlights power, ideology, humor, and resistance in digital discourse.	<b>Qualitative</b>  CDA approach.  <b>Data:</b> 15 viral memes from Twitter, Instagram, Facebook.  <b>Analysis:</b> Linguistic, visual, and cultural layers of memes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Memes used humor, irony, and satire to critique militarism, nationalism, and political leadership.</li> <li>Served as <b>digital resistance</b> against hegemonic narratives.</li> <li>Functioned as <b>psychological relief</b>, reducing panic through humor.</li> <li>Amplified <b>counter-narratives</b> (ordinary citizens' voices vs. state narratives).</li> <li>Normalized conflict by trivializing war (e.g., weather jokes, domestic concerns).</li> </ul>	<p>Addresses <b>memes as propaganda/counter-propaganda</b> in the 2025 Indo-Pak conflict.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explains how memes either amplified anxiety or normalized conflict through satire.</li> <li>Provides evidence of memes being used to boost domestic morale and undermine adversary (India).</li> </ul>	<p><b>Strengths:</b> Strong CDA framework; rich examples; connects humor to resistance.</p> <p><b>Weaknesses:</b> Limited sample size (15 memes); focus only on English-language memes; excludes TikTok/YouTube.</p> <p><b>Gap:</b> Does not empirically measure audience reception or psychological impact (relies on interpretation).</p> <p><b>Use for the study:</b> Foundational article to show how memes served as narrative warfare in real-time during Indo-Pak tensions.</p>

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2	<p><b>Shazia Akbar Ghilzai</b> (Assistant Professor, Department of English, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad).</p> <p><b>Published in</b> Academia International Journal for Social Sciences, Vol. 4, Issue 2, 2025.</p>	<p>"Digital Battlegrounds: Multimodal Humor and Ideological Framing in Memes of the 2025 Pakistan-India Conflict."</p> <p><b>Focus:</b> Examines how Pakistani Gen Z used memes for coping, resistance, and ideological framing during the conflict.</p>	<p><b>Framing Theory</b> (Entman, 1993) – diagnostic, prognostic, motivational frames.</p> <p><b>Multimodal Framing Theory</b> (Geise &amp; Baden, 2015) – interplay of text + visuals.</p> <p><b>Semiotics</b> (Barthes, 1977) – decoding cultural signs.</p> <p>Humor Theories (Incongruity, Relief, Superiority; Attardo, 2001).</p> <p><b>Introduces Meme Frame Analysis (MFA):</b> integrates framing + humor + multimodality.</p>	<p><b>Dataset:</b> ~90 memes from Twitter, Instagram, Facebook (April–May 2025).</p> <p><b>Tools:</b> NVivo coding (humor strategies, ideological frames, multimodal features).</p> <p><b>Approach:</b> Meme Frame Analysis (MFA) – six-step model combining discourse, semiotics, humor analysis, and audience reception.</p>	<p><b>Themes identified:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Self-deprecating humor (~40% of memes) → coping + resilience.</li> <li>Mockery of India &amp; Modi (~30%) → undermined adversary.</li> <li>Meme warfare (~15%) → framed as 5th-generation digital resistance.</li> </ul> <p><b>Audience response:</b> Emojis (40%) and memes (30%) dominated → humor resonated more than text.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Shows how memes became tools of propaganda,</li> </ul>	

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3	<b>Mohib Ullah</b> (Lecturer, NUML, Islamabad)  <b>Rabeea Maryam</b> (Lecturer, NUML, Islamabad)  Corresponding Author <b>Kamran Ashraf</b> (FAST-NUCES, Islamabad)  <b>Published in</b> Journal of Arts and Linguistics Studies (JALS), Vol. 3, Issue 3, 2025.	"Framing War with Humour: A Multimodal Critical Discourse and Verbal Humour Analysis of Pakistani Memes on the 2025 Pakistan-India Conflict."	<b>Framing Theory</b> (Entman, 1993) – how memes construct conflict narratives.  <b>Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA)</b> (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001) – synergy of text + visuals.  Focus: Analyzes Instagram memes by Pakistani Gen Z during May 2025 to explore how humor framed war, its actors, and national identity.	<b>Design:</b> Qualitative, interpretive. <b>Sample:</b> 10 purposively selected Instagram memes (Apr 28 – May 10, 2025). <b>Criteria:</b> High engagement, created by Pakistani users, conflict-related hashtags. <b>Analysis:</b> Triangulation of MCDA, Framing, and GTVH → lexical, syntactic, visual, and humor strategies.	Memes used non-standard syntax, bilingual code-switching, and irony to subvert war discourse.  <b>Frames identified:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Domestic triviality (war linked to exams, household chores).</li> <li>Banal nationalism (turning grand political issues into everyday jokes).</li> <li>Sports &amp; entertainment frames (e.g., war as cricket).</li> <li>Gendered nationalism &amp; parody (Bollywood tropes, Abhinandan tea meme).</li> </ul> <b>Functions:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Emotional coping (relieving anxiety).</li> </ul>	Demonstrates how memes normalized conflict via humor (exam jokes, traffic metaphors) while also undermining India and state rhetoric (Abhinandan tea, Rafale parody).  Supports the RQs: memes as propaganda/counter-propaganda, humor as panic-reducer, memes as morale boosters.	<b>Strengths:</b> Innovative triangulation of three theories (MCDA + Framing + GTVH); in-depth qualitative interpretation of memes. <b>Weaknesses:</b> Small dataset (10 memes only); focused only on Instagram. <b>Gap:</b> Lacks quantitative audience analysis (engagement measured but not deeply studied). <b>Use for the study:</b> Strong theoretical and methodological model; shows memes as both psychological coping devices and narrative warfare tools.

