



Operation Sindoor and the Geopolitics of Kashmir: Strategic Competition and Regional Security in South Asia

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IJKS: Vol. 8 - No. 1/2026

The IJKS

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Suggested
Citation:

Chicago: Begum, Toheeda, Afzal Mahmood, and Nousheen Jamshed. "Operation Sindoor and the Geopolitics of Kashmir: Strategic Competition and Regional Security in South Asia." *International Journal of Kashmir Studies* 8, no. 1 (2026).
APA: Begum, T., Mahmood, A., & Jamshed, N. (2026). Operation Sindoor and the Geopolitics of Kashmir: Strategic Competition and Regional Security in South Asia. *International Journal of Kashmir Studies*, 8(1).



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Abstract

This study scrutinizes the evolving strategic worth of Kashmir within the broader geopolitical dynamics of India-Pakistan relations, using Operation Sindoor and its aftermath as an analytical lens. Operation Sindoor, though limited in scope, suffice to reveal that how military maneuvers, strategic posturing, and political narratives continue to redesign the regional security milieu. The study argues that the Kashmir conflict is not merely a bilateral territorial dispute but a strategic threat where geography, identity, and power converge to influence regional stability. The aftershock of the operation exposed

the delicacy of diplomatic channels thereby revealing that India and Pakistan are trapped in deterrence-based stability rather than substantive conflict resolution. The findings suggest that while nuclear deterrence and international pressure reduce the likelihood of full-scale war, they do not address the structural and political drivers of conflict in Kashmir. The peace in South Asia remains contingent on political will, sustained dialogue, and recognition of Kashmir as both a human and geopolitical landscape. This study concludes that without addressing underlying political grievances and recalibrating strategic priorities, Kashmir will continue to function as the strategic pivot around which the future of India–Pakistan relations.

Key Words: *Geopolitical, Kashmir issue, operation Sindoor, nuclear deterrence, regional peace and stability*

Background

Geopolitical is derived from the term Geopolitics that is defined as the study of how topographical landscape and location of a geographical piece of land that influences local or regional or global power undercurrents, foreign policies, international relations, and political policy choices.¹ Geopolitics of any country, in peace and war, stems from its geographical landscape, natural resources, borders and routes to them, ideology, alliances and positioning of defence

¹ Colin Flint, *Introduction to Geopolitics* (London: Routledge, 2021).

forces.² In other words Geopolitics is judicious and skill use of geographical resources as instrument to achieve national interest or denying space or freedom to enemy's political maneuvers in its power struggle. Unlike temporary value of alliances, the strategic advantage rooted in geography is permanent.

Geopolitical balance is vital for national economic security and territorial sovereignty, as it serves as forceful equilibrium of power upheld and sustained through a balance of power or military or economic alliances with in the international/ regional system. Contemporary geopolitical thought on geopolitical balance or geostrategic power is mainly enlarged from the ideas of Alfred Mahan, Mackinder, and Nicholas Spykman. According to Heartland Theory of Mackinder controlling of Eastern Europe controls tantamount to the controlling of the world.³ Rimland Theory of Spykman states that whosoever controls shoreline areas adjacent Eurasia hold geopolitical power dominance.⁴ Whereas, Mahan: Underlined the strategic significance of naval power as a key to global dominance.⁵

² Sloan, Geoffrey, and Colin S. Gray. "Why Geopolitics?" *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 22, no. 2-3 (1999): 1-11.

³ Chowdhury, Suban Kumar, and Abdullah Hel Kafi. "The Heartland Theory of Sir Halford John Mackinder: Justification of Foreign Policy of the United States and Russia in Central Asia." *Journal of Liberty and International Affairs* 1 (2015): 58.

⁴ Nicholas Spykman, "Heartland and Rimland." In *The Structure of Political Geography*, (London: Routledge, 2017), 170–177.

⁵ Alfred Thayer Mahan, *The Influence of Sea Power upon the French Revolution and Empire* (DigiCat, 2022).

