

The Resurgent India

A Monthly National Review

May 2025



“Let us all work for the Greatness of India.”

– The Mother

Year 16

Issue 2

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SUCCESSFUL FUTURE

(Full of Promise and Joyful Surprises)

Botanical name: Gaillardia Pulchella

Common name: Indian blanket, Blanket flower, Fire-wheels

Year 16

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A Declaration

We do not fight against any creed, any religion.

We do not fight against any form of government.

We do not fight against any social class.

We do not fight against any nation or civilisation.

We are fighting division, unconsciousness, ignorance, inertia and falsehood.

We are endeavouring to establish upon earth union, knowledge, consciousness, Truth, and we fight whatever opposes the advent of this new creation of Light, Peace, Truth and Love.

– The Mother

(Collected works of the Mother, Vol. 13, pp. 124-25)

HIGHLIGHTS

DEVELOPMENTS IN RUSSIA-UKRAINE WAR

Emboldening Russia Via China:

The presence of Chinese President, Xi Jinping, besides other notable countries from the Global South, at Russia's May 9th Victory Day parade, despite the ongoing war, has come as a major boost of legitimacy to Russia. Mr. Xi was on a full three-day visit to Russia and was accompanied by an entourage of aids and correspondents of such size that the Russian protocol department was stretched to the limit. In their joint declaration, Russia and China used the two bilateral statements – a Joint Declaration of the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation on Further Strengthening Cooperation to Uphold the Authority of International Law, and a Joint Statement by the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation on Global Strategic Stability – to emphasize their countries' maintenance and strengthening of global stability and the international order.

The points of emphasis were deliberately chosen to resonate against the West, with talk of improving global governance, promoting multilateralism and stability, and protecting sovereignty. China also concurred with Russia's interpretation of the war that the root causes of the war need to be addressed. This latest Putin-Xi meeting continued the slow consolidation of the PRC-Russia relationship that has been building for last several years. Despite the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war, in the last two years alone, the two militaries have conducted numerous joint exercises from the Gulf of Finland and the

Persian Gulf to the Bering Sea and the Sea of Japan, giving their collaboration a global hue.

Since the advent of Donald Trump, China has vigorously intensified its relations with Russia, and has gone out of the way to keep the latter out of America's orbit.

Failure of Ceasefire:

Amid mounting calls for a ceasefire, the Ukrainian and Russian delegations met for the first time in Turkey. However, despite pressure from Ukraine, Russian President, Vladimir Putin, himself did not turn up. Indeed, the delegation that Russia sent to Istanbul was also so low-level that that itself became a message that Russia is not serious about a ceasefire. Furthermore, Russia also rejected the terms presented by Ukraine, decrying them as being formulated by the West, and instead presented its own terms.

As part of Russia's conditionalities, it is insisting on "agreements" offered to Ukraine in Istanbul in March–April 2022. While there were no such "agreements," Russia wants to incorporate parts of its own 2022 drafts into the terms of settlement. This is in contrast to Ukraine's stand which, along with its European partners, wants a comprehensive ceasefire (land, air, sea) for at least 30 days, without preconditions. Such a ceasefire should precede any political-diplomatic process. Otherwise, Ukraine would be negotiating under the gun.

They also hoped that the Russian delegation would seamlessly proceed to a broader political dialogue in the same meeting. They, therefore, wished to see a high-level Russian delegation with the necessary authority to start that dialogue in Istanbul. Those hopes turned out again to be unfounded.

Broadly, Russian preconditions include:

- Ukraine will recognize Russia's incorporation of Crimea and the entirety of Ukraine's Luhansk, Donetsk, Zaporizhzhia, and Kherson provinces.
- Ukrainian troops will withdraw from the portions they still hold in those four mainland provinces.
- No Western troops (from North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) member states) will oversee an eventual armistice on Ukraine's remaining territory.
- Kyiv will renounce its claims to Russia for war damage reparations.

Russia has not only attached those preconditions to a ceasefire agreement but has also listed them as elements of an eventual political settlement. Additionally, Moscow and Kyiv agreed to exchange prisoners of war on a 1,000-for-1,000-basis, becoming the largest one-time exchange of prisoners in this war thus far.

The failure of the negotiations has, for now, dashed hopes of the ceasefire. The failed negotiations reveal the limitations of the American policy towards the war under Donald Trump. By creating a divide with Ukraine and Europe and by threatening to 'walk away' in case the negotiations fail, the American attitude has emboldened Russia to an extent not seen in the last three years.

TECHNOLOGY UPDATE

China has made a significant breakthrough in the field of cyber electromagnetic warfare. This form of warfare lies at the intersection of kinetic/military and non-kinetic forms of

warfare. It is a form of informatized warfare in which the adversary's information, communications and electromagnetic systems can be crippled, by targeting the adversary's command, control, and communication infrastructure.

As part of this wider mode of warfare, China, through its People's Liberation Army (PLA), is now rapidly expanding its arsenal of high-power microwave (HPM) weapons. This will help to give China advantage in the electromagnetic spectrum. The PLA aims to integrate these HPM weapons into its asymmetric warfare tool kit, enabling disruption of adversary electronic systems. HPMs target the central nodes that hold technologically advanced militaries together, making them a critical weapon in future conflicts, including a Taiwan contingency. The PLA is likely to synchronize HPM strikes with cyber-attacks to paralyze critical infrastructure, giving it a rapid battlefield advantage. This breakthrough will pose significant threats to the US and its allies in the Indo-Pacific and beyond.

Interestingly, China's interest in this area goes back to its Cold War era research on electromagnetic pulse (EMP) weapons. During the time of Cold War, U.S. and Soviet nuclear tests in the 1960s revealed that high-altitude nuclear detonations produced electromagnetic pulse that could disable or destroy electronics. Following these tests, China was quick to integrate these nuclear EMP weapons into their broader approach to information and cyber capabilities. For China, these weapons represented an effective asymmetric capability designed to even the playing field against technologically superior adversaries, such as the United States.

In today's time, when China's adversaries like the US have

increased their reliance on an array of electronics for their increasingly integrated networks of weapons and communication equipment, advanced non-nuclear EMP weapons like HPM systems can be used as an effective asymmetric warfare strategy by China, without the threat of nuclear escalation.

Today, China's advantage in this field has made it a dominant player in the research on these weapons. As of 2022, 90 percent of all new HPM-related patents globally belong to PRC-affiliated researchers and organizations.

OPERATION SINDOOR AND THE CHANGING INDIA-PAKISTAN DYNAMICS

The deviously unalterable relationship between India and Pakistan is back to the forefront of global and regional South Asian politics, thanks to the Operation Sindoor launched by India in response to the Pahalgam terrorist attack in Jammu & Kashmir on 22-4-2025. The massive airstrikes carried out by the Indian air force on major terrorist camps in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) as well as deep inside Pakistan on 7-5-2025 resulted in a retaliation from Pakistani military, leading to at least three days of protracted conflict. The brief, but intensive hostile military engagement between the two countries served to highlight several aspects of the changing patterns of war and geopolitics, the changing military technology scenarios and the nature of diplomacy in today's world. At a deeper level, it brings home the fallacy of Pakistan's claims on Kashmir when viewed from a spiritual-moral perspective, and conversely, their validity when viewed simply from a material-political perspective. The conflict should, therefore, serve as an occasion for the country to rise above the pervasively common short-term political thinking, and instead, combine the development of its material capabilities with a higher instrumentation flowing from the right receptivity and motivation. The upshot of the conflict may serve as a significant eye-opener for India in many ways, should we choose to heed it.

