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Article:

The War of Humor: A Visual Content Analysis of Israel's Information Warfare in France and Spain

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Abstract

While humor has invested all areas of society, it is still largely considered as an epiphenomenon in international security studies and a second-rank topic when it comes to information warfare. This article explores to what extent humor functions as a key component of information warfare, with a focus on Israeli visual messaging in France and Spain in the digital space. Using qualitative visual content analysis of humor-based tweets, it investigates how humor is a multifunctional tool of information warfare with a tactical, a social and an affective-cognitive dimension. Humor is tactical because it is very rarely incidental but calculated on purpose to serve broader goals. It is social because it creates relationships between individuals by unifying and differentiating. It is ultimately affective-cognitive because it shapes how people think and make sense of things while playing with emotions. This research contributes to the growing understanding of humor not only as entertainment but as a weapon of war.

Keywords
Humor, Information Warfare, Qualitative Visual Content Analysis, Social Media, Israel

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Introduction

In the 21st century, humor has invested all areas of society, including topics that were previously considered serious, such as politics, journalism, research, and international relations. In 2018, when Iran's Supreme Leader tweeted on X his will to remove and eradicate Israel for being "a malignant cancerous tumour," the Embassy of Israel to the USA (2018) replied with a meme from "Mean Girls," a teenagers' movie, saying "Why are you so obsessed with me?" Humor is everywhere, even when dealing with issues of war and peace, especially online. This should completely redefine our understanding of information warfare not merely as a battle over facts and narratives, but as a battle over targeting, bonding and manipulating where humor operates as a weapon.

This article attempts to formally acknowledge humor no longer as aesthetic or incidental, but to demonstrate its link with information warfare online. This acknowledgement step is crucial to stop neglecting humor, its dynamics, its impacts, its risks and opportunities. The following analysis will shed light on the patterns in the types and functions of humor which enable to convey and support the main wrenches of information warfare.[1]

Theoretical Background

Humor and the related works

Humor is a broad and flexible label that covers many different ideas rather than one clear-cut phenomenon (Condren 2024), which makes its definition particularly challenging. In addition to being an umbrella term, humor is not a fixed phenomenon: it evolves over time, changes depending on the geographic region and the culture. Yet amid these challenges, one point of consensus remains: humor is a special quality of human beings, sometimes called laughing animals (Kopper 2021). Hence, humor is a social reality, only meaningful in the interactions between human beings (Zijderveld 1968).

[1] This article is based on author's Master's thesis (Bouteloup 2025).

In these interactions, humor is understood to produce three types of consequences. For a long time, scholarship has represented humor as cruel, hostile, and negative, preventing the public sphere from functioning well. In this understanding, humor is divisive and promotes exclusion because it creates two camps: those who laugh and those who are laughed at. A contrasting perspective views humor as overall beneficial for the public sphere because it brings joy and can also serve positive goals. This is due to the unifying power of humor: it brings people closer together, ties them and promotes inclusion. The idea is that people who laugh at the same thing agree on the same thing, as Tom Burns says: "the joke is the shortcut to consensus" (Zijderveld 1968, 307). The most widespread position in the current literature, however, is the middle-ground: humor can be both beneficial and detrimental to an open and free democratic society (Mortensen and Neumayer 2021; Kuipers and Zijp 2024). These two functions of unification and division are not mutually exclusive since humor can be a double-edged sword (Meyer 2000; Choquette, Bédard, and Ismail 2024; Kuipers and Zijp 2024; Ödmark 2021; Adler-Nissen and Tsinovoi 2019; Browning and Brassett 2023; Mullan 2022): "laughter forms a bond and simultaneously draws a line," notes Lorenz (Meyer 2000, 317).

Another way to define humor is to focus on the ways it emerges. The scholarship highlights three basic instances in which humor emerges in human thought: through perceptions of relief, incongruity and superiority (Meyer 2000). First, people engage with humor as a coping mechanism to release stress in tense situations. Some studies demonstrated the benefits of laughter on health by releasing tensions, stress, and nervosity in the body (Zijderveld 1968; Zelizer 2010). Second, incongruity leads to humor when people are surprised. Incongruity theory proceeds that there is humor when it is unexpected or weird, meaning different enough from the norm to be noted as humorous but close enough not to be threatening. Third, people experience humor when they laugh at others whom they consider inferior for being weak, wrong, or defeated.

Because humor is multifaceted and resists simple definition, scholars have approached it from multiple angles. For this article, a key strand of research

examines how humor represents the "Other" in conflict. Through memes (Mortensen and Neumayer 2021) and cartoons (Hewitson 2012), humor often reinforces boundaries between groups (Travlos, Akyüz, and Mert-Travlos 2022; Tamás 2024). This representational function extends to propaganda, especially during wartime (Tamás 2024; Hewitson 2012). More broadly, humor helps construct and express collective identities (Priana et al. 2024; Adler-Nissen and Tsinovoi 2019). Deeply rooted in cultural norms (Ozolina et al. 2017), it can preserve social order or promote transformation (Sorensen 2008). States have also used humor strategically, as in Israel's "Presenting Israel" campaign to reframe national identity (Adler-Nissen and Tsinovoi 2019). Nonetheless, distinguishing this state-produced humor from the user-generated one is essential. State-produced humor refers to humorous content created, commissioned, and disseminated strategically by an official state actor. User-generated humor, by contrast, refers to humor created by ordinary users with no formal institutional mandate. This humor may still align with state narratives, but it is produced voluntarily.

The rise of digital media has reshaped humor's dynamics. Online, the roles of initiator and audience blur, allowing users to continuously co-create humor (Ozolina et al. 2017). The relative freedom from political correctness makes the internet a fertile ground for ethnic and political humor (Boxman-Shabtai and Shifman 2015). Memes have emerged as a hybrid form of entertainment and engagement, often functioning as political commentary (Mortensen and Neumayer 2021; Browning and Bassett 2023).

In wartime, humor sustains morale, aids survival, and enables civilian participation through narrative dissemination (Hewitson 2012; Khraban 2023; Rodley 2016). Studies on wartime communication show that humor plays a growing role in strategic messaging, such as in Ukrainian politicians' tweets during the current conflict (Yehorova, Prokopenko, and Zinchenko 2023). The NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (Ozolina et al. 2017) identified only relatively recently humor's strategic functions meaning: persuasion, image construction, social bonding, aggression and defense, and expressions of political freedom.