Kashmir is a geographical piece of land that is not only a strategically pivots amid three nuclear powers, but also positioned as a cross road junction of Central Asia, South Asia and East Asia thereby having potential capability to control routes landlocked Central Asia and beyond.⁶ Kashmir is the major source of natural water for India and Pakistan, and a lifeline for the Pakistan's economic and agricultural survival. Realization of the criticality of water as source of national security and survival, with the mediation and guaranty of World Bank, both India and Pakistan, signed Indus Water Treaty in 1960s, The treaty granted right of sole control of three Western rivers (Indus, Punjab, Jhelum) to Pakistan and three eastern rivers (Ravi, Sutlej, Bias) to India.⁷ One of the most vital geopolitical flash points within the world is the area of Jammu and Kashmir which is located between the three nuclear powers of India, Pakistan, and China. Kashmir is positioned at the crossroads linking South and Central Asia, while Central Asia is itself a geographical conduit between Europe and Asia.

Kashmir population is a predominant Muslim with small portion of Hindu Pundits, Sikhs and Christians. The quest for their sovereign identity, pursuit for socio-political and religious rights, and political

⁶ Ananda Narasiman, "A Geopolitical Analysis of Kashmir Part 1: The Geographic Strategic Significance of Kashmir." *Risk Analysis* (2025).

⁷ Ali Raza, Naeem Abas, Qadeer Ul Hasan, Esmat Kalair, Anam Kalair, and Nasrullah Khan. "Water, Energy and Food Nexus of Indus Water Treaty: Water Governance." *Water-Energy Nexus* 2, no. 1 (2019): 10-24.

autonomy through right of self-determination has been a central focus in their vibrant struggle. The struggle has been demonstrated by all shades of resistance, protests, rallies with the slogans like; “Kashmir bany ga Pakistan, aor ham Pakistan hain; Go India Go”.⁸ Despite the repressive responses from Indian forces and political challenges, the struggle remained steadfast and sacrificed over hundred thousand freedom lovers. The insights from Kashmiris’ freedom movement testify that ideological roots and aspirations for independence via self-determination have been moving along historic timeline with more vigor, hopes and freedom centered ambitions.

Since the independence of subcontinent, Kashmir is a critical factor that is shaping India and Pakistan’s geopolitics, foreign policy maneuvers, and their alliance with global powers. Pakistan’s, consistent stand over the year, backing for the Kashmiri right to self-determination is a matter of lifeline principle and a scarlet thread to its foreign policy without fear of any price tag. The unsettled nature of the Kashmir dispute endures an uncertain security dilemma in South Asia and surrounding, diverting capitals from socio-economic improvement to armed build-up, and acts as a chief impediment to regional collaboration and integration. The unresolved Kashmir issue has brought both arch rivals physically in the battle field in 1947, 1965, 1971, and 1999 and in May 2025. The persistent Kashmir

⁸ S. M. Yunus Gilani, “Kashmir: Occupation and Resistance,” *Al-Idah* 24, no. 1 (2012): 1–17.

issue has gained potential of triggering fears of another major war having high probability of nuclear ramifications whenever tensions escalate.

Research Question: This review of the literature on the Kashmir disputes and history of its ramifications upon arch rivals-India and Pakistan magnifies its potential for fueling a major war escalating to a nuclear clash in near future. The study seeks to build on the hypothesis that Kashmir functions as a strategic pivot within the shifting geopolitical undercurrents between India and Pakistan, particularly when observed through the lens of Operation Sindoor and its consequential environment. The study specifically explores how the operation Sindoor altered military posturing, political narratives, and balance of power calculations, and how did it remodel the strategic implication of Kashmir in South Asian security architecture. The research further explores whether the aftermath of Operation Sindoor has intensified geopolitical competition, redefined strategic priorities, or generated new constraints and opportunities for conflict management and diplomacy in the region.

