Journal of Media Horizons
ISSN: 2710-4060 2710-4052 Volume 6, Issue 3, 2025

MEME WARFARE IN DIGITAL AGE: AI GENERATED HUMOUR AS A TOOL IN INDIA-PAKISTAN CONFLICT (2025)

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DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.16932328

Keywords
Digital Warfare, AI-Generated Memes; India-Pakistan Conflict, Discourse Analysis

Article History
Received on 23 May 2025
Accepted on 27 July 2025
Published on 23 August 2025

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Abstract
This study investigates the emerging phenomenon of AI-generated memes as psychological weapons in the India-Pakistan conflict 2025, focusing on the digital warfare escalation. The research investigates how both nations are engaged in an "AI meme arms race," where synthetic content creation precedes and potentially instigates physical confrontations, effectively capturing audiences mentally before any military engagement occurs. Employing Baudrillard's hyper-reality theory as its primary theoretical framework, the study explores how AI-generated memes create self-referential war narratives independently of factual events. The research utilizes James Paul Gee's Seven Building Tasks for Discourse Analysis to systematically examine 10 purposively sampled AI-generated memes (5 from each side) collected from Facebook, the primary battleground for this digital conflict. The sample focuses on content exhibiting clear markers of AI generation, including deepfake imagery, algorithmically optimized humor, and synthetic text elements. The analysis addresses three critical dimensions: How AI memes construct hyperreal war narratives that blend and distort factual events, the comparative strategies employed by Indian and Pakistani digital combatants in meme warfare, and the mechanisms through which synthetic content achieves psychological impact before physical conflict. The study particularly examines how AI tools enable rapid, mass-produced content that traditional fact-checking mechanisms cannot effectively counter, creating an environment where simulated realities dictate public perception and potentially influence policy decisions. This research contributes to the growing body of knowledge on digital warfare by providing discourse analysis of AI-generated memes in interstate conflict. Indian and Pakistani memes deploy contrasting strategies to assert national superiority; India emphasizes dominance and heroification Modi, while Pakistan uses satire to undermine Modi and highlight its own resilience. Both sides construct power hierarchies and geopolitical narratives through symbolic practices, metaphors, and visual rhetoric.

INTRODUCTION

The digital age has transformed warfare, extending battlegrounds beyond physical borders into the psychological and virtual realms. Cyberwarfare has changed contemporary conflicts by impacting military strategy, national security, and international stability (Gurung, 2025). Among the most powerful tools in this new era of war is weaponized humor. Specifically, AI-generated memes manipulate public perception,

reinforce nationalist narratives, and escalate tensions between adversarial nations. Social media political memes created by AI significantly impact political discourse and civic involvement; Republicans use AI to target outgroups, while Democrats use it to boost their group (Chang et al., 2024).

The May 9-10, 2025, digital escalation between India and Pakistan saw an unprecedented surge in AI-generated memes, reflecting an "AI meme arms race" where synthetic content outpaced traditional propaganda. Unlike human-created memes, AI-generated variants leverage deepfake imagery, algorithmic humor optimization, and synthetic text to produce mass-disseminated, emotionally charged content designed to provoke, ridicule, or radicalize. Deep fakes are artificially synthesized media that can be used and misused, and can be perceptually and forensically distinguished from reality (Farid, 2022). This study aims to analyze how AI-generated memes construct hyperreal war narratives by blending and distorting factual events, and to compare the meme warfare strategies employed by Indian and Pakistani digital combatants in shaping conflict narratives. This will not discuss ethical considerations, but rather, it will talk about warfare narratives—how humor can be used as a weapon in war.

The 2025 India-Pakistan conflict marked a critical turning point in digital warfare, where AI-generated memes emerged as a psychological weapon deployed before conventional military engagement. This study examines the role of algorithmically engineered humor in shaping hyperreal war narratives, influencing public sentiment, and potentially instigating real-world confrontations. It is limited to AI-generated memes shared on Facebook during the conflict, and does not account for other platforms or human-created meme content.

1.1. The Concept of Weaponized Humor in Digital Warfare

In the digital age, warfare now includes the online information sphere, where memetic warfare plays a vital role. During the Russia-Ukraine war, Russia employs Maskirovka-based tactics to spread disinformation and create false narratives, in response, civic resistance group engages in defensive memetic warfare using humor and irony to counteract (Munk, 2025). By combining ideology with humor, memes can subtly manipulate public opinion, drive stereotypes, polarize nations, and play on emotions (Mihăilescu, 2024).

Humour is a vital coping mechanism during crises and societal change, presenting cross-cultural, empirical, and theoretical research (Vanderheiden & Mayer, 2024). AI's integration into cultural discourse creates a hybrid marketplace of ideas, reshaping creativity, influence, and cultural evolution. This shift demands reevaluating socio-legal and ethical frameworks to address challenges in intellectual property, authenticity, and equitable participation while harnessing AI's transformative potential (Chaffer et al., 2025).