THE PERVASIVE SCOURGE OF TERRORISM IN KASHMIR AND ITS PAKISTANI ANTECEDENTS

The evolution of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) is

closely linked to the phenomenon's antecedents to its main sponsor viz. the Pakistani state. While the rise of organized terrorism in the Valley has been witnessed since the 1980s with the formation of organized terrorist outfits that would cross the Line of Control (LoC) to Pakistan for weapons training and procurement, the deeper genesis of terrorism in the Valley cannot be delinked from the geopolitical contestations surrounding the status of Kashmir. There are, therefore, two dimensions through which the rise of terrorism in Kashmir must be viewed:

First, the antecedents of the issue lie in the post-Partition contestation around the disputed nature of J&K, with an Indo-Pak war breaking out over the issue in the immediate post-Independence period, followed by four other wars and conflicts over the subsequent decades.

Second, the political contestations around J&K have been accompanied, in the decades following Independence, by Pakistan's use of terrorism as a means to systematically compromise India's security, stretch its capabilities and alienate Kashmir from the rest of India. This has served the dual purpose of enabling Pakistan to use terrorism as a cheap, low-cost alternative to wage a proxy war against India, and to use religion to create deep-rooted alienation in Kashmiri society against India.

Post-Independence Geopolitical Contestations over Kashmir

These tactics were reflected in the immediate post-Independence period when the Kashmir dispute first arose. At the time, J&K was a princely state. Like other princely states under the British administration, it enjoyed a special status of

suzerainty, which allowed it to be semi-autonomous from the British government. In the aftermath of the Partition, the newly independent Indian government went about the process of integrating princely states into the Indian Union. There were 565 princely states at the time of Independence. The British advice that in the integration of princely states into either India or Pakistan, “due consideration should be given to numerical majority and geographical congruity”, was followed in most cases (Schofield, 2021).

However, three princely states presented a complex problem viz. Hyderabad, Junagadh and Kashmir. In case of Junagadh, while the population of the state was predominantly Hindu, the ruler was Muslim. After Partition, the Nawab of Junagadh acceded to Pakistan. India refused to accept this decision, citing the presence of majority Hindu population in the state, and imposed a blockade to prevent the Nawab from governing, leading the Nawab to flee to Pakistan along with his family. Thereafter, based on a popular plebiscite in the state where the people overwhelmingly favoured integrating with India, the state was made a part of the Indian Union in 1948. The Junagadh case served as an important precedent for other princely states that were refusing to integrate into either India or Pakistan.

Hyderabad also presented a similar dilemma. It was ruled by the Muslim Nizam and consisted of majority Hindu population. At the time of Independence, the Nizam refused to integrate with India, expressing a preference for either integration with Pakistan or an independent, sovereign status.¹

¹ The Nizam had signed a Standstill Agreement with India in 1947. The agreement provided for the maintenance of administrative status-quo even as the formal negotiations were going on. It was to ensure Hyderabad's independence in the interim period.

Pakistan further fueled tensions by influencing the Nizam. The Nizam was also supported by radical fundamentalist Islamic outfits such as the Ittehadul-Muslimeen and the Razakars. The Nizam's recalcitrance, the precipitation of communal violence by the Razakars leading to thousands of deaths, and the tensions created by the peasant uprising against the Nizam in Telangana, led India to integrate Hyderabad into the Indian Union by force (Operation Polo).

Finally, unlike Junagadh and Hyderabad, the case of Kashmir was the opposite. The princely state was ruled by a Hindu Dogra ruler, Maharaja Hari Singh, but consisted of majority Muslim population. This enabled Pakistan to stake claim over the state, along the lines of what happened in other Hindu-majority princely states viz. since the state had Muslim majority, Pakistan believed it was justified in claiming it. Further, since the rationale for Pakistan's formation and existence was justified through the 'two-nation theory' viz. Hindus and Muslims constitute two separate nationalities that cannot ever be reconciled or co-exist, therefore, it was used to argue that all Muslim-majority regions should go to Pakistan. Proponents of Pakistan viewed Hyderabad's and Junagadh's accession to India through the same prism of two-nation theory. However, this justification did not work out well in the case of Kashmir. There were two immediate reasons for this:

Secularism vs Religious Justification

First, Kashmir's accession to India was justified by India not through the grounds of the communal two-nation theory, but through the prism of secularism and religious co-existence. From this perspective, the accession of Muslim-majority Kashmir to India was as valid as the accession of Hindu-majority

states like Hyderabad and Junagadh because post-Independent India was a country founded on the basis of principles of secularism and religious co-existence. In such a country, religion cannot become the criteria for national decisions. The accession of Kashmir to India was, therefore, a symbolic proof of the country's secularism. Sheikh Abdullah, a popular Kashmiri leader and the state's first Prime Minister, had often taken this line in his speeches. This position was also clearly enunciated by Jawaharlal Nehru in one of his speeches in 1953, given in the wake of the arrest of Sheikh Abdullah, where he said, "We have always regarded the Kashmir Problem as symbolic for us, and it has far-reaching consequences in India. Kashmir is symbolic as it illustrates that we are a secular State, that Kashmir, with a large majority of Muslims, has nevertheless, of its own free will, wished to be associated with India" (Mehraj, 2024).

This was a compelling justification for the integration of Kashmir with India. Despite the signing of the Nehru-Liaquat Pact (1950) which had mandated the governments of India and Pakistan to undertake the protection of minorities within their respective territories, Pakistan had witnessed drastically dwindling minority population numbers, due to their persecution, systematic deprivation of their rights, their treatment as second-class citizens, and their forced conversions to Islam. This continues to be the case even at present, with the pattern in Muslim-majority societies like Pakistan being clear. In Pakistan, the population of Hindus declined from about 20.5% in the year 1951 to around 2.17% in 2022, while in Bangladesh (former East Pakistan), it has declined from 22% Hindus in 1951 as opposed to 7.9% in 2022. Conversely, in India, Muslim population has steadily grown with Muslims now

accounting for 14.2% of India's population (according to official estimates), as opposed to 9.8% in 1951.

Farahnaz Ispahani, media advisor to the President of Pakistan from 2008-2012, has in her book 'Purifying the Land of the Pure: Pakistan's Religious Minorities', documented what she calls the slow 'genocide' of minorities in Pakistan since 1947 and Pakistan's tryst with radical Islamism. She breaks this pattern of slow genocide into four stages (Roche, 2016):

- *First, the stage of Muslimisation:* This is the phase between 1945 and 1951 when there is a massive decline in Hindu and Sikh populations, with Pakistan becoming demographically more Muslim.

- *Second, the stage of cultivation of Islamic identity:* This is witnessed after 1958, when attempts are made to forge Pakistani identity purely based on Islam. This happened through state-sponsored textbooks which rejected pluralism, painted religious minorities negatively, and glorified Islamic history by purging it of its South Asian basis.

- *Third, the stage of Islamisation:* This is witnessed after 1974, under General Zia ul Haq, when laws were systematically framed to legalize the persecution of religious minorities.

- *Fourth, the stage of militant hostility towards minorities:* It is the phase which picked up pace after 1988 and continues till now. It has witnessed the use of terrorism and organized violence against minorities.

Thus, through this rationale it is clear how, over the decades, India's claim over Kashmir has been solidified on a firm moral and humanitarian ground. Since Independence, India has been able to show that the country's national fabric is not just based

on the constitutional principles of secularism and religious pluralism, but religious minorities have flourished, and their population has grown in the country. This overriding moral reasoning is far superior to the narrow religious justification given by Pakistan and has formed the clearest moral rationale for India's rightful claim over Kashmir.

Political Precarity of Kashmir

Second, at the time of Independence and in the subsequent years, Kashmir also became crucial to India politically due to the rapidly changing international situation. While initially the Maharaja of Kashmir chose to remain independent of both India and Pakistan, when he realized that his state was about to be overtaken by the incoming Pashtun hordes and Muslim tribesmen from Pakistan (with the active participation of Pakistani Army), he chose to sign an Instrument of Accession in October 1947 acceding the control of J&K to India. The Instrument created special administrative and political arrangements whereby India could exercise control over key subjects like defence, foreign affairs and communications only, while the state retained political autonomy in all other respects. It was as part of this agreement that Article 370 was inserted into the Indian Constitution, validating Kashmir's autonomous status.