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					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Resistance against state/militaristic narratives.</li> <li>Vernacular critique of education pressures, traffic, and media spectacle.</li> <li>Memes reframed conflict as banal, absurd, and negotiable, not purely nationalistic.</li> </ul>		
4	<b>Nida Noor</b> (MS Media Sciences, Riphah International University)  <b>Dr. Muhammad Shahid</b> (Assistant Professor, Riphah International)	"Conflict and Narratives: An Analysis of Media Role in the Escalation and Perception on Pakistan-India Conflict (May 07, 2025)."  <b>Focus:</b> Examines how Pakistani and Indian media framed and set agendas during	<b>Framing Theory (Entman, 1993):</b> How media highlights certain elements (revenge, sovereignty, heroism) while ignoring others.  <b>Agenda-Setting Theory (McCombs &amp; Shaw, 1972):</b> How media prioritizes issues, making war a top	<b>Case Study analysis</b> of May 2025 confrontation (Pahalgam attack, Operation Sindoor, Bunyan al Marsoos).  <b>Comparative media analysis</b> of Pakistani and Indian outlets (traditional + social media).  Review of past	<b>Indian media:</b> Aggressive frames (revenge, patriotic duty, surgical precision, heroism of soldiers). Spread misinformation & fake news, fueling nationalism.  <b>Pakistani media:</b> Frames of sovereignty violation, victimization, international law. Positioned Pakistan as victim but also	Shows how media narratives and memes amplified panic, misinformation, and nationalistic fervor during the conflict. Supports the RQ2 (Did social media amplify anxiety/panic?) → yes, through misinformation & emotional dramatization. Connects to RQ3	<b>Strengths:</b> Strong theoretical link to Framing & Agenda-Setting; comparative perspective (Pakistani vs. Indian media); situates social media alongside traditional media.  <b>Weaknesses:</b> More focus on mainstream media; memes are mentioned but not

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	University) <b>Muhammad Atiq</b> (MS Media Sciences, Riphah International University)  <b>Published in Journal for Current Sign, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2025.</b>	the Pahalgam attack & Operation Sindoar, shaping public opinion and fueling escalation.	concern while sidelining peace narratives.	literature on Indo-Pak media conflicts.	promoted retaliation. Social media: Amplified misinformation, memes, and emotional content, complicating peace efforts. Both sides' media sensationalized rather than de-escalated, pushing public sentiment toward aggression instead of negotiation. International media attempted balance, but narratives were drowned by nationalistic hype.	(memes/narratives as morale boost & adversary undermining) → memes and emotional media coverage boosted nationalism while ridiculing the opponent.	deeply analyzed. <b>Gap:</b> Lacks micro-level analysis of specific meme examples; audience reception not empirically studied. <b>Use for the study:</b> Supports broader argument that digital narratives (including memes) are part of escalation strategies and contribute to public panic or morale-building.

