

NARRATIVES OF POWER AND LEGITIMACY: A CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF LEADERSHIP RHETORIC IN THE 2025 PAK-INDIA CONFLICT

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Abstract

The study accounts for the discourses employed by Pakistan's Director General of Inter-Services Public Relations (DG-ISPR) Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and U.S. President Donald Trump during the India-Pakistan conflict of 2025. Based on Teun A. van Dijk's socio-cognitive model, this analysis explores the construction of narratives that served to justify the leaders' own actions, delegitimize the actions of the opposing parties, and influence public perception. Ultimately, it shows how the various actors strategically manipulated language to construct national identities, vindicate military action, and shape geopolitical agency. Future research may be devoted to the question of discourses of DG-ISPR, Modi, and U.S. leadership through time especially in the post-conflict narratives.

Keywords: *Critical Discourse Analysis, Socio-cognitive model, India-Pakistan conflict, National identity, Political rhetoric*

1. Introduction

Language is not merely a vehicle of communication; rather, it is a tool for constructing reality, molding perceptions, and establishing ideological hegemony. In the age of political conflict, perhaps its greatest power lies in giving structure to state action through persuasion and in framing public sentiments and national identity towards the rest of the world. The India-Pakistan war of 2025, though confined to geographic coordinates, delimited within a global discursive arena, which was highly affected by the rhetoric of national leaders and military spokespersons. The study performs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) on how three important persons, namely Director General of the Inter-Services Public Relations from Islamabad, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and President of the USA Donald Trump, constructed their discourses to legitimize their own positions while delegitimizing their enemies.

This new conflict rekindled tensions over Kashmir and other broader territorial sovereignty; by now, immediate responses and strategic decisions were being taken at the level of political and military leadership. As stated by Chilton (2004), in political discourse during conflicted situations, heightened symbolism, polarized identities, as well as the appeal on fear, legitimacy, and moral obligation, are often present. These rhetorical strategies, therefore, are seldom neutral or spontaneous; they constitute conscious acts of power, loaded with ideology. Following Teun A. van Dijk's socio-cognitive model (1998, 2006), this endeavor analyzes how such discourse functioned at the intersection of language, cognition, and social structures to reinforce dominant ideologies while manipulating public memory and perception.

The socio-cognitive approach of Van Dijk (1998) provides a coherent theoretical framework for analyzing how the elite create, circulate, and uptake discourse in the interests of perpetuating power. The model is built around mental models—cognitive structures that influence

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interpretations of events—and ideological squares that demarcate group membership and binary construction of "us" versus "them" (van Dijk 1998). Because of this dual focus on textual features and cognitive processes, van Dijk's model is particularly useful for the analysis of conflict rhetoric, in which justification and condemnation are key acts carried out through discourse (van Dijk, 2006).

The actors selected for this analysis assume different geopolitical roles and rhetorical traditions: the DG-ISPR, acting in some fashion as the voice of the military establishment in Pakistan; Modi as the elected leader of the Indian state; and Trump as a global influencer whose statements often shaped international framing of regional conflicts. Their respective discourses pertain not only to national narratives but also to larger ideological commitments and strategic interests. While the DG-ISPR has tended to speak in terms of defensive sovereignty and Islamic solidarity, Modi has fused his rhetoric into one of nationalism combined with a development agenda seen through a securitized lens; Trump's own discourse, though less constant, fluctuated between offers for mediation and strategic silence—each dictated by a different set of geopolitical imperatives.

This study explores how each actor produced legitimacy for its position while painting the opposition as irrational or unjust and appealing to audiences both at home and abroad. It assesses emotional language, references to history, metaphor, and framing tools for their contribution to discursive dominance. Thus, the analysis intends to shed light on how power, identity, and ideology are, in the international domain, linguistically constructed and contested.

By placing the 2025 conflict within the wider tradition of conflict discourse analysis and applying the model of van Dijk (1998), it throws great light on the state's actors' strategic manipulation of language. Ultimately, it shows that discourse is mobilized not merely to represent a geopolitical reality but to construct it, shaping the engagement parameters, influencing public opinion, and framing those narratives that endure long after the conflict has subsided.

2. Discussion of Literature

Discourse has been a key area of research under critical linguistics, political science, and media studies concerning its role in political conflicts. The current study, which is based on Teun A. van Dijk's socio-cognitive model of critical discourse analysis (CDA), investigates how the three top actors: DG-ISPR of Pakistan, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and U.S. President Donald Trump, legitimated their actions and built national and international narratives through discourse during the 2025 conflict between India and Pakistan. This scholarship is, therefore, on three principal dimensions: CDA and the socio-cognitive approach, political discourse and legitimacy in conflict contexts, and discourse, national identity, and strategic communication in South Asia and the global arena.

2.1. Critical Discourse Analysis and the Socio-Cognitive Model

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is a multidisciplinary perspective which perceives language as social practice; it is an arena where power, ideology, and dominance are enacted and reproduced (Fairclough 1995; Wodak & Meyer 2016). Among the many different CDA approaches, Teun A. van Dijk's socio-cognitive model is particularly pertinent to the analysis of elite political discourse. It considers that discourse is conditioned not only by textual and contextual factors, but also by the cognitive frameworks on the basis of which actors interpret meanings and produce them (van Dijk, 1998, 2006).

This makes the model particularly apt for analyzing state leaders' speeches or public communications with military spokespersons through dramatic global events, particularly during increased geopolitical tension. This aspect of Van Dijk, ideological squares—the preference of

discursive tension to portray the ingroup positively and outgroup negatively—is critical in understanding how political actors polarize their conflicts. The model also included the notion that there would be compliance in the discursive manipulation, where elites control public discourse access to memory and the way that society represents itself.