After the signing of this Instrument, the Indian military successfully repelled the Pakistani forces and their tribal terrorists and was in a commanding position to capture the entire Kashmiri territory (including the present-day Pakistan Occupied Kashmir or PoK), which would have considerably weakened the strategic nerve centres and bases of Pakistan. This alarmed the pro-Pakistan British government, leading their

representative in India, Lord Mountbatten, to prevail upon PM Nehru to withdraw the Indian military from Kashmir and approach the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) on this issue. He also induced Nehru to give assurances of holding a plebiscite in the territory to ascertain the will of the people.

At the time, PM Nehru agreed to the withdrawal of troops and approaching the UNSC, as he was of the view that it would give India a high moral ground internationally if it approached the UNSC first. India assumed that the matter would anyway come up before the UNSC, most likely at Pakistan's behest, leaving India on the defensive and painting it as an aggressor, so India might as well gain a high moral ground by approaching it first. This was stated by Nehru in one of his speeches when he said in 1956, "Many people have criticized us for doing that [going to the UN]. As I said, it is easy to be wise after the event. But I think it was a right step to take, and there is no doubt in my mind that the matter would have gone there whether we took it or somebody else took it" (Mehraj, 2024). Nehru has also argued that "India went there to ask the Security Council to call upon Pakistan to withdraw its forces from the Indian Union territory. That was the main object." (Mehraj, 2024).

In one of his letters, Sri Aurobindo elaborated on this aspect by stating that, "It was for political motives, I take it, and not from a consciousness of military weakness that India did not push her initial advantage, and she insisted on the plebiscite, not because it was her last or only chance but because it gave her the best chance. In a plebiscite on the single and straight issue of joining either Pakistan or India she was and is quite confident of an overwhelming majority in her favour.

Moreover, she does not cling to the plebiscite from motives

of ideological purity and will even refuse it if it is to be held on any conditions other than those she has herself clearly and insistently laid down. She is quite prepared to withdraw the case from the cognizance of the U.N.O and retain Kashmir by her own means and even, if necessary, by fight to the finish, if that is unavoidable. That Patel has made quite clear and uncompromisingly positive and Nehru has not been less positive. Both of them are determined to resist to the bitter end any attempt to force a solution which is not consistent with the democratic will of the Kashmir people and their right of self-determination of their own destiny. At the same time they are trying to avoid a clash if it is at all possible” (CWSA 36, 2006, pp. 517-20).

At the time, the complex politics played by the western countries at the UNSC, spearheaded by Britain, further led India to realize the geopolitical importance of Kashmir. The politics of Cold War was gaining ascendance, and Kashmir was situated at a strategically important border position, straddling borders with India, Pakistan and China. It was, therefore, also an important buffer zone. The Indian establishment, under Nehru, was of the view that the Western countries, particularly, the United States and the United Kingdom, were supporting Pakistan, as they viewed it as a channel to establish relations with the Arab countries, with the purpose of containing the Soviet Union. As early as 1950, Nehru enunciated this position in one of his letters saying that, “I am a little tired of the intrigues and the various moves of Britain, the United States, etc. in Kashmir and have lost interest in them... this Kashmir question would have been settled long ago but for the pro-Pakistan attitude and activities of Britain and some other countries” (Mehraj, 2024).

Therefore, political and strategic interests also made Kashmir crucial to India's security. This continues to be the case till date. Straddling Pakistan, China and India, Kashmir continues to occupy a pivotal role in South Asian security till date. In 2019, the revocation of Article 370 was based on an implicit recognition of these geopolitical realities and was an attempt to secure Kashmir internally.

Growth of Terrorism in Kashmir

The growth of terrorism in Kashmir has witnessed, historically, various broad phases. After India's victories in the three successive India-Pakistan wars of 1948-49, 1965 and 1971, the resultant creation of Bangladesh by carving out of East Pakistan and the inability of Pakistan to make any meaningful gains on the Kashmir issue, the Pakistani state began to adopt a different strategy to deal with India over the Kashmir issue. This was the time of peak Cold War era. Pakistan had begun to cultivate close relations with China and was already a strong American ally. In addition, the Sino-American rapprochement was also underway, as the Sino-Soviet relations had fractured during the 1960s. Pakistan also helped America in ensuring the defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan by cultivating the *mujabideen* terrorists, which later became the Taliban. Pakistan's strong Cold War era foreign alliances further led to a substantial growth of foreign economic as well as military aid flowing into the country, leading to a period of internal economic prosperity from the 1960s to the 1990s.

This combination of Pakistan's inability to acquire conventional battlefield advantage over India, its internal economic growth and external Western support bases, led Pakistan to deploy terrorism as a low-key, but continuous and

deep-rooted means of executing the policy of ‘bleeding India by a thousand cuts.’ This was a well-executed operation of Pakistan known as ‘*Operation Topac*’ (EFSAS, 2024). At the time when Pakistan and America were training mujahideen to wage war against the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, Pakistan, flush with money, also began to execute cross-border arms training for the youth in Kashmir. The potential terrorists were taught not only how to use arms to wage war against the Indian state, but also to psychologically infiltrate the Kashmiri society and establish total control by cultivating local support bases. The upheavals in domestic Kashmiri politics from the 1960s onwards, starting with the Nehru-Abdullah rift combined with the feeling of separatism and national isolationism already cultivated because of Article 370, further created a fertile ground for terrorism to thrive.

First phase: In its first phase, terrorism in Kashmir largely assumed a ‘secular’ form and propaganda to legitimize itself as a genuine pro-independence separatist movement led by the Kashmiris themselves. With the aim of achieving secession from India and the establishment of Kashmir as a sovereign state, this phase began in the early 1980s and continued for almost a decade. Its major mouthpiece was the Jammu and Kashmir Liberation Front (JKLF)² led by Amanullah Khan and Maqbool Bhat. Ironically, the JKLF was largely sponsored and supported by the Pakistani military establishment and acted at its behest.

Former Pakistani President, Gen. Pervez Musharraf, had admitted as much in an undated interview which went viral in 2019, in which he had said, “Kashmiris who came to Pakistan

² JKLF was founded in 1977 in London, and advocated secession of Kashmir from India.

received a hero reception here. We used to train them and support them. We considered them as Mujahideen who will fight with the Indian Army. Then, various terrorist organisations like Lashkar-e-Taiba rose in this period. They (jihadi terrorists) were our heroes... In 1979, we had introduced religious militancy in Afghanistan to benefit Pakistan, and to push the Soviets out of the country. We brought Mujahideen from all over the world, we trained them and supplied weapons to them. We trained the Taliban, sent them in. They were our heroes. Haqqani was our hero. Osama bin Laden was our hero. Ayman al-Zawahiri was our hero. Then the global environment changed. The world started viewing things differently. Our heroes were turned into villains” (NDTV, 2019).

Second phase: Broadly, the second phase of terrorism in Kashmir was witnessed after the infamous elections of 1987, which were allegedly rigged by the Congress and the National Conference (NC) in a bid to usurp power in the state. The popular Muslim United Front (MUF) which believed that the elections were rigged took to the path of militancy. However, beyond this superficial and surface reason, which does not hold much water given the already fraught background of terrorism in Kashmir, lay the fact of the changing nature of terrorism in Kashmir. This was the phase when, fresh from victory in Afghanistan, the mujahideen were turned towards Kashmir to fight against the Indian state. In this phase, which was witnessed after the 1990s, Pak-sponsored terrorism assumed an overtly fundamentalist religious character. All pretence of pro-Independence and sovereignty for Kashmir was abandoned, and explicit calls were given for Kashmir to join Pakistan, as well as for the Islamization of Kashmir. This fundamentalist phase also saw the widespread genocide and exodus of Kashmiri Pandits in the Valley.