Prelude to Operation Sindoor

Pakistan and India, since their independence, have fought four wars in 1947, 1965, 1971 and 1999 including the recent conflict of 90 days in May 2025. The 1947 war was concluded with an UN-mediated ceasefire that deployed UN Observation Group Inter zone termed as

Line of Surveillance or Ceasefire line.⁹ The wars of 1965 and 1971 resulted in to mutually agreed Simla Agreement that formalized Ceasefire line of 1947 into line of control. The Kargil conflict of 1999 did not alter the line of control however, the nuclearization of India and Pakistan in 1998 along with the inbuilt deterrence to the new phenomenon brought a new balance among the two warring states.

No denying the fact that Kashmir is vital for the national security and economic interests of both Pakistan and India. China, though not a direct party in the conflict, has been very concerned in the peace and stability in region. The political economy of all three is dependent on the secure and stable trade corridor to transport their goods, capital, and people across. Therefore, none of the country around Kashmir shall be interested in a conflict, but for a lasting peace and stability in the area. But, a glance over the Indo-Pak history and Kashmir reveals that India has always been conspiring to defy UN resolutions on Kashmiris Right of Self Determination and absorb Kashmir into Indian Union territory by hook or crook^{10, 11}. India with its geopolitical weight anchored along with its big consumer market due size of country and its population succeeded in influencing other

⁹ . Hilali, A. Z. "Kashmir dispute and UN mediation efforts: An historical perspective." *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 8, no. 2 (1997): 61-86.

¹⁰ Ishita Chakrabarty, "Self-Determination: What Lessons from Kashmir?" *Indiana International & Comparative Law Review* 31 (2021): 35.

¹¹ Sameer P. Lalwani and Gillian Gayner, *India's Kashmir Conundrum: Before and After the Abrogation of Article 370* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2020).

countries to support her game to isolate Pakistan and Kashmir from global agenda.¹²

India has always been going all out to corner Pakistan on diplomatic front and took every measure to damage Pakistan economy, socio-political standing within the country and abroad, tarnish the soft image of Pakistan and label it a place haven for terrorists and a country that is sponsoring terrorism across Indian borders under the guise of Kashmiris freedom movement. To support its narrative against Pakistan as ‘terrorism sponsor country’ India went to the extent of conspiring and staging fake incidents of terrors and false flagged surgical strikes to raise the intensity of the gravity of situation to peace and stability in the region. Most of the small, medium and great nations used to buy the message from the Indian narrative and pressurized Pakistan against the offence for which Pakistan has never been responsible.¹³

The Indian narrative against Pakistan became more pronounced and louder with the Prime Minister Narindra Modi taking oath of PM office in 2014. To force Pakistan for two front wars, change Kashmir’s demographic and political profile and bleed out in proxy war a special cell under Ajit Deval, National Security Advisor, was

¹² Prem Mahadevan, “India and Global Discourse on State-Sponsored Terrorism,” *Rising Powers Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (2017): 185–201.

¹³ Adam Saud and Nehal Kazim, “Disinformation and Propaganda Tactics: Impacts of Indian Information Warfare on Pakistan,” *Journal of Indian Studies* 8, no. 2 (2022): 335–354.

established in PM office. Ajit Deval stepped up Indian proxies in their war of attrition against Pakistan, jeopardize China Pakistan Economic corridor (CPEC) by targeting Chinese and their projects in this regard. These Indian Proxies, using human shields, succeeded in thwarting progress on CPEC, threatening investors and slowing down economic activities in Pakistan.

India did all efforts to deprive Pakistan from any opportunity that could offer connectivity or dialogue platform to further its interests. In November 2016, South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) Summit was scheduled to be held in Islamabad and Pakistan was looking for furthering its bilateral relation with member nations of SAAARC. The SAARC Summit was cancelled due to the refusal of India to attend on the pretext of rising tension due to Uri terrorist attack occurred on 18 September 2016.¹⁴ With the refusal of India, other Indian vessel states including Bangladesh, Bhutan and Afghanistan sided with India and declined to attend the Summit. Since then, the SAARC has become virtually redundant and no meet of any level in the organization is held thereafter.¹⁵

¹⁴ Manjari Chatterjee Miller and Bharath Gopalswamy, "SAARC Is Dead; Long Live SAARC," *The Diplomat*, 2016.