Despite its ubiquity, humor remains underexplored in security studies. While it permeates public discourse and contemporary conflicts (Kuipers and Zijp 2024; Gubanov, Gubanov, and Rokotyanskaya 2019), it is still treated as a second-rank topic, marginal to central concerns of war and peace. Few studies explicitly connect humor to information warfare, even though contemporary conflicts actively employ humor as a tool of strategic communication (Loiseau 2022; Dougherty 2023). Civilians also participate in this humorous information dimension of warfare, as illustrated by the NAFO (North Atlantic Fella Organization) social media movement, which supports Ukraine by countering Russian propaganda and ridiculing trolls through Shiba Inu memes (Dougherty 2023).

This article therefore addresses this gap by examining the extent to which humor—understood as whole rather than limited to specific forms such as irony—functions as a key component of information warfare, and what patterns emerge in the types and functions of humor within that framework.

Information warfare

To understand how humor contributes to these struggles over meaning, it is therefore necessary to turn to the concept of information warfare. The 21st century has driven humanity into what Alvin and Heidi Toffler (1993) called the Third Wave. This Third Wave has triggered a change in economy and warfare from "brute-force" to "brain-force" by turning towards information. In such context where information becomes the primary arena through which power is exercised, the very status of truth becomes contested. The "naïve view of information" (Harari 2024) presupposes that, despite the new challenges that arise in contemporary societies, such as disinformation, societies can recover thanks to the collection and treatment of even more information. But this perspective is weak because truth is never an objective representation of reality. Truth will always highlight certain aspects, giving them more importance, while neglecting others, invisibilising them (Harari 2024). This is why multiple truths coexist, leaving a vacuum for competition on who is right and who is wrong in representing reality. This ambivalence around what is true has turned information into a weapon, one from an inexhaustible

resource that can be used by both sides of a conflict simultaneously (Toffler and Toffler 1993): this is information warfare.

In the literature, terms supposed to refer to information warfare are multiple and used interchangeably. The ambivalence around the terminology has long been marked by democratic countries reformulating the same idea into neutral and softer terms not to be compared to authoritarian regimes, proponents of these methods widely associated with darkness and the most totalitarian regimes (Rashi and Schleifer 2023). In this respect, this study will simplify its approach and refer to information warfare, the general term regrouping diverse strategies. Information warfare can be defined, according to John Alger, as consisting of "those actions intended to protect, exploit, corrupt, deny or destroy information or information resources in order to achieve a significant advantage, objective or victory over an adversary" (Denning 1999, 10). The general purpose of information warfare is to target and exploit information to ensure the dominance of one narrative interpreting reality (Cherkaoui 2018) while preventing the opposite side from accessing a strategic advantage thanks to information (Farwell 2020). In this sense, information warfare always encompasses this win–lose outcome. To do so, information warfare relies extensively on emotions to produce an emotional response and then a change of behavior (Denning 1999), particularly on social media, where emotional contagion is easier and faster.

In this study, information warfare is understood as an ecosystem. Its whole existence is based on people connected with each other through networks. Information is what binds people together: sometimes information is true, other times it is false, but in any case, it always connects people in networks across borders, beyond cultures and sometimes regardless of languages (Harari 2024). It creates a new kind of reality, beyond objectivity and subjectivity, now, the inter-subjective reality exists (Harari 2024). It is a reality that is shared by billions of people, reinforcing its appearance of truth. The more people believe in it, the truer it appears. Information warfare completely requestions the notions of space and time. New technologies, and especially social media, greatly facilitated this cross-border dimension of information warfare, connecting people in a fraction of seconds. New technologies

also have this equalizing power, enabling even the smallest state to get an advantage over a bigger one, thanks to information warfare. Palestine, not even a recognized state by all on the international scene, managed to win most of the public opinion battles against Israel while they were disadvantaged in their military capabilities on the battlefield (Colon 2023; Saressalo 2019a; 2019b).

Before social media, no low-cost method enabled an ordinary person to reach billions of people. These activities were reserved for states and their services with enough resources to engage in information warfare through the printing of propaganda posters, the broadcasting of radio or TV documentaries or the publishing of articles in the media. Nowadays, thanks to social media, anyone can share their ideas, bring support to a cause or shame an actor. In October 2016, Bana al-Abed, a seven-year-old Syrian girl, challenged and even defeated the digital strategy of the dictator Bashar al-Assad on Twitter (Colon 2023). By sharing online her daily life under siege in Alep, she brought light to the inhuman campaign the Syrian dictator was carrying out against its population. Her voice had such an echo, and she received so much support, that Bashar al-Assad himself had to discredit her accusations. In cyber information warfare, the voice of a little girl is as powerful as the one of a state leader.

Nowadays, some random people can also make one state's narratives travel across borders by simply liking a content, commenting on it, sharing it, or using a hashtag. These simple actions online can have huge consequences. Normal users can also see their content being pushed and get a lot of visibility because it happens to serve the interests of a state or an organization. Farah Baker, a young girl from Gaza, has been enrolled—voluntarily or not—as one of Hamas's cyber soldiers in its information warfare against Israel for her posts serving the purposes of the organization (Colon 2023). In information warfare online, there is no neutral terrain anymore: we are all or will all be at one point a soldier in this war, be it consciously or not.

This theoretical understanding of information warfare differs from the common belief that it is a strategy organized hierarchically, planned by a state

and carried out by the military or intelligence services. Its implementation as an ecosystem penetrating every territory regardless of borders and time, and using anyone as a soldier of this war, can be even more dangerous because it is more discreet: the links drawing back to the states for which the propaganda is acting are even less evident than an official campaign. To use the expression of Colon (2023), "the battlefield is now everywhere," even far away from the state at the origin of the narrative, and it involves people who are sometimes not even impacted directly by it. On social media, the boundary between observer and participant is very thin. This understanding of information warfare as an ecosystem is not a new idea. Back at the end of the 70s, Yuri Andropov, director of the KGB, compared disinformation campaigns to seeds that the state has to water until they blossom on their own. At that time, for the KGB, the goal was to create reliable disinformation campaigns to repeat until it generates alone "a horde of involuntary but passionate defenders" (Colon 2023, 242). Then the state does not even need to intervene anymore, and random civilians do the job for them, sometimes not even knowing that they have turned into soldiers of this information warfare.

Case Study: Israel's Information Warfare in France and Spain Relative to the Arab-Israeli Conflict

Faced by a double threat since its creation, Israel had to defend itself against two types of enemies: neighboring states and irregular armed groups. While these two types of enemies are completely different and would require two different approaches, Israel has never had the capabilities to develop two different kinds of armies and military strategies to adopt tailored approaches (Goya 2024). The threat from Arab neighboring countries being predominant first, Israel developed a strategic culture based on striking first preventively and disproportionally to prevent war from penetrating the territory and to deter from threatening the Jewish state any time soon. This strategic culture has not much evolved over time despite changes in the strategic context and despite the diversity of threats Israel has to deal with now. This overly militarized approach, driven by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), revealed itself highly unsuited to the conflict in Palestine, particularly against Hamas's information warfare.