Organizations like JKLF went into decline as Pakistan withdrew its support to them, and new terrorist outfits, based on Islam and advocating Kashmir's merger with Pakistan, were formed. These included Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)³, Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM), Hizbul Mujahideen (an offshoot of Jamaat-e-Islami Pakistan)⁴, Harkat-ul-Ansar, Hizb-e-Islami and others. To penetrate Kashmiri society more deeply, even all-women's terrorist outfits like Dukhtaran-e-Millat were formed, which glorified the wearing of burkha and practising of religious extremism by Muslim women. To coordinate the work of these numerous pro-Pakistan terror outfits, a political outfit, namely, the All Party Hurriyat Conference (APHC) was formed in 1993. It was created directly by the Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) of Pakistan, as was later admitted by former Pakistan ISI chief, Lieutenant General Mohammad Asad Durrani, in order to give unity and legitimacy to the various terrorist outfits operating in the Valley. During this phase, despite the crackdown by the Indian security forces, terrorists were able to establish sway over the Kashmiri society, leading to the spread of pan-Islamism across the Valley.

Third phase: This phase began in the early 2000s and has witnessed the rise of Pak-sponsored terrorism driven by digital means and social media, where the Internet was used to widely psychologically penetrate into the society and influence youth to ensure their recruitment and ideological indoctrination. On

³ It has the largest militant network in Pakistan by maintaining 2,200 offices nationwide and around two dozen camps to launch fighters across the Line of Control (LoC). LeT was responsible even for the 2008 Mumbai attacks.

⁴ Hizbul Mujahideen controls up to 60 percent of the Mujahideen operating in Kashmir and has been working alongside Lashkar-e-Taiba since 1997 (EFSAS, 2024)

the one hand, there was a decline in the kind of terrorism witnessed during the 1990s due to the pressure by the US on Pakistan to rein in its terrorist groups after 9/11 and as part of the global 'War on Terror.' On the other hand, terrorism assumed new, localized and hybrid forms in Kashmir due to the spread of Internet and social media. The spread of digital technology also spurred the rise, on a world scale, of global Pan Islamism and the rise of global Islamic political consciousness centred on fundamentalist idea of jihad, to which even the Kashmiri youth was not immune (EFSAS, 2024). Therefore, paradoxically, the rise of globalization also led to the globalization of political Islam, with terrorism becoming its weapon of choice to wage jihad.

Thus, unlike the previous decades, instead of picking up arms and outrightly executing terror attacks, there was now a steady infiltration among the locals and a garnering of local sympathy. This was witnessed in the wake of the 2009-10 Amarnath land controversy, when 99 acre of forest land in Kashmir was transferred to the Amarnath shrine for the welfare of the Hindu pilgrims. This event triggered the biggest protests since 1990s. However, instead of resorting to the use of arms, locals were engaged in a new *modus operandi* of heavy stone-pelting.

The localization of terrorism in Kashmiri society during this phase did not, however, prevent large scale standalone terrorist attacks from occurring elsewhere on the Indian soil, beginning with the 2001 Parliament attack and spanning a series of terror attacks across major Indian cities between 2006 and 2009, including the 26/11 attacks. Across the rest of the country, this phase saw the activation of numerous terrorist sleeper cells consisting of Muslim youth.

Major Terrorist Attacks in India (2006–2010)

Date	Incident	Location	Perpetrators	Deaths	Injured
11 Jul 2006	Mumbai train bombings	Mumbai, Maharashtra	Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT), SIMI	209	714
8 Sep 2006	Malegaon bombings	Malegaon, Maharashtra	Unknown (suspected Islamist groups)	37–40	125
18 Feb 2007	Samjhauta Express bombings	Panipat, Haryana	Suspected LeT	68–70	50+
18 May 2007	Mecca Masjid bombing	Hyderabad, Telangana	Islamist extremists	13–16	100+
25 Aug 2007	Hyderabad bombings	Hyderabad, Telangana	Islamist groups	42	54
13 May 2008	Jaipur bombings	Jaipur, Rajasthan	Indian Mujahideen (IM)	63–71	200+
26–29 Nov. 2008	Mumbai attacks (26/11)	Mumbai, Maharashtra	Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)	166–175	300+
26 Oct. 2009	2009 Assam bombings	Assam	ULFA, Harkat-ul-Jihad al-Islami (HUJI)	6+	67+
13 Feb 2010	Pune bombing	Pune, Maharashtra	Indian Mujahideen (IM)	17	60+

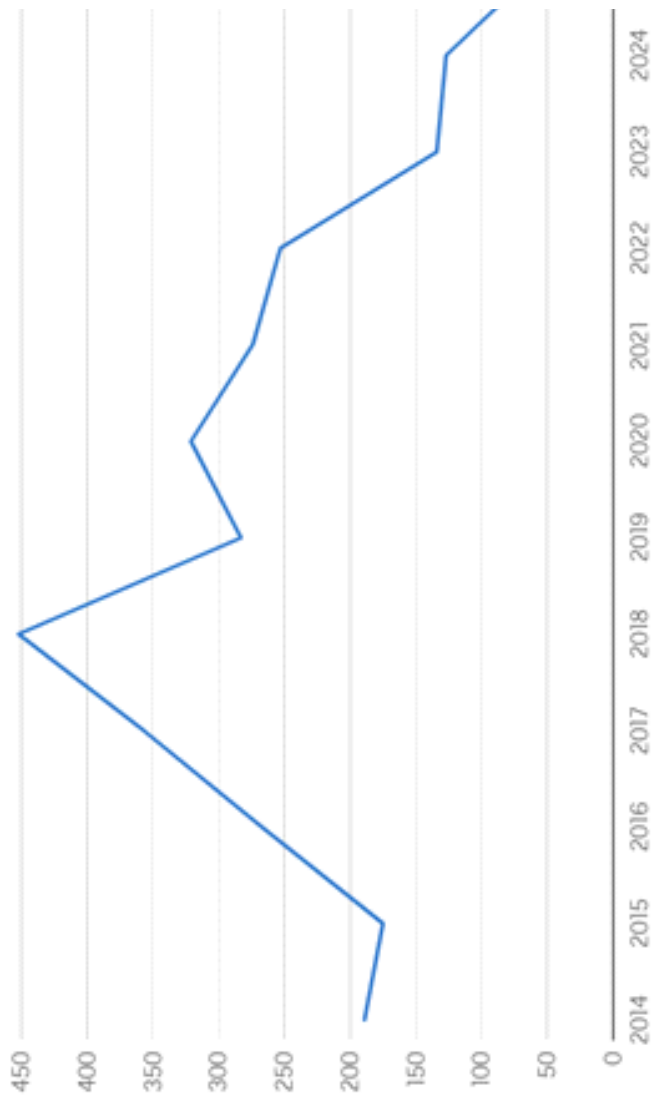
The inefficient and weak response of the government to most of these terror attacks fuelled them further. The government of the day responded by merely putting diplomatic pressure on Pakistan and, in the case of 26/11, even attempted to insinuate the involvement of Hindus. To take away attention from the growing scourge of Islamic terrorism during this phase, the government functionaries at the time even invented the bogey of ‘Hindutva terror.’ All of this not only diluted the fight against Pak-sponsored terrorism but worked in actively diabolical ways to produce the exact opposite results.

A New Phase – Revocation of Article 370:

The revocation of Article 370 in 2019 went a long way in denting the very roots of terrorism in Kashmir. This measure opened and integrated Kashmir with the rest of India, led to the implementation of uniform government policies in the territory, and led to a drastic decline in terror incidents in the region compared to previous years. Incidents of stone pelting have not been occurring and there has been a marked decline in the support for terrorism within the common public.