2.2. Political Discourse, Legitimacy, and Conflict Narratives

Discourse is particularly the site for producing political legitimacy in conflict situations in which state actors construct arguments for military decisions or reinforce national unity and public opinion. As Chilton (2004) noted, political discourse in wartime usually employs devices of metaphor, modality, and presupposition to naturalize aggression and moralize conflict. Thus, reality is not merely mirrored in language but constructed in and by it and legitimized.

Reyes (2011) elaborated five typical strategies of legitimation in political discourse: authorization (appeals to authority), moral evaluation (phrasing actions as ethically justified), rationalization (referring to logical or historical justifications), mythopoesis (use of narratives and allegories), and emotional appeal. This brought the leaders into the realm of strategic use of such discourse when constructing a collective "we," usually defined against a morally or ideologically inferior "they" (van Dijk, 1998).

Among the findings and analysis of said studies, the major conclusions indicated that political discourse during conflict frequently drew upon historical memory and trauma for affective intensification. For example, leadership within India has historically invoked terrorist attacks to carry a legitimate argument historically for securitized responses (Rajagopal, 2011), while rhetoric in Pakistan usually zooms in on Kashmir within a post-colonial and Islamic justice narrative (Zia, 2019). Manipulating similar threat and sovereignty narratives, however, such Western leaders have accomplished in domestic contexts, too, such as Donald Trump (Mercieca, 2020).

2.3. Discourse, National Identity, and Strategic Communication in South Asia and Beyond

National identity is often formed and fortified through conflict discourse. Anderson (2006) states that "imagined communities" then the nation is constituted by narratives of origin, struggle and common enemy. This is where leaders turn out to be crucial when narrating through public language and symbolic acts.

The discourse of Narendra Modi received a lot of critical review on how it amalgamated Hindu nationalism, developmental rhetoric and security discourse. Most of the time, it portrays that India is a rising but besieged global power (Chatterjee, 2022). His speeches often include references to cultural heritage, civilizational pride, and military valor—all aspects central to the performance of strong national identity in times of crisis.

On the other hand, the DG-ISPR has a different kind of role in Pakistan as the official voice of the military precisely one of the most crucial institutions in that country's political landscape. Research has shown that DG-ISPR discourse integrates military rationality with appeals to religion, resistance, and victimhood, especially in the case of Kashmir and relations with India (Ahmed, 2017; Khan, 2020). This position empowers DG-ISPR to work both as a strategic communicator and national myth-maker.

Meanwhile, even the comments made by Donald Trump regarding the India-Pakistan conflict phenomenon would have to be understood within America's geometry of strategic ambiguity and performative diplomacy. In fact, by populism, strategic vagueness, and the tendency of unpredictability, Trump's rhetorical style could serve both domestic political ends and foreign policy posturing (Mercieca, 2020). His comments on South Asian troubles indeed reflected both

diplomatic interest and supplying the use of international conflict narratives for domestic politics in America.

Evidence from the literature would indicate to the power of discourse to shape public perception, national identities, and legitimation to political action during conflicts. Van Dijk's socio-cognitive model may be the best theoretical perspective for interrogating the ideological and cognitive aspects of such discourse especially when fired by elite actors with significant communicative authority. The rhetorical performances of DG-ISPR, PM Modi and President Trump regarding the 2025 India-Pakistan conflict would present an interesting site of analysis on how language is structured for legitimacy, blame attribution as well as navigating the intricate terrains of national and international power.

3. Research Questions

1. How did Pakistan's DG-ISPR, India Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and United States President Donald Trump construct and deploy discourse during the 2025 India-Pakistan conflict to justify actions at a national level and influence public perception?
2. What strategies were adopted by each leader to delegitimize the opposing parties and legitimize their own actions in the international and domestic sphere?

4. Methodology

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) will be employed to carry out the present study on the rhetorical strategies used by DG-ISPR of Pakistan, Indian Prime Minister Modi and the President of the United States, Trump, during the 2025 India-Pakistan conflict. Based on the socio-cognitive approach derived from CDA by Teun A. van Dijk, this study will attempt at unearthing how political actors construct discourses to justify their own actions, delegitimize the other party, and influence opinion at the local and global level.

4.1. Theoretical Framework

Van Dijk's socio-cognitive model sees discourse as a mediation between cognition and society, showing how language both reflects and reshapes social ideologies (van Dijk, 1998, 2006). His framework seeks to understand the relationships between discourse structures, social cognition (in terms of mental models and knowledge schemata), and the socio-political context of discourse production and interpretation. Particularly relevant to the analysis of political communication, this theory provides a means to investigate how, in detail, elites strategically deploy language with a view to constructing and legitimizing certain ideologies to exercise power and shape social representations (van Dijk, 2008).

4.2. Data Collection

The data is based on purposively selected discourse samples. These include:

- Statements and updates from verified government and personal social media accounts;
- News reports and transcripts, from credible regional and international media outlets (e.g., Dawn, Pakistan Today, The Nation, The Express Tribune etc.).

The data were collected from January to April 2025; during this period, the data collection covered the escalation, peak, and the de-escalation of the conflict. The selection was made based on the relevance of the content to foreign policy discourse, military action, and narratives regarding national identity.

4.3. Analytical Procedure

The analysis of the data is conducted based on a multi-level CDA procedure by van Dijk (2008).

4.3.1. Contextual Analysis: Studies the larger socio-political and historical background of each discourse event as context for the actors' language use.

4.3.2. Macro-Structural Analysis: Uncovering global themes (e.g., terrorism, nationalism, peace, sovereignty) and the overall narrative structure of the texts.