1.2. Memes as Tools of Information Warfare

Once thought to be unimportant, memes are now an effective means of uplifting young people, fostering a sense of community, and challenging existing hierarchies of power (Kang'ethe & Onyango, 2024). Memes have emerged as a significant and influential form of online communication, deeply embedded in digital culture, particularly among youth (Romadhon, 2024). Influencers via stylized, curated lives and images act as influential media agents whose work does not depict an authentic reality but rather creates simulacra; images that replace reality, with no referent original (Hania & Souad, 2024).

Online communities have a subtle, context-dependent stance towards AI-generated content, and human-computer interaction platform designers need to place greater emphasis on these communities' changing needs and autonomy as generative AI becomes embedded in social media (Lloyd et al., 2025). Memes can be weaponized in information warfare to manipulate public opinion and incite action, potentially playing a role in modern armed conflicts (Liagusha & Iarovyi, 2025).

According to Mejova et al. (2025), Ukrainian users on Twitter effectively employed memes as tools of digital resistance and narrative construction during the war. He revealed that memes were not only humorous but also carried strong ideological messages that framed the conflict from a pro-Ukrainian perspective.

1.3. The Rise of AI-Generated Memes in Digital Conflicts

The rise of generative AI poses both transformative opportunities and serious risks to electoral integrity. These technologies enable large-scale manipulation through disinformation, AI-generated propaganda, and psychological influence, threatening democratic processes (Imran, 2025). There are valid concerns that the emergence of deepfakes and generative AI could undermine confidence in democratic elections (Łabuz & Nehring, 2024). Generative AI, which can generate images, sounds, and text from inputs by the users, can change individual-to-individual interactions as well as business processes with its wide range of applications (Janjeva et al., 2023).

AI-generated content super-spreaders have higher bot scores, suggesting automated accounts play a key role, with possible coordinated bot activity (Chen et al., 2025). Deepfakes act as a prism through which to view wider ideological contradictions surrounding technological regulation, emphasizing the imperative for consent-led strategies in regulating synthetic media (Santoriello, 2025).

The true depth of AI's potential lies not in raw computational power alone, but in its ability to foster ethically grounded human connections; transforming it from a mere tool into a genuine collaborator within our collective human narrative (Smith & Levin, 2025). To ensure AI development, transparency in model training and datasets is crucial to detect biases and risks early (Erol et al., 2025). Additionally, public awareness and education about language model vulnerabilities can help mitigate the harmful effects of toxic AI-generated content.

1.4. The India-Pakistan Digital Conflict Landscape (2025)

India and Pakistan fought a limited four-day war from May 7 to 10, 2025. The exchange of airstrikes between the two countries started after India launched Operation Sindoor by carrying out strikes on various civilian targets in Pakistan and Azad Kashmir on the pretext of a response to the Pehalgam attack (Staff, 2025). This article mentioned both sides' perspectives. In a press briefing on Wednesday, May 7, Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri asserted that the missile strikes "targeted destroying the terrorist infrastructure and incapacitating terrorists likely to be dispatched to India". On the other hand, the Indian airstrike was characterized by ISPR as an "unprovoked attack, targeting innocent people".

The Indian strike was retaliated against by Pakistan by targeting various military targets in India and Occupied Kashmir. Ellis-Petersen (2025) covered the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's May 12, 2025, statement, in which he mentioned that India has only paused military action, not ended it; future terrorist attacks will be met with retaliation on India's terms. On the other side, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif invites India to live as a 'peaceful neighbour', as he said, "We won the war but seek peace" (Bacha & Ali, 2025). Pakistan's response to Indian aggression was effective, said PM Shahbaz (Desk, 2025).

1.5. Fifth Generation Warfare

Fifth Generation Warfare (5GW) involves non-kinetic techniques like secrecy, manipulation, and psychological warfare to achieve strategic objectives without resorting to overt war or violence (Krishnan, 2024). According to Wagner & Cetinic (2025), the widespread creation of deepfake content raises serious ethical concerns, violating individual dignity and consent. Such dynamics reflect a broader pattern of exploitative practices in the generative AI space. While the development of technology is not fixed, platform mechanisms often intensify harmful trends.

The fifth generation warfare focuses on controlling narratives to destabilize adversaries without direct combat, blurs lines between war and peace, often waged in information spaces; 5GW intensifies this by using AI-driven disinformation, cyberattacks, and psychological operations to erode trust in institutions (Qureshi, 2019). 4GW emphasizes asymmetric conflict, where non-state actors (e.g., insurgents, terrorists) challenge traditional militaries, technology (e.g., social media, drones) amplifies influence operations. Qureshi highlights how modern warfare has shifted from kinetic battles to cognitive and digital domains, where controlling perceptions is as critical as physical dominance.

1.6. Baudrillard's Hyperreality and the Blurring of Fact/Fiction

Baudrillard's concept of hyperreality describes a condition where simulations (e.g., AI-generated

memes) become more influential than objective reality, creating a self-referential system of signs detached from factual events (Baudrillard, 1994). Hyperreality is a state in which virtual signs memes, AI-generated images, scripted histories no longer point to external facts but self-generate "truth." Within this world, disputed epistemologies collapse into a hypermediated semiotic order: here, the question of the most importance is not whether something exists, but whether the simulacrum of it spreads believably (Essien, 2024). Van Kessel et al. (2025) use Baudrillard's theory of hyperreality to describe how in sites such as Facebook or Twitter, disinformation is not simply inaccurate information, but part of an invented virtual world in which simulation displaces actual referents, fiction replaces fact, and public opinion is influenced by symbolic fit rather than empirical proof.

