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PAHALGAM INCIDENT: INDIAN AGGRESSION AND PAKISTAN RESPONSE

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Abstract:

In this article, the focuses on the 2025 India-Pakistan war starting from the incident at Pahalgam and discusses the claim that India has used a false flag tactic for the attack and pinned blame on Pakistan. The paper continues by discussing the military actions of India through the launch of Operation Sindoor and discusses the impact of Indian media on the conflict. Conversely, the military strategy used by Pakistan through Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos is discussed. The paper also examines the part played by the international community, especially the diplomatic involvement of the United States and the geostrategic value of China in the 2025 dispute. Also, it is stated that both India and Pakistan used modern military technology and sophisticated weaponry. The research uses a qualitative research methodology with a mixed-methods approach to make a thorough study of the conflict. Moreover, the research includes a comparative study of the media representations of India and Pakistan in relation to their information strategy. The research makes an evaluation of the strategic advantages of Pakistan in the 2025 conflict in the military and information spheres.

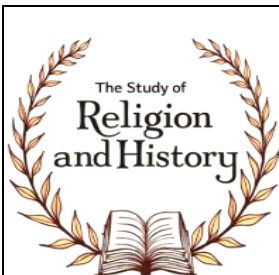
Key words: India, Pakistan, Pahalgam, false flag, operation Sindoor, operation banyan-un-Marsos.

Introduction:

The 2025 India Pakistan war wasn't just a straightforward war, more like a war of technology. In today's kind of fighting, winning is not really decided only by how big an army is, or how many soldiers are in the field. What matters is how well the sides can use advanced military technology in real time, plus some kind of fresh war technique, and also decent tactical planning. There are a lot of historical cases where leaders got results not because they had bigger forces, but because they leaned on smarter war tactics and they made the best use of whatever cutting-edge tools were around at the time. Military leaders such as Alexander the Great, Muhammad bin Qasim and Babur had a great deal to teach about how it is possible to secure the battle on your terms through innovation and the judicious use of superior technology. For its part, the 2025 battle highlight how not only can a technological advantage not be a war winning advantage, but without the intelligent use of that technology, not even the modern battlefield can guarantee that the battle will end in one's favor.

According to Pro Dr Muhammad Ibrahim he describes the war technique throughout history, military success has not depended only on the size of an army, or the total number of soldiers. Instead, war techniques, and the more advanced military technology have often been the real deciding matter in whether victory happened. To back this claim he brings forward a few historical examples.¹

¹ Interview by Eram Zahra from Professor Dr. Muhammad Ibrahim on 23 April 2026

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He first points to Alexander the Great, and says that one of the main reasons behind his success was his rather innovative military strategy. he mentioned that Alexander relied on fire arrows, that made the enemy's elephants panic. When those elephants became terrified, they moved back toward their own army, which created confusion and disorder inside the enemy ranks, and this is what helped Alexander win in the end. then, it goes on to mention Muhammad bin Qasim, and it says that when he was campaigning in Sindh he used a strong siege weapon called the Manjaniq, you know the catapult. it also adds that, in those days most battles basically turned on getting into heavily fortified cities, so this Manjaniq gave Muhammad bin Qasim the chance to bombard the walls, with big stones, and to push through their defenses and well, get a real military edge over his opponents. Later on he mentions Babur's Tulughma tactics: a battlefield maneuver in which his mounted forces were expected to outflank the enemy before swinging around and assaulting the enemy rear. this kind of unexpected shift, disrupted their formations, stirred up confusion, and it made it easier to secure victory. and from his point of view, the whole thing is yet another example where better military techniques can outweigh the usual, conventional ways people fought.²

War supremacy is basically that military dominance a state manages to get, by using superior technology, really advanced weaponry, and some effective defense capabilities. The interview implies that, over history, countries that had the most advanced military technology, more often than not, ended up having political and military leadership over the other nations. And to show that, the he points to the invention of gunpowder as one of the biggest military turnarounds in history. He states that gunpowder revolutionized the nature of war since it provided a powerful edge to European armies the British ones in particular particularly those relying primarily on the sword and more traditional weaponry. The only thing that worked in favor of the British was they had a great technical edge over the rest of the Indian subcontinent, which meant they were able to keep control of it for a rather long time a long period indeed.

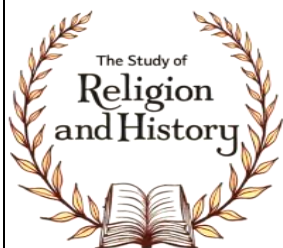
Then he moved to modern era, talking about the back and forth between the United States, and the Soviet Union during the Cold War. Actually, the whole competition was about developing sophisticated missile systems and the Cuban Missile crisis became the prime example of the "tech battle. The Soviet Union invested huge expanses of money in technology and in missile development, and in the final an economy which was on the verge of collapse. Then he says that, if as such very refined missile defense systems are expensive, Iran decided to apply the technology to produce more affordable and flexible drones and missile tech instead. By the end, he feels that the military might of the day isn't just about the number of weapons but also the development of groundbreaking and efficient technologies to make new types of capabilities.³

Literature review:

Maryam Mastoor, Operation Sindoor vs Operation Bunyan un Marsoos, institute of regional studies 22 may 2025. This report is looking at a serious military conflict between India and Pakistan - escalated to the military level - that began in May 2025 after a terrorist attack in the Jammu & Kashmir region caused fatalities. Narrates alternate explanations including India's use of precision-strike weapons and drone technology for Pakistan's strategic air defense and