¹⁵ Javeria Noor Sawal, Ahmad Ali, and Mahnoor Shahid, "Role of SAARC in Tension Diffusion between Pakistan and India," *Journal of Peace, Development and Communication* 6, no. 1 (2022).

The Uri attack transpired on 18 September 2016 near Line of Control (LoC) in the Indian-occupied part of Jammu & Kashmir, killing 19 Indian soldiers. India, without any investigation or evidence, immediately claimed it a cross-border terrorism from Pakistan based attackers tagged with Jaish-e-Mohammad (JeM) and proclaimed “surgical strikes” across the LoC on 29 September 2016.¹⁶ Pakistan immediately rejected Indian claim and denied any involvement immediately after the occurring of attack. Pakistani termed the event as a false flag operation, meaning a staged or internally conducted attack but blamed Pakistan. It is worth mentioning that a special session of UN General Assembly was expected to discuss severe human rights violations, tortures, killings and persistent unrest in Kashmir following the killing of Burhan Wani in July 2016. Pakistan argued that India staged the false flagged operation in order to smoke screen the global narrative away from human rights concerns in Kashmir.¹⁷ Despite Pakistan’s repeated demand for independent investigations and provision of authentic forensic reports, no independent international investigation was endorsed until today to adjudicate amid the two claims.

¹⁶ Nabarun Roy, “Contested Grounds and Missing Sticks: Assessing the Legality of India’s Surgical Strikes in Pakistan,” *India Quarterly* 80, no. 4 (2024): 481–502.

¹⁷ Abdul Manan Cheema, Farhat Naseem Alvi, and Hafiz Muhammad Abrar Awan, “Unmasking the Ongoing Genocide in Indian Occupied Kashmir,” *Jahan-e-Tahqeeq* 6, no. 3 (2023): 491–502.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's every election strategy was centered along accusing Pakistan sponsoring terrorism in India to gain electoral support. Similarly, Uri attack of 2016 led to follow a barrage of propaganda against Pakistan that helped BJP to win elections in Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Manipur, Goa, as well as Indian Punjab.¹⁸ At the start of the election year 2019, Modi Government, once again staged a deeply conspired terrorist attack in Pulwama, killing 40 soldiers of security forces through a suicidal attack. Modi, once again succeeded in winning public support by creating hatred against Pakistan. Indian media and the BJP government blamed Pakistan for sponsoring terrorist attack and turned it an instrument of anti-Muslim and anti-Pakistan propaganda.¹⁹ Besides securing political benefits in elections, these all-false flagged operations and supported propaganda / media reports were used to tag Pakistan in FATF grey list in 2018-19.

Post Operation Sindoor Situation

The above narrated incidents of false flag operations testify that Indian Government succeeded in crafting a war fury through false encounters and fictitious news thereby making it a routine habit for the Modi government. This typical trend of BJP was once again

¹⁹ Adeel Kazmi, "Electoral Expediency: A Case Study of the Pulwama Incident and Its Impact on Indian General Elections 2019," *Journal of Security & Strategic Analyses* 10, no. 1 (2024): 106–121.

transpired in Pehlgam (IOK) on 22 April 2025 and killed 25 Indian citizens.²⁰ Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi strongly vowed to go after terrorists and their sponsors. Pakistan extended condolences to the grieved families of the deceased and conveyed concern about the loss of tourist lives, calling for independent investigations through third country for justice and fairness. This time Pakistan stood firm with claim of its innocence and expressed its resolve for punitive response against any Indian adventure.²¹

The UNO SC, SCO, OIC, Arab countries, China, USA and Russia-all called for restraints and solution through negotiated dialogue. India, immediately announced suspension of Indus Water Treaty, expulsion of diplomatic officials, closure of air space for Pakistani flights and cancellation of all kinds of visiting visas. Pakistan also responded with tit for tat. Other salient of happenings prior to launching of operation Sindoor were as follow:

- a. None of the country of South Asia and beyond accused Pakistan on the Indians claims and stood with Pakistan's stance of neutral investigations. This resulted in to the Indian failure in isolating Pakistan as before.