4.3.3. Micro-Structural Analysis: Investigating linguistic features such as pronoun use, modality, presupposition, lexical choices, and argumentative structures to identify discursive strategies.

4.3.4. Cognitive Dimension: Exploring the mental models and ideological schemata presumed by the speakers to understand how they seek to control public knowledge, frame events, and construct in-group/out-group identities.

4.3.5. Comparative Analysis: Contrasting the discursive approaches of the three actors to highlight differences and similarities in narrative construction, ideological framing, and power projection.

This layered approach works such that it can give thick description on how discourses work from textual level as well as cognitive level in reproducing power relations and ideological dominance within international conflicts.

4.4. Ethical Considerations

All data used are publicly accessible and involve no private or personal information. The study complies with the academic code of conduct for rigorous inquiry, with no preference or endorsement for any particular political viewpoint or government. The analysis is meant for scholarly purposes and aims to further the understanding of political discourse and its relevance to international relations and media studies.

5. Data Analysis

5.1. Lt-Gen Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry's (DG ISPR) Narrative

Example 1: "Pakistan's military response has been precise, proportionate and still remarkably restrained... compared to Indian relentless provocations."

(The Nation, 2025)

Analysis:

This statement examined in the context of the Indo-Pak conflict of 2025 has a very deep political and strategic background against the ongoing period of rampant cross-border firing. Including the official point of view from DG ISPR, it gives expression to the state-sponsored narrative from Pakistan that tries to highlight the fact that the country acts as a responsible actor because of purported provocations from India-likely relating to operation 'Sindoor'. This framework is built up for achieving multiple layered objectives, within which context it aims at showing Pakistan as being restrained and compliant with international humanitarian norms of conduct, appealing thereby to global agencies like the UN and Western allies. Macro-level analysis applies to the broader Pakistan narrative diplomacy strategy in which the weapon of information warfare occupies as critical a role as that of battlefield operations. This message puts India on the defensive yet at the same time fortifies a long-standing stance on Pakistan foreign policy by stating moral high ground and victimhood. On a micro level, such language is designed to not escalate a military crisis, employing terms such as the following to signal military professionalism and strategic prudence to domestic and international audiences—"precise," "proportional," and "restrained." Cognitively, it creates a national identity founded on moral superiority, defending the public to rally toward its militarily persuasive ends without inciting mass hysteria. It fits cognitive schemas that frame India as the persistent aggressor and Pakistan as the rational actor, thus shaping the public view. Finally, the analysis at the cognitive level points to intentional use of low-effort framing devices that correspond with high emotional resonance-such as "restraint" and

"proportionality"-that make retention easier and propagate rapidly within and across media and public discourse. For the audiences according to confirmation bias in Pakistan, these signals decelerate.

Example 2: "Anyone who tries to violate our territory ... our response will be brutal."

(Geo News Web Desk, 2025)

Analysis:

Against this context, a statement delivered with utmost seriousness amid the elevated tensions of the 2025 Indo-Pak conflict in the wake of India's Operation Sindoor is very much a political and historical statement related to Indo-Pak relations. Probably issued in reaction to an actual or perceived violation by India of Pakistani airspace or territory, it acts as a strategic warning that is clearly intended to deter any such violations in the future by restating Pakistan's core position about territorial sovereignty. The assertion puts Pakistan's military posture on an international scale into a zero-tolerance doctrine compatible with its customary stance of strategic ambiguity and readiness for retaliation. The message is not directed merely to India but is also intended to convey a signal to other global powers such as the UN, U.S., China, and the OIC in the backdrop of preemptively justifying an action for future force as legitimate self-defense. On a micro level, the tone and wording of the statement take a drastic turn from previous restraint. Using terms such as "brutal" and broad reference to "anyone" indicate an unambiguous and emotionally alarming warning—one directed at state and non-state actors perhaps alike. The dramatic pause (denoted by ellipses) serves either to produce tension or underline in seriousness the matter in hand, whether in a public speech or over the media. The rationale operating in this language plays upon base instincts of visceral emoting charged with fear for togetherness in group solidarity and national pride. Thus "violate our territory" strikes at the heart of a deep undercurrent of territorial nationalism, psychologically equipping the domestic audience for acceptance, support, or even demand for retaliation. If approached from a cognitive analysis, the term "brutal retort" becomes a sticky, binary frame that reduces the conflict into a clear cause-effect schema: violation-destruction. Low complexity with high impact ensures easy repeatability across many forums of public discourse, constituting therefore a strong anchor for framing all subsequent events and maintaining coherence of the national narrative.

Example 3: "We prioritize peace ... but if war is imposed, we are fully prepared."

(The Express Tribune, 2025)

Analysis:

The statement was issued during the height of military confrontations of the 2025 Indo-Pak conflict and arises out of a complex amalgamation of international scrutiny wrapped up with domestic expectation. At a time when Pakistan was being pressured to display both restraint and resolve, the message reflects a familiar strategic behavior: preference for diplomacy with military readiness in reserve. Through the DG ISPR, the statement seeks to tell two stories: on the one hand, message conveying to the international community that Pakistan does not seek war, while on the other hand, and boosting internal morale by reaffirming the relevance of national defense. At the broader level, the statement fits well into the general geopolitics of messaging from Pakistan. Peace remains Pakistan's default option, with conditional deterrence articulated as key component of its strategic thinking that portrays it as a reactive rather than a provocative actor. In doing so, Pakistan positions itself as a responsible nuclear state, contrasting it with the alleged aggressiveness attributed to India. Thematically, on a micro level, the statement balances deterrence and diplomacy: the calm declaration "we prioritize peace" is followed up by the firmer "fully prepared," signaled by a