² Interview by Eram Zahra from Professor Dr. Muhammad Ibrahim on 23 April 2026

³ Interview by Eram Zahra from Professor Dr. Muhammad Ibrahim on 23 April 2026

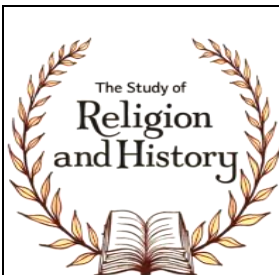


Pakistan's "diplomatic counter offensive". One large theme is on the media, and how it affects thinking, for instance, India's narrative is very different from Pakistan's which is international law and civilian casualties. *A Study of Misinformation and Media Framing During the 2025 Pahalgam Terror Attack in India* by Shivani patal and Dr. Arvind kumar pal, 2026 this academic research paper looks into the whole wave of digital misinformation and also biased media framing after the 2025 Pahalgam terror attack in India. It uses the Information Disorder Framework, and the authors pretty much sort out multiple kinds of false content, like AI made visuals as well as recycled video clips, which were then employed to stir communal frictions and political splits. The paper highlights, in a revealing way, how both social media companies and the mainstream media relied on certain kinds of narratives-including nationalist framing, and assertions of security failures-to construct opinion during the crisis. Alan Robock, and his coworkers, in the article "How an India-Pakistan Nuclear War Could Start and Have Global Consequences" in this paper the author lay out a cautionary argument-incredibly backed by actual science-about what could happen if India and Pakistan ever found themselves in a nuclear showdown. They map out how, if you imagine a 2025-type escalation triggered by a horrific terrorist attack on the Parliament of India, local tit-for-tat exchanges could rapidly spiral into a full-scale nuclear war-with 125 million dead almost immediately. In "Pahalgam and Beyond Operation Sindoor and India's Options," Air Vice Marshal Anil Golani, 2025 he offers an authoritative if, arguably, ideological explanation of what might have been done regarding April's Pahalgam terror strike in India (2025, for context; not actual date) by Pakistan. He then provides a coherent as the well-planned and well-executed Indian army maneuver, "Operation Sindoor," and suggests India was judicious in its retaliatory strikes against terrorist infrastructure located in and across Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir. Abid Hussain's article, "Pahalgam Attack: A Simple Guide to the Kashmir Conflict" 2025, in a way, an objective, accessible explainer on the extremely, indeed intensely, bitter dispute between Pakistan and India concerning the State of Jammu and Kashmir. Composed in the aftermath of the April 22nd terror attacks in Pahalgam, it sets the incident into its broader historical and political context. Sajid Mahmood Ansari's article "Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos: Retaliation Begins Now" 2025 Is a colorful Pakistani account of Pakistan's Defense Response to India's May 2025 Air Strikes against Pakistan. In style it blends astute strategic analysis with powerful patriotic prose in an attempt to convince the world of the defensive and thus justify Pakistan's offensive maneuvers that were intended to achieve the stated objectives of retaliatory strikes in India, defending its territorial integrity and the people of Pakistan.

Pahalgam Attack: Background and Immediate Trigger

The Pahalgam incident is not an isolated incident, it has deep rooted historical border and political conflict in the Kashmir. The Indo-Pak is one of the most militarizes and politically contextualize region in the world. Since the partition of subcontinent in 1947, and the emergence of India Pakistan, the Kashmir has emerged not only as the territorial dispute, but also have a symbolic site of ideological and geopolitical site.⁴ The presence of this dispute has shaped the rivalry war 2025 as Pahalgam attack. The first India Pakistan war 1947-48 soon after the establishment of Pakistan, ended with the establishment of line of control (LOC)

⁴ Alastair Lamb, *Kashmir: A Disputed Legacy, 1846–1990* Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2002.

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which divided the Kashmir into two administrative regions. Over the decades the unresolved status of Kashmir contributed in the military and diplomatic crisis in the two states.⁵

The heavy militarization in the region further intensified the relations. The development of large number of forces along with the border line, has been justify by the state for the maintaining of border and to counter down the terrorism. These type of militarization in the region effect the daily life of locals as everyday life is shaped by the surveillance and retractions which contribute to a broader climate of mistrust and resentment.⁶

The Phalgham Attack required an assessment of its immediate cause which consisted of specific factors that triggered the event. The development of structural causes occurs over extended timeframes while triggers function as particular events which occur during specific periods to heighten existing conflicts. The current situation may have been affected by security operations that occurred recently and the military focus on militant leaders and the unexpected political changes that created a new situation.⁷ The latent discontent in conflict settings becomes open violence through the use of specific triggers which function as operational catalysts.

The militant groups responded with counterattacks because the major counterinsurgency operation created a situation of increased conflict during the days before the attack. The organizations need to respond to the public killing or arrest of their important members because it serves as a public challenge which requires them to defend their organizational reputation and their internal strength. Political events such as elections and administrative changes and controversial policy decisions create new triggers which determine public perceptions about political legitimacy and political authority. The Phalgham Attack occurs at a moment which shows strategic planning but does not occur at random.

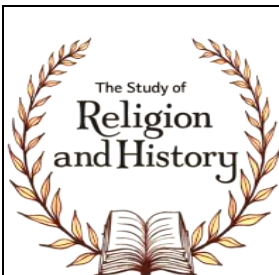
The immediate trigger contains an important dimension which involves how violence is used for communication purposes. People use violent acts in war zones to deliver messages which reach different groups of receivers. People involved in the violent event select their location and target and method of attack because these decisions allow them to deliver specific messages which demonstrate their abilities while showing their refusal to comply with authority. The Phalgham Attack becomes easier to understand when people examine its three essential components which help them determine the objectives the attackers wanted to achieve. The attack needs to be examined for its physical effects and its deeper meaning because attackers used it to establish power over the state while creating an atmosphere of normality and drawing foreign observers to their cause.

These attack's immediate context includes all responses which followed the attack. The state reactions which included security crackdowns and arrests and diplomatic statements,

⁵ Sumit Ganguly, *The Crisis in Kashmir: Portents of War, Hopes of Peace* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

⁶ Ayesha Jalal, *The Struggle for Pakistan* Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 2014.

⁷ Stathis N. Kalyvas, *The Logic of Violence in Civil War* Cambridge University Press, 2006.

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determined how the situation developed after the initial attack. The restoration of stability through these measures faces challenges because they have the potential to increase tensions when they strengthen current grievances and create new resistance.⁸ The Phalgham Attack functions as a continuing conflict because its ongoing battle between actions and reactions determines the conflict's development.

The Phalgham Attack investigation uses its dual framework to demonstrate how violence in Kashmir develops through multiple stages. The study demonstrates how permanent conflicts lead to repeated violent outbreaks which result from both existing tensions and present-day circumstances. The approach provides researchers with a valuable tool because it promotes essential skills to assess causal relationships between events while establishing their contextual elements and their specific interpretative frameworks. The study demonstrates that researchers need to understand all events within their complete historical and political contexts.

Phalgham Attack as a Potential False Flag:

Authorities told to the BBC that a gunmen opened fire on a group of tourists, visiting a well-known beauty site in Indian-administered Kashmir, killing at least 20 people. The attack happened in Pahalgam, a charming Himalayan hamlet known as the "Switzerland of India." According to Omar Abdullah, the chief minister of the region, the strike was "much larger than anything we've seen directed at civilians in recent years". There are reportedly many injured people, some of whom are in severe condition.⁹

World leaders who denounced the attacks included EU chief Ursula Von der Leyen, Russian President Vladimir Putin, and US President Donald Trump.¹⁰

News from Kashmir is really unsettling. In a post on Truth Social, Trump stated, "The United States stands strong with India against terrorism." Von der Leyen called the Kashmir deaths a "vile terrorist attack", while Putin expressed "sincere condolences" for the effects of a "brutal crime".