Due to their disadvantaged position on the battlefield, actors from Palestine turned to the information domain to get a strategic advantage with the upper hand on public opinion (Saressalo 2019a; Goya 2024). Hamas has excelled in this area, becoming famous internationally in particular for its propaganda videos that have earned it the nickname "Hamaswood" (Goya 2024). On October 7, 2023, the conflict resumed when Hamas launched a surprise attack on Israel. Despite its advanced defensive infrastructures, such as its Iron Dome to counter rockets, more than 8,500 Israeli civilians were killed or taken hostage. Hamas mediatized its attack thanks to videos filmed by combatants themselves on the battlefield to have complete control of the media coverage (Goya 2024). The militant group also got the support of Al-Jazeera, the Qatari news channel, which relayed pro-Hamas information. Then the humanitarian crisis orchestrated by Israel (United Nations 2024) to pressure Hamas and the Palestinian population to free hostages, offered the best materials for Hamas to point its cameras. Social media played a huge role in disseminating these images and narratives online to the greatest number. The photos and videos taken in Gaza showing the consequences of the airstrikes, the displacements of populations and the emergence of the humanitarian situation affected international audiences.

For its part, Israel has been slow to embrace hybrid tools and understand the importance of information (Goya 2024; Saressalo 2019a). For the first time in 2008, Israel integrated an influence campaign into its military Operation Cast Lead (Goya 2024). This first influence campaign targeted the Israeli public opinion with the goal to reinforce support from the population and elevate the morale of Israeli soldiers and their families. Israel also implemented an image blockage in the West Bank, providing the media with its own photos to control the narrative (Goya 2024). This strategy has been heavily criticized internationally, to the point that for the next operations, journalists were now free to enter Gaza—even though the situation backslid to image blockage since the resurgence of the conflict in 2023. The Jewish state also relied on random sympathizers online to overflood the social media and blogs with messages friendly to its Cast Lead Operation (Goya 2024). The IDF then invested in its social media strategy for higher-quality videos promoting its Operation Pillar of Defense three years later (Saressalo 2019a). Despite all

these efforts, Hamas has always dominated Israel in the information field thanks to victimization narratives and humanitarian headlines that have been very difficult for Israel to counter with its security perspective only.

Israel, being in the Middle East, surrounded by authoritarian regimes, holds dear to present itself as a liberal democracy. Like other democratic states, it is therefore quite reluctant to openly qualify its strategy as "propaganda" or "information warfare." Democratic nations stand by open societies and consider that governments must always present true facts to their citizens. This is reflected in the vocabulary used, such as the word "propaganda" in Hebrew that has been replaced at the end of the 19th century by the word "taamula," meaning "making an effort to achieve something" (Rashi and Schleifer 2023, 202). Currently, Israel's Foreign Ministry uses the term "hasbara," coming from the root "to explain" (2023)—translated as "public diplomacy"—which contributes to making the term more mainstream and generally accepted.

Contrary to Hamas, an irregular armed organization, Israel must convince the international public opinion to legitimise its military operations. American public opinion is particularly important for Israel, considering the massive support it receives from the United States. Not winning the American people's hearts and minds would result in massive protests and would ultimately prevent the Israeli state from carrying out its operations. But it is also crucial for Israel to dedicate resources more broadly and to focus on other international audiences. Israel's main target audiences have always been in Western countries and Russia. The material published by the IDF during the operation Pillar of Defense was in English, French, Spanish, and Russian (Saressalo 2019a). This focus on French- and Spanish-speaking communities is not a coincidence, because both countries have a long history of Anti-Semitism. For this reason, Israel has devoted resources to its humorous campaign "Presenting Israel" to change Spain and France's opinions on Israel that are based on stereotypes to reaffirm Israel's identity as like the Europeans (Adler-Nissen and Tsinovoi 2019).

Methodology: A Qualitative Visual Content Analysis of French and Spanish Humorous Tweets Supporting Israel

To study the role of humor in information warfare, this article focuses on humorous visual content, including photos, memes, or cartoons. Unlike textual information that requires a cognitive effort, visuals are more direct and easier to understand for everyone. This rapid process leads to more engaging content and strong emotional responses such as anger, empathy, or excitement (Hameleers 2024; 2025). Thus, visual elements do not just convey information, they make the audience feel something, increasing motivation to act. Visual elements coupled with humor are even more powerful in information warfare because they convey complex ideas very quickly and evoke stronger emotional responses. Humor has always been very effective visually, sometimes not even necessitating words.

The visual materials have been collected on the social media X. Social media are highly relevant for the study of humor in information warfare because of the social nature of humans that naturally led them to virtual networking. Thanks to its cheap and fast way of spreading content, social media greatly contribute to this information as an ecosystem in which anyone can participate. Online users participate in the widespread dissemination of information by posting the visual content, liking it, commenting on it, sharing it by "re-tweeting" it, or even by using the same hashtag to disseminate a trend more broadly. Yet the dynamics that facilitate the viral spread of information online also create challenges for information reliability, especially in wartime. Indeed, as Virilio notes, war is a "speed-factory" (Rodley 2016): things change fast. The information coverage requires means such as social media that can adapt very quickly to the new context and give a glimpse of the conflict situation to a maximum people on the planet within seconds. But this fast-paced characteristic is also what makes disinformation thrive online. The demand for quick information prevents reliable fact-checking and leads to the dissemination of false information. Social media leave room for alternative truths to coexist and competing narratives to present events under rival perspectives. This leads to a deceptive information environment in which an atmosphere of uncertainty and distrust reigns (Hameleers 2024). This

atmosphere of uncertainty and competing truths contributes to lowering the perceived stakes of online expression. Posting on X enables people to escape concerns for "political correctness" (Boxman-Shabtai and Shifman 2015), enabling anyone to speak more freely, even on topics that are controversial. This is reinforced by the use of humor online that offers further freedom of expression to social media users because it grants deniability. It gives a way to argue something risky or controversial while hiding behind the excuse "it is just a joke."

Thus, the sample of this study is composed of a total of 87 visual content posted on X, 55 on French-speaking accounts and 32 on Spanish-speaking ones. Visual media from X were collected over a period of six weeks following Hamas's attack on October 7, 2023. In information warfare, the first six weeks of a conflict are a period of high stakes in the information environment because people are very much in demand for information to understand the conflict and form their own opinion on it (Hameleers 2024). The content selected had to be created and posted with a clear, humorous intention. This does not imply that the researcher personally finds the visual material amusing, rather, it means that the content was deliberately designed and posted with the intention to provoke laughter in an audience. It is also important to note that the author of the tweet is not always the creator of the visual they share. Users frequently post cartoons by famous illustrators, such as Charlie Hebdo. These posts remain relevant since many users lack the skills to produce original visuals but can still use existing humorous images to convey their message. Also, although some visuals include English texts or hashtags, they are shared by French- or Spanish-speaking accounts.