deliberate ellipsis giving a tonal shift. The word "imposed" subtly deflects agency from Pakistan, placing moral culpability squarely upon the shoulders of the adversary. This dual cognitive framing taps into both national pride and a collective feeling of moral righteousness. It reasserts a familiar identity: Pakistanis desire peace, but if provoked, they are willing to suffer and give back. The message, going on to emotional appeal, may evoke calm and purposeful intent with no sign of panic, and as such, the military seems to emerge immutable and calm. Finally, from the cognitive analysis, the contrast between peace and preparedness simplifies a very complex geopolitical scenario into a very clear digestible frame: "we didn't start this, but we'll finish it if necessary." It is this particular simplicity, distinctiveness, and lucid structure which aids the commission in chartering wartime perception and national narrative, first with its internal circle and second with global awareness. It reemerges from different media headlines and political statements, easily laying itself in public memory.

Example 4: "India's claim that Pakistan attacked Amritsar is entirely fabricated."

(Pakistan Today, 2025)

Analysis:

This deeply contextual statement gains its significance in the aftermath of Indian allegations regarding possible missile or drone strikes in Amritsar. Given the heightened environment and tensions, the calculated timing of a response stresses more on managing international perception and thereby avoiding potential risks of retaliatory escalation. By completely denying the very charge, Pakistan wants to avert diplomatic backlash and prepare an argument for the opposite side—that of being framed as an international law violator. This denial is placed within a list of instances of an information war both countries are engaged in, fighting for narrative supremacy, particularly in situations where civilian casualties could possibly be implicated. On a macro level, the statement follows Pakistan's standard mode of rebutting Indian allegations in international fora, especially in cases where civilian injury has been mentioned. It would assist in maintaining Pakistan's image globally while putting India in the negative light of disinformation and casting suspicion over its credibility in places like the UN or the OIC. The language at the micro level enhances this stance by emphasizing strong, absolutist phrases such as "entirely fabricated," which signals total confidence and leaves no gray areas or room for shared blame. Accusatory in tone, the statement goes that India intentionally manufactures fake allegations, which serves both to reject the specific claim made by Pakistan and to attack India's credibility on a much larger scale. Cognitively, the message activates a strong sense of in-group loyalty and nationalistic sentiment by depicting Pakistan as innocent and wronged. It then creates a psychological barrier to any future "evidence" emanating from India, positing such evidence as inherently dubious. Emotionally, this message engenders patriotic solidarity and feeds upon a deep-seated sense of injustice, all of which serve to fortify the belief that Pakistan acts with moral rectitude and is unfairly targeted. By stating that India is dishonest, Pakistan is declaring itself to be truthful; this binary framing of the conflict reduces the intricate realities of conflict to a simplistic moral dichotomy. The language used in calling those acts of aggression false works as a cognitive trigger that allows audiences to quickly assess the accusation as false. Considered through media and public speeches, this frame repeats and sediments a public narrative that forever casts India as the aggressor and Pakistan as the honest victim, thus shaping perceptions and recollections in the long run.

Example 5: "It is some madman who can think that he can stop water of 240 million people ... the consequences ... will be felt for years and decades to come."

(Pakistan Today, 2025)

Analysis:

The term issued amid the 2025 Indo-Pak tensions was direct reaction to the assertion made by India as threats to restrict or block water flow under the Indus Waters Treaty, which Pakistan regards as nothing short of existential. While these threats cause alarm both strategically and in humanitarian terms for the lower riparian state, whose agriculture, economy, and survival of more than 240 million people depend on these waters, the threats are strategic and humanitarian ones. Thus, it reflects urgency in strategy, establishing any interference as a form of humanitarian assault rather than mere policy controversy. On macro level, it brings about allegations against India exceeding IWT violations to a larger extent in international norms: weaponization of water is not only irrational and immoral, but also saddled with destabilizing effects in the region. That will also help internationalize the crisis, giving an impression of having appealed to bodies like the UN and the World Bank, which oversees the IWT, while making it clear that water conflict is a red line that could lead to long-term hostilities. On the micro level, the language is emotionally potent and deliberately provocative; madman is dehumanizing, stripping any legitimacy from Indian actions and provoking psychological reaction. By invoking the suffering of "240 million people," the issue is framed as collective punishment—an affront to humanitarian values. The use of phrases and temporal framing ("for years and decades to come") dramatizes the consequences making them feel at once immediate and enduring. The psychology of qualifying the water or ecological disquiet triggers primordial emotional responses like fear, anger, and national solidarity. Constructing a binary moral narrative of Pakistan as the sane, victimized state versus India as irrational and villainous will thus solidify in-group identity. From the point of view of cognitive analysis, the statement exploits the availability heuristic linking a water cutoff with vivid catastrophic imagery that feels real and imminent. The specificity of "240 million people" adds weight and urgency to this scenario, making it highly memorable and shareable. Overall, this message reiterates pre-existing beliefs concerning the threat posed by India, water as a national right, and waging war not only through arms but also through economic and ecological means.