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5	<b>Mariam Irshad</b> (Lecturer, Faculty of Media & Mass Communication, University of Central Punjab, Lahore).  <b>Published in</b> UCP Journal of Mass Communication, Vol. 3, Issue 1, Jan–June 2025.	"Visual Digital Resistance: Examining the Humor and Hostility in Pakistani Instagram Memes Pahalgam Incident."	<b>Digital Resistance &amp; Digital Activism</b> (Couture et al., 2023; Bennett & Segerberg, 2013). <b>Focus:</b> Explores how Pakistani Instagram memes served as digital resistance, mixing humor and hostility, after the April 22, 2025 Pahalgam attack.	Qualitative, Thematic Analysis. <b>Sample:</b> 20 viral Instagram memes (April 22–29, 2025). <b>Selection criteria:</b> Memes directly/indirectly linked to Pahalgam incident (hashtags like #Pahalgam, #PakIndiaTensions). <b>Coding:</b> Recurring themes of satire, nationalism, hostility, digital resistance.	Themes identified: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Satirical Nationalism:</b> Mocking Modi, Indian policies, Indus water dispute with humor.</li> <li>• <b>National Pride through Humor:</b> Memes reframed past events (e.g., Abhinandan 2019) to boost morale.</li> </ul>	Shows memes as propaganda/counter-propaganda tools. Demonstrates how memes reduced panic by turning threats into humor, and boosted morale by mocking India. Reinforces that meme warfare is a form of strategic digital resistance in Indo-Pak narrative battles.	<b>Strengths:</b> Focused dataset (20 memes); highlights emotional + political roles of humor; links memes to activism and resistance.  <b>Weaknesses:</b> Short timeframe (one week only); Instagram-centric; limited cross-platform comparison.

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6	Bisma Bashir & Dr. Muhammad Shahid (2025)	<p>Framing Conflict: A Review of Media Representation during the 2025 Pakistan–India War</p> <p>Focus: How <b>traditional &amp; digital media</b> in Pakistan, India, and internationally framed the 2025 conflict.</p> <p>How media shaping, representation, and war narrative construction influenced nationalism, enemy imagery, and public reactions.</p> <p>Comparative</p>	<p>Hall's Media &amp; Representation Theory (1997)</p> <p>Media constructs reality using symbols, images, and language.</p> <p>Representation is tied to socio-political contexts.</p> <p>Framing Theory (Goffman 1974; Entman 1993; Entman 2003)</p> <p>Media selects what to highlight &amp; what to omit.</p> <p>Defines problems, diagnoses causes, evaluates morality, suggests solutions.</p> <p>Encoding/Decoding (Hall, 1980)</p> <p>Audiences interpret war</p>	<p>Qualitative review &amp; case analysis of media coverage (Indian, Pakistani &amp; International media).</p> <p><b>Examines:</b> News reports Social media responses Headlines, hashtags, visuals (fake videos, AI-generated content)</p> <p>Political statements &amp; diplomatic reactions</p> <p><b>Time frame:</b> April 22 – May 11, 2025 (From Pahalgam attack → Operation Sindoor → Operation</p>	<p>Indian Media Frames: Terrorism narrative → justified military action</p> <p>“Heroism”, “surgical precision”, “make Pakistan pay”</p> <p>Strong nationalist rhetoric</p> <p>Pakistani Media Frames: Indian aggression → violation of sovereignty &amp; international law</p> <p>Emphasis on victimhood, resistance, diplomacy</p> <p>Highlighting civilian losses</p> <p>Social Media: Viral hashtags (#NoWar, #JusticeForPahalgam, #DefendKashmir)</p> <p>Fake videos, AI-generated visuals, propaganda</p> <p>Influencers shaped</p>	<p>Extremely relevant for the research topic because:</p> <p>Shows how media narratives influence public anxiety, panic, nationalism → aligns with RQ2.</p> <p>Highlights propaganda, misinformation, and war framing → supports RQ1.</p> <p>Social media framing (hashtags, fake videos, emotional content) links to <b>meme warfare &amp; morale-boosting</b> → relevant for RQ3.</p> <p>Complements the argument that <b>digital spaces became narrative</b></p>	<p>Strengths: Strong theoretical grounding (Hall + Entman).</p> <p>Clear comparative framing between India, Pakistan, and international outlets.</p> <p>Detailed timeline of events &amp; media responses.</p> <p>Includes both traditional &amp; digital media dynamics.</p> <p>Weaknesses: Does not specifically analyze memes (only mentions social media in general).</p> <p>Lack of audience impact metrics.</p> <p>Overly broad — focuses on macro media narratives rather than micro-level content like memes or humor.</p>

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		analysis of Operation Sindoor (India) & Operation Bunyan al-Marsus (Pakistan).	narratives differently based on ideology and culture.	Bunyan Marsus Ceasefire	al- →	public emotions → digital nationalism International Media: Mixed neutrality; some biased due to geopolitical alignments U.S. leaned toward India (counterterrorism frame) BBC/Al Jazeera → humanitarian focus Overall: Media did not just report the conflict → it constructed it Framing reinforced nationalism, fear, and enemy images Representation influenced public opinion & foreign policy narratives	<b>battlegrounds</b> during the 2025 conflict.	<b>Gaps:</b> Missing psychological/emotional response analysis (fear, panic, coping). No multimodal analysis of images or memes. <b>Use for the study:</b> Excellent for contextualizing how media constructed narratives during the conflict, helping you frame why meme warfare emerged and spread. <b>Useful for the</b> "background narrative environment" that fueled meme production on Pakistani social media.