1.7. Gee's Discourse Analysis and the Construction of Narratives

James Paul Gee's Seven Building Tasks of Discourse Analysis provide a framework for understanding how language constructs reality through significance (how language highlights or downplays meanings), practices or activities (how it enacts certain actions or behaviors), identities (how speakers position themselves and other), relationships (how social relations are shaped or maintained), politics (how power, status, and resources are distributed), connections (how ideas and events are linked or separated), and sign systems and knowledge (how systems of knowledge or belief are legitimated or questioned). James (2017) outlines the foundations and practical applications of discourse analysis, particularly how language is used not just to convey information but to perform social actions and construct social realities.

2. Research Methodology

This study investigates the use of AI-generated memes as psychological weapons in the India-Pakistan conflict to examine how synthetic content shapes hyperreal war narratives and influences public perception, addressing the emerging challenge of digital warfare and information manipulation in interstate conflicts.

2.1. Research Approach

This study uses a qualitative and interpretivist approach that focuses on discourse. In particular, it treats memes as communicative texts and applies discourse-analytic theory. Zeb et al. (2025) describe a similar study as "qualitative research through critical discourse analysis (CDA) of political and cultural memes". Study explores social meanings and narratives (not frequencies), guided by theory (Baudrillard's hyperreality) and by Gee's discourse framework. The research is exploratory and comparative. It explores a new phenomenon (AI-generated meme warfare). It is descriptive in that it characterizes how memes construct war narratives because it compares Indian vs. Pakistani meme content. The data consists of qualitative digital artifacts – specifically, AI-generated memes (FaceBook reels). Data include deepfake-style images, stylized humor text, etc., which are analyzed as discourse rather than as numerical data. Memes were collected from Facebook reels. The collection was done manually by searching relevant keywords/groups and identifying content flagged by users or community moderators as AI-generated. In our case, only Facebook was used (as the "primary battleground"), but the principle is the same – mining social media for topical meme content. This study is conducted using purposive sampling (non-random, criterion-based selection). Memes were chosen specifically for relevance to the Indo-Pak conflict and clear AI-generation markers. The sample aimed to capture the most politically charged and AI-styled memes. The study analyzes 10 memes in total (5 from Indian sources, 5 from Pakistani sources). Each was selected for its illustrative content. Well-chosen items suffice to explore the discourse patterns of interest. Analysis was conducted using conceptual tools. This research employed Baudrillard's hyperreality theory (to interpret how memes simulate and Gee's Seven Building Tasks framework (to systematically decode meaning in each meme). The data were analyzed via discourse analysis using Gee's seven "building tasks". Each meme was dissected along these tasks (e.g. significance, practice, identity, relationships, politics, connections, sign systems) to reveal how it constructs a war narrative. This research interpreted memes as simulations that can "generate a 'real without origin or reality': a hyperreal" representation.

3. India Side Memes



India Side Meme 001: India Vs Pakistan hahahaha hehe are so much

In this Meme, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi is shown riding on heavy bike and President of Russia Vladimir Putin is shown as ally of India. Both are on heavy bike and going with fast speed with their fast moving vehicle. On the other side, Prime Minister of Pakistan Shahbaz Sharif with his ally on old fashioned scooter, Shahbaz Sharif is pushing the scooter and his allies are trying to drive it.



India Side Meme 002: India Vs Pakistan hahahaha

The content creator has divided this meme into three parts. The first part shows humiliation. In first part, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi poke fun of Prime Minister of Pakistan Shahbaz Sharif, by eating the biscuits himself and not giving to him. It has also attempted to give the impression that US President Trump is also favoring Modi in this act.

In the second part, Modi is humiliating Shahbaz by dragging like a dog. In the third part, Modi is teasing Shahbaz by giving him a fake biscuit.



India Side Meme 003: Pakistan hahahahahe

This meme shows Modi searching, chasing, and dragging shahbaz. Modi is riding on lion, viewing through his Mariner Telescope, Shahbaz is hiding and fearing. Modi find Shahbaz and chase him on his lion while shahbaz is running away from him in fear to save his life. Soon, Modi grab Shahbaz and drag him with rope.



India Side Meme 004: India Vs Pakistan hahahaha hehe you are

In this meme, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, US President Donald Trump and Pakistani Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif are shown playing football. Modi and Trump passing the ball to each other while Shahbaz is not getting any chance to reach football, he is trying a lot of times but every time he is not able to get even close to the ball, due to which he is constantly frustrated. Modi is showing him his excellent skills,

swinging the ball left and right with his feet. Meanwhile, Shahbaz geta change to get the ball but loses his balance and falls into the mud, and the other two make fun of him.



India Side Meme 005: Pakistan hahahaha India

The creator has shown Modi and Shahbaz as kids playing with their plane. Shahbaz with serious face while Modi has smile on his face and enjoying the situation. Suddenly, plane is on attacking mode, streams of water appear to be coming out of it and Modi is saying what will he do with his plane while Shahbaz is unable to do anything.