5.2. Modi's (India's Prime Minister) Narrative

Example 1: "Operation Sindoor is now India's policy against terror ... the new normal."
(India Today, 2025)

Analysis:

"The Operation Sindoor is now India's policy against terrorism ... the new normal" falls within the political and strategic framework of future conflict in 2025 with India and Pakistan, and is probably announced immediately after a successful Indian military strike or at a time when tension is high in that region and may be following a cross-border terror event. The timing and way this is announced would indicate strategic calculation—how a single military operation would be framed as a codified doctrine. This further signals a shift from random, reactive military-level responses to a permanent, proactive posture of counter-terrorism, aimed at achieving strategic clarity and deterrence. The phrase "new normal" institutionalizes and normalizes cross-border military action as a standard policy, sends a clear message to both external and internal audiences that the threshold for restraint has been altered for India. At the macro level, it shows a change in doctrine from a defensive posture to an active initiation in response to challenges emanating beyond the Indian borders. These new configurations increase stakes within the regional context, forcing Pakistan to review its defensive-diplomatic strategy and putting pressure on global stakeholders—the UN, the US, and neutral actors—to reassess their positions on preemptory military action and state sovereignty norms. On the micro-level, the phrases employed are terse, declarative, and

strategically loaded. The ellipsis builds rhetorical suspense, moving from statement to implication, while the term "new normal"-popularised during global crises-conveys irrevocable change. The tone is authoritative, psychologically assertive and designed to unsettle enemies while boosting local confidence. The statement addresses the public sentiment in India,-increasingly tired with terrorism and having preferred action-stiff measures from the government against terrorists. It upholds national pride and presents India as strategic mature and military capable. For the people of Pakistan, this possibly instills fear, threat perception and entrenches distrustful narratives. The "new normal" functions as a heuristic anchor from a cognitive analysis viewpoint-an easily repeatable phrase that simplifies complex strategic shifts into digestible and memorable terms. It allows future military actions to be framed not as escalations, but as consistent with established doctrine, thus reducing public and political resistance. Over time, such framing would shape broader expectations regarding conflict thresholds and acceptable behavior in the region. In effect, this solidifies a new strategic baseline in South Asian geopolitics.

Example 2: "India won't tolerate nuclear blackmail ... talks and trade cannot go with terror."

(Times of India, 2025)

Analysis:

The statement "India won't tolerate nuclear blackmail ... talks and trade cannot go with terror" has emerged from a rather sour political and strategic moment heavily marked by heightened Indo-Pak tensions that possibly arose from fresh militant activity allegedly originating from Pakistan or veiled threats invoking Pakistan's nuclear deterrent. This statement appears to indicate a shift in India's tolerance threshold to what it perceives to be nuclear extortion. To use the term "nuclear blackmail" contravenes a long-standing strategic norm in South Asia, wherein Pakistan is often accused of exploiting its nuclear capability to support low-intensity conflict and proxy actors. By equating such accusations with a categorical rejection of the commencement of dialogue or economic engagement in the presence of terrorism, India asserts that normalization, in fact, is now explicitly conditional on clearly measurable security outcomes; this is a major hardening of its diplomatic posture aimed at breaking the past cycle of negotiations undermined by acts of terror.

Example 3: "Terrorist hubs such as Bahawalpur and Muridke...we uprooted their universities of terror."

(ABP Live, 2025)

Analysis:

A statement announced in the wake of a well-directed Indian military foray against Pakistan during the heightened Indo-Pak confrontation of 2025 meant to dismantle alleged terror infrastructure. By specifically naming Bahawalpur and Muridke-names usually associated with groups such as Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba-the claim acquires a concrete geographical basis in popular consciousness of recognized threats. It is framing the Indian narrative as ushering in an era that is overtly louder than intelligence-sharing and diplomatic protests to; maybe, direct military action of sort, or even cross-border military strike-this morally justifying act on the part of India as a genuine resort to national self-defense. The embedded past tense-we uprooted-clearly emanates an aura of successful operations and the indication of a sustained shift toward a proactive counterterrorism doctrine.

Example 4: "Pakistan planned war at borders, we struck at its heart."

(Firstpost, 2025)

Analysis:

It seems like the statement was made in the heightened fire of Indo-Pak tensions following skirmishes that crossed the borders line between the two nations, eventually escalating along the Line of Control or international border. For the Pakistani agitating hostilities at the frontier, India claims its response to be final and deeper retaliatory strike inside the country. It appears time-wise to be well-constructed as creating a narrative of justifying Indian military actions as preemptive and retaliatory against a non-strategic depth frame of just border clashes. The term "war at borders" as opposed to "struck at its heart" indicates a transformation from a reactive, defensive posture to a pro-active, offensive strategy posing India as having initiated the offensive by dealing with Pakistan's core capabilities or leadership, thus establishing India's dominance and resolve. Much broader than this particular exercise, this statement indicates India's intent for its operational instruments to move beyond tactical border conflicts to punishing Pakistan's centers of gravity, like military infrastructure or terror hubs, indicating a tendency to respond aggressively and invariably to provocations. Regionally, this from-then-on intervention has escalated the stakes in South Asia, where Pakistan needs to reconsider its border strategies and where the chances of a wider conflict are increased.

Example 5: "Pakistan's economy will pay price for terror attacks ... India won't allow Pakistan access to our rightful share of water."

(Business Standard, 2025a)

Analysis:

Fast-growing tensions between India and Pakistan are evident in this evolving statement, which is red-flagged by terror attacks and indicates India's shift toward a strong multi-faceted response with an exposure that broadened beyond the military's direct lines into economic as well as resource-based pressure. India connects Pakistan's security policies with economic and resource controls—including water with bilateral treaties such as the Indus Waters Treaty—and thus its retaliation is framed as strategic and proportionate within the context of a wider conflict. It indicates a potential utility of the water-sharing rights as leverage or disincentive, mapped against a very sensitive and basic issue for both nations. On the macro level, this hardens India's stance as far as terror and the relationship are concerned since it extends the conflict arena by including dimensions such as economic and environmental threats to civilian livelihoods thus signaling a movement toward integrated strategies in order to secure objectives employing diplomatic, economic, and environmental instruments. India-Pakistan relations have become much more complicated; the stakes for regional and international stakeholders are much higher; and Pakistan is also under pressure to reassess its support for proxy militants into its territory. All these events send signals to countries such as those pledging accession to the Indus Waters Treaty that India's insistence is to be accounted for, making the regional diplomacy much more complex and drastically increasing the chances of organization-wide humanitarian and environmental fallout. The words of the statement manifest evidence in direct, uncompromising, and very rhetorically powerful phrases such as "pay the price" and "won't allow," which clearly communicate veiled threats and an intent of resolve, whereas the metaphor-a reference to India's "rightful share of water"-appealing to both justice and entitlement, fortifies India's moral claim. It brings firmness and determination in tone, projecting an image of India as a strong and principled actor firmly asserting its national interest—messages crafted at domestic and international level by emphasizing India's moral high ground. Cognitively mobilizes statement as an evocation of Indian audiences in terms of a collective identity grounded into resilience, justice, and sovereignty-using the emotional framing of water as

a no bargain point concerning national survival and dignity. Certainly, it would raise initial defensive barriers and further increase distrust within Pakistan-rather, foster nationalism-thus also perhaps signalling to the outside world India's rational yet firm limits. The simplifying of complex geopolitical dynamics into a clear cause-and-effect-facilitated simplicity that successfully provides easy retrieval and reinforces existing beliefs regarding India's firm posture against terrorism and rights over shared resources. By framing India against terror as an infallible justification for assertive or even punitive responses to provocation, the public perception as well as the long-term diplomatic perceptions will be set here.

5.3. Trump's (America's President) Narrative

Example 1: "We stopped India and Pakistan from fighting... I said, 'You want to trade with the United States or kill each other? We're not going to allow that.' They both agreed." (Cole, 2025)

Analysis:

The statement emanates from a critical political juncture at a time of increased Indo-Pak tensions, possibly during military skirmishes or in the face of imminent conflict. It hence positions the speaker-who must be either a U.S. official or mediator-as a major arbiter preventing warfare from commencing between India and Pakistan. In mentioning economic ties, particularly U.S. trade, the statement employs economic leverage as an instrument of conflict prevention, thus emphasizing America's much larger geopolitical role in South Asia in times of turmoil. Strategically, it indicates the convergence of economic relations and the imperatives of security, portraying economic carrots or sticks as realpolitik instruments to keep peace. This speaks very loudly to both India and Pakistan about the costs of acting out conflicts that include losing U.S. trade incentives and opportunities for diplomatic engagement, while also informing the larger international community that the U.S. has considerable clout over both actors and is willing to utilize that clout to prevent warfare, reaffirming its position as a global peacekeeper and regional power broker. The unemotional, crisp, and commanding tone of the statement comes with a glaring binary ultimatum, "You want to trade with the United States or kill each other?"-making a complex surrounding reality much more digestible and appealing. The admonition "We are not going to allow that" speaks to the great resolve of the speaker, who places himself as the enforcer in the peace dialogue. This frank, conversational way of expression makes the message immediate and memorable; it takes an immensely high-stakes and delicate moment of diplomacy and crystallizes it into an unforgettable statement highlighting the importance of the choice before them. It's an appeal to both logic and fear: an appeal to the logic that asserts peace to be the rational option and an appeal to the fear that talks of lost economic benefits, thereby reinforcing the U.S.'s identity as a decisive peacekeeper while calling upon India and Pakistan to behave responsibly. The stark dichotomy in framing provides a mental anchor that facilitates the memory of a situation whose costs are now juxtaposed in a cognitive way, while inducing the same audiences to view U.S. diplomatic interventions as much-needed and effective in conflict prevention in South Asia.

Example 2: "On Saturday, my administration helped broker an immediate ceasefire, I think a permanent one... ending a dangerous conflict between two nations with lots of nuclear weapons." (Business Standard, 2025b)

Analysis:

One could arguably place these remarks midway through an intense phase of confrontation flying between two nuclear nations, India and Pakistan, with the increasing amenities facing the threat of overt war. It fixes the speaker, presumably a political leader or head of state like the U.S. President, as a leading mediator who has arranged for an immediate ceasefire, albeit with a modicum of

cautious optimism for a lasting settlement. Correspondingly, the timing of intervention is crucial, emphasizing the undeniable need to defuse a very volatile situation, the crux of which is the hyper-intensification of even the presence of nuclear weapons. By referring to the statement as “immediate ceasefire” and “perhaps a permanent one”, it carries hopeful prospects of a diplomatic breakthrough considering the depth of entrenchment of the conflict, presenting the speaker's administration as a key factor in managing. Further, this renders the notion of ceasefire not merely a bilateral issue but also an international concern since the nuclear dimension is involved.

Example 3: “We stopped a nuclear conflict. Millions of people could have been killed... I’m very proud about that.”

(India Today News Desk, 2025)

Analysis:

The statement probably came from a moment of high tension politically or diplomatically when perhaps a nuclear catastrophe was averted with the speaker-probably either a national leader or a key negotiator-at a moment of fraught relations between nuclear-armed states making the affirmative declaration that disaster had been successfully ward. When it says "we stopped a nuclear conflict," the statement is truly at the critical point of almost being a disaster-probably only after or nearby to-theater hostilities-whereas the reference to "millions of people" will touch upon the universality of humanitarian concerns, which clearly go far beyond military or political will and considerations. This statement at the broader level is thus an emphasis of nuclear deterrence and diplomacy from a global perspective while reaffirming the importance of leadership and preemptive action to manage conflict in the interest of promoting international peace and security. The statement implicitly criticizes the persisting turmoil in geopolitical relations and stresses the need for vigilance, multilateral diplomacy, and international governance to avert nuclear escalation. The language chosen is pretty straightforward, precise, and highly charged. The statement "We stopped a nuclear conflict" is assertive of agency and success, while the pause after "millions of people could have been killed" evokes sadness linked to the vast scale of tragedy that had been averted. The last phrase, "I am very proud about that," personalizes the message and expresses the speaker's own emotions in taking responsibility for leadership while keeping a subtle mix between gravity and assurance. At a cognitive level, the statements convey collective relief and thanks, inviting the audience to associate with the leader's avoidance of catastrophe. Critics might find it offensive, while most will bask in its expression of pride, thus connecting with unity and emotion. The statement serves as a cognitive anchor transforming complex crises into memorable cause-effect stories that showcase the leader's competence and the need for swift action, feeding public support, legitimizing the decisions taken by leadership, and in turn framing the future discourse on conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