²⁰ Asifa Tanveer, "From Ganga to Pahalgam: India's Arc of Strategic Deceit," *Policy Perspectives* 22, no. 1 (2025).

²¹ Mehreen Yaseen, Sabahat Ali Sheikh, Ghulam Hussain Abid Sipra, Musa Khan, and Sadaf Ghayoor, "False Flag or Faulty Intelligence? A Diplomatic Analysis of India's Accusations Against Pakistan After the 2025 Pahalgam Attack," *The Critical Review of Social Sciences Studies* 3, no. 3 (2025): 48–66.

- b. USA, despite being member of the QUARD and strategic partner of India, didn't take Indo Pakistan borders standoff seriously and opted to stand neutral in this regard. Whereas China announced her full commitment to ensure to keep Pakistan's security and sovereignty intact ward off any threat to Pakistan's territorial integrity at all cost against any aggression.

Despite UNO, SCO and other countries calls to show restraint and give chance to peace via investigations and dialogue, India initiated a naked aggression across Pakistan international border on night 6/7 May thereby setting a new normal in Indo Pak tussle. Pakistan responded this new normal with its full preparedness and destroyed seven fighter jets those have fired missiles on Pakistan civilian locations. Pakistan's response was calculated but befitting that inflicted humiliating slap on aggressor. Pakistan matured, self-constrained and limited response was well appreciated by the World whereas, India was criticized for continued escalating the situation through drones' attacks and firing on civilian population across line of control. The short, swift, and well-targeted response by Pakistan and stunning losses on Indian Air Force, S 400 and forward air bases was surprise for the world in general and the West in particular. World acknowledged Pakistan wining pinch and Pakistan agreed to the ceasefire request of USA and brothers from Arab World.²²

²² Kokab Saeed, Nadir Ali Khan, Irshan Arif, Amjad ur Rehman, Misbah Rehman, and Navishta Maheen, "From Pahalgam to Ceasefire: The 2025 India-Pakistan

After keeping silence for few days, public and the opposition parties started questioning the outcomes of operation with focus on the stunning losses of IAF and the S-400 etc. Indian Government started denying the operational losses in quantitative terms followed by publicly rhetoric that operation Sindoor is continued.²³ Meanwhile American President Donald Trump started claiming the credit of ceasefire and reporting losses of fighter jet during the conflict. Indian Chief of Defence Staff, Indian Naval Attaché in Indonesia and Indian Deputy Chief of Army Lt. Rahul Singh acknowledged some losses in war. However, after a month or so Modi government started denying their war losses and any role of American President in brokering ceasefire. Indian lies are exposed by the American Congress in first week of November 2025 by releasing the report compiled by the US-China Economic and Security Commission with following findings in conclusive term:²⁴

- a. Pakistan clearly won the Indo-Pak 90 days' conflict of May 2025,

Conflict, Its Historical Roots, and Donald Trump's Mediation Role," *Pakistan Journal of Social Science Review* 4, no. 4 (2025): 1173-1204.

²³ Jahan Zaib Adil, Mehar Sohail, and Shazad Farid, "Pak-India War Crisis: A Historical and Strategic Analysis," *The Critical Review of Social Sciences Studies* 3, no. 3 (2025): 131-144.