3.1. Analysis

These five memes repeatedly tell a story of Indian superiority and hegemony over Pakistan, often with the tacit or overt backing of the United States. They utilize diverse symbolic representations and scenarios to depict humiliation, weakness, and frustration on the part of Pakistan and strength, proficiency, and strategic partnerships on the part of India.

Through Gee's seven building tasks, this section examines how meaning, identity, and social contexts are negotiated in India side memes.

3.1.1. Significance

These memes highlight Indian dominance and Pakistani inferiority, especially in geopolitics and defense. Memes construct contrasting narratives—India as technologically superior and dominant in Meme 001, ironically deluded, humbled, and deceptive at the same time in Meme 002, as dominance in Meme 003, and as superiority in Meme 004 and Meme 005—highlighting different facets of national identity and conflict perception. The significance is placed on strength, modernity, alliances, and humiliation, constructing Modi as a symbol of national pride and Shahbaz Sharif as a weak, ridiculed figure. The exaggerated visuals (e.g., riding a lion, controlling a plane, playing with Trump) emphasize Indian power and mock Pakistani efforts.

3.1.2. Practices or Activities

The memes construct and reflect political rivalry and nationalistic pride, particularly within the online meme warfare between India and Pakistan. Activities include: Military and diplomatic strength (riding lion, fighter jets), as shown in Meme 003 and Meme 005.

Alliances (friendship with Putin and Trump), as shown in Meme 001 and Meme 004. Humiliation rituals (denial of biscuits, dragging like a dog), as shown in Meme 002. These practices mimic real-world geopolitical events through symbolic, humorous depictions.

3.1.3. Identities

Modi is constructed as dominant, assertive, and strategic, with heroic or even imperial traits (riding a lion, superior player), as in Meme 003 and Meme 004. Shahbaz Sharif is portrayed as weak, dependent, and humiliated, representing Pakistan as lacking power or competence, as in Meme 005. While Putin and Trump act as global power brokers, as in Meme 001 and Meme 002, reinforcing Modi's importance on the world stage, Pakistan's leader is depicted either as weak and struggling or narratively stronger despite physical subjugation.

3.1.4. Relationships

The memes structure hierarchical dynamics—Meme 001 asserts India's superiority and Pakistan's inferiority; Meme 002 subverts this by exposing India's hubris and Pakistan's effective resistance, thus inverting power relations, Meme 003 shows that the interaction is one-sided, Modi exerts force while Shahbaz can only flee or be captured, Meme 004 reinforces a power asymmetry, Modi and Trump share a partnership (India-US ties), and Meme 005 shows uncontested dominance, the attacking mode signifies aggressive action or strategic moves by India.

3.1.5. Politics

Symbolic capital is central, with Meme 001 reinforcing India's claim to regional leadership through digital humiliation, while Meme 002 critiques nationalist mythmaking by highlighting the fragility of India's official narratives. Meme 003 reflects real-world India-Pakistan tensions, framing Modi as assertive and Shahbaz as defenseless. Meme 004 reflects India-US strategic cooperation, and Shahbaz's mud-fall symbolizes loss of dignity or national status. Meme 005 transforms childhood toys into weapons, mirroring real-world military tensions where water attacks symbolize technological/strategic superiority.

3.1.6. Connections

In Meme 001, the creator uses vehicles as national metaphors, biked as modernized military or economic systems, while scooters as old-fashioned infrastructure. Meme 002, food as a metaphor for power, biscuits as resources, fake gifts symbolize economic coercion and Modi dragging Shahbaz shows military aggression, evokes imagery of uncontested territorial dominance (e.g., Kashmir disputes). Meme 003, symbolic warfare, the lion (power and courage), telescope (strategic foresight, ability to locate and track opponents), and rope symbolize intelligence superiority, reducing the conflict to a game of pursuit. Meme 004, sports as a power struggle, football becomes a metaphor for diplomatic maneuvering, Shahbaz's inability to play the game suggests Pakistan's failed foreign policy. Meme 005 uses childhood nostalgia to frame geopolitical conflict; toy planes become metaphors for national defense capabilities.

3.1.7. Sign Systems & Knowledge

Meme 001 uses vehicle humor to simplify complex geopolitics and requires an understanding of current alliances and development gaps. Meme 002 uses childish imagery (food fights, pet treatment) to trivialize serious geopolitical oppression, relying on audience familiarity with India-Pakistan resource disparities and US-India strategic ties. Meme 003 uses exaggerated, almost cartoonish imagery to reinforce a narrative of India's supremacy over Pakistan. Meme 004 uses sports tropes to simplify complex politics into winners vs losers, targets an audience familiar with India-Pakistan-US dynamics, and reinforces stereotypes. Meme 005 employs childish imagery to emphasize political domination for audience familiarity with India-Pakistan power dynamics.