Example 4:

“The general from Pakistan was in my office... he was really very impressive. ... I got them to reason.”

(Dawn, 2025)

Analysis:

A statement like this would likely have originated during a tense episode in Indo-Pak relations with direct dialogue ongoing amongst senior officials. Mentioning the general from Pakistan visiting this speaker's office suggests an unusual high-level interaction, possibly for conflict resolution or crisis management. The phrase, "I got them to reason", suggests that at some point persuasion or de-escalation was applied, putting the speaker in the position of influential mediator.

The whole context suggests some level of hostility or back-channel operations to avert further escalation on the already charged environment. On a macro level, the statement highlights the personal diplomacy that plays an ever-important role in resolving conflicts for nuclear-armed foes. In other words, there seems to have been a hide-and-seek game that was developed in public between two countries where negotiations became very important for their international security. The comments of the speaker regarding the "general from Pakistan" being "really very impressive" constituted an indirect acknowledgment of the professionalism of the adversary serving to ease bilateral tensions. The assertion of having "got them to reason" lays the characterization of the speaker's side as rationally justified, and effective, thereby bolstering their leadership image in the part of South Asia affected by conflict, and might affect more generally the diplomatic-strategic dynamics of the area. The language used is casual and understated, giving it a conversational feel, while the use of ellipses suggests contemplative pauses that add to its authentic flavor. The terms "really very impressive" lend other humanness to the encounter, while the concise "got them to reason" implies that she had successfully persuaded them to her position and was now in charge of the dialogue. Such informality gives this statement some relatability, thus enhancing its credibility and memorability. For the audience, through this statement, faith is built on the Speaker's diplomatic moves, offering hope for resolution through rational dialogue rather than brute force. It taps into frames of cognitive problem-solving and mutual understanding that would reassure both Indian and international audiences that negotiations were under control while somehow giving Pakistani audiences a positive or cautious reception. The framing engages audiences with the idea of rational leadership while tempering fears of an irrational escalation. Cognitively, this statement simplifies a complex diplomatic exchange into a simple yet memorable narrative: A respected adversary was confronted face to face, and persuaded to "reason." The stark contrast between reason and conflict is easy to recollect and share. The personal anecdote serves as a cognitive anchor that bolsters the speaker's reputation as a competent, calm negotiator while setting standards for future negotiations to be grounded in dialogue and reasoned discourse.

Example 5: "He included the India-Pakistan truce among his global peace achievements—citing Africa, Israel-Iran, and Ukraine—as part of a campaign for a Nobel Peace Prize nomination". (Reuters, 2025)

Analysis:

Placed in the broader international context, the India-Pakistan cease-fires can be understood in the moment that the speaker—likely a politician—is attempting to present his diplomatic activities as part of an even broader legacy of conflict resolution. By linking the regional truce with other conflict-prone regions in Africa, the still-warm conflict between Israel and Iran, and the situation in Ukraine, the truce attains an exalted status and puts the speaker straddling multiple platforms of peace efforts. The context suggests that of an active promotion, perhaps while seeking international glorification, like a nomination for a Nobel Peace Prize, using diplomacy, as it were, a moral asset or political bait. On one macro level, the statement emphasizes how interlinked the world conflicts are and how strategically peace diplomacy is then manipulated by leaders to improve their public image. The speaker is seen here linking all these theaters of tension under one narrative of resolution that casts him as a multi-sided mediator who can navigate different regions through negotiations. Micro-level—the language is direct and declarative, relating achievements with global outreach while hinting at the Nobel campaign in a subtle hint at a mix of genuine concern and self-interest. However, by downplaying complex diplomatic achievements into a relative lightness of symbolism of leadership and effectiveness, this representation comes into its own as an appeal to

the audiences. In the invocation of "global peace achievements" in connection with the Nobel aspiration, more notions of credibility and moral authority enter, combined with some alternative room for skepticism about his motives. So, this meta-narrative assigns a firm psychological association between the speaker and international peace in a way that is more likely to inform audiences' perceptions of future attempts as either genuine acts of conflict resolution or merely dressed-up expositions for affirmation or a name in the history books.

6. Discussion

As much as popular thinking propounds that soldiers alone construct military narratives, Pakistan aspires towards multi-actor civilian-inclusive strategic storytelling regarding narrating its military-relations stories. Such an architecture of the narrative seeks to portray Pakistan as a morally responsible, rational actor engaged only in self-defensive measures against the aggression of India. In part, key messaging with "restraint," "proportion," and "precision" is tailored for external consumption to show that Pakistan is compliant with the humanitarian laws and earns moral legitimacy. At the same time, bold yet defensive rhetoric resonates with the audiences at home and fosters unity, patriotism, and confidence in military readiness.