To understand to what extent humor is a component of information warfare, this study focused on three categories. The first category is the six wrenches of information warfare borrowed from Toffler and Toffler (1993):

> (1) Atrocity accusations: Whether true, distorted or entirely false, atrocity accusations are a common feature of information warfare. Widespread accounts of brutality and crimes accusations -such as massacre, rape, torture, ethnic cleansing

or use of prohibited weapons- manipulate public opinions and stir up indignation. They also contribute to making an image of the opponent as savage or even uncivilized. The goal being to discredit the opponent while justifying the recourse to military action.

(2) Hyperbolic inflation of the stakes involved in a battle or war: To better rally support, information campaigns usually exaggerate the stakes of the battle or the war. The exaggeration can focus on the importance of the conflict, its meaning or its consequences. By presenting the situation as very alarming, as threatening core values or as endangering anything the targets might hold dear, the support attracted will be greater. The consequences of a defeat are presented as chaotic and irreversible turning the fight into an existential struggle. This wrench can help to turn a local or regional conflict into a world-changing one to expand global involvement.

(3) Demonisation and/or dehumanisation of the opponent: Information warfare commonly creates a degrading image of the opponent. It is about redescribing the enemy, portraying the other side as evil, subhuman, morally inferior, uncivilized or animals. The goal is to justify extreme actions while suppressing any form of sympathy with the opponent.

(4) Polarisation: When describing the situation as black and white, information warfare pushes for polarisation. It relies on the "us versus them" narrative, forcing public opinions to side with one camp and fully commit to it because according to the adage "those who are not with us are against us". Polarisation also aims at creating divides among societies to weaken them from within by turning citizens against each other. In this wrench, conflicts are presented as zero-sum battles: either you win, or you lose.

(5) Claim of divine sanction: To better justify a battle or a war, information warfare refers to religion to claim being on the "right" side. The initiator of the information campaign declares to be blessed by God who will grant them victory for having conducted a sacred duty. On the contrary, the opponents will be divinely punished for not fighting on the right side. This wrench is extremely powerful to justify a military action and mobilise support for what appears as a legitimate action while suppressing dissidents and any form of compromise with God's enemies.

(6) Meta-propaganda: A meta-propaganda is a propaganda that counters the other side's propaganda by discrediting it. The ultimate goal of this wrench is to destroy the information environment and sow distrust among public opinions so that they will question the veracity of everything coming from this enemy. The audiences are disoriented and stop trying to find the truth. Accusing others of propaganda also enables actors to mask their own propaganda under supposed neutrality. The goal of meta-propaganda is therefore to weaken the political participation and involvement of civilians in the conflict while increasing their vulnerability to manipulation.

The second category is the functions of humor, presented earlier: perceptions of relief, incongruity, and superiority. The third category focuses on the types of humor. Having no typology from the existing literature fitting the purpose of this study, an abductive approach to this coding has been preferred, creating a mix from different typologies from the literature (Juckel, Bellman, and Varan 2016; Buijzen and Valkenburg 2004) while also being educated by the data collected and the codes naturally emerging from it. The types of humor comprise: parody, irony, satire, absurdism, dark humor, self-deprecating, and ridicule.

The visual elements have been coded according to the codebook in Annexes (Figure 11). The coding sometimes had some overlaps with several wrenches of information warfare, several functions and types of humor being present in

the same image because of the complexity of the social world and the Israel-Palestine conflict, inherently including multiple layers of meanings.

Some frequency tables (Figures 12, 13, 14 in Annexes) and cross-tabulation tables (Figures 15, 16, 17 in Annexes) enable systematic categorisation of the data and reveal patterns to support the interpretation of the meanings. Indeed, the qualitative visual content analysis is primarily an interpretative method that aims to shed light on why and how humor functions with the delivery of information warfare's wrenches.

Presentation of Results and Discussion

The findings reveal that humor is a multi-functional tool in information warfare, which operates on three levels: tactical, social, and affective-cognitive. The findings are presented below as general rules for more clarity, even though they refer only to the study conducted here on Israel's information warfare in France and Spain relative to the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Tactical dimension: Humor as a strategic communication tool

Humor in information warfare is not aesthetic, spontaneous, or incidental, but rather deliberate and calculated because humor is a tactical tool that serves specific ends.

Finding 1: Humor in information warfare is one-directional: less reflective than outwards.

The frequency tables revealed the total absence of self-deprecating humor in the dataset. Self-deprecating humor is a kind of humor where someone makes fun of themselves, often making fun of flaws or mistakes in a light-hearted way. It can also be used as a defense mechanism because pre-empting the worst criticism by saying it first removes weapons from the adversary. The total absence of self-deprecating humor in this study corroborates the literature on Jewish humor that noted that while Jews are inseparable from "laughing through tears" and self-disparaging humor in high stress circumstances with

jokes on gas, chemical weapons, or Saddam Hussein—in reference to the dark period of the Gulf War—Israel's humor differs fundamentally (Nevo and Levine 1994). Some argue that Jewish humor was lost in transit to Israel because the situation for Jewish people evolved, with the creation of their own state. Thanks to the security granted by their new territory and state, it turned the former "humor of the weak," into Israel's "humor of the strong" with a more aggressive tone towards others (Nevo and Levine 1994, 127).

In the context of information warfare, the absence of self-deprecating humor shows that humor is one-directional: it is outwards and not reflective. This might suggest that, in information warfare, there is a deliberate avoidance of showing vulnerabilities. As strategists have already claimed, the goal of communication is to maximize one's strengths and minimize one's weaknesses (Farwell 2020). In information warfare, the absence of self-deprecating humor signals that the group is not open to dialogue by acknowledging its faults. On the contrary, humor directed outwards signals a very aggressive humor type. It aims to mock, judge, and diminish the opponent with no room for introspection and internal criticism. This finding corroborates the claim that, at the beginning of the conflict, during the period of adaptation, audiences are in demand of more aggressive humor styles to cope with the trauma of war (Khraban 2023). The goal is to frame the conflict in binary terms with rigid ideological positions and no compromise.

Finding 2: Satire serves as the backbone of humor-based information warfare.

Satire largely dominates the types of humor in the dataset. Satire is perfectly suited for information warfare because it is a way to formulate a moral or political criticism. It is a very accessible humor type to broaden the audience and engage it with messages as informative and impactful as a traditional news broadcast (Becker 2022). Commonly, satire juxtaposes contrasting elements side-by-side to stress the critique more evidently and relies on caricatures with exaggerated features or anthropomorphism. Visual hyperboles are also used with over-the-top scenes and scenarios to reflect the issues of the real world being distorted by the satirical mirror.