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7	Yasir Habib Khan, Hassan Siddique, Hafiz Imran Ahmed Qureshi & Imran Sanaullah (2025)	<p>Between Inevitability and Opportunity: How Pakistanis Viewed the 2025 Indo-Pak War</p> <p><b>Focus:</b> Understanding <b>public perceptions</b> of the May 2025 conflict. Measuring perceptions of inevitability, media trust, leadership, national unity, economic impact, and prospects of peace. Examining views from <b>seven demographic/professional groups</b></p>	<p>Although the article does not propose a single formal theory, it is grounded in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Media Framing &amp; Representation Theory (Hall, Entman) – how media constructs conflict narratives.</li> <li><b>Information Warfare / Hybrid Warfare Concepts</b> – role of misinformation, deepfakes, and propaganda.</li> <li><b>National Identity Theory</b> – unity, patriotism, civil-military symbolism.</li> <li>Political Communication &amp; Crisis</li> </ul>	<p>Mixed-Methods Approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Quantitative:</b> Large-scale survey, bilingual (Urdu/English).</li> <li><b>Likert-scale questions</b> measuring: inevitability, leadership, media fairness, unity, economic effects, international role, peace prospects.</li> <li><b>Qualitative:</b> Thematic analysis of open-ended responses.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Quantitative Findings:</b> War viewed as <b>inevitable</b> by majority respondents. High approval of government crisis management. Media coverage considered mostly fair (though with skepticism).</p> <p><b>Strong national unity</b> → war acted as social glue.</p> <p>Economic damage perceptions divided (mixed views).</p> <p><b>Thematic analysis of open-ended responses.</b> Compares perceptions across 7 groups: judiciary, officials, citizens, military,</p>	<p>RQ3 (Undermining India &amp; boosting morale)</p> <p>Study discusses: National unity Patriotism “Victory” narratives Digital nationalism</p> <p>These are exactly the emotional drivers behind Pakistani meme warfare.</p> <p><b>Overall relevance:</b> This paper provides the <b>macro-level narrative environment</b> within which meme warfare emerged – making it extremely useful for the Introduction, Background &amp; Context sections.</p>	<p><b>Gaps:</b> Does not explore humor, memes, or narrative warfare – the focus area. No platform-specific analysis (Twitter, Instagram, TikTok). Emotional/psychological effects (panic vs normalization) are implied but not measured.</p> <p><b>Usefulness for the study:</b> Excellent for framing the <b>national mood</b>, <b>public sentiment</b>, and <b>narrative climate</b> that shaped meme production and diffusion during the 2025 war. Provides contextual grounding for analyzing why meme warfare was so widespread and why humor became</p>

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		(judiciary, officials, military, public, business community, academia, cultural representatives).	Perception Literature – leadership, diplomatic signaling, public morale. (Note: It is a perception study, so its “theoretical framework” is more conceptual than classical.)	business, educators, cultural sector. Sampling: Nationwide participants across all major regions and sectors.	disruption, economic uncertainty. <b>Academia:</b> Advocated peace education, long-term dialogue. <b>Cultural sectors:</b> Promoted soft diplomacy, cultural unity, narrative-building. <b>Cross-Sector Themes:</b> Kashmir = universal core issue. Media narratives shaped emotional responses & nationalism. Civil-military coordination perceived positively. Peace requires multi-sector collaboration.		a coping strategy.
8	Umm-e-Laila Naqvi & Dr. Waqas Naeem (2025)	Laughing Through Crisis: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Social Media Memes During	Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) – Fairclough (1992): language, power, ideology.	Qualitative CDA approach <b>Data:</b> 15 viral memes from Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook	A. Meme Functions Humor as emotional coping → diffuses fear during conflict. Digital resistance memes challenge state-driven	RQ1 – Memes as Propaganda & Counter-Propaganda This article directly shows how memes: Criticize Indian nationalism	<b>Strengths:</b> Deep qualitative insight using CDA Strong theoretical base (Fairclough + Shifman + Milner) Detailed analysis of