²⁴ U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, *2025 Report to Congress of the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission: Executive Summary and Recommendations* (Washington, DC: U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission, 2025), https://www.uscc.gov/sites/default/files/2025-11/2025_Executive_Summary.pdf

- b. Night 7th May witnessed, first time in the history of air battles, over hundred fighter jets
- c. Pakistan Air Forces successfully engaged and destroyed seven IAF Jets through beyond visual range (BVR) missiles including four Rafael, one SU 30, one Mig 29 and one UAV. Pakistan also locked ten to fifteen more aircrafts but left them as warning shot for India so as not to escalate war ladder.
- d. Pakistan bombed 109 military targets including two dozen forward air fields, S-400 and Indian posts / headquarters along line of control.
- e. Pakistan predominantly used Chinese platforms and weapon systems including;
J-10 C fighter jets, PL 15 BVR Missiles, AQ 19 Air Defence Missile Systems,
- f. Pakistan stunning victory in 90 days' war stemmed from the skillful and well-coordinated use of multi domain operation integrating space electro-magnetic spectrum, electronic warfare, cyber warfare and intelligence-surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) of air based and ground-based radars. Kill chain derived through integration of all form of ISR platforms resulted in hit to kill.
- g. Pakistan showcased Chinese weapon systems as quality weapons with war tested insignia on them, and this marketing damaged market of the Rafael air crafts. This failure of Rafael through Indian pilots resulted into increase market share of Chinese companies and devaluation of Rafael market. Indonesia was planning to acquire Rafael aircrafts worth US

\$10 billion but cancelled the deal after seeing the performance of Rafael in May conflict.

- h. In June 2025 Chinese high command approved provision of Chinese J-35 stealth aircrafts, KG-500 surveillance radar system, AQ 19 Air Defence Missile System and PL 17 missile with extended range.

Before operation Sindoor, India was considered as a net security provider in the region and counter weight to China in any future conflict. Over the years, America and the West supported India with their all-out efforts to build its economy, diplomatic and geopolitical profile to sustain its role as guardian of India Ocean maritime trade.²⁵ Whereas, Operation Syn door badly exposed its military power and fighting resolve against five-time small country. Pakistan, once it was totally isolated and nearly to default nation, emerged as peer to Indian military might and succeeded in testifying balance of power in her favor. Pakistan stood tall in the region and global community, with rising trend in its geopolitical profile. Following outcomes in post operation Sindoor clearly mark the Pakistan's rise and Indian fall to lowest ebb of diplomatic isolation.

²⁵ Sufian Ullah and Zeeshan Hayat, "India as a Net Security Provider in Indo-Pacific and Implications for the Region," *NUST Journal of International Peace & Stability* (2021): 26–39.

First time in the history of White House, Donald Trump, President of United States officially invited any military general in uniform for lunch in and military leader was Pakistan Army Chief Field Martial Syed Asim Munir.²⁶ The meeting lasted for nearly two hours. Though the meeting has no official press release but following remarks of the American President summed up the meeting that it was an honor to meet Field Martial; he is a great person with vision and statesman. We have agreed on economic and trade cooperation, share views on regional and international issues with commonality of interests. Pakistan knows much better Iran than us, Field Martial has given new angle and perspective to Iranian stand.

- a. Indian government sent its delegates to 35 countries to seek support of their narrative against Pakistan but failed to muster absolute support from any of the visited countries. There were only two countries, somewhat supported India were Israel and Afghanistan.
- b. Second meeting of Field Marshal and Pakistani Prime Minister with American President within the short period of two month was a unique hallmark in Pakistan's diplomatic ventures.
- c. Indian senior dignitaries including Prime Minister Modi and its FM tried to persuade IMF, World Bank, ADP and even FATF not to extend economic cooperation to Pakistan but failed in their nefarious designs.

²⁶ Rick Noack, "Inside Pakistan's Strikingly Successful Washington Charm Offensive," *The Washington Post*, 2025.