3.2. Pakistan Side Memes



Pakistan Side Meme 001: This video has set the world on fire

In this video, the creator has tried to show that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, despite all his efforts, he was unable to succeed in his claims of stopping the Pakistan's water. Instead, Pakistani Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif and his ally are enjoying the abundance of water. Both are enjoying themselves in the swimming pool while their opponent is watching them through the binoculars, he numbed and vanquished, shaking his head in despondent.



Pakistan Side Meme 002: Why did India declare a ceasefire?

The creator arouses the power of air defense of Pakistan. During war, Pakistani jets strike Indian territories while Indian PM Modi and Minister of Home Affairs Amit Shah are lamenting the situation that why they put them in this situation. Meanwhile, Pakistani Prime Minister and Army Chief are seeing through binoculars and carefully observing the war situation.



Pakistan Side Meme 003: ro Modi ro

In this reel, the creator has presented Modi as a junk collector. He is collecting the drones and other wreckage. He is carrying all the wrecks in his cart and showing them to people everywhere, but no one is willing to take it at all. Everything is ruined, and he wanders the streets.



Pakistan Side Meme 004: Modi's Mission Sindoor

n this reel, he is shown riding his drone. It takes off and after flying a short distance, it crashes to the ground. And along with that, he also ends up lying down on the ground. His drone is destroyed completely without any harm to its target. Modi is self-sabotaged, his incompetence defeated him before the war even started.



Pakistan Side Meme 005: Rafaell

In this reel, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Pakistani Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif are shown as children. Modi is showing his plane to shahbaz, Rafael as the symbol of power. Shahbaz suddenly jump and smashed the plane in no time and all pride was turned to dust.

3.2. Analysis

Pakistan side memes serve as counter-narratives to Indian digital propaganda. They distort, ridicule, and invert India's claims to dominance by reframing failures as victories, mocking strength as weakness, and empowering national pride through satire. These memes build a hyperreal digital battlefield.

Through Gee's seven building tasks, this section examines how meaning, identity, and social contexts are negotiated in Pakistan side memes.

3.2.1. Significance

Meme 001 frames water as the symbol of control, where Modi's claims are mocked (his inability to stop Pakistan's water), and Sharif's victory is highlighted (enjoying water despite Modi's efforts), while on the other side, Modi watches helplessly while Sharif celebrates. Meme 002 shows Pakistan's air superiority (jets striking India successfully), Indian leadership's regret and panic, and (Modi & Amit Shah lamenting their decisions), Pakistani leadership's calm control (PM & Army Chief observing strategically). Meme 003 portrays Modi as a failed leader whose efforts are useless and unwanted; broken drones and wreckage represent failed projects, policies, or military losses, no one wants his "junk," implying his work has no real value. Meme 004 portrays Modi as incapable and clumsy; Modi's drone crash symbolizes failed technology, poor strategy, or lack of control. Meme

005 shows that Pakistan can effortlessly destroy India's symbols of power, rendering Modi's pride meaningless; Modi's plane (Rafale) symbolizes India's military power, and Shahbaz's easy destruction of the plane represents Pakistan's ability to neutralize India's assets.

3.2.2. Practices or Activities

Meme 001 shows Modi's struggle (trying but failing to stop water), Sharif's celebration (enjoying the water in a pool, showing dominance). Meme 002 reinforces the idea that Pakistan is proactive, while India is reactive and failing, with Pakistan's military action (jets attacking, leaders monitoring), and India's reaction (leaders in distress, unable to respond effectively). Meme 003 shows Modi collecting wreckage, suggesting that he is scavenging from past failures, showing junk to people implies that he is trying (and failing) to sell his achievements, and public rejection reinforces the idea that his work has no worth. Meme 004 satirical degradation of authority, Modi attempting to operate a drone suggests a failed attempt at power or control, the drone crashing immediately implies technical or strategic incompetence, and Modi falling with it shows his actions lead to his downfall (literally and symbolically). Meme 005 is about expected power dynamic (India's military superiority) vs. actual outcome (instant Pakistani dominance), Modi displaying his plane shows overconfidence in military hardware, and Shahbaz quickly smashing it shows decisive and easy victory over Indian capabilities, Modi's reaction is pride turning to dust, complete humiliation, and reversal of power perception.

3.2.3. Identities

Meme 001 portrays Modi as weak, ineffective, and frustrated (shaking head in despondency), Sharif & Ally are shown as confident, victorious, and relaxed (enjoying the pool), while Binoculars suggest Modi is a distant observer, powerless to intervene. Meme 002 shows Pakistani Leadership (PM & Army Chief) as strategic, composed, and powerful, while Indian Leadership (Modi & Shah) as regretful, panicked, and weak (lamenting their decisions). Meme 003 shows Modi as a powerless, pitiable, and ridiculous junk collector, desperate for validation (showing wreckage to people who ignore him and reject what Modi offers them). Meme 004 portrays Modi as incompetent, foolish, and powerless, self-destructive, representing that his actions cause his defeat, the drone depicts as failed power projection (crashes without achieving anything). Meme 005 shows Modi as arrogant but weak, who proudly shows off but cannot protect his toy, Shahbaz as decisive and powerful, acts swiftly and effectively, and wins without apparent effort.