Terrorism-related fatalities in J&K, 2014-2025

Provisional data based on news reports



Source: Jose (2025)

This marked decline in the local support for terrorists has been seen through the decline in the presence of overground workers (OWGs) from among the ranks of the locals. The terror incidents in the Valley declined from 120 in 2021 to just 7 in 2024. Further, the terror attacks that did occur were led by Pak-sponsored foreign terrorists. In 2024, out of the 68 terrorists neutralised in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), 42 were foreigners (Wani, 2025). Furthermore, the declining support for terrorism among the locals was also visible when there was an unprecedented, complete shutdown in the Valley to protest the Pahalgam terrorist massacre.

Pakistan's Toxic Terror Laboratory

Over the decades, the development of Pak-sponsored terrorism in Kashmir has also proceeded alongside the growth of terrorism inside Pakistan itself. For, Pakistan has not only deployed terrorism as a tool to deal with India over the Kashmir issue, but also to deal with its other neighbours. As a result, Pakistan has cultivated various terrorist organizations directed towards different countries, making it the world's biggest hotbed of terrorism.

Terrorist Groups in Pakistan	
Orientation	Name of the group
Globally oriented	• Al Qaeda • Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) • Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISKP)
Afghanistan oriented	• Afghan Taliban • The Haqqani Network
India oriented	• Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) • Jaish-e-Muhammad (JeM) • Harakat-ul-Jihad Islami • Harakat ul-Mujahidin • Hizbul Mujahideen
Domestically oriented	• Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) • Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) • Jaysh al-Adl (Jundallah)
Sectarian militants (groups which target Pakistan's own minorities)	• Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan (anti-Shia group) • Lashkar-e-Jhangvi
Source: Congressional Research Service (2023)	

Pakistan is home to at least fifteen terror networks, according to US State Department, out of which twelve are proscribed terrorist organizations. Over the decades, Pakistan's involvement with terrorism has become so deeply entrenched that it has become a permanent feature of the country's strategic calculus and policy. Just as much was admitted in recent days – in the aftermath of Operation Sindoor – by Pakistan's Defence Minister, Khwaja Asif, on live television during an interview with Sky News, where he said that Pakistan has been doing the West's dirty work for the last three decades, asserting that, 'We did the dirty work of the West, and yes, we have these proxies, and they exist, and this is how it is' (Livemint, 2025).

Therefore, Pakistan has used terrorism as a form of state policy, not only at the behest of the West, but also as a strategic lever in the neighbourhood, particularly directed against India and, to a lesser extent, against other neighbouring countries like Iran and Afghanistan. In doing so, the Pakistani military state (Rawalpindi) has used militant groups to maintain its power in the domestic hierarchy as well as external power against its neighbours, suppressing terrorist groups as well as elevating them. India-oriented terrorist groups have received special patronage from Pakistan and have never rebelled against the country. In contrast, other terrorist groups have often created domestic security havoc within Pakistan itself, especially as the relationship began to crack in the aftermath of US's War on Terror and the pressure on Pakistan to rein in the terrorist groups operating on its soil, leading to mass terrorist attacks within Pakistan itself. This has, however, not deterred Rawalpindi from continuing to patronize anti-India terror groups and keep the Kashmir pot boiling.

THE CHANGING TRAJECTORY OF INDIAN RESPONSES TO PAKISTANI-SPONSORED TERRORISM

Over the last few decades, Indian response to terrorist attacks emanating from Pakistan-based terrorists has been largely political and diplomatic. The 2001 Parliament attack brought the forces of the two countries into eyeball-to-eyeball confrontation, but an all-out conflict was prevented. Even in the wake of the 26/11 attacks, India undertook an international diplomatic campaign against Pakistan. As part of this, India attempted to ensure that Pakistan was put on the grey list of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) and that Pakistan-sponsored terrorists, both organizations and individuals, were put on the sanctions committee of the UNSC. India has also tried to usher in a global compact on terrorism, which has not yet fructified. All these diplomatic measures did result in notable success in putting pressure on Pakistan. The changing geopolitical dynamics also worked in India's favour, marked by a dilution of the once-strong relationship between Pakistan and the US.

Under the Modi government, there was a marked change in India's approach towards Pakistan-sponsored terrorism. While initially, after 2014, the Indian government sought to build bridges with Pakistan through diplomatic outreach, it only resulted in the opposite result. The 2015 attack in an Indian military post in Pathankot and the 2016 attack on an army base in Uri evoked, for the first time, a military response by India to Pak-sponsored terrorism. In response to this attack, ten days after the attack, the Indian army undertook surgical strikes in which select terrorist camps in Pakistan were destroyed. For

the first time, the Indian army had crossed the LoC to conduct the strikes, killing approximately 35-40 terrorists in terrorist safe houses in LoC. Pakistan denied incurring any damage. It was the first tentative and cautious move by India.

The next time a wider operation was undertaken in response to the 2019 Pulwama terrorist attack, targeting military personnel in Kashmir. For the first time, India used airpower to cross LoC and strike terrorist camps within Pakistan, known as the Balakot strikes. It was the first time since 1971 that an Indian aircraft had carried out an airstrike inside Pakistan. India is estimated to have killed 200-250 terrorists. This time, while Pakistan did not deny the airstrikes, it maintained that the damage was minimal. Pakistan also launched retaliatory strikes in Rajouri in which it engaged the Indian Air Force, leading to the downing of a Pakistani F-16 aircraft and an Indian MIG-21 aircraft, and the capture of an Indian pilot who was later released due to the mediation by the then US President, Donald Trump. In this conflict, as expected, both India and Pakistan claimed victory.

The 2019 conflict made two things clear:

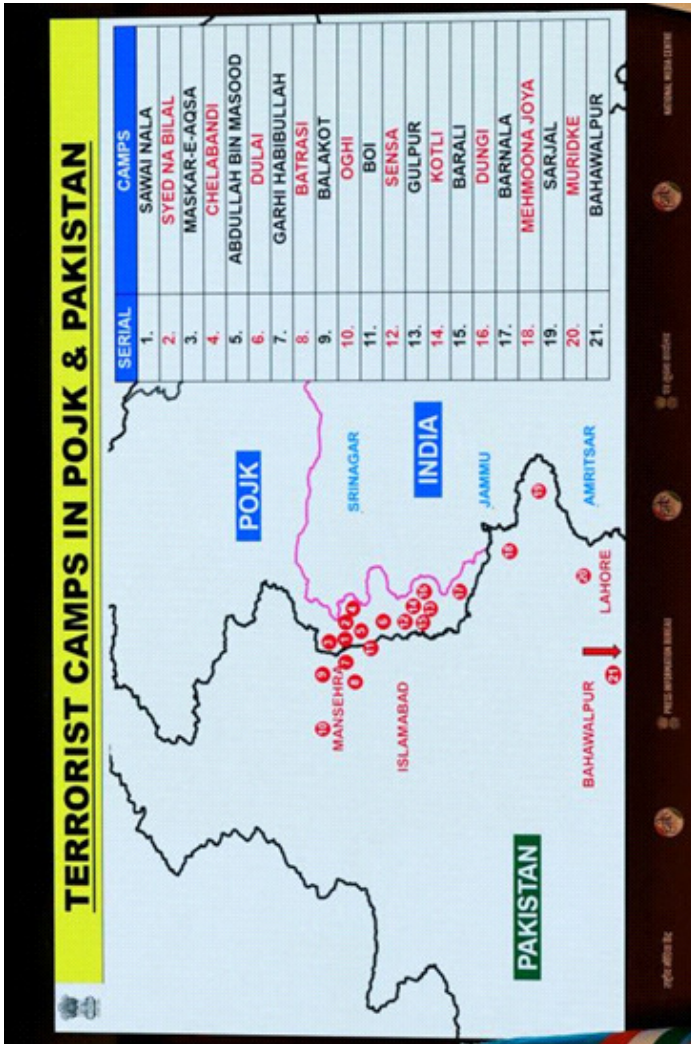
First, India had adopted a changed policy towards Pak-sponsored terrorism. While the country acknowledged that standalone airstrikes would not eliminate terrorism emanating from Pakistan, there was also an acceptance of the fact that military measures were needed, even if symbolically, to send a message to Pakistan and to the world at large on India's approach towards terrorism.