Yet, satire is very rarely the unique code of visual content. This suggests that satire is used as a backbone of humor-based information warfare rather than as the only message. This might be explained by studies which proved that there is a limited effect on attitudes after exposure to satirical content, suggesting that satire successfully but limitedly influences positions and opinions (Becker 2022). Satire is thus a good base on which additional humorous strategies may be built for a stronger impact. Nonetheless, as the backbone of most of the humor-based information warfare, satire is structurally essential to humor, to make the audience laugh, and to information warfare, to spread an ideological message.

Finding 3: Humor in information warfare avoids theological or spiritual arguments.

The wrench of information warfare "claim of divine sanction" is avoided across all humor types and functions. This means that theological or spiritual arguments are largely excluded from humor-based information warfare. Some visuals do represent some religious figures, like the Prophet, but only Figure 1 aims to present the jihadists as punished for not supporting "the right side." Despite the literature on information warfare, which confirms the reference to religious legitimization through sanctions for God's enemies, the sample of humorous content, with very few of this narrative, tends to suggest that humor in information warfare remains secular.

Figure 1: Two dead jihadists are asking: "Where are the 70 virgins?" while someone from the orgy at the back is answering "With the team of Charlie, losers!," referring to Charlie Hebdo's victims of the terrorist attack in 2015. (@PhilChose. X, October 17, 2023)

Secularity ensures that anyone can identify with the message being conveyed and therefore that it will be spread more widely. Indeed, religious beliefs are deeply held, emotionally charged, and non-negotiable. Making fun of religion is therefore not likely to convince people and change their mind, rather, it is very likely that it will create resentment, irritation, and undermine credibility. There are high risks that jokes on religion become "anti-jokes," meaning situations in which humor is considered as outrageous, not only leading to the absence of laughter but to "unlaughter" which is a reaction of indignation, as observed by Lewis (Gubanov, Gubanov, and Rokotyanskaya 2019, 2142). Charlie Hedbo, the French journal, suffered the consequences of the transgressive nature of humor on religion, having been attacked by terrorists in 2015 to avenge the caricatures of the Prophet. This makes humor about religion very tricky, where messages risk sparking conflict and appear as more blasphemous than clever, placing the limit of discursive acceptability right before theological and spiritual topics.

Social dimension: Humor as a mechanism of group identity and division

Humor in information warfare aims for a social impact to create bonds between individuals, tie them together and create clear boundaries between the in-group and the out-group. It helps individuals to find their place in a community by sharing the affirmative laugh while the out-group remains silent, creating the boundaries between groups (Mullan 2022). Every identity being relational, it exists by affirmation or difference to another identity (Mortensen and Neumayer 2021).

Finding 4: Humor polarizes by elevating the in-group for superiority with ridicule and mocking the out-group for incongruity with absurdism.

The analysis of the results revealed two trios of elements functioning together to draw a line with humor between the in-group and the out-group in information warfare: polarization–superiority–ridicule to elevate the in-group, and polarization–incongruity–absurdism to mock the out-group. Humor simplifies the conflict and turns it into binaries: "if you laugh with

us, you're on our side. If not, you're the enemy." In the content studied, polarization could be visualised with the two camps opposing each other, as in Figure 2, or with a line separating them or with a contrast in colors, as in Figure 3, with red or dark colors for Hamas connoting violence and blood, and blue and light colors for Israel connoting good and peace.

Figure 2: Comparison of an "LGBT parade in Israel" at the top and a "LGBT parade in Palestine." (@HasbaraEsp. X, October 22, 2023)

Figure 3: Comparison of Israel's defence shield with the Iron dome, and Hamas using human shields with children. (@phyloza. X, October 15, 2023)

Polarization is mostly associated with superiority as a function of humor. It means that humor here aims to accentuate the difference between us versus them, while reinforcing in-group unity and undermining the opponent. The visual elements tend to frame—with amalgam—the Palestinians, Hamas, the Arab countries supporting them—such as Iran—and Muslims as inferior, irrational, or dangerous. Israel is represented as technologically superior with its Iron Dome and other cutting-edge weapons, while Hamas is represented with basic weaponry, sometimes even barbaric, such as blades. Israel's moral superiority is shown through its respect of LGBTQ's rights, the protection of its population represented by women and children, and its efforts to limit the collateral damage in Gaza. In contrast, Hamas is shown as intolerant towards the LGBTQ community and as using the population as human shields, enabling them to play the victim card in the media. Antisemitism is also largely implicitly present in polarization-coded images spreading the idea of persecution of the Jewish state through protestations, graffiti, antisemitic insults, and the geographic position of Israel surrounded by hostile Arab countries. The visuals also aimed to mock the activists supporting Palestine as naïve or biased. For instance, Figure 4 depicts a stereotypical LGBTQ woman supporting a Muslim woman in a rainbow veil, juxtaposed with a veiled figure holding the LGBTQ woman's severed head. This has for consequence of positioning the audience as intellectually or morally superior to the out-group. A good joke must show "they are all the same" but "we are different" (Ozolina et al. 2017; Adler-Nissen and Tsinovoi 2018). This is particularly effective when the audiences are French or Spanish to portray Israel and its supporters as modern and civilized, like Western Europeans, contrary to the barbaric and savage enemy. When including those audiences in this feeling of belonging to the morally superior group, it helps to get their support for the legitimization of the conflict and the methods employed.

Figure 4: On the left, a stereotypical LGBTQ woman is holding a sign supporting veiled women with a rainbow veil. On the right, a veiled woman is holding the head of the LGBT woman on a pike. (@Rey_Guardian. X, October 11, 2023)

In order to make the in-group feel superior in this polarization, the out-group is generally ridiculed. It is a mutually reinforcing strategy because anyone will perceive content as more humorous when they are able to identify more with the winner (Ozolina et al. 2017), which in the end will increase the emotional contagion of the message that will be shared more widely. Ridicule to polarize is very effective because it mocks rather than debates the ideas of Palestine and the pro-Palestinian supporters. The goal is either to convert people to Israel's cause or to harden the positions, but not to open the debate, which makes it very difficult for the pro-Palestinian side to respond. Ridicule for polarization is also a soft weapon, thanks to the deniability it offers by avoiding overt aggression but still attacking and being ideologically heavy.

The other side of the coin is to mock the out-group so that the polarization mechanism is complete and effective. For this, incongruity creates the right conditions to laugh at the enemy because it focuses on mismatching expectations and reality by showing logical contradictions and surprising twists. When the out-group is presented as irrational, illogical, and incoherent, it becomes easier to laugh at them and to distance us—the in-group—from them.