3.2.4. Relationships

Meme 001 shows the power balance; Sharif is in control and Modi is helpless, emphasizing that Pakistan wins this round. Meme 002 is about power dynamics, Pakistan is dominant and India is submissive; as Military Asymmetry, Pakistan's air force is successful and India's defenses fail. Meme 003 is about Leader vs. People; Modi is disconnected from the public (who ignore him), a PM reduced to a helpless street vendor. Meme 004 shows that Modi is incompetent in handling the tools of power, as a leader who defeats himself before an enemy even engages. Meme 005 is about interaction style; one boasts, the other destroys effortlessly, Shahbaz is positioned above Modi despite equal child status.

3.2.5. Politics

Meme 001 ridicules Indian efforts while celebrating Pakistani resilience; criticizes Modi's policies (suggesting his claims are empty), supports Sharif's leadership (showing him in a positive light). Meme 002 serves as propaganda reinforcing nationalist pride in Pakistan while mocking India; Pakistani military strength (successful air strikes), Indian leadership incompetence (Modi & Shah are to blame for defeat), superiority of Pakistan's decision-making (calm observation vs. Indian panic). Meme 003 mocks Modi's policies; criticism of Modi's leadership (his work is "junk"), drones as a possible reference to failed tech or defense, and Public dissatisfaction (no one wants what he's selling). Meme 004 is a Criticism of Modi's leadership; a mockery of India's tech capabilities (drones crashing as a possible reference to real failures), narrative of self-sabotage as Modi's actions lead to failure. Meme 005 is Pakistan's military superiority over Indian technology; mockery of India's defense investments (Rafale as ineffective), and Pakistan's claims of neutralizing Indian air power.

3.2.6. Connections

Meme 001 connects water as resource control (Modi couldn't stop it), the swimming pool as abundance and victory, and Modi's binoculars as detachment and powerlessness. Meme 002 shows jets striking India as Pakistan's unstoppable power, here the binoculars as Pakistani leaders' strategic vision, and lamenting Indian leaders as a failure of Indian policies. Meme 003 connects Junk cart as accumulated failures, Drones wreckage as military or tech shortcomings, and empty streets as a lack of public support. Meme 004 connects the drone as a symbol of modern warfare strategy, crash as leadership failure, and an unaffected target as Modi's policies have no real impact. Meme 005 symbolizes Modi's display of military pride and humiliation by Pakistani action; a child's toy plane as military hardware as ultimately fragile, dust as complete nullification of Indian power, and a playground setting as geopolitics as childish competition.

3.2.7. Sign Systems & Knowledge

Meme 001 uses visual metaphors (swimming pool vs. binoculars), assumes viewer understands: India-Pakistan water disputes, Modi's claims about stopping water, and political rivalry between the leaders. Meme 002 uses visual storytelling of Action (jets attacking) vs. reaction (Indian leaders panicking) and Binoculars as surveillance and control, assumes viewers understand; India-Pakistan military tensions, Modi & Shah's political roles, and the symbolic meaning of war scenarios in nationalist discourse. Meme 003 uses visual metaphors of the junk collector as a fallen leader and ignored by people as a loss of public trust, assumes viewers recognize; Modi's real-world image, and satire of political propaganda (selling false success). Meme 004 uses visual metaphors of a falling drone as a collapse of authority and Modi falling with it as his undoing, assumes viewers recognize; Modi's strongman image (contrasted with his depicted incompetence), possible references to real drone failures or military shortcomings, and satire of political overpromising vs under-delivering. Meme 005 uses visual metaphors of child representation as a simplification of complex issues and instant destruction as the claim of Pakistani military superiority, assumes viewers recognize; the significance of Rafale jets in India-Pakistan military balance, Modi's emphasis on military modernization, and ongoing tensions between the nations.

4. Findings

In James Paul Gee's first building task, "Significance," a comparative analysis of Indian and Pakistani memes reveals that both use language and semiotic choices to emphasize national strength and geopolitical superiority, but through contrasting methods, Indian memes construct a narrative of Indian superiority by highlighting military dominance, technological advancement, and global alliances, often heroification of Prime Minister Modi as a powerful, even mythological, figure. These memes portray Pakistan as weak and backward, magnifying Indian national pride and delegitimizing Pakistani agency. Conversely, Pakistani memes reclaim power through irony and mockery, focusing on perceived Indian failures in military actions and technology while highlighting Pakistani resilience and strategic competence. They delegitimize Modi by portraying him as weak and out of control, placing significance on Pakistan's ability to resist and symbolically humiliate India. Ultimately, while Indian memes use significance to project power and dominance, Pakistani memes leverage it to expose vulnerabilities and assert a narrative of subversion and resistance, with Modi serving as a central, albeit celebrated or ridiculed, figure in both cross-national narratives.