Second, through these strikes, a certain threshold of nuclear deterrence was breached. For India, it represented taking a calculated risk to call the bluff on Pakistan's nuclear blackmail

by notching up the level of conventional warfare. For Pakistan, as evident from Pakistan's subsequent press conferences by its military, the nuclear deterrent was still relevant. Had it not been relevant, India would not have stopped at a single strike and would have taken a more extensive operation. It was precisely Pakistan's nuclear deterrent that managed to keep India's military action calibrated and cautious. Through the Balakot military conflict, Pakistan also sought to send out a message that it is capable of engaging India in conventional conflict combined with the threat of their nuclear deterrent.

Addressing a gathering in 2020, retired Pakistani Lt. Gen. Khalid Kidwai noted that Pakistan has a “declared policy of ‘Quid Pro Quo Plus’ against a limited Indian attack...Pakistan's nuclear weapons continue to serve the purpose for which they were developed...It is precisely the presence of these nuclear weapons that deters, and in this specific case, deterred India from expanding operations beyond a single unsuccessful air strike” (Hooda, 2022).

It is in the context of the new escalation ladder set in 2019 that the Pahalgam terror attack of 2025 and the Operation Sindoor that followed it as a response, should be seen. The present operation constitutes amongst the most extensive military strikes carried out by India on Pakistan, apart from the four wars that the two countries have fought. India, as detailed by the country's foreign office briefings, struck nine sites inside Pakistan and Pakistan Occupied Kashmir, which spanned a total of 21 terrorist camps. Five of these nine sites were in Pakistan occupied Kashmir, while the remaining four were in Punjab, spanning Bahawalpur, Muridke, Shakar Garh and a village near Sialkot (Al Jazeera, 2025).



Source: Al Jazeera (2025)

The present operation also marks the first time that India has attacked Punjab, Pakistan's most populated province, since the 1971 war, targeting large population centres, such as Muridke (which is next to Lahore), Sialkot and Bahawalpur, among others (Al Jazeera, 2025).

Location of major strikes	Significance
Muridke, Punjab	Headquarters of the Jamat-ud-Dawa, a charity organisation which is a front for the Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). India struck the LeT's Markaz Taiba camp in Muridke, where the 26/11 terrorists were trained.
Bahawalpur, Punjab	Headquarters of the Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM), called Markaz Subhanallah, described by India as a hub for recruitment, training and indoctrination.
Muzaffarabad, Pakistan Occupied Kashmir	LeT training centre, Sawai Nala camp in Muzaffarabad, 30 km away from the Line of Control (LoC).
Kotli, Pakistan Occupied Kashmir	LeT base, Gulpur camp, about 30km away from the LoC. Abbas camp in Kotli, 13km away from the LoC. Mehmoona Joya, a facility of the Hizbul Mujahideen (HuM).
Bhimber, Kotli, Pakistan Occupied Kashmir	The Barnala camp, about 9km away from the LoC, used for training terrorists.
Sialkot, Punjab	The Sarjal camp, used for training terrorists responsible for the killing of four Indian police officers in March this year in Kashmir.
Source: Al Jazeera (2025)	

Such was the dynamic triggered by the Operation that, unlike in the case of Uri and Balakot, Pakistan did not deny the Indian strikes and even accused India of wrecking damage on civilian sites, especially demolishing mosques. Pakistan claimed that India struck six cities leading to the civilian casualties, and claimed to have downed five to six Indian Rafale fighter aircrafts. While Pakistan could not offer concrete proof of the downed jets, India did not deny these claims and said that losses are a part of war. India's Chief of Defence Staff later even admitted that Indian fighter jets were downed but rubbished the claims that they were six in number. The admission of the Indian Operation by Pakistan gave space for Pakistan to respond in equal measure leading to a near-war and full-scale conflict spanning over three to four days in the aftermath of Operation Sindoor.

AFTERMATH OF OPERATION SINDOOR: MISMATCH OF OUTCOMES AND EXPECTATIONS

Operation Sindoor, undertaken in response to the Pahalgam terror attack, has taken place at a time when Pakistan was increasingly becoming irrelevant in global politics, plagued by a crippling economic crisis from which its erstwhile allies did not bail it out. The country was also torn from within, due to numerous terrorists on its own soil targeting its own people, and due to people's anger with the military establishment since the arrest of Imran Khan.

In terms of relations with other countries, Pakistan's once-strong relations with the US became thoroughly diluted after the American withdrawal from Afghanistan in 2021 because of which it no longer needed Pakistan as a regional power. Its

relations with China, while strong, have also seen a dilution, as many Chinese infrastructural projects in Pakistan remain mired in corruption and vulnerable to terrorist sabotages. Its relations with Gulf states have diluted in proportion to India's increased engagement with them. Its relations with Taliban too have suffered a blow, leading to increased conflicts along its border with Afghanistan. It has never shared particularly close relations with Iran, which has often provided refuge to the Baloch militants along the border. Finally, India's indifference to Pakistan – since the revocation of Article 370 in Kashmir – had cemented Pakistan's regional and global isolation. India's success in bringing about substantive changes in Kashmir after 2019 completely thwarting Pakistan's decades-long policy of proxy terrorism, and its successful 'de-hyphenation' with Pakistan, had led to immense strategic losses for the latter.

In the context of this background, Pakistan would ideally vie for any means to garner engagement, even if it is negative engagement or engagement with Pakistan as a rogue actor. Any form of engagement would be better than the indifference to which the country has been subjected from India and the world. Particularly unbearable to Pakistan has been its removal as a stakeholder from the Kashmir issue since the revocation of Article 370 in 2019. In this context, the brutal Pahalgam terror attack in Kashmir was a message to show that Pakistan is still a regional player and can influence what happens in Kashmir. That the attack took place a few days after the Pakistani Army Chief, Asim Munir's incendiary communal speech, and at a time when PM Modi was visiting Saudi Arabia – a once strong ally and patron of Pakistan, but increasingly courting India – was meant to deliberately dispel all doubts about Pakistan's involvement.

That India would undertake a military response to this terror attack – especially after the new bar set by Balakot – was no longer in doubt. Thus, after announcing a series of measures to diplomatically cut ties with Pakistan and after taking the unprecedented step of putting the Indus Water Treaty in abeyance – which Pakistan termed ‘an act of war’ – India, after nearly two weeks from the Pahalgam attack, launched its Operation Sindoor. Unlike in the past when India’s operations were largely met with Pakistani denial, this time, Pakistan sought to kinetically engage India, leading to a protracted military conflict between the two countries. This was a deliberate choice on Pakistan’s part, as it had calculated that the war would not breach the nuclear threshold and limited engagement with India would provide a much-needed respite from the existential crisis facing Pakistan. As a result, contrary to India’s expectations, the escalation ended up handing to Pakistan a major symbolic victory in decades.

Therefore, the escalation has had several consequences, which may not be desirable from India’s perspective. These are:

First, it provided a much-needed boost to the Pakistani morale. The tit-for-tat escalation did not lead to any clear winners or losers, putting both sides on parity and enabling both sides to claim a victory. Given the recent past context in which Pakistan was rapidly losing its relevance, the military conflict with India provided the avenue for Pakistan to re-assert its relevance. It also provided an internal boost to the Pakistani Army which was rapidly losing popularity among people. Through a limited war with India, it could again unite the country against a common enemy.