The main type of humor associated with this process is absurdism because it works as an amplification of incongruity. It is an effective tool to surprise the audience with unexpected images and deny the out-group its status of serious opponent while presenting them as absurd. Figure 5 is a striking example of mocking Palestine's supporters by presenting supposedly irrational thinking by comparing it with an absurd situation. Queers standing for Palestine are ridiculed into cows standing for McDonald's to highlight the incompatibility between belonging to these groups and supporting Palestine (equalized to Hamas), known to be intolerant towards these communities. It triggers this emotional distance that turns the out- group into a laughable "other."

Figure 5: Comparison of "Queers for Palestine" with "Cows for McDonald's."(@Guayu_210. X, October 22, 2023)

Therefore, humor acts as a reinforcement of positions by flattering the in-group who "gets the joke" and mocking the out-group who is the target of the joke. This shows humor as a "double-edged sword": it unites with affiliative humor on the one hand, and it divides with aggressive humor on the other (Meyer 2000). This is part of the process of information warfare, consisting of reaffirming group identities and sparking hostility.

Finding 5: Humor tends to reduce opponents into figures of contempt rather than concern.

The trio demonization–superiority–ridicule demonstrates that humor in information warfare does not aim to scare the audience but to belittle the enemy and turn them into figures of contempt for the in-group.

Demonization and dehumanization of the enemy are often connoted with violence, death, barbarism, foolishness, or immorality. Israel's enemies are portrayed as backward people, often with missing teeth and as being overly violent, bloodthirsty, with primitive weapons such as blades. Figure 6 represents an Arab character walking on a time axis towards 2023 while his brain stayed in 1400. Animals are also associated with Israel's enemies, such as a pig for Al-Khamenei (Iran's Supreme leader), adding to the "comic" of the visual due to the religious prohibition to eat pig, or a crocodile to criticize Hamas's crocodile tears. Therefore, it is mostly associated with superiority because it allows the in-group to feel different and morally superior to the evil or inhuman opponent. Associated with ridicule, demonization, or dehumanization of the enemy does not aim to scare the audience, but, on the contrary, it helps to relativize the fear or concern the opponents may inspire. Ridicule withdraws from the enemy its capacity to scare the audience, by rather turning the relationship upside down and giving the ascendant to the in-group. Humor becomes a soft hate speech to ostracize the enemy while feeling superior. Soft because a humorous message is understood as less offensive than a non-humorous one, which makes humor a very effective tool to denounce and belittle the opponents (Ozolina et al. 2017).

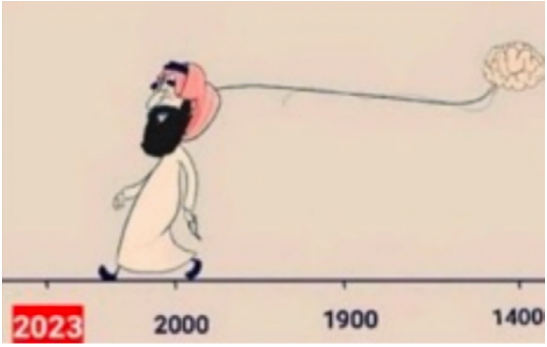

Figure 6: A Muslim character is walking on a time axis heading to 2023 while his brain is staying stuck in 1400. (@MartinLaly. X, November 17, 2023)

More than just framing the out-group as being wrong, demonization–dehumanization through ridicule leads to moralizing emotions like contempt, which frames the enemy as being "beneath respect." The out-group is no longer a political opponent but only a laughable individual. Demonization–Dehumanization through ridicule removes their human nature and denies their position, stakes, and grievances. The audience, therefore, does not feel concern—through fear or empathy—for the out-group but only contempt because humor made the opponent laughable and thus unworthy of care.

Findings 6: Humor helps to neutralize fear to build psychological resilience.

While perceptions of relief are the least common function of humor in the dataset, it is interesting to note that it is mostly associated with hyperbolic stakes. This means that showing dystopic futures and framing the stakes of the conflict as leading to a catastrophe if no action is taken does not aim to petrify the audience, but rather is associated with the expiation of fear to leave room for mobilization and action. For instance, the visual contents framed the threat of jihadist terrorism as universal and soon to spread all over the world, as in images representing a jihadist character doing "door-to-door delivery" by setting on fire each door representing always a new country. With these images, Israel and its supporters aim to warn the world and justify their military operations as a way to save the world. Another visual theme based on already existing fears spread by far-right groups in France and Spain is that Muslims will turn into the dominant group in society and will impose their values and religion. This is known as the "great replacement theory," and it is illustrated by the parody of the French election of Miss France turned into the election of "Miss Potato Sack" with veiled women. This is to anchor the conflict into a broader clash of civilizations. The visual contents from the hyperbolic stakes category also present the conflict as evidence of antisemitism. This narrative helps Israel to justify its actions by the feeling of persecution and with the broader goal to fight antisemitism on a global scale.

When dealing with hyperbolic stakes such as war and existential threats for Jews, associating it with humor for perceptions of relief is a defensive mechanism for the in-group. It is linked to the idea "to laugh not to cry,"

turning high stakes into laughable material to provide physical release of tensions and better cope with the situation. The goal is also to avoid apathy and rather present the future as not ineluctable, but as something on which the audience has a power, be it to support, to mobilize, or to legitimize. Humor in this context helps to break tensions by fostering a shared sense of control over the situation, reframing the situation as something manageable. It is manageable thanks to a collective action that necessitates group cohesion, which is built by perceptions of relief that unite a community by the sense of shared experience (Browning and Brassett 2023). This finding reaffirms the social dimension of humor by building the sense of agency of the in-group. Here, humor in information warfare deals with the collective emotional management in times of crises, which defuses fear to build group cohesion and encourage psychological resilience.

Affective-cognitive dimension: Humor as emotional manipulation

Lastly, humor influences how people understand and interpret the information and how they emotionally react to it. "Reason persuades, but emotions motivate" (Farwell 2020, 76). Humor is a very effective medium to transmit emotions that call the attention of the audience and encourage mobilization.

Finding 7: Humor amplifies threat perceptions to mobilize the audience.

Humor, in the form of parody, when associated with hyperbolic stakes, aims at incongruity. Usually deeply rooted in reality for more reliability, here, on the contrary, the hyperbolic stakes are incongruous. Incongruity creates this cognitive dissonance, which amplifies the tension to make it emotionally compelling.