Following the incident, India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced that the perpetrators would "be brought to justice" and cancelled his trip to Saudi Arabia. Modi tweeted, "Our resolve

to fight terrorism is unshakeable and it will get even stronger," on X.

The foreign ministry of Pakistan stated it was "concerned at the loss of tourists' lives," sent its sympathies to the victims, and hoped "the injured a speedy recovery."

In three and a half decades of fighting, tourists have hardly ever been targeted, let alone on such a large scale, which makes Tuesday's attack unique.

Home Minister Amit Shah flew to Srinagar, Kashmir's main city, on Tuesday to hold an emergency security meeting.

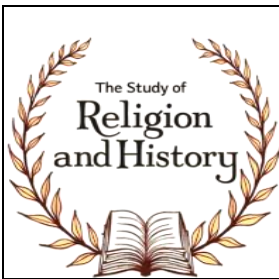
The region's Lieutenant Governor, Manoj Sinha, said the army and police had been rushed to the scene.¹¹

⁸ David Kilcullen, *Counter insurgency* (Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁹ Omar Abdullah, the chief minister of the Indian-administered Kashmir

¹⁰ Jessica Rawnsley, more than 20 killed after gunmen open fire on tourists in Indian-administered Kashmir, BBC, 23 April 2025

¹¹ Jessica Rawnsley, more than 20 killed after gunmen open fire on tourists in Indian-administered Kashmir, BBC, 23 April 2025

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The attack has not been attributed to any group. There has been a long-running insurgency in the Muslim-majority region since 1989, although violence has lessened in recent years. Three miles (5 km) from Pahalgam, in the mountain-top meadow of Baisaran, the attack occurred.

Inspector General of Jammu and Kashmir Police Vidi Kumar Birdi informed BBC Hindi that cars are unable to go to the scene of the incident.

According to a Gujarati visitor who was in a group that was fired upon, the abrupt attack caused confusion, with everyone running, sobbing, and yelling.

While victims can be heard in other film claiming that the shooters had targeted non-Muslims, video footage released by Indian media agencies seems to show Indian forces rushing to the scene of the incident.

Social media footage that hasn't been confirmed by the BBC seems to show people sobbing and begging for assistance while dead are laying on a meadow. Several tourists were rushed to the hospital with gunshot wounds, according to the police. Soldiers are halting cars at checkpoints, and the area has been sealed off. The Indian army and Jammu and Kashmir police are conducting a joint search operation.

Indian media reports that a number of protests have been planned for Wednesday.

Since the 1990s, an armed separatist insurgency against Indian control in the region has claimed tens of thousands of lives, including those of civilians and security forces. Following India's independence from Britain, partition, and the establishment of Pakistan in 1947, the Himalayan area was split.

In the decades that have passed, the two nuclear-armed governments have engaged in two wars and a brief battle over their shared claim to the entire territory.¹² There are over 500,000 Indian soldiers stationed there permanently. Although there are still violent instances, the government asserts that after Modi removed Kashmir's limited autonomy in 2019, the security situation has improved and violence has decreased.

The most recent significant assault on civilians took place in June 2024, when militants opened fire on a bus carrying Hindu pilgrims, resulting in nine fatalities and thirty-three injuries. In 2019, a suicide attack in Indian-administered Kashmir killed at least 46 soldiers and triggered Indian airstrikes on targets in Pakistan.

Pahalgam is a popular tourist attraction, both domestically and internationally, and in recent years the government has worked to encourage greater travel to the region. According to government statistics, 3.5 million tourists travelled to Kashmir in 2024.

According to reporting cited by CNN, gunmen carried out a deadly on tourists in Kashmir, consistent with patterns of insurgent violence in the region.¹³ Indian authorities later formally charged groups such as Lashkar-e-taiba and the resistance front for planning and executing the attack.¹⁴ Pakistan officially rejected Indian allegations and, along with sections of its media and political discourse, suggested the possibility of a false flag operation. Pakistan's Defense

¹² Sean Seddon and Koh Ewe, India closes main border crossing with Pakistan after Kashmir attack, BBC news, 24 April 2025

¹³ Mahwish Hafeez, Pahalgam Incident: Another False Flag Operation? INSTITUTE OF STRATEGIC STUDIES ISLAMABAD, April 29, 2025

¹⁴ Reuters, India charges Pakistan-based militant groups, six men over Kashmir tourist attack, December 15, 2025

Minister publicly stated suspicion that the attack “was a false flag operation” indicating a belief that it may have been orchestrated internally by India.¹⁵ During the press conference the DG ISPR stated that within the ten mint of incident FIR fare against the Pakistan in police station while the police station is about thirty mints travel. Is this is possible that a incident held in huge security area and police came take evidence record people interviews and fir FIR against Pakistan without any authentic evidence and the attacker run from the spot?¹⁶

According to monitoring reported by the BBC, some Pakistani political and religious groups even described the attack as a “staged drama” or conspiracy.¹⁷

Pakistan’s parliament and officials also framed the attack as part of an “orchestrated campaign to malign Pakistan”, reinforcing the false-flag discourse in official rhetoric. The “false flag” debate surrounding the Pahalgam attack reflects two deeply entrenched strategic narratives:

- The Indian narrative emphasizes cross-border terrorism and state-sponsored militancy.
- The Pakistani narrative frames the attack as potentially staged or manipulated to serve political and strategic objectives.

Media, Misinformation and Narrative Construction in the Aftermath of Phalgham

In the present information-based world media serves as the most influential instrument. The media functions as a key element that determines how people think about social and political matters through its power to create public awareness and distribute information. The positive or negative impact of media usage depends on the particular circumstances which determine its purpose and the extent of responsible usage.

Some news channels choose to prioritize their ratings through their reporting instead of delivering accurate news, which results in public misapprehension through false information and inflated stories. Sensationalism becomes more important than truth and this can mislead the public. Some media outlets present government stories without critical evaluation while other outlets support the government to maintain existing power structures. This situation creates a space where news organizations find it hard to produce unbiased and neutral news coverage.

The media operated as a vital instrument during the 2025 India Pakistan war by providing essential support to military operations. The media served as an information source but used its power to control public feelings about the war. Through continuous coverage, breaking new and debates, media outlets influenced how citizens perceived the conflict. The media coverage developed nationalistic feelings while creating fear and anger among people which prevented the establishment of peace and mutual understanding. The public response to these events became more intense which led to higher tension levels between different social groups.

