



## EDITORIAL: INDIAN EXPRESS

**GENERAL STUDIES 3: INTERNATIONAL RELATION**  
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**Pakistan's Asim Munir has made a gamble at Pahalgam. India must not let it succeed**

### **Context: India's Strategic Reassessment After the Pahalgam Attack**

- India is formulating a comprehensive response to the Pahalgam terror attack that resulted in the targeted killing of civilians.
- The attack is allegedly directed by Pakistan's Army Chief, General Asim Munir, revealing deeper strategic intent beyond isolated militancy.
- The focus now is on understanding Pakistan's internal dynamics, Munir's motivations, and India's options for a calibrated and long-term response.

### **Sun Tzu's Wisdom in Modern Conflict**

- The article opens with a quote from Sun Tzu: "If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles."
- This ancient strategic principle underlines the importance of understanding both India's capabilities and the adversary's psychology.
- Applying this to the Indo-Pak context, it emphasizes the need to decode General Munir's strategic thinking to avoid miscalculated or reactionary responses.

### **General Asim Munir: The Power Behind Pakistan's Policy**

- In Pakistan, the military—not the civilian government—has significant control over national security, especially in India-related matters.
- General Munir holds decisive power over security strategy, foreign affairs concerning India, and even internal stabilization.
- His decision to greenlight the Pahalgam attack likely serves multiple objectives — military, political, and ideological.

### **Domestic Challenges Fueling Pakistan's External Provocation**

- Pakistan faces acute internal instability:
  - Political unrest and confrontations with former PM Imran Khan's supporters
  - Economic stagnation with a growth forecast of only 2.7%
  - Ethnic and regional unrest in Balochistan, PoK, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa



- Tense relations with Taliban-led Afghanistan
- These pressures may have pushed Munir to provoke India to:
  - Reassert military dominance
  - Divert public attention from domestic failures
  - Consolidate power within the army and national narrative

## **Munir's Strategy: Nationalism Through External Conflict**

- The attack on Hindu pilgrims in Pahalgam seems intended to:
  - Trigger communal tensions within India and destabilize its social fabric
  - Reignite anti-India sentiment in Pakistan through religion-based polarization
  - Reinforce the military's role as the defender of the Pakistani nation

## **Using the Nuclear Threat as Strategic Leverage**

- Pakistan has historically used the “nuclear umbrella” to deter strong Indian military retaliation.
- Munir's intention may be to provoke India just enough to draw an international response without actual escalation.
- The goal is to compel foreign powers, particularly the U.S., to intervene diplomatically and pressure India, ideally leading to concessions on Kashmir or halting military action.

## **India's Strategic Imperatives: A Multi-Dimensional Approach**

- Internally, India must maintain communal harmony and prevent retaliatory violence, denying Munir any ideological victory.
- Externally, India must:
  - Frame its military or diplomatic responses as self-defense, not aggression
  - Retain or gain global support by controlling the narrative
  - Prevent international pressure from neutralizing India's counter-terror efforts

## **Geopolitical Context Favors India**

- Unlike earlier decades, Pakistan no longer enjoys robust global strategic value:
  - The U.S. is no longer reliant on Pakistan post-Afghanistan



- Middle Eastern powers (UAE, Saudi Arabia) have stronger economic and security ties with India
- Only China maintains a consistently supportive stance toward Pakistan, but with growing caution
- India, meanwhile, is central to the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy, QUAD initiatives, and global economic partnerships.

## India's Evolution in Coercive Diplomacy

- India has developed tools of coercive diplomacy:
  - Surgical strikes (2016) and Balakot air strikes (2019)
  - Global diplomacy to isolate Pakistan at FATF and UN
- However, any military response must be proportional and strategically useful, not emotionally reactive.
- The aim is to change Pakistan's behavior, not just score short-term points.

## Breaking the Recurring Conflict Cycle

- The India-Pakistan conflict cycle has followed a pattern:
  1. Pakistan provokes through terrorism
  2. India retaliates
  3. Global powers intervene
  4. Pakistan backs down temporarily but retains strategic impunity
- India now needs to break this pattern by:
  - Targeting not just terror outfits but the systemic structures that support them
  - Weakening Pakistan's military-driven state apparatus symbolized by Munir
  - Exploring long-term engagement with civil society and democratic actors in Pakistan

## Reframing the Kashmir Narrative Post-2019

- After the revocation of Article 370, India is reshaping the Kashmir discourse:
  - From a disputed territory to a fully integrated region
  - From conflict zone to development focus





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- Any response to the attack must align with this broader transformation:
  - It should reinforce India's control and legitimacy over J&K
  - Avoid giving Pakistan any ideological or diplomatic foothold

## Conclusion: Strategic Patience Over Tactical Bravado

- India's challenge is not just military retaliation, but long-term strategic victory.
- Defeating Munir's plan means:
  - Preserving internal unity
  - Preventing international pressure from diluting India's goals
  - Accelerating Pakistan's internal contradictions through diplomatic, economic, and psychological means
- India must now operate not just as a reactive power, but as a mature, calculated, and forward-looking strategic actor.

Source: <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/c-raja-mohan-writes-pakistans-asim-munir-has-made-a-gamble-at-pahalgam-india-must-not-let-it-succeed-9973210/>