It also falls under the purview of debunking India's claims (disclaiming specific accusations of attacks) as falsehoods that invalidate India's credibility and enhance Pakistan's overall image. It includes dramatic things like existential threats, like water security, thus widening the battlefield to humanitarian grounds with dramatization at stake and international empathy.

Memorability and therefore viral propagation of emotionally charged language are afforded through binary framing (e.g. peace vs. war, sanity vs. madness), thus enhancing not just domestic cohesion but also global diplomatic positioning. In essence, Pakistan is at a peace-seeking, sovereign state prepared for war only when provoked, all under the guise of a strategic narrative for psychological warfare as well as geopolitical.

The 2025 messaging of Prime Minister Narendra Modi indicates a clear shift in India's strategic doctrine towards proactive deterrence and decisive retaliation. Phrases such as: 'Operation Sindoor is the new normal' resize Indian military actions among other responses to an on-going standing policy.

The narrative includes military, economic, and environmental tools (such as water, trade) into the new integrated national security doctrine, appealing to the war-fatigued domestic audiences demanding strength and clarity. Termed: "nuclear blackmail" and pay the price; such phrases reflect an uncompromising posture that seeks to empower citizens, intimidate adversaries, and position India globally as a sovereign power with agency.

Not only are these Modi retorts retrospective but they are also futuristic whereby, logically, he pushes India as a self-determined architect in the region to set new standards for engagement.

Donald Trump's narrative around Indo-Pak tensions, beginning 2025, will be personal diplomacy, economic leverage, and symbolic peaceful cohabitation within the United States. Trump would then sign on as the reasoning behind Nuclear War basically stopped--"We stopped a nuclear war"--as well as simplistically developing complex diplomacy into binary choices of war vs. trade and chaos vs. reason for the elevation of his image as global crisis manager.

Peace thus becomes a transactional outcome, tied to access to the American economy, in keeping with his doctrine of "America First." Stability within South Asia becomes the derivative of the combative bargaining power of the U.S. rather than institutional diplomacy.

The narrative also serves, however, legacy purposes; linking Indo-Pak peace efforts to broader global hotspots and casting Trump as a unique stabilizing force. Analogous to "millions could have

died", as emotional and mnemonic strategies, anchor Trump in the story. Still, refurbishing such older constructs invites charges of trivialization of diplomacy and like promoting peace as self-aggrandizement. But its emotional accessibility gives the narrative legs to fulfil its functional goal, casting cast against the U.S. as an indispensable mediating agent in the resolution of all global conflicts.

7. Conclusion

The 2025 Pakistan communication strategy is depicted as a hybrid civil-military effort with probably the most significant impact in projecting the state as rational, restrained, and principled, acting only when compelled to do so morally in self-defense. Civil actors are cooperating well with military messaging in propagating what Pakistan does through humanitarianism and legality. Restraint, precision, and proportionate response are the core themes being functionally tailored to international audiences—the UN and Western governments—in a nationalist heroic narrative fueling domestic morale. Such existential threats as water scarcity elevate the artifice from geopolitics to the arena of survival and morality with the intension of eliciting global empathy. In which information warfare is a strategic tool, denial, deflection, and counter-narratives form the basis, especially against Indian claims. Emotional potency and easy dissemination into the psychopolitical consciousness of the population aided lands used to frame the moral binary-peace vs. aggression and truth vs. propaganda-foritives-neither for the country's unity nor for any posturing that would allow advancement of legitimacy abroad.

Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India rejects reactive postures and institutionalizes preemptive deterrence through slogans like "Operation Sindoor is the new normal." This paradigm shift implies that proactive military action is becoming standard doctrine rather than an exception. Kill the message—pay the price"—we have uprooted"—"nuclear-blackmail"; this is the congruent language India uses for counterterrorism, sovereignty, and deterrence. The narrative empowers domestic audiences frustrated by asymmetric warfare, while projecting internationally that India sets the terms of engagement. India's approach integrates military, economic, and environmental levers—including possible weaponization of trade and water access—hinting at a full-spectrum recalibration of how India intends to respond to threats. Modi's narration positions him as decisive strongman, asserting regional control, and in turn redefining India's role as a regional hegemon.

Underpacking Indo-Pak conflict to the individual level for narrative purposes, President Donald Trump presents peace as a charm-dealing product contingent on charisma, economic leverage, and binary moralism.

Statements such as "we stopped a nuclear war" or "do you want to trade or kill each other?" signify his populist, results-oriented reductive framing of conflicting interests, thus ignoring the diplomatic complications. His version of peace has transactional overtones characterized by the "America First" paradigm, in which U.S. access gets implicitly attached to geopolitical behavior. Critics might classify such moves as straightforward sustenance; however, its emotive clarity and campaign-style presentation strike a chord with an audience in dire need of concrete and decisive leadership. This strategy not only casts the U.S. in the role of global stabilizer but functions to bolster the building of his legacy, claiming to be the indispensable peacemaker.

The India-Pakistan conflict is, by 2025, one that is being fought as much in Word as in War. Each actor is constructing narratives for specific audiences and purposes:

Pakistan is seeking to legitimize its standing through a moral frame, restraint, and psychological preparation.

India promotes a proactive doctrine with nationalistic fervor through strategic messaging that consolidates its authority in the domestic arena as well as internationally.

The U.S. under Trump has turned peace into a personal brand and engages in simple narratives to showcase power and influence.

These narratives are not simply forward-looking reflections of policy; they construct reality, create public opinion, impact institutional perceptions, and solidify support domestically. In this warfare of narratives, legitimacy is not won by action alone, but by control of the language, framing perspectives, and resonating with the audience.

The war zone expanded from the territories of the perception, narratives, policy, actions, and images. The outcome of South Asian geopolitics might be determined by a dominant story instead of the best state.

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