In this context, parody mimics and offers representations of this dystopic future. The most common type of visuals in this category are parodies of cultural elements borrowed from the cultures of the target audiences that are turned into dystopic elements. For instance, Figure 7 is part of a series of memes parodying famous paintings originally representing naked women, here turned into veiled women with the caption "From now on, let's not offend

anyone." Hyperbolic stakes must reflect the fears and concerns of the French and Spanish populations, selecting cultural elements for parody that are widely known across the societies so that they resonate with them (Ozolina et al. 2017; Farewell 2020). Without this knowledge, the communication strategy will fail to create an emotional response. The advantage of information warfare online and its ecosystem characteristic is that the state at the origin does not need to acquire the sufficient knowledge on the public it aims to gain, but it only needs to provide the narratives and then the online networks within and across countries will do the job to tell the story in an engaging and culturally-specific manner, consciously or not (Colon 2023).

Figure 7:Parody of Goya's painting "The naked Maja" representing a naked woman, now turned into a veiled Muslim woman with the caption "From now on, let's not offend anyone." (@jokesmanager. X, November 6, 2023)

This humorous strategy inflates threat perception and creates greater identification for the audience to feel the urge to mobilize. It is a compelling example of how information does not necessarily inform the audience about a topic, but rather it "puts things into shape," it arranges them (Harari 2024). Parody therefore offers this dual purpose to mock and to mobilize: the out-group is so absurd, it is funny; but so extreme, it is dangerous. This trio magnifies threat perception to create this affective mobilization, where the audience is not only entertained but also provoked into mobilization.

Finding 8: Humor contributes to shocking the audience into attention.

Dark humor is mostly associated with atrocity accusations because it deals with themes usually off-limits and controversial when associated with jokes, such as war and suffering or the Holocaust. Atrocity accusations were present in many of the visual content in the form of killings, beheadings, violence, blood on hands and clothes, blades, et cetera. It was often associated with facial expressions of pride, enjoyment and humor, or indifference to violent scenes. Dark humor makes it a very effective tool to expose or accuse the out-group of committing violence indirectly. Visually, the most common theme was the accusation of Hamas using civilians as human shields with babies tied on it, an umbrella made of civilians, a Hamas soldier tied with babies and a detonator, a combat vest with a baby in front, a Hamas soldier hiding behind a stroller, or even Hamas's soldiers hiding among the population in hospitals or in Gaza represented as a labyrinth. The goal was to turn the accusations of Israel targeting civilians into a claim of collateral damage due to Hamas's instrumentalization of civilians in the conflict.

It does not require the accusation to be true, defamation is also a form of denouncement that damages the reputation of the enemy (Denning 1999) and ultimately connects the in-group together, creating this new kind of truth: the "inter-subjective truth" (Harari 2024). Humor is highly effective in this regard, because humor makes acceptable some approximations, for the sake of a good joke. For instance, the images coded with atrocity accusations tend to wrongly equalize Muslims with Hamas, with ISIS, with Al-Qaeda. It is easier for Israel and its supporters to blame ISIS and Hamas indistinctively for the same crimes to create this link with the European audiences and sensitize them with a terrorist group they have already been victims of.

But it is the third element that creates this attention-catching mechanism, which is to associate dark humor and atrocity accusations with incongruity because it shocks with the unexpected. The content is very serious, but the form and its visual representation suggest lightness. Visually, Hamas violence is juxtaposed with ordinary actions such as a hospital scene or even picking up dog waste in town, as in Figure 8. It is this clash that is unsettling for the

audience, and that will grab its attention to listen to the message. Humor, especially online, emancipates from the usual injunctions of political correctness and reveals the "repressed instincts" to make jokes from sensitive and accusatory topics through incongruity (Hewitson 2012; Boxman- Shabtai 2015).

Figure 8: Parody of a famous French quote for clean cities "I like my city, I pick up," here "I like my city, I Hamas." Two Hamas soldiers are picking up a dead person with the caption "Clean war in Gaza." (@stephane49col. X, October 18, 2023)

Finding 9: Humor contributes to plant doubt and erode trust.

Irony is mainly used with meta-propaganda, which is the exposure and mockery of the propaganda from the enemy. Meta-propaganda is usually more cerebral than emotional, which explains why irony is mostly used: the message requires reflection to be understood since irony shows the opposite of what it means. The goal is to highlight the contradiction between what the enemy claims and what it does, while preventing accountability, since irony denounces something while pretending not to. Visuals, such as Figure 9, enable Israel to denounce Palestine's victimhood by representing a Palestinian character who complains about the water being cut off in Gaza in opposition to the image that shows him needing water to wash his bloody hands.

Figure 9: A Palestinian is asking: "How far will barbarism go?" because he has no water to wash his hands from blood, with the caption "Israel cuts off water supply to the Gaza Strip." (@otherpeoplelife. X, November 9, 2023)

Meta-propaganda through irony leads to an emotional reaction in the audience: representing the contradiction of the enemy contributes to fostering doubt and eroding trust. Here, the goal is not to represent the in-group as possessing the one clear truth, but rather to undermine the concept of truth itself. Through ambiguity, disorientation and skepticism, irony in meta-propaganda does not aim to persuade but to confuse. It shows that truth is unknowable and that everyone manipulates.

This finding demonstrates that sometimes the goal of information warfare is not to get the support of the audience but rather to subvert and destabilize to create conditions more favorable for your own narratives (Colon 2023). It is the least that can be done in such a polarized conflict where ideologies and positions are non-negotiable: the only solution left is to subvert and hope to make the opposition move towards a position of neutrality (Farwell 2020).

Irony for meta-propaganda is the only mechanism in these findings that takes care of the often-underrated side of information warfare, which is to deny capabilities to the opponent (Colon 2023). Fostering distrust through irony fights back and even preempts any attempt of the enemy to control the

narratives on the conflict because the audience has been warned about the unfixed nature of truth. For this, the media were also a target of the visuals representing them as manipulating information, as in Figure 10, which compares Hamas's attacks from October 2023 to two rhinoceros mating, a very rare scene in the wild, and the photographer capturing something in the opposite direction, which is Israel's counterattack.

Figure 10: A photographer is turning his back to two rhinos mating, with the caption "Hamas terrorist attacks since 7 October" for the rhinos and "Israel counterattacks" for what the photographer is shooting. (@PFernandezBeri. X, October 29, 2023)

Conclusion

Humor is no longer entertainment only; it is also information warfare. This study examined to what extent humor functions as a key component of information warfare, with a focus on Israel's visual messaging in France and Spain's digital space.

Today, information warfare is a total war which touches upon all aspects of our lives. With its ecosystem, information warfare can drag anyone into this war, with the consequence of not only blurring the line between war and peace but also between observers and participants. In the digital space, content can go viral with very cheap efforts, especially when it is humorous. People informing themselves online do not always distinguish harmless and entertaining content from ideological and manipulative one. And authors of

these contents often do not realize themselves that they are serving bigger stakes when posting, liking, commenting, using a hashtag, or sharing online. Humor, being omnipresent in our real-life or digital communications, hides broader goals under its trivial appearance.