Second, the conflict led to a re-hyphenation between India and Pakistan. During previous two terms of the Modi government itself, India had made painstaking efforts to de-hyphenate India and Pakistan, based on India's economic and military superiority, its rising stature in the world and its flourishing democracy. India wouldn't let Pakistan drag it down into its muddle. Despite the Uri and Balakot conflicts, this de-hyphenation had only further increased. However, this time, Pakistan's choice to militarily engage India after Operation Sindoor led to perceptions of re-hyphenation between the two countries, as it brought the Kashmir issue once more into global limelight and contentions.

Third, the conflict demonstrated the limitations of India's military applications in the face of the changing nature of warfare. Today, warfare is marked not by clear winners or losers in a military conflict, but has become multi-faceted, spanning military as well as psychological dimensions, fueled further by the deployment of new technologies. The conflict demonstrated all these elements. Despite the fact that India theoretically enjoys conventional military superiority over Pakistan, the inability to utilize this superiority led to mixed outcomes. There could be two possible aspects of this:

- A major factor for this was that, despite political assertions to the contrary, India takes the threat of nuclear deterrent of Pakistan seriously and was, throughout the conflict, retaliating in a very measured manner, to avoid escalation. India likely deliberately chose not to deploy its advanced military systems to their full capacity. Major part of this conflict was limited to advanced drone warfare by both sides, in which each side sought to test their own capabilities and also got the opportunity to test each other's air defenses.

- Another major factor that has come to light in the wake of potential undisclosed Indian losses is that possession of advanced superior weaponry may not suffice, and adequate training, and skilled technological deployment (including ensuring interoperability of weapons systems) is required to beget success in an actual war. The conflict resulted in a frenzied comparison of Chinese-made and Western-made (including Russian, French and American) weapons systems being used by Pakistan and India respectively, as this was the first time many of them were being tested in an actual war.

Thus, the conflict worked symbolically in favour of Pakistan, giving it the opportunity to test Indian air defenses through a series of drone and missile attacks, and enabling Pakistan to show that it can hold its own against a limited conventional conflict with India.

Besides these aspects related to military and technological dimensions of war, India was also perceived to have lagged in psychological warfare to some extent. It was only towards the end of the conflict that India struck some major Pakistani airbases, including the Nur Khan airbase, located near Pakistan's nuclear facilities, and leading to an immediate announcement of a ceasefire by the US. This had a desired psychological effect. Such psych-ops were not visible throughout the conflict, where India was cautiously retaliating in response to Pakistani drone aggressions.

Fourth, on the diplomatic front, the conflict has revealed certain limitations of India's diplomacy. It not only brought the Kashmir issue into contention once again, but in doing so it also deflected attention from India's core objective of fight against terrorism. Further, in his various speeches, PM Modi's

emphasis on the fact that India will not give in to Pakistan's nuclear blackmail shifted focus away from terrorism towards nuclear weapons and Indo-Pak balance of power.

As a result, the public discourse became more about debating Kashmir rather than Pakistan-sponsored terrorism. The fact that the ceasefire was first announced by US President, Donald Trump,⁵ further acted to dilute India's position that it does not accept any third-party mediation on Kashmir. All of this worked in Pakistan's favour in terms of diplomatic and public discourse. India's belated response that the ceasefire had nothing to do with the US came too little and too late.

One major reason for this outcome was likely the timing of India's Operation. The Operation was conducted after a long lapse of a full two weeks. Given the time lapse, the scope of the Operation was rather limited. Further, the time lapse and the limited scope of the operation went to some extent in taking the attention away from the original terror attack and focusing it on Indo-Pak war and Kashmir instead. If India was not anticipating a full-blown war, its armed forces should have been ready to respond promptly, especially since Pakistan had already started violating the ceasefire post-Pahalgam. It is difficult to justify a two-week delay when facing two nuclear-armed adversaries and a radicalized neighbourhood. The delay gave Pakistan space to paint India as an aggressor. Considering that we have been technically at war with Pakistan since 1947, India's full military preparedness is the first thing that is expected.

⁵ Trump has since, unsurprisingly, continued to repeatedly take credit for the ceasefire and preventing a nuclear war, and has even offered to mediate between India and Pakistan.

Finally, the conflict has also taught India a lesson that US, as an ally, can never be trusted in general and Donald Trump can never be trusted in particular. Trump's brewing commercial interests in Pakistan in terms of his cryptocurrency businesses has led to an elevation in his personal relationship with Pakistan. If US starts investing in Pakistan's crypto infrastructure, it will create another source of opaque funding which can then be used to fuel terrorism inside India.

WHAT INDIA SHOULD DO: MATERIAL CAPABILITIES AND HIGHER DYNAMISM FOR A CHANGING WORLD

In the aftermath of Operation Sindoor, the vacuous political signaling by nearly all sections of India's ruling leadership has gone to a great extent in diluting the objective with which such operations are undertaken. Claiming credit, holding victory rallies and resorting to various forms of domestic propaganda brings out openly before the eyes of all who – not completely blinded by the cheapness and shallowness of our national character which seems ravenously hungry of name and popularity – are able to see in all this a cheap and insidious attempt to get political mileage out of this tragic and painful incident. It has reduced the military operations and external engagements to convenient forms of domestic political constituency mobilization. Therefore, more than any other assessment of the outcomes from India's Operation Sindoor, the most critical national failing that needs to be urgently identified is the problem of a serious national weakness that we as a country seem to suffer from.

Through Operation Sindoor, this major national failing gets revealed on several fronts. These are:

First, in all the din of baseless victory celebrations, we have conveniently forgotten the fact that the Pahalgam terror attack itself was a massive intelligence failure. As a country, we have failed to ask tough questions such as why the attack occurred in a high-security and well-known tourist-frequented area, why there were no security arrangements in place despite advance warnings of a possible terrorist attack and why was such a famous and highly frequented tourist area not connected well through road links, to facilitate easy access.

Further, instead of engaging in public propaganda, this massive intelligence failure calls for institutional measures to undertake a comprehensive review and reform of the existing security apparatus. Nothing along those lines has been visible as yet.

Second, the fact that even after more than a month of the Pahalgam terror carnage, the terrorists who committed the attack are still at large, reflects a major failure on India's part. At one level, this reflects a failure of institutional and law enforcement capabilities. At another, broader level, it also raises questions about how such a failure can be celebrated through propaganda. Failure and lack of capacity itself is not the key issue here. Many countries have such limitations, and even earnest countries like Israel have been unable to avoid intelligence failure leading to major terror attacks, such as the 2023 Hamas incursion. However, it is very very painful to see a sober society stooping to the level of attempting to turn it into an occasion for self-glorification.

To pretend as if such failures did not exist and to go out of the way to politically glorify itself – as the ruling party has been continuously doing in the wake of Operation Sindoor –

is something that betrays a deep deficit of national character, and the presence of pervasive dishonesty at a very fundamental level. It also challenges collective intelligence by taking people of the country for gullible simpletons. It is akin to glorifying our weaknesses and failings. This kind of attitude, stemming from a base national character, can never provide even the slightest opening for course correction.

Third, there needs to be an introspection about what kind of victory we are celebrating. The ruling party leadership has, in the process of their public propaganda, declared that Pakistan-sponsored terrorism will no longer be tolerated. However, the present conflict has revealed the limitations of India's own military capabilities vis-à-vis Pakistan, as the cloud surrounding India's military losses that the country's military chiefs have alluded to, indicates. The conflict should come as a clarion and urgent wake-up call to India to review its military preparedness. While there were no clear winners or losers in this conflict, it is also undeniable that Pakistan has emerged looking stronger and securing a partial victory. The reason is simple. Theoretically, our military strategists have always harbored the assumption that India has stronger conventional military capabilities compared to Pakistan, and that in a non-nuclear, conventional war scenario, India will win. Past wars have even proven that to an extent.