In Indian Side Memes, Modi is depicted as dominant, assertive, and strategic, often in heroic or imperial imagery (e.g., riding a lion, outplaying opponents). His global stature is elevated, as he is showcased alongside powerful leaders like Putin and Trump, reinforcing India's geopolitical influence. He is constructed as a strong leader who dominates Pakistan, while Shahbaz Sharif is shown as weak. On the other side, in Pakistani Side Memes, Modi is portrayed as weak, ineffective, and frustrated (e.g., shaking his head in despondency, ignored by others). His power is undermined—shown as a "distant observer" (binoculars meme), a "junk collector" (desperate for validation), or even self-destructive (drone crash). He is humiliated and powerless, while the Pakistani leadership is confident and victorious. In Indian Side Memes, Shahbaz Sharif is weak, dependent, and humiliated, symbolizing Pakistan's incompetence (e.g., submissive posture, losing in

strategic games). Pakistan is framed as lacking agency, with leaders either struggling or narratively overpowered despite physical subjugation. While on the Pakistani Side Memes, Shahbaz Sharif (or Pakistani leadership) is confident, strategic, and powerful, often relaxed in victory (e.g., enjoying a pool, decisively acting against Modi). Pakistan is shown as composed and victorious, while Indian leadership is regretful and panicked.

James Paul Gee's third building task, Practices or Activities, concerns how language (and by extension, visual media like memes) enacts or reflects social practices, routines, and culturally meaningful actions. Indian memes construct a set of practices centered around military prowess, global diplomacy, and symbolic humiliation of adversaries. Memes such as riding lions, piloting fighter jets, or engaging with world leaders like Putin and Trump represent national strength. Moreover, the act of publicly humiliating Pakistan's leadership, like biscuit denial or physical dragging, re-enacts domination. Conversely, Pakistani memes emphasize practices that reflect strategic resistance, public humiliation of Indian failures, and the reassertion of national control. Memes depict Pakistani leaders enjoying resources Modi failed to block, military leaders calmly directing airstrikes, and Modi reduced to a scavenger or a failed drone operator.

Both Sides memes construct hierarchical power dynamics between the two nations, shaping how their leaders and militaries interact. In Indian Side Memes, India is dominant, with Modi in control (riding a lion, strategic moves), Pakistan is either submissive (fleeing, captured) or humiliated (Meme 003, 005). India-US partnership (Modi & Trump) reinforces India's global alliances (Meme 004). In these memes, no focus on Indian public opinion; focus is on leadership dominance. Conversely, in Pakistani Side Memes, Pakistan is dominant, with Shahbaz Sharif in control, Modi is helpless, frustrated, or ignored (Meme 001, 002). India's arrogance leads to self-defeat (Meme 004, drone crashes, Modi's boasts backfire), also highlighting public rejection of Modi, weakening his authority (Meme 003).

James Paul Gee's third building task, Practices or Activities, concerns how language (and by extension, visual media like memes) enacts or reflects social practices, routines, and culturally meaningful actions. Indian memes construct a set of practices centered around military prowess, global diplomacy, and symbolic humiliation of adversaries. Memes such as riding lions, piloting fighter jets, or engaging with world leaders like Putin and Trump represent national strength. Moreover, the act of publicly humiliating Pakistan's leadership, like biscuit denial or physical dragging, re-enacts domination. Conversely, Pakistani memes emphasize practices that reflect strategic resistance, public humiliation of Indian failures, and the reassertion of national control. Memes depict Pakistani leaders enjoying resources Modi failed to block, military leaders calmly directing airstrikes, and Modi reduced to a scavenger or a failed drone operator.

In the context of Indian and Pakistani memes, both sides use metaphors, symbols, and analogies to frame geopolitical conflicts, but with contrasting perspectives that reinforce their respective national narratives. In Indian Side Memes, vehicles (bikes vs. scooters) portrays to contrast India's modernization with Pakistan's outdated systems, food metaphors (biscuits, fake gifts) symbolize economic and military dominance, animal symbolism (lion, telescope, rope) frames India as strategically superior and sports metaphors (football) depict Pakistan as incompetent in diplomacy, while India is always winning. Conversely, in Pakistani Side Memes, Water and swimming pools signify Pakistan's resilience against India's control, military imagery (jets, drones) portrays India's failures and Pakistan's unstoppable power, junk carts and empty streets symbolize India's systemic collapse, and Toy planes and dust reduce India's military pride to fragility.

Sign Systems and Knowledge explores how semiotic tools, such as symbols, imagery, narratives, and visual metaphors, are used to construct meaning and convey cultural or political knowledge. Indian Memes rely on the viewer's internalized sense of national pride and regional dominance, while Pakistani Memes require understanding of specific political events (e.g., water disputes, Rafale deal), symbolic personas (Modi, Shah), and the military-political ecosystem. Both reduce complexity, but with differing tone, India through mockery and dominance, Pakistan through satire and political critique. Same as, both sides weaponize childishness, but in reverse roles, India

infantilizes Pakistan, while Pakistan infantilizes Indian leadership.

5. Discussion

5.1. Construction of National Significance through Symbolic Emphasis

Indian memes tend to glorify achievements in technology, military power, and international diplomacy, portraying India as a global leader and Pakistan as a declining force. For instance, memes showing Modi riding lions or engaging confidently with world leaders frame India as superior and assertive. In contrast, Pakistani memes challenge this narrative by mocking Indian failures, showcasing technical mishaps or political embarrassments to highlight Pakistan's strategic strength. Through selective emphasis, these memes create a symbolic hierarchy, making specific aspects of national identity seem more "significant" while trivializing others. Thus, memes serve not merely as humor but as tools for constructing and contesting the meaning of geopolitical events.