The analysis of visual humorous materials from X has demonstrated that humor is a multifunctional tool in information warfare with a tactical, a social, and an affective-cognitive dimension. Humor is tactical because it is very rarely incidental but calculated on purpose to serve broader goals. It is social because it creates relationships between individuals by unifying and differentiating. It is ultimately affective-cognitive because it shapes how people think and make sense of things while playing with emotions. Humor in this context is predominantly one-directional and outwards, the goal being to attack the opponent. Rather than fostering dialogue and reflection, it aims to elevate the in-group thanks to ridicule and mock the out-group thanks to absurdism, to erode the credibility of adversaries with irony, and to spark threat perception with parody. Humor also aims to catch the attention of the audience by shocking it into mobilization, but not through fear or spiritual justification, but rather through resilience. These findings complicate existing understandings of humor in security fields. It makes the link between humor and information warfare clear, by stating that humor is not a benign reality on the fringes of international relations, but a central component of their performance, especially in times of hybrid conflicts.

As digital platforms become increasingly digital battlefields saturated with satire, ridicule, absurdism, irony, dark humor, and parody, understanding humor not only as entertainment but as a weapon of war becomes critically urgent.

Declaration on the Use of AI

The author used an AI-assisted language tool to improve readability. All content was reviewed and verified by the author, who takes full responsibility for the final text. All interpretations and arguments are the author's own.

Annexes

Wrenches of Information Warfare (Toffler & Toffler 1993)		
Wrenches	**Definition**	**Operationalisation**
Atrocity Accusations	Claiming the other side commits brutal or inhumane acts.	Visuals showing death, destruction, suffering...
Hyperbolic Stakes	Framing the situation as existential or apocalyptic by exaggerating consequences.	Doomsday visuals such as nukes, flames, symbols of Western identity under attack...
Demonisation/Dehumanisation	Presenting the enemy as evil, less than human.	Monsters, Animals, Nazis, occult symbols, enjoyment of violence, faceless or massified enemy...
Polarisation	Drawing a strict "us versus them" line.	Visual binary such as dark vs light, flags and nationalist iconography...
Claim of Divine Sanction	Suggetsing divine support, religious legitimacy.	References to God, Star of David, Crescent moon...
Meta-Propaganda	Exposing or mocking the enemy's propaganda.	Mocking media coverage, side-by-comparision of propaganda vs reality...
Functions of Humour		
Functions	**Definition**	**Operationalisation**
Perceptions of Relief	Helping with realeasing physical tensions due to stress, fear or anxiety.	Juxtaposition of normality and violence, calmness in absurd situations...
Incongruity	Laughing at what is unexpected relying on a contrast between what is expected and what is shown.	Absurd scenarios, logical fallacies, trivialisation of violence...
Superiority	Ridiculing, mocking or belittling the opponent to reinforce in-group pride or perceived dominance.	Israel's moral or technological superioriy, mockery of the opponents' leaders, ridiculing the West for falling for propaganda...
Types of Humour		
Types	**Definition**	**Operationalisation**
Parody	Humourous imitation of a specific person or message often exaggerating features to mock or criticize the original.	Mimicking the structure of known media, use of well-known slogans, logos or visuals, copying pop culture, mimicry of known individuals such as leaders or institutions such as the UN...
Irony/Sarcasm	Showing the opposite of what is meant to mock and highlight contradictions.	Visuals where text and image contradict, expose doble standards of the West or the institutions, mimicking official discourse...
Satire	Humour with a critical edge for a moral or political critique.	Exaggeration of hypocrisis of opponents, the West, or media, symbolic imagery that criticizes how events are framed...
Absurdism	Humour from irrational, bizzare or illogical combinaisons.	Unexpected visual pairings or random symbols, over-the-top exaggeration...
Dark Humour	Humour that treats serious topics such as death, violence or suffering in a way that is comic or emotionally detached.	Use of horror visuals such as bombing or casualties combined with casual humour, joking about moral taboos...
Self-deprecating	Humour where the in-group mocks itself.	Jocking about Israelis' own security or politics...
Ridicule	Direct mockery or derision to humiliate, discredit or insult.	Humiliating caricatures, protraying of the opponents and their activists as dumb, cowards or weak, belittle institutions such as the UN or NGOs...

Figure 11: Codebook

Wrenches of information warfare	Frequency
Polarisation	46
Meta-Propaganda	37
Atrocity Accusations	37
Hyperbolic Stakes	22
Demonisation/Dehumanisation	17
Claim of Divine Sanction	3

Figure 12: Frequency of Wrenches of information warfare in the visual dataset.

Functions of humour	Frequency
Incongruity	41
Superiority	41
Perceptions of Relief	14

Figure 13: Frequency of Functions of humor in the visual dataset.

Type of humour	Frequency
Satire	75
Ridicule	26
Absurdism	16
Irony/Sarcasm	15
Dark humour	12
Parody	9
Self deprecating	0

Figure 14: Frequency of Types of humor in the visual dataset.

Wrenches of information warfare/Functions of Humour	Incongruity	Superiority	Perceptions of Relief	Total
Polarisation	18	30	5	53
Meta-propaganda	17	20	5	42
Atrocity Accusations	19	18	2	39
Hyperbolic Stakes	16	2	6	24
Demonisation/Dehumanisation	7	8	4	19
Claim of Divine sanction	1	2	1	4
Total	78	80	23	181

Figure 15: Cross tabulation table Wrenches of information warfare–Functions of humor.

Wrenches of Information Warfare/Types of Humour	Satire	Ridicule	Absurdism	Irony/Sarcasm	Dark Humour	Parody	Self deprecating	Total
Polarisation	43	15	11	5	5	2	0	81
Meta-Propaganda	37	9	4	11	2	0	0	63
Atrocity Accusations	36	8	5	8	8	1	0	66
Hyperbolic Stakes	21	8	2	4	3	6	0	44
Demonisation/Dehumanisation	15	9	3	3	5	2	0	37
Claim of Divine Sanction	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	5
Total	154	50	27	31	23	11	0	296

Figure 16: Cross tabulation table Wrenches of information warfare–Types of humor.

Functions of Humour/Types of Humour	Satire	Ridicule	Absurdism	Irony/Sarcasm	Dark Humour	Parody	Self deprecating	Total
Incongruity	38	16	13	8	8	8	0	91
Superiority	35	11	5	7	3	2	0	63
Perceptions of Relief	8	3	4	3	3	2	0	23
Total	81	30	22	18	14	12	0	177

Figure 17: Cross tabulation table Functions of humor–Types of humor.

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