The media narratives established through their coverage of the conflict created a framework which reinforced existing biases and stereotypes. Some platforms failed to foster critical thinking skills because they exposed viewers to extreme perspectives that widened rifts in society. Users were unable to distinguish between what was propaganda and what was a true fact as a result of the unverified information that proliferated on social media platforms. In

¹⁵ Jillian Kestler-D'Amours, Kashmir updates: Pakistan claims Pahalgam attack ‘false flag operation’ Al Jazeera, 24 Apr 2025

¹⁶ DG ISPR, news conference on PTV new, 8 may 2025

¹⁷ BBC Monitoring, 30 April 2026

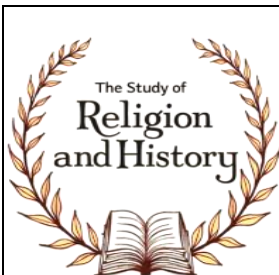
times of crisis, the media can be a double-edged weapon. The media has the ability to spread misinformation and intensify conflict, but it may also offer information and educational content along with opportunities for discourse. While audiences must evaluate the reliability of every information they come across, media organizations must fulfil their ethical obligations. On April 22, 2025, a terror attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, killed 26 civilians the majority of them were Hindu pilgrims and injured 20 more. Before firing, the attackers, who are purportedly connected to The Resistance Front (TRF), a militant proxy organization with headquarters in Pakistan, allegedly divided the victims based on their religious affiliation. Within hours of the occurrence, false photos, AI-generated visuals, misattributed videos and collective conspiracy theories appeared on Twitter (now X), Instagram, WhatsApp groups, and even some well-known mainstream news stations. A BOOM Live report states that between April 22 and May 1, 2025, more than 23% of the organization's fact-checks focused on inaccurate information regarding the Pahalgam incident, particularly AI-generated images and false material that targeted minority groups. These included vintage film that was misrepresented as recent military retaliation and deep fake audio-visual information designed to affect religious mood. Some unrelated photos of the incident were shared as "exclusive" photos. The 2025 Pahalgam terror incident was covered by mainstream media outlets using a variety of framing strategies, according to the Mainstream News Media. TOI exposed a security breakdown and is accusing the government of doing nothing. First post was going to adopt a nationalist stance that emphasized martyrdom and patriotism. Dainik Bhaskar associated the incident with a religious perspective and connected it to a communal framework. The Wire employed a media critique framework, emphasizing misinformation and the dangers of sensationalism, which implies that the media picks and highlights certain aspects of events in order to affect audience perception and emotional reaction.¹⁸

According to Professor Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Chawla, in his interview with Ms. Eram Zahra on 5 May 2026, he emphasized that we won the war 100 percent, and the credit goes to the Pak army. He argued that during the Phalgham incident, Indian media became very aggressive toward Pakistan, which reflected their bias against Muslims and Pakistan. He further stated that they often had no clear understanding of what they were saying on screen. For example, some Indian media channels even claimed that they could take control of Lahore port. However, this raises a question: do we even have a Lahore port, or any sea around Lahore?¹⁹

One of the most important concepts is narratives. States, international organizations, and non-state actors use them to create perceptions and attribute meaning to international order, players, and events. By matching the past, present, and future in a way that makes the implementation of specific policies seem necessary and acceptable, they aid in connecting the timelines. Its role becomes even more apparent during the conflict situation as the narrative propagated by the media fosters a sense of "selves" and "others" that either makes the war seem realistic or makes peace seem unthinkable. The outcome of such conflict situations is determined by attributed meaning rather than chaos. Two methods framing and securitization are used to infuse narratives into policy decisions. Through the strategic process of framing, players choose a

¹⁸ Shivani Patel, and Dr. Arvind Kumar Pal, A Study of Misinformation and Media Framing During the 2025 Pahalgam Terror Attack in India, Journal for Social Sciences and Humanities, 2026

¹⁹ Interview by Eram Zahra from Professor Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Chawla on 5 may 2026

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particular aspect of reality and give it names or meaning. Additionally, securitization offers a viewpoint that elevates a problem or circumstance to the level of existential threat. The elites then exploit it as an excuse to employ exceptional countermeasures. The audience's views and opinions are shaped by the frequent employment of labels and speech, creating certain "images" or "narratives." These narratives, particularly in times of crisis, define public consent, policy priorities, and agendas rather than being ornamental.

The anti-Pakistan narrative has taken over India's public discourse under the BJP government. The Indian government is successfully using the media, a powerful weapon for shaping public opinion, to incite limited nationalistic feelings. All these three aspects of journalism fake news, anti-Pakistanis, and yellow journalism have become characteristic of this media. The same was visible in the coverage of the Pahalgam incident when the Indian media blurs the line between public interest and jingoism by blind allegiance to public speech. The recent terrorist incident in Pahalgam has important implications and will serve as an interesting case study in exploring how media coverage shapes public opinion which impacts on geopolitics by highlighting or playing down issues. In Pahalgam in Anantnag District, holiday makers had been randomly gunned down by gunmen; 26 died. India was outraged at the incident and blamed Pakistan for this attack, without substantiating its claims. A study of the media's treatment of the Pahalgam incident would be relevant because of media's ability to construct discourse; this becomes all more important in the case of crisis.²⁰

Indian media, on the other hand, played a critical role in the escalating situation with Pakistan by selectively highlighting comforting news, ignoring damaging evidence and amplified the narratives issued by the government. Indian news outlets significantly understated the number of civilians who were killed in Indian airstrikes and characterized those victims as terrorists engaging in militant activity. While Pakistani authorities maintained at least 34 people, including women and children, were killed, the picture remained.²¹ In parallel mainstream Indian media, along with social media had turned into breeding sites for false information. However Karachi Port Trust denied the spurious story on its temporary account later confirming that their account was compromised on social media for a while.^{22, 23} Another baseless narrative to alleging Pakistan was about to attack Golden Temple Amritsar, which was rubbished by Foreign Office as false and seditious.²⁴ Several false stories about a coup in Pakistan have also surfaced. Some have claimed that Islamabad has fallen and Army Chief General Asim Munir has been imprisoned. Pakistan officials as well as international fact-checkers have refuted these reports.²⁵ Meanwhile, India has also demonstrated considerable restraint on negative voices. The authorities have cut off internet in Kashmir, legally threatened editors, who challenged official claims of the government and were quick to remove or purify reports on Indian air plane crashes and failed drones missions. This has produced a tightly