However, this decades-old theoretical assumption was critically challenged in the present conflict, as both the countries engaged in military combat on an almost equal basis, leading to perceptions of conventional military parity.⁶ That itself is like

⁶ This may be also partially because unlike the past wars, the present conflict was the first of its kind high-tech war after the Russia-Ukraine and the Israel-Hamas wars. The conflict was fought without the deployment of

a promotion or elevation of Pakistan's status. It has trashed the assumption that Pakistan can only engage with India by relying on the threat of nuclear weapons. Thanks to the present engagement, there is now a new realization that India and Pakistan can engage equally in a conventional war, where Pakistan would be able to probably hold its own. This should be a real eye opener for India. Instead of baseless celebrations, it calls for some serious introspection, especially at a time when Pakistan is in the process of procuring ever more superior technology weapons from China and Turkey.

At a time when we should be introspecting where we went wrong and what lessons we can draw for the future, the propaganda being undertaken by India's ruling party to capitalize on Operation Sindoor exemplifies the basest form of politics. To further justify such fulfilment of selfish political interest in the name of nationalism, only goes on to reveal the extent to which our collective character has been irreparably damaged. By showing that we are at a stage where we need to take credit

human military resources and majorly through drone warfare techniques and equipment. Indeed, it was a combination of psychological and technological warfare. Even in the case of Russia-Ukraine and Israel-Hamas wars, Russia and Isarel were assumed to have stronger conventional military power, and it was assumed that the wars will decisively and soon end in their favour. Contrary to expectations, the wars have been going on for years instead of days or even months. This shows that our traditional definitions of conventional warfare have now changed due to technological intervention. In the case of India-Pakistan conflict, this holds true, and in the light of the new nature of warfare, India needs to urgently review its military planning, as its conventional superiority has been decisively challenged in the present conflict. Pakistan has shown its boldness by almost continuously shelling the border Indian villages in Jammu and Kashmir throughout the whole period between the Terror Attack and the announcement of the Cease Fire.

for illusory non-achievements to justify our existence, it goes on to reveal the total bankruptcy of our national character.

Therefore, the vacuous excuse that in democratic politics, mobilizing people along national lines is necessary, flies in the face of the excessive extensive propaganda undertaken by the ruling dispensation this time. The recent Indo-Pak engagement, by creating a perception of hyphenation and parity between the two countries, requires an urgent and deeper assessment of where we need to work. In this context, reducing the recent conflict to a falsified and illusory propaganda exercise will completely distort the larger picture that calls for a deeper correction in national spirit and attitude. If we can undertake such an introspection and if this can bring about the much-needed changes in our attitude and approach, that will be the only worthwhile victory from this whole conflict. Therefore, the lesson that India needs to draw from the present conflict is that there is an urgent need to reverse the bankruptcy of our national character and to do some soul-searching on the deeper reasons for our failure. If such a reflection leads to a resolve to abandon the present attitude of weakness and irresolution and cultivate a strong national spirit, then only can there be some hope for the future.

CONCLUSION

The starting point of the present conflict was the communally charged speech given by Pakistan's Army Chief, General Asim Munir, where he invoked the two-nation theory to argue that since Kashmir is a Muslim-majority region, therefore, Pakistan will always have a claim over it and he implied the strength of Pakistan's psychological commitment to Kashmir, by referring to it as Islamabad's 'jugular vein', a

life-line that Pakistan cannot ignore. As if to demonstrate the ominous reality of his words, few days later the Pahalgam terror attack took place in Kashmir, precipitating in the limited conventional conflict between India and Pakistan. Munir had gone to the extent of proclaiming in his speech that in the history of humanity, there had been only two states based on the 'Kalima.' The first was the Riyasat-e-medina and the second, which came 1300 years later, was Pakistan itself. He said that "Pakistan is different from Hindus in every possible aspect of life – religion, custom, tradition, thoughts and ambitions" (Narayanan, 2025). This timely rein vocation of the two-nation theory in the present context has come as a reminder of the communal basis of the existence of Pakistan and has also brought back the rationale for India to look deeper within to recover the basis of its moral claim over Kashmir viz. India's tradition and spirit of religious pluralism and co-existence.

India's moral claim over Kashmir, also partially highlighted by Nehru in some of his speeches, should hew the path towards a changed future. Two aspects of this outlook immediately stand out:

First, India's moral claim should become a rationale for evolving a humanitarian policy in the neighbourhood and in the world to intervene to protect minorities in countries where they are facing persecution. These are mostly Hindu minorities in Muslim-majority countries, as the data bears out. The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), 2019 was only a very preliminary and ineffective step in this regard. It applied to persecuted minorities in the neighbouring Muslim-majority countries who could seek citizenship in India, but its effectiveness was hampered by its cut-off date (of December 2014) and the inability of the government to formulate the

rules to operationalize it. Like many of the other policies of the present government, this too was mired more in signaling and messaging than implementation.

Its irony and limitation were elaborately revealed during the recent year-long persecution and genocide of Hindus in Bangladesh after the fall of the Sheikh Hasina regime in August 2024. The scale of the genocide and India's helplessness in the face of it flies flagrantly in the face of the lofty ideals of religious co-existence and pluralism that India supposedly stands for. If India cannot intervene to send a message to countries like Pakistan and Bangladesh that their persecution of minorities is against all human decency and human rights, and is against the very future of humanity, then it merely makes a mockery of India's own moral claims made on the basis of religious pluralism.

Second, in response to Munir's speech, India must make it clear that if religion is the only criteria for making geographical claims, then this logic can potentially give rise to hundreds of 'Pakistans' in India. After all, many of India's districts and villages have seen such an exponential rise in Muslim population that they have changed from Hindu majority to Muslim majority in terms of demographics.

The fact that such preposterous criteria – as highlighted by Munir as the basis of existence of Pakistan – is being asserted and going unchallenged in today's world shows the gross state of today's humanity. Despite the advances in science and technology and despite the progress of global liberal rationality since the 19th century, the presence of such discourse shows that without deeper foundations, all this progress and its concomitant values merely become superficial factors that give

a false sense of progress to the world. India, based on her own values, must reinforce the fact that if there is enmity based on religion or any such narrow criteria leading to the division of humanity on that basis then there will be no future for humanity.

The only response to such a venomous approach, as forms the basis of Pakistan, can only effectively come from the deeper springs of Sanatan Dharma to which India must turn. It is only the spirit of Sanatan Dharma – being the eternal religion – that can provide the basis for delivering the human race from its present conundrum. It professes that there are infinite ways to approach the Divine. Sanatan Dharma, instead of imposing narrow religiosity, is based on the spirit that each one of us has a unique journey and must be allowed to pursue it in one's own unique way. This alone can help us surmount sectarian divisions and move towards an organization of human unity, which is the need of the hour at present.

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THE PRESENT SITUATION IN INDIA

“Men everywhere seem to be aiming for quick, cheap and easy ways and means for material success and solution to their problems, forsaking all higher values and nobler aspirations of their being. Education, medicine, business, administration, law and justice, everywhere it is the same story. **The result is that our educational institutions continue to supply degrees and diplomas but no longer provide any education worth the name; our doctors and hospitals are more likely to deprive a person of his money and body’s natural health than his disease; one must be a real genius in the art of shopping if one is to avoid paying too much and buying an adulterated, fake or a poor quality product in our markets. In our courts, justice may not be denied, but it can almost always be delayed indefinitely, for a fee. Our politics, government and the administrative machinery are increasingly taking on the appearance of a real nemesis for the country.**”
(Corruption, A comprehensive study in the light of Sri Aurobindo and the Mother, The Resurgent India Trust, 2016, Jhunjhunu, Rajasthan, Page 37)