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		the Pak-India Conflict (April-May 2025)  Focus: Understanding how memes shaped public discourse, humor, ideology, and national identity during the conflict. Exploring humor as political critique, resistance, nationalism, and emotional coping.	Digital Culture – Shifman (2014).  Participatory Media Theory – Milner (2016).  Digital Humor & Political Satire – Cohen & Talbot (2020).  (A strong ideological + discourse-based framework.)	<b>Analysis:</b> Linguistic analysis  <b>Focus on:</b> Participatory Media Theory – Milner (2016).  Digital Humor & Political Satire – Cohen & Talbot (2020).  (A strong ideological + discourse-based framework.)	narratives, jingoism, and militarism.  Counter-propaganda mocking India, leadership failures, and war hysteria.  National identity construction everyday humor reinforcing "Pakistani-ness."  Political critique satire targeting political figures, foreign policy, and media sensationalism.  B. Typical Discourses Identified  Sarcasm + Pop culture references  Irony, absurdity, trivialization of war  Mocking India → reversal of power narratives  Domestic triviality → war discussed like household jokes	Mock Indian military power  Promote Pakistani digital nationalism  Resist state propaganda by creating alternative narratives  RQ2 – Panic vs Normalization  Humor reduces panic → everyday jokes trivialize the war	linguistic + visual components  Shows humor as emotional, political, and ideological device  Highlights memes as digital protest & narrative resistance  <b>Weaknesses:</b> Only 15 memes – sample is small English-only memes → excludes Urdu/Roman Urdu memes (which dominate meme culture) Limited platform diversity (no TikTok/YouTube) No quantitative audience impact  <b>Gaps:</b> No empirical measurement of how memes affect perceptions No Indian meme

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					Collective anxiety management Self-deprecating humor (common in Pakistani meme culture)  C. Major Themes War normalized through humor		analysis for comparison Does not explore meme evolution over time <b>Use for The Study:</b> Serves as the first pillar of the literature review Justifies analyzing memes as discourse, not just jokes Supports the theoretical argument for "narrative warfare through humor"
9	Tanveer Nasir, Ali Bhadur, Sobia Javed & Dr. Sehrash Sabir (2025)	Digital Battlegrounds: The Role of Social Media in the Indo-Pakistani Media War – Analyzing Narratives, Propaganda, and Public Perception Focus:	Although the paper does not explicitly list one fixed theory, it is theoretically grounded in: A. Propaganda Model Herman & Chomsky: media ownership, sourcing,	Mixed-Methods Approach <b>Qualitative:</b> <b>Content Analysis of:</b> Hashtags Fact-checking posts Influencer content News updates Purposive	A. Effective Counter-Narratives Pakistani digital actors actively debunk Indian misinformation.  Hashtags, coordinated campaigns & fact-checking strengthen Pakistani narrative power.	RQ1 – Propaganda & Counter-Propaganda This study strongly supports the topic: It shows how Pakistan & India use social media as <b>weapons of narrative construction.</b>  Highlights misinformation, How online responses shaped	<b>Strengths:</b> Strong mixed-methods approach (rare in digital conflict studies). <b>Usefulness for The Study:</b> Helps you explain: The overall digital narrative war How online responses shaped

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	Volume 6, Issue 3, 2025.	How Pakistani digital actors (influencers, journalists, fact-checkers) counter Indian propaganda. Public perceptions of credibility, national image, misinformation, and peace-oriented narratives.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ideological filters.</li> <li>B. Framing Theory Entman (1993): problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, treatment recommendation s.</li> <li>C. Digital Diplomacy &amp; Narrative Warfare Emphasis on soft power, digital influence, cross-border storytelling.</li> <li>D. Peace Journalism Framework Lynch &amp; McGoldrick: reducing sensationalism &amp; highlighting dialogue.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>sampling of Pakistani digital media content.</li> <li><b>Quantitative:</b> National Survey analyzing:</li> <li>Trust in Pakistani digital media</li> <li>Engagement in counter-narratives</li> <li>Dominance of Pakistani digital messages</li> <li>Influence on Pakistan's international image</li> <li><b>Interviews:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews with:</li> <li>• Digital strategists</li> <li>• Journalists</li> <li>• Fact-checkers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>B. Peace-Oriented Framing Pakistani platforms promote dialogue, accuracy, and responsible communication. Contrasts with Indian sensationalist, hyper-nationalistic coverage.</li> <li>C. High Public Trust in Pakistani Digital Media 82% trust Pakistani digital sources. 78% believe Pakistan promotes peace-oriented messaging.</li> <li>D. Strategic Digital Tools Hashtags, influencer networks, live fact-checking, YouTube explainers. Cross-platform</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>strategic messaging, and propaganda wars, which directly connects to meme warfare.</li> <li>RQ2 – Anxiety, Panic, or Normalization? Fake news increased panic.</li> <li>Peace-oriented Pakistani messaging reduced anxiety.</li> <li>Shows the same environment where memes normalized the conflict through humor.</li> <li>RQ3 – Undermining India &amp; Boosting Pakistani Morale Pakistani digital content strengthened national identity and morale.</li> <li>Similar mechanisms appear in meme humor (mocking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>public perception</li> <li>Why memes became powerful tools of satire, resistance, and propaganda during the conflict</li> <li>This article is excellent for the literature review, context-building, and theory discussion.</li> </ul>