²⁰ Mahzaib Khan and Tooba Altaf, Construction of Anti-Pakistan Narrative by Indian Media: Case Study of Pahalgam Incident, ADVANCE SOCIAL SCIENCE ARCHIVE JOURNAL, 2025

²¹ 34 Civilians Killed in Indian Air Strikes, Says Pakistan," Dawn, May 17, 2025,

²² Social Media Erupts as Indian Media Falsely Claims Destroying Pakistan's Karachi Port," Middle East Eye, May 16, 2025

²³ Karachi Port Destroyed? 9 Fake Stories Pushed by Indian Media," Geo News, May 17, 2025

²⁴ Pakistan Rubbishes Indian Claim of Attack on Golden Temple," The Express Tribune, May 15, 2025

²⁵ India's Media Wages a War of Propaganda Against Pakistan," TRT Global, May 9, 2025

controlled information environment that has severely curtailed professional, unbiased journalism in the face of pro-government war narratives.²⁶

Pakistani Media's Responsible Posture

The Pakistani media channels, on the other hand, took a complete different road, highlighting almost all of the violations of international laws.²⁷ Television networks invited weapons experts to perform in-depth analyses of missile debris and hit locations to demonstrate how the attacks breached the Geneva Conventions. Unlike their Indian counterparts, Pakistani media heavily featured interviews with survivors of the Muridke incident to support the civilian casualty toll.²⁸ Additionally, it frequently denied the numerous accusations made against Pakistan by Indian media.

Operation Sindoor

India launched Operation Sindoor in response to the Pahalgam terror attack on May 7 carrying out airstrikes on nine terror infrastructures in Pakistan and Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir eliminating at least 100 terrorists.²⁹ In collaboration with the various intelligence agencies, the headquarters of India's three armed forces created a number of different response scenarios on April 23 and 24 that targeted the infrastructure of jihadist groups based in Pakistan that were carrying out operations against India. On April 29, tactical planning got underway. Nine camps belonging to JeM (Jaish-e-Mohammed) and LeT (Lashkar-e-Taiba) were chosen as targets, and the strike date was decided upon on May 5. Meanwhile, the political leadership simply stated that the counterattack had to be sufficiently spectacular to prevent more terrorist attacks, while allowing the armed forces total autonomy over operational planning and handling any escalation that might occur in the event of a Pakistani military response, including the potential for open conventional warfare.³⁰

Between April 26 and 28, Indian military strategists carried out a number of counter-UAS defense drills in addition to using red-teaming and a series of war games to hone their scenarios.³¹

The Indian Army was tasked with destroying seven of the nine camps that were chosen because they were near the border. The IAF was entrusted with attacking the remaining two because they were situated farther within Pakistani territory. As a result, Indian planes fired a number of long-range weapons into the compound housing the JeM headquarters at Bahawalpur, around 100 kilometres from the border, at around 1:00 on the morning of May 7.³² The attack targeted five different buildings, at least one of which was destroyed. Simultaneously, a second

²⁶ Maryam Mastoor, Operation Sindoor vs Operation Bunyan al Marsoos, institute of regional studies, 22 may 2025

²⁷ Army Chief Praises Pakistani Media for Responsible Role During Conflict with India," The Express Tribune, May 12, 2025

²⁸ What Did the Public Witness When Indian Attacked Masjid in Muridke? , YouTube video, posted by Dawn News English, May 8, 2025

²⁹ Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, Rajnath Singh releases Operation Sindoor documentary, calls mission benchmark for modern warfare, firstport, 7 may 2026.

³⁰ Air Marshal Narmdeshwar Tiwari, op. cit. 30 August 2025

³¹ Lt. Gen. Sumer Ivan D'Cunha, op. cit. 19 May 2025; Lt. Gen. Rajiv Ghai, "Director General of Military Operations, Lt Gen Rajiv Ghai's Address on Op Sindoor | Full Speech", Republic World, 14 October 2025.

³² Adrien Fontanellaz, Operation Sindoor The India-Pakistan Air War (7-10 May 2025), Centre for military history and perspective studies (CHPM), 2025

salvo of guided munitions was fired by another formation toward the LeT headquarters in Muridke. This site was monitored by a drone because it was only about thirty kilometers from the border. This allowed for a more precise post-strike battle damage assessment; at least two of the targeted buildings were verified to have been struck by penetration warheads.³³ One of the two Indian attack formations, made up of Rafale or Mirage 2000I planes, entered Pakistani territory at a very low altitude and then used a pop-up manoeuvre to launch precision-guided bombs that were steered until they struck. By doing this, the planes purposefully made themselves vulnerable to engagement by ground-based air defence systems and interception by Pakistani fighters.³⁴

Pakistan response

Pakistan claimed that India attacked at least three significant airbases with ballistic missiles after launching a barrage of drones into the country.

India has struck the following Pakistani bases:

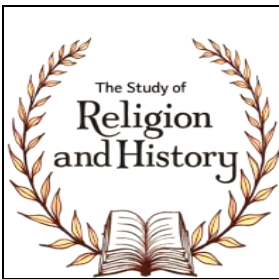
- **Nur Khan Airbase:** This important operating and training center is situated close to Chaklala in Rawalpindi. Important Pakistan Air Force commands are housed there, and it facilitates VIP flight operations, logistics, and transportation.
- **Murid airbase:** About 120 kilometres (75 miles) from Islamabad, in Chakwal. For the Pakistan Air Force, it is an essential forward-operating base. It is essential for both combat readiness and air defence.
- **Rafiqui Air site:** Fighter units are housed at this site in Shorkot, Punjab.

Pakistan claimed that it attacked several Indian military installations from the air in retaliation. The following bases are known to have been targeted:

- **Udhampur airbase:** The Indian Army's Northern Command is headquartered in Udhampur, which is situated in Kashmir under Indian administration.
- **Pathankot airbase:** An important component of India's front-line air force operations, the base in Indian Punjab was attacked by armed fighters in 2016, killing six Indian soldiers. India accused Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad of being responsible for the attack.
- **The Drangyari** artillery gun post is located in Jammu and Kashmir, which is governed by India.
- **Uri field support depot:** An important Indian Army base located in Indian-administered Kashmir was assaulted by armed fighters in 2016, killing 19 Indian soldiers. India launched what it called "surgical strikes" after accusing Pakistan-based Jaish-e-Mohammad of carrying out the attack.
- **Nagrota:** The town in Indian-administered Kashmir serves as a storage facility for the Brahmos missiles, which are jointly developed and manufactured by Russia and India.
- **Beas:** The Brahmos missile storage facility is situated in Punjab, India.