5.2. Strategic Use of AI-Generated Memes

Building on theories of memes as persuasive political acts, these AI-generated memes enable states and communities to orchestrate humor that reinforces identities, delegitimizes opponents, and contests official narratives in emotionally powerful and decentralized ways. AI-augmented media editing presents both significant opportunities and serious risks for digital culture. While it has the potential to transform visual perception, collective memory, and personal identity, its impact depends on how society guides its development (Alnaser, 2024). The policies and discussions we establish now will decide whether AI fosters creativity, inclusivity, and knowledge or fuels disinformation, division, and distrust. To ensure positive outcomes, responsible innovation, thoughtful regulation, and cultural adaptation are crucial.

5.3. Strategic Construction of Political Identities

Indian memes consistently elevate Modi, portraying him as a decisive, heroic, and masculine leader often in a larger-than-life manner. These portrayals reinforce national pride and support for his leadership. In contrast, Pakistani memes depict Modi as ineffective or foolish, usually isolating him in exaggerated or humiliating situations. Simultaneously, Pakistani leaders are shown as calm, victorious, and intelligent. These binary constructions hero vs. villain, competent vs. clueless are not just satirical but serve ideological functions. They help establish a sense of in-group superiority and out-group inferiority, contributing to the emotional reinforcement of nationalism. Such portrayals shape public opinion and reinforce collective identities through digital storytelling.

5.4. Symbolic and Metaphorical Warfare

Memes are deeply reliant on metaphor and symbolism to convey political messages, reflecting Gee's building task of Connections. Indian memes frequently use imagery such as animals (e.g., lions), vehicles, and sports metaphors to suggest modernity, speed, and strategic dominance. These elements help frame Pakistan as outdated, weak, or incompetent. In response, Pakistani memes utilize similar symbolic tools—toy planes, broken equipment, and battleground settings to ridicule Indian efforts, portraying them as childish, fragile, or ineffective. This symbolic warfare not only entertains but also simplifies complex geopolitical conflicts into emotionally charged visuals.

5.5. Weaponized Humor and Digital Nationalism

The memes blur truth and parody to fuel affective nationalism and hybrid warfare tactics, circulating within algorithm-driven echo chambers that amplify nationalistic pride, ridicule, and humiliation as tools of symbolic conflict.

5.5. Automated Influence and Risks of Backfire

The 2025 conflict's AI-driven meme production allows rapid, large-scale humor weaponization, but exaggerated satire like India Side 002 can backfire by undermining credibility and being interpreted as desperation or propaganda, limiting its effectiveness.

5.6. Memes as Virtual Political Practices

Indian memes often simulate acts of dominance, such as defeating enemies, taming wild beasts, or engaging with powerful nations. These are visual metaphors for India's aspirations of regional and global supremacy. Pakistani memes, in turn, engage in counter-practices—mocking these dominant representations by

showing Modi in absurd or failed scenarios, thereby subverting Indian narratives of power.

6. Conclusion

The analysis of Indian and Pakistani AI-generated memes through Gee's Seven Building Tasks and Baudrillard's hyperreality reveals how digital narratives construct, distort, and weaponize war discourse. These memes are not mere humor; they strategically shape identities, relationships, and power dynamics in the hyperreal space of online conflict. Indian memes amplify narratives of dominance, portraying Modi as a mythic hero and Pakistan as incompetent, while Pakistani memes counter with resistance, ridiculing Modi and asserting Pakistan's resilience. Both sides employ exaggerated symbolism, Modi as a lion-riding conqueror or a buffoonish bully, transforming geopolitical tensions into digestible, emotionally charged visuals.

Gee's framework demonstrates how these memes assign significance, enact practices, and construct identities, reinforcing nationalist ideologies. Meanwhile, Baudrillard's hyperreality explains why these synthetic representations feel more visceral than reality itself—memes replace diplomacy with spectacle, reducing war to a loop of simulated battles (e.g., biscuit wars, football matches). The memes function as social goods, distributing pride or shame, and as pedagogical tools, teaching audiences to internalize simplified, oppositional worldviews. AI accelerates this process, generating endless variations that deepen detachment from factual complexities. Mohammed (2024) emphasizes the importance of using advanced computational methods, including machine learning and forensic analysis, to identify manipulated content and safeguard against AI-driven misinformation. Media literacy programs equip young people with critical thinking and fact-checking skills, helping them responsibly navigate the digital world. Alongside this, promoting community dialogue and civic engagement can bridge divides by fostering constructive conversations across different groups (Farooq et al., 2025).

Ultimately, these meme wars reflect and reinforce real-world hostilities, raising critical questions: If hyperreal narratives dominate public perception, could they contribute to escalating real violence? The self-sustaining nature of meme warfare—where each side crafts its truths—suggests that digital discourse is no longer just about conflict but is itself a battleground. Future research should compare Pakistani counter-memes to unravel further how these competing simulations shape collective memory and geopolitical tensions in an era where war is as much about pixels as it is about politics.

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