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			These collectively explain how social media constructs, contests, and influences narratives in conflict.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Media experts</li> </ul> <p><b>Analysis Techniques:</b> Thematic analysis for qualitative data Descriptive statistics for quantitative data</p>	<p>coordination enhances message amplification.</p> <p>E. Fake News Crisis Both sides suffered from fake videos &amp; doctored images.</p> <p>Digital nationalism intensified due to unverified posts.</p> <p>F. International Media's Mixed Framing Western media leaned pro-India due to geopolitical ties.</p> <p>Chinese &amp; Russian media framed Pakistan more favorably.</p> <p>Al Jazeera remained balanced &amp; contextual.</p>	<p>Indian narratives, boosting Pakistan's image).</p> <p>Helps you establish the broader narrative warfare context that shaped meme creation.</p> <p><b>Overall:</b> This article gives the <b>macro-level media war context</b> in which meme warfare functioned as a <b>micro-level narrative tool</b> — perfect for the introduction &amp; discussion sections.</p>	
10	İdil Galip (2023) Published in ISPI	Propaganda, Digital Diplomacy, Meme Wars: How Digital	The article is conceptual and theoretical, combining: A. Propaganda	This study is conceptual + descriptive + case-based analysis, not	A. Propaganda has become Memetic Today's propaganda is viral, cheap, abundant, fast, and	This article is highly important for the research because: Provides global theory of meme	<p><b>Strengths:</b> Rich theoretical insight.</p> <p>Connects memes, propaganda, digital</p>

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	Multipolarity After Ukraine: Old Wine in New Bottles?	Confrontation Is Shaping the New World Order Focus: How memes, digital propaganda & online platforms operate as tools of modern warfare. The intersection of propaganda, influencer culture, memetic warfare, bot networks, and digital diplomacy. Case studies from the <b>Russia–Ukraine war</b> , TikTok propaganda, and global digital conflicts. This article lays	Theory Modern propaganda as mass-mediated manipulation. Digital propaganda = decentralized, rhizomatic, multi-actor. B. Memetic Warfare Theory (NATO OPEN 2015) Memes as “weapons” in narrative battles. Trolling, virality, memetic templates as strategic tools. C. Platform & Algorithmic Governance Platform monopolies (GAMA, BATX) shape visibility, virality, and	empirical. Methods include: Critical analysis of historical propaganda cases (Crimean War, Fenton photography). Review of digital propaganda infrastructures (bots, troll armies, algorithmic amplification). Case studies from: Ukraine–Russia war TikTok propaganda Armed forces using influencers Chinese censorship & political memes Far-right meme	rhizomatic. Memes are the currency of digital information warfare. B. Memes are Both Bottom-Up & Top-Down Tools Not just citizens — governments, military actors, states, and influencers use memes. Meme armies are often strategically coordinated, not organic. C. Platform Affordances Enable Conflict Algorithms push polarising, confrontational content. Platforms benefit financially from chaos & engagement. D. Memes Blur Truth, Fiction, and	warfare You can use this to frame the Pakistani–Indian 2025 meme war inside a global paradigm of digital confrontation. Supports RQ1 (propaganda + counter-propaganda) Shows how memes are tools of state propaganda. Explains why Pakistani memes mocking India = counter-propaganda strategy. Gives the theoretical basis for “meme troops,” “digital battlegrounds,” and narrative combat. Supports RQ2 (panic vs normalization) TikTok war examples show how humor normalizes	warfare, and influencer culture. Strong global comparisons (Russia–Ukraine, China, US, Algeria). Provides powerful concepts like memetic warfare, meme troops, digital propaganda networks. <b>Weaknesses:</b> Not an empirical study. No quantitative or systematic data collection. Focused mostly on Western/global conflicts, not South Asia. <b>Gaps:</b> Does not study the India–Pakistan context. No audience reception analysis. Does not focus