³³ Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh, conference at the LM Katre Memorial, 9 August 2025; Air Marshal Narmadeshwar Tiwari, op. cit. 30 August 2025.

³⁴ DH Webdesk, "Operation Sindoor heroes among gallantry awardees named in Centre's gazette notification: Details" in Decan Herald, 22 October 2025; Tom Cooper, Ravi Rikhye, Sanjay Badri-Maharaj, Mangesh Sawant, 88 Hours war. The India-Pakistan War of May 2025, Warwick, Helion and Company, 2025 (initial manuscript forwarded by the author, 2 November 2025).

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Adampur Air Base: Situated in Punjab, India, the base has an S-400 missile defence system that India purchased from Russia.

• **Bhuj Air Base:** Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's native state of Gujarat is home to the base.³⁵

On 23 April 2025, India said it was suspending its participation in the Indus Waters Treaty, a six-decade old transboundary water-sharing agreement, that basically handles how the waters of the Indus Basin's six rivers get divided between India and Pakistan. For years the treaty has been viewed as one of the most successful water-sharing arrangements on earth, and it's often treated as a lifeline for more than 270 million people, with most of them based in Pakistan, and relying on these rivers for farming, drinking water, plus day to day economic activities. A day after this announcement, Pakistan's National Security Committee, which is the country's top security forum, pushed back on what it called India's "unilateral" move. The committee cautioned that any effort to divert, or somehow block Pakistan's share of water would be treated as an "act of war", and it would trigger a fitting counter response. Still, even with all the political heat, water specialists pointed out that India currently does not have the infrastructure needed to fully halt the western rivers reaching Pakistan, though it may be able to manage, or temporarily stagger some water flows within the scope of its existing projects.³⁶

During the 2025 India-Pakistan war, Pakistan's military leadership kept coming back to the idea that the country's sovereignty and water security were simply not up for discussion. In a few public addresses, Pakistan's military officials made it clear, in a very stern way, that any move meant to take away Pakistan's lawful share of water would lead to serious consequences, no matter how it was packaged. Chief of Army Staff, Field Marshal Asim Munir, also gave statements that landed hard, stressing that Pakistan would answer firmly if anything tried to endanger what it sees as its vital national interests, and that includes its water resources.³⁷

The same 2025 conflict put a spotlight on how important cyber capability and advanced military technologies now are in modern combat. The Pakistan hacked Indian dam control systems and then cut off or shut down water supplies, and electricity of Indian areas during the 2025 war.³⁸

Director General of ISPR, saying Pakistan only displayed a small fraction of its technological strengths during the conflict. These lines spread fast across media and social platforms.

Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos

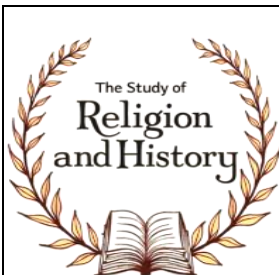
Pakistan launched Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos (a wall of solid lead) on May 10, 2025 against India which may be difficult to say and very difficult to understand. The loud pro-Bunyan and pro-Marsoos chanting was a landmark which changed tactics and set standards. Its effective implementation has changed operating dynamics and sparked important changes in the field. This operation is a game-changer – and it impacts a lot of industries.

³⁵ Abid Hussain, Pakistan launches Operation Bunyan Marsoos: What we know so far, ALJAZEERA, 10 May 2025

³⁶ Abid Hussain, Can India stop Pakistan's river water - and will it spark a new war? 9 Jul 2025

³⁷ Dawn news, Chief of Army Staff, Field Marshal Asim Munir speech, 16 April 2025

³⁸ Interview by Eram Zahra from Professor Dr. Nawaz Bhatti, on 17 June 2026

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It has laid a foundation for future successes and overcoming adversity through the strategic addressing of key issues and the fostering of creativity. Literally it translates to a “Solid Wall of Lead” and Pakistan executed the operation accordingly. This was questioned by both local and international publics why Pakistan failed to react immediately to the initial Indian strikes. Rumors of the episode are being circulated which is a must-do task to analyze what really went wrong and draw Pakistan's decision to not take revenge till India rethink.

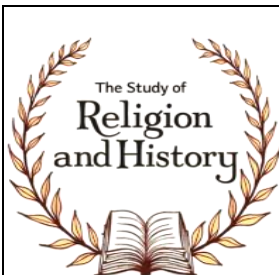
Military stalemate between India and Pakistan in 2025 can be segmented in three phases. 2025 is being characterized by stalemated war between India and Pakistan in 3 phases. On the evening of 5th and 6th May 2025. India initiated the first phase of Operation Sindoor against Pakistan. India launched 24 missile strikes on six Pakistani cities in its first strike: Muzaffarabad, Ahmed Pur East, Kotli, Muridke, Sialkot, and Shakargarh. Over thirty-one persons, including women and children, lost their lives as a result of these attacks. This operation was declared by India as a reaction to the April 22 attack on Pahalgam, which was carried out by militants in Indian-administered Kashmir and resulted in the deaths of 28 civilians, primarily tourists.

India's main shortcoming in this case, meanwhile, is that it hasn't yet offered any proof that Pakistan was involved in the Pahalgam attack. India continues to encourage its citizens to submit any information they may have, even after initiating the strikes against Pakistan. As a result, India and Pakistan engaged in the greatest air combat in history, involving some 125 jets, setting new standards for air warfare. The Pakistan Air Force (PAF) had 42 advanced aircraft, whereas the Indian Air Force (IAF) had between 80–83 aircraft, including 14 Rafales. It was the longest dogfight ever recorded as the PAF battled the IAF for more than sixty minutes while maintaining air sovereignty. Pakistan successfully deterred its enemy and produced important results by changing the air combat environment and establishing new rules of engagement. Five Indian aircraft, including three Rafales, were successfully shot down by Pakistani forces as they targeted key components of the Indian air defense. Surprisingly, the highly respected S-400 system, which has proven powerful enough to keep NATO at bay throughout the Russia-Ukraine conflict, did not damage or destroy any PAF aircraft.

The threat posed by Russian S-400 systems has put even NATO F-16s in Ukraine at serious risk close to the border. Some have referred to this fight as the largest aviation engagement since World War II. Operation Q, which featured 78 aircraft and was spearheaded by Allied Forces in Operation Desert Storm, was the second-largest air strike since World War II. All of India's aircraft were grounded as a result of Pakistan's single hit, which severely crippled the country's air defense system.

