



## EDITORIAL: **INDIAN EXPRESS**

**GENERAL STUDIES 3: INTERNATIONAL RELATION**

**DATE: 29.04.2025**

**TOPIC: INDIA-NEIGHBOURS**

**In Pahalgam aftermath: Protect growing India story, send a strong message to Pakistan and terror**

### **Context: Pahalgam Terrorist Attack and India's Strategic Reassessment**

- A brutal terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Jammu & Kashmir, allegedly backed by Pakistan, has triggered national outrage.
- The incident has reignited debates on India's counter-terrorism strategy and its diplomatic stance toward Pakistan.
- The government is now reassessing its Pakistan policy by employing a mix of military, diplomatic, and strategic tools.

### **Recurring Pattern of Terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir**

- Terrorist attacks in J&K follow a recurring cycle: brutal, high-casualty strikes backed by Pakistan-based terror groups.
- These attacks generate widespread national grief, anger, and political pressure for decisive action.
- The Pahalgam incident stands out for its deliberate targeting of civilians and symbolic timing, signaling strategic escalation by Pakistan-backed elements.

### **India's Historical Response to Terror Attacks**

- India's traditional responses have included diplomatic isolation, military preparedness, and mobilization of global opinion.
- Operation Parakram (2001–2002) followed the Parliament and Kaluchak attacks and led to a near-war situation and later a peace process.
- In response to the 26/11 Mumbai attacks, India emphasized diplomatic and legal recourse, showing strategic restraint in avoiding a direct war.

### **Post-2014 Shift: Assertive Policy Under Narendra Modi**

- The Modi government marked a departure from restraint toward a more proactive and assertive posture.
- India employed targeted cross-border strikes, such as the 2016 Surgical Strikes and the 2019 Balakot Air Strikes.



- Simultaneously, India intensified international lobbying at forums like the UN, FATF, and bilateral ties with key global powers.
- Despite the assertiveness, Modi attempted symbolic diplomacy (e.g., Lahore visit), which was later derailed by repeated terror attacks like Uri and Pulwama.

## Changing Global Context: Pakistan's Waning Strategic Utility

- Earlier, Pakistan enjoyed geopolitical leverage due to its support for the US-led war in Afghanistan.
- Post-Afghanistan withdrawal, Pakistan's importance in global strategic calculus has declined.
- Gulf nations, previously close to Pakistan, are now critical of its support for extremist ideologies.
- India's rising global stature and active diplomacy have helped shift international opinion in its favor, especially after the Pahalgam tragedy.

## India's Current and Projected Strategic Calculations

- India responded swiftly by downgrading diplomatic ties and suspending the Indus Waters Treaty — a significant move with geopolitical implications.
- The country is preparing for a wider diplomatic campaign to:
  - Expose Pakistan's terror links at global forums.
  - Block or reduce its international military and economic aid.
  - Push for blacklisting specific terrorist outfits and leaders at the UNSC.
  - Keep pressure alive through the FATF grey-listing mechanisms.
- The strategic objective is both retributive justice and the long-term dismantling of cross-border terrorism infrastructure.

## Military and Security Strategy: Calibrated Retaliation

- India's military approach will be deliberate, emphasizing *retaliatory unpredictability* to avoid becoming predictable to adversaries.
- Tactical operations will be supplemented by international intelligence support and cyber or covert options.
- The military doctrine now includes hybrid warfare, psychological operations, and deterrent messaging for long-term gains.

## Risks of Escalation and Pakistan's Limited War Doctrine



- Pakistan may provoke controlled escalations hoping to draw international attention to Kashmir and force mediation.
- The Pakistani military, facing domestic challenges, could use the crisis to assert internal control and legitimacy.
- Nuclear weapons are considered a deterrent but not a practical tool for warfighting — as seen in the Ukraine conflict.
- India is prepared to counter any such provocation with firm but calibrated military and diplomatic actions.

## Safeguarding Kashmir's Peace and Development

- India must ensure that the attack does not derail the ongoing normalization and development efforts in Kashmir.
- Communal harmony must be preserved to prevent internal destabilization.
- Ending terrorism requires not just a military crackdown but also supporting democratic institutions within Pakistan and weakening military dominance there.

## Long-Term Strategy: Security and Vision for South Asia

- Immediate priorities include boosting surveillance, deploying advanced security tech, and improving local police-military coordination in J&K.
- Bureaucratic lethargy and intelligence failures must be urgently addressed to prevent recurrence.
- In the broader perspective, India must focus on a regional vision for peace, security, and prosperity across South Asia.
- A sustained strategy combining diplomacy, economic partnerships, counter-terrorism, and people-centric development is essential for lasting peace in the region.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/political-pulse/pahalgam-attack-protect-india-story-strong-message-pakistan-terror-9971569/>