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		out the global theory of meme warfare.	<p>conflict.</p> <p>D. Participatory Culture &amp; Intertextuality</p> <p>Memes as vernacular digital communication.</p> <p>Bottom-up &amp; top-down memetic practices.</p> <p>E. Digital Diplomacy &amp; Influencer Politics</p> <p>States, influencers, bots, troll farms shaping narratives.</p> <p>This framework deeply strengthens the theoretical chapter.</p>	<p>campaigns (Trump Meme Army)</p> <p>Uses examples, discourse analysis, and platform studies.</p>	<p>Manipulation</p> <p>Hard to distinguish bots, organic users, orchestrated campaigns.</p> <p>Memes can be seeded by actors like Russia, US, China, NATO.</p> <p>E. Citizen Memetics Can Resist or Amplify Propaganda</p> <p>Memes can be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Resistance</li> <li>• Solidarity</li> <li>• Satire</li> <li>• State propaganda</li> <li>• Authoritarian control</li> <li>• Political violence</li> <li>• Recruitment tools</li> </ul> <p>F. The Ukraine War = TikTok War</p> <p>TikTok became a major propaganda</p>	<p>conflict.</p> <p>Digital humor acts as coping → same as Pakistani memes in 2025.</p> <p>Supports RQ3 (undermining adversary + morale building)</p> <p>Shows how memetic attacks undermine the enemy (e.g., Trump memes, anti-Russia memes).</p> <p>Explains how humor boosts domestic morale.</p> <p>Helps frame the broader argument: Memes are not trivial — they are strategic weapons in digital conflict.</p>	<p>specifically on meme humor effects.</p> <p><b>Use for The Study:</b> Ideal for building the: Theoretical framework (memetic warfare) Background chapter (global digital warfare) Justification of study (why meme warfare matters) Discussion chapter (linking Pakistan's meme war with global patterns) This article strengthens the research academically and theoretically.</p>

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					<p>front:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Emotional templates</li> <li>● Gestural memes</li> <li>● Audio memes</li> <li>● Influencer soldiers</li> <li>● Dark humor &amp; daily life videos</li> </ul> <p>G. Memes Can Be Dangerous Under Authoritarian Regimes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● China → Winnie the Pooh memes censored</li> <li>● Algeria → man jailed for political memes</li> <li>● Russia → meme-sharing = extremism</li> </ul> <p>H. Memetic Literacy is Now Essential Understanding memes = understanding</p>		

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					modern propaganda. Memes shape global politics and war narratives.			
11	Dr. Ghazala Shoukat & Dr. Farhat Jokhiyo (2025)	Memes as Tools of Resistance, Distraction, and Tribalism: A Sociological Analysis of Digital Culture in Pakistan  Published in The Critical Review of Social Sciences Studies, Vol. 3, Issue 2, 2025.	A. Memetic Theory (Dawkins, 2006; Shifman, 2013)  • Memes as cultural replicators → rapidly evolving in digital ecosystems.  Focus: How Pakistani youth use memes for political resistance, emotional coping, and identity/triple-based group formation.  How memes operate as soft-power tools, expression of	B. Digital Sociology (Castells, 2013; Van Dijck, 2013)  • Memes reflect power, conflict, cultural codes, and platform-driven visibility.  C. Symbolic Interactionism (Mead, Blumer)  • Meaning-	Mixed-Methods Approach  1. Qualitative Content Analysis  • <b>Sample:</b> 30 viral Pakistani memes (Jan–March 2025)  • Themes: political satire, nationalism, religious humor, regional jokes, inflation, student frustration.  • Coding based on Shifman's meme analysis framework + contextual sociocultural markers.	A. Memes as Tools of Resistance (40%)  Criticize leadership, inflation, corruption, civil-military power. Youth use memes as safer political speech due to fear of backlash.  72% shared political memes recently; 60% used memes instead of open political debate.  B. Memes as Distraction & Emotional Coping (33%)  Humor used as psychological relief during crises	This article is <b>highly relevant</b> , especially for RQ1–RQ3.  RQ1 – Propaganda & Counter-Propaganda Shows how memes function as safer political dissent → indirect protest. Memes challenge dominant narratives through satire & coded humor.  RQ3 – Undermining Adversary & Boosting Morale Tribal memes strengthen national identity.  India–Pakistan rivalry humor = foundational to Pakistani digital	<b>Strengths:</b> Strong mixed-methods approach. Pakistan-specific – highly rare & valuable. <b>Use for The Study:</b> Excellent for the literature review, cultural context, and background chapters. Strong support for the arguments on humor, morale, resistance, identity, and youth behavior. You can use this to strengthen psychological & sociological dimensions of meme warfare.