On the evening of May 8–9, India sent drones towards Pakistan in the second phase, threatening reprisal that might be too much for India to handle, despite Pakistan's admonition to be cautious. Despite the neutralization of ninety drones, Pakistan said nothing and did not strike back. In response, India sparked a media frenzy by claiming to have launched missile, drone, and aircraft attacks over the international border. Pakistan rejected these allegations as untrue, claiming that there was simply media narrative and no electronic signature, captured pilots, or supporting documentation.

India also launched attacks on its cities, accusing Pakistan of attacking its citizens. Pakistan retorted that it would not launch a cowardly strike but would notify India beforehand, claiming that not only would India hear the explosion, but the entire world would see it.

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In the third phase, India attacked Noor Khan Airbase, Shorkot Airbase, and Murid Airbase in Pakistan on the evening of May 9 10. All of these attacks, nevertheless, were stopped. India also fired missiles and drones at Afghanistan at the same time. Pakistan responded by declaring "Operation Bunyaan-un-Marsoos" on May 10 and cautioning India to "wait for our response."³⁹ Pakistan successfully targeted multiple targets with missile attacks in retaliation against India within minutes. The following locations are said to have been destroyed by the strikes: BrahMos Missile Depot; Udhampur: S-400 Air Defence System; Pathankot Airbase; Logistics Headquarters; Jalandhar Airbase and its facilities; Nagrota BrahMos Launch Site; Akhnour Brigade Headquarters; Uri Supply Depot; Srinagar Northern Command Headquarters; Chandigarh Weapons Depot; Sirsa Airbase; Rajuri Military Intelligence Headquarters. Additionally, there was still another round of air dogfight.

Over Sialkot, Lahore, and Kashmir, three Rafale aircraft were shot down, and one was shot down close to Sialkot. Drone attacks were carried out by Pakistan over Jammu and Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, and border regions, such as Pathankot, Pokhran, Amritsar, Ferozepur, Fazilka, Largarh, Jaisalmer, Barmer, Bhuj, Kurabet, Lakhi Nalla, Hoor Maniya, and Hisar.⁴⁰

Role of china

Beijing maintained a fairly calm public stance throughout the crisis. Despite officially opposing direct military involvement, Chinese leaders saw the conflict as a significant test of their regional might and ability to mediate disputes. Behind the scenes, China accelerated the shipment of pre-approved defence equipment to Pakistan while being cautious not to do anything that would provoke India. This careful balancing act reflected China's complex role as Pakistan's closest friend as well as its wish to preserve its shaky economic ties with India. The issue served to highlight China's growing role as a regional power broker, even if it carefully refrained from taking the initiative in attempts to find a solution.⁴¹

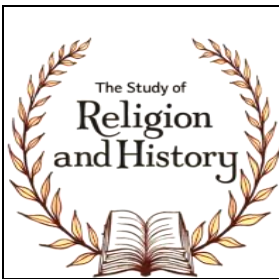
During the interview with Eram Zahra, Prof. Dr. Nawaz Bhatti said that Pakistan acquired some technology from other countries, and in return they also benefited from our expertise. We did receive assistance from others but it is completely false to say that our technology came entirely from them or that they came here and built everything for us. This is Pakistan's own achievement, you know. Just because Pakistan developed technology in cooperation with China doesn't mean that all the credit belongs to China. Pakistani scientist's engineers, and researchers worked tirelessly to develop advanced technologies that the world witnessed during the 2025 conflict. In 2019 Pakistan established the Cyber Wing of the Pakistan Air Force. And the capabilities shown today are the result of years of research development, and hard work by that institution.

Pakistan has built this technological ecosystem for its own benefit. And it is the Pakistani people who actually deserve the credit. Of course, every country seeks assistance from others. The United States partners with its allies, China also gains from international cooperation. Pakistan is no different in this regard. But getting help doesn't mean Pakistan has no ownership of its achievements. We developed these capabilities ourselves. India was surprised by Pakistan's technological performance and asked how Pakistan managed such capabilities.

³⁹ DG ISPR, news conference on ARY new, 8 may 2025

⁴⁰ Dr Farah Naz, Operation Bunyaan-un-Marsoos: The New Art of War, Pakistan institute for conflict and security studies

⁴¹ China Rejects Claims That It Sent Military Aircraft with Arms to Pakistan," Scroll.in, May 13, 2025.

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According to the Director General of ISPR, Pakistan displayed only about 10 percent of its technological capabilities during the conflict, while nearly 90 percent of its advanced capabilities were intentionally kept undisclosed.⁴²

The international response demonstrated the possibilities and limitations of handling crises on a worldwide scale during a period of renewed great power competition. Even while coordinated pressure stopped full-scale war, the crisis showed how regional disputes might be utilised as stand-ins for bigger geopolitical rivalries. To prevent nuclear-armed states from starting a full-scale conflict, modern international crisis management mechanisms are required.

Strategic advantage for Pakistan

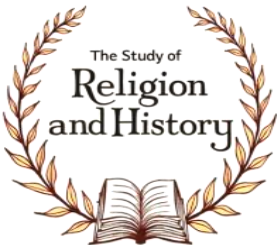
2025 proved to be a pivotal year for Pakistan in many respects. Despite ongoing domestic political and economic volatility, the nation found itself suddenly important in international affairs once more. This complicated picture for Pakistan was defined by four significant events that highlighted the chances and challenges the nation faced during the year. First, Pakistan was able to regain prominence on the international scene following years of relative marginalization. The fierce four-day military confrontations with India in May, which demonstrated Pakistan's military prowess, particularly in air operations and allegedly resulted in the downing of many Indian jets, served as the impetus for this change.

This showed that, despite domestic economic difficulties, Pakistan's military had not only kept up with India's military modernization but had, to some extent, successfully resisted New Delhi's advances. This success greatly restored Pakistan's strategic credibility worldwide, despite the country's struggles with internal terrorism, economic difficulties, and political conflicts. While India's relations with Washington were strained, Pakistan's relations with the United States significantly improved following confrontations with India. In the Middle East, Pakistan signed a \$4 billion arms deal with Libya and formalized a significant mutual defense agreement with Saudi Arabia.

Additionally, the nation is negotiating similar agreements and defense sales with other regional nations. Notable achievements from its counterterrorism efforts included strong cooperation with Türkiye in operations against Islamic State insurgents. The deployment of the second phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was somewhat aided by China's appreciation of the practical validation of its defense equipment employed by Pakistan during the conflict with India. Furthermore, Pakistan's participation in international attempts to stabilize Gaza including possible contributions to a multinational force emerged as crucial.

Together, these accomplishments have shown a level of momentum not seen in years, positioning Pakistan to play a more significant role in the world going into 2026. Second, Pakistan took a more aggressive approach to Afghanistan, eschewing previous accommodations to the Afghan Taliban in favor of applying persistent pressure to destroy the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and force Kabul to cut off relations with the group. From this perspective, those deep-seated notions of cultural and national dependence which had hitherto permeated thinking in Islamabad were challenged by direct military measures such as invasions of Pakistan's closest neighbor Afghanistan. The readiness with which Pakistan is using force its resolve to block trade has come as a surprise in the face of a faltering Pakistani economy to the Taliban government.

⁴² Interview by Eram Zahra from Professor Dr. Nawaz Bhatti, on 17 June 2026

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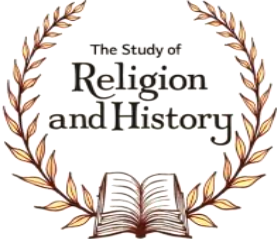
Moreover, Pakistan's concern regarding Afghanistan was reflected on the international platforms. For the sake of catching the attention of cross border risks, it mediated Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkiye to appeal in the risks. With this it was decided to enter into the mediation of Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Turkiye with regard to other risks that threaten the entire cross border region for the sake of capturing the attention of this region of danger. This led to increasing isolation of the Taliban leadership and they could not convince the people around the world that they are not associated with TTP and other extremist groups. However, more than 1,000 Afghan clergy issued a directive banning the assaults from Afghan territory on neighboring countries. No doubt, this was influenced by strain, particularly from Pakistan and other environs. The intercontinental counter-terrorism efforts continued in Pakistan and rather remarkable progress was made against the TTP.

This shows the Afghan Taliban that if they continue supporting the TTP, it might have grave consequences in Pakistan in the near future that the country's foreign policy will not remain unaffected from. Third, although Pakistan had made progress in diplomacy with other countries, the economy was still facing challenges, and Foreign Direct Investment rate was declining. Persistent issues such as expensive energy, tax policies, and steep import and export taxes continued to be a barrier for industry and exports. International commitments to financial support often failed to be honored, for instance. All of this has boosted the country's poverty rates. All these have contributed directly on rising poverty rates in the country.

The success of the privatization of Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) was a big positive moment in this grim economic situation. Consistently loss-making PIA has run up public budgets for many years. The deal, for a state-owned business to be privatized for the first time in 20 years, is historic and the Pakistani government deserves credit for reaching this milestone. This orientation to more private sector activity and momentum to the economy could mark a new beginning for Pakistan.

Fourth, the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf's (PTI) persistent counterattacks on military and federal institutions played a significant role in the current political turmoil in the country. The party's provincial government has gone against the provincial government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa for working together on key national issues including refugee issues and counterterrorism measures. Moreover, Founder of PTI Imran Khan has often called for protest from prisons, aggravating the deadlock and blurring the horizon for political stability in the country. On a positive note, the state's growing intolerance towards violent extremism was seen when the severe actions against extreme Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan (TLP) emerged. The army chief's statement to the nation's religious leaders that only the state has jurisdiction over declarations of jihad served to further support this.

However, in 2025, national cohesiveness remained a struggle due to wider pressures on the social compact between individuals and the state, which were fueled by population increase, inflation, income inequality, and restrictions on liberties. 2025 was difficult on a global scale as well, with a renewed focus on military aggression and hard power straining international norms, laws, and institutions. Furthermore, terrorist organizations continued to take advantage of weaknesses in Africa and Asia as conflicts in the Middle East and Ukraine continued. In 2025, geopolitical uncertainty increased. This was mostly caused by changes in American policy, especially the widespread application of coercive tariffs to put pressure on nations

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worldwide. Despite calls for responsibility from the international community, the United States also persisted in supporting Israel's conduct in Gaza.⁴³

Another big strategic consequence, was how it boosted Pakistan defense ties with Saudi Arabia a bit more than before. After the conflict, Islamabad and Riyadh sort of formalized their usual military coordination through the Strategic Mutual Defense Agreement, signed in September 2025. In that agreement established some framework of mutual security mutual defense planning, sharing of information along with broader, expanded defense cooperation. So the argument here would-be it's the indication of the confidence of Saudi Arabia towards Pakistan as an important ally regionally for the sake of its security. The argument again would be that it may well be a sign that it raised the stakes for Pakistan to become geopolitically a more central the Gulf security architecture.⁴⁴

Pakistan's political and diplomatic importance became even higher when another round of US and Iran crisis loomed. While unlike almost all of other countries in the region Pakistan maintained a relatively balanced diplomatic relation with Saudi Arabia, China, US, and Iran, thus acting as an useful but somewhat awkward position that it played role as the intermediary where messages were delivered and dots were connected to Washington and Tehran when things began to boil to a level that concerned everyone. As indicated by The Reuters and Associated Press Pakistan leadership both civilian and military played the intermediary role which in fact was able to move forward negotiations and gave way for a somewhat de facto diplomatic process between Washington and Tehran. Thus in the end it delivered both as the fighter state as well as genuine intermediary state, with the ability to communicate between clashing regional stakeholders.⁴⁵ Furthermore, the war in effect enhanced Pakistan's relevance to the Gulf states. Pakistan came to be viewed by Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, and other neighbors as reliable, both as a professional training provider, an intelligence partner and a source of military expertise and strategy. In Pakistan's case, its displayed military capabilities as well as its status as a Muslim, nuclear-armed nation possessing a large trained army gave it leverage as an almost essential regional security ally. The country's deepened status could thus serve Pakistan's defense diplomacy, invite foreign investment, and impact Pakistan's regional profile for years to come.

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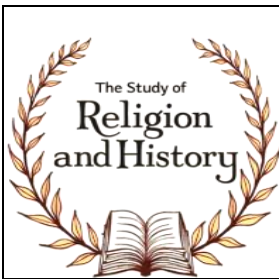
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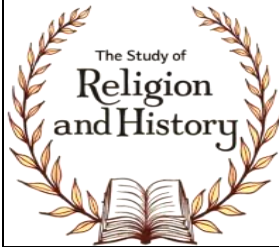
⁴³ Umair Jamal 2025: The Year Pakistan Stepped Back into the Spotlight, the diplomat,24 December 2025

⁴⁴ Abdullah Momand, "Pakistan and Saudi Arabia Sign Defence Pact Pledging Joint Response to Aggression," *Dawn*, September 17, 2025.

⁴⁵ Reuters, "Talks Between Iran and U.S. Concluded Successfully, Pakistan PM Says," June 22, 2026.

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