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		dissent, psychological relief, and digital community building. This explores memes as sociocultural artifacts, not just humor.	making through memes → negotiated identities, humor, and interaction.		<p>83% used memes for stress relief.</p> <p>Memes integrated into daily routines → 54% scroll memes before sleep.</p> <p>C. Memes as Tribalism (27%)</p> <p>Strong in-group/out-group identity:</p> <p>D. Meaning-Making &amp; Identity</p> <p>Memes help youth negotiate identity, belonging, and political opinions.</p> <p>Humor + cultural symbols = identity performance.</p> <p>Memes blend local idioms, cricket culture, political slang, religious references.</p>	<p>morale.</p> <p>Shows how humor creates in-group solidarity and out-group mockery.</p> <p>Macro-Level Relevance</p> <p>Supports the argument that Pakistani meme culture is deeply political, emotional, and tribal → ideal for the research's cultural analysis section.</p>	

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12	Sundas Zahra & Dr. Muhammad Shahid (2025)	Narratives in Conflict: Media Framing and Propaganda During the 2025 India–Pakistan War  Published in Review Journal of Social Psychology & Social Works, Vol. 3, Issue 2 (April–June 2025)	A. Framing Theory – Entman (1993)  Media constructs reality by selecting certain elements and omitting others.  Focus: To analyze how Indian, Pakistani, and global media framed and constructed narratives around the 2025 conflict (Operation Sindoor vs Operation Bunyan-e-Marsoos).  To explore how propaganda devices, misinformation, selective reporting, and	Qualitative Case Study Analysis  Examined news coverage from: Indian media (Times Now, Republic TV, India Today) Pakistani media (Geo, ARY, Dunya News, ISPR releases) International media (CNN, BBC, Al Jazeera, RT, CGTN)  <b>Data included:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Headlines</li><li>Breaking news segments</li><li>Images/video frames</li><li>Social media hashtags</li><li>Doctoral videos &amp; unverified posts</li></ul>	A. Indian Media Framing <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Strong hyper-nationalistic tone.</li><li>Heavy reliance on unverified footage.</li><li>Frames used: Heroism / Surgical precision / Retaliatory justice / Anti-Pakistan aggression</li><li>Aligned closely with state messaging (Propaganda Model's sourcing filter).</li><li>Pakistan: #IndiaAttacks, #KashmirUnderFire, #StandWithPakistan</li><li>Youth-driven digital nationalism intensified tensions.</li></ul> E. Psychological & Emotional Impact <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Media sensationalism</li></ul> →	This article is <b>highly relevant</b> to the topic on <b>meme warfare &amp; narrative battles</b> during the 2025 conflict.  RQ1 – Memes as Propaganda / Counter-Propaganda  This study demonstrates: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>How official media narratives influenced memes.</li><li>How citizens used memes as counter-propaganda to resist Indian narratives.</li><li>How patriotic hashtags &amp; media narratives shaped meme content.</li></ul> Overall: This article gives you <b>macro-level media propaganda context</b>	

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		<p>emotional framing shaped public opinion. To understand how war was fought not just on ground but also through media and digital information warfare.</p>	<p>ng</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sourcing</li> <li>• Flak</li> <li>• Ideology</li> </ul> <p>Explains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hyper-nationalism</li> <li>• Biased war narratives</li> <li>• State–media alignment</li> </ul> <p>Controlled information flow Selective representation This framework directly links to information warfare and the memetic environment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Official statements &amp; military briefings</li> </ul> <p><b>Analytical Methods:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Framing analysis</li> <li>• Propaganda filter analysis</li> <li>• Cross-country media comparison</li> <li>• Disinformation tracking</li> <li>• This methodology reveals the narrative ecosystem where memes operate.</li> </ul>	<p>high emotional intensity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public opinions formed through <b>feelings, not facts</b>.</li> <li>• Rise of polarization, panic, confusion, and anger.</li> </ul> <p>F. War Was Fought Through Narratives Headlines + Hashtags = narrative battlefield. Media became an extension of warfare &amp; policy. Narrative victory became as important as territorial victory.</p>	<p>— essential for explaining why meme warfare erupted and how it shaped digital narratives.</p>	

**Appendix 2**  
**Memes Collection**

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fo/9osmdqoddatqhxbp376ws/AKC6hC8IeY8N0V8I3OSvguc?rlkey=jyit6hiop72h8nycvkp7hml3g&st=aqiachof&dl=0>

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