- d. Despite persistent requests by Indian Defence Minister and Foreign Minister, SCO Summits declined to acknowledge Pehlgam attack as a cross-border terrorism.
- e. Pakistan and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia signed a strategic Defence Agreement, citing attack on one country to be treated as an attack on other country.
- f. Economic and defence cooperation among Pakistan and Bangladesh is moving with accelerated speed.²⁷ This development in Indian backyard has served an alarming notice to Indian CDS General Anil Chohan, who publicly expressed his serious concerns for Indian security. The evolving defence cooperation is being seen as an emerging threat for Siliguri corridor (Chicken Neck) for North Eastern seven sisters and Sikkim. The emerging threat is being multiplied by provision of Chinese weapon system, investment to Bangladesh.²⁸ The rehabilitation of Lalmonir hat airbase on the mouth of Chicken neck and deployment of Chinese aircrafts, AQ 9 Air Defence system, and radars etc. on the base is a looming threat from Chinese-Pakistan and Bangladesh triangular alliance.
- g. Twelve days' war of June 2025 between Iran and Israel further exposed India as a betrayal to Iran by its longtime friend. On

²⁷ Syed Rizwan Haider Bukhari, Shujat Ali, and Inam Ul Haq, "Realigning Alliances in South Asia: Exploring the Dynamics of Pakistan-Bangladesh Relations in a Post-Hasina Era," *Journal of Regional Studies Review* 4, no. 1 (2025): 94–109.

²⁸ Md Farid Hossain and Munira Jahan, "Deepening Bangladesh–China Military Relations: Rhetoric and Reality," in *Bangladesh–China Connectivity: History, Trade and Diplomacy, and Society* (Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore, 2025), 203–215.

the other hand Pakistan's immediate condemnation of Israeli aggression on Iran and extending full political and diplomatic support to Iran was lauded by Iranian people and the leadership.²⁹ Improvement of bilateral relations with Iran and revival of Iranian trust on Pakistan helped Pakistan to hunt BLA (Indian proxies) who were finding safe heavens before on Iranian soil.

- h. Pakistan's role in brokering ceasefire in Iran Israel war, extending full support to Qatar against Israeli air attacks on its soil, actively pursuing peace deal for Ghaza peace, Strategic Defence Agreement with KSA, furthering defence cooperation with Egypt, Jordan, and Azerbaijan are worth mentioning episodes of Pakistan's geopolitical standing in the Middle East and beyond.
- i. Pakistan has successfully replenished its weapons and military equipment consumed during the 90 days war and tested its nuclear delivery system with perfection.
- j. America has signed 500 million dollars deal with Pakistan to acquire rear earth minerals and negotiating for exploration of oil deposits in Pakistani sea.
- k. On getting frustrated with failure of operation Sindoor and rise in Pakistan geopolitical profile coupled with economic stability, India has stepped up intensity of its proxies against Pakistan through TTP and BLA. India is trying to use Afghanistan and

²⁹ Shahid Jan Afridi, Imtiaz Ahmad, Usman Khan, and Ahmad Khan, "Trump's Stance on the Iran-Israel War and How It Affects Regional Security and Pakistan's Foreign Policy," *Social Science Review Archives* 3, no. 3 (2025): 968–975.

other proxies to fix Pakistan from the West so as to facilitate India in its any eventuality of Syndoor-2.

1. International Arbitration Court and World Bank denounced Indians declaration of making Indus Water Treaty held in abeyance and declared it unlawful, violation of international law and detrimental to peace in the area. The court snubbed India on using riverine water as weapon of war.

Reassessment: Post–Operation Sindoor

The future of peace in South Asia, predominantly between India and Pakistan will be shaped by the Operation Sindoor's outcomes. A nonpartisan analyses and insights from the operation Sindoor and Pakistan's Operation Buyian al Marsoos offers strategic and operational insights for the wearing sides. The lesson learnt from operational unfolding, execution and consolidation phases suggests reorganization and restructuring of defence forces and command structure on one hand, remodeling of military **posturing, diplomatic behavior, narrative framing, and regional security calculations on the other. The consequences of operation are shaping new cooperation, alliances and strategic alignments and realignments in the region and its surroundings.** The operation's political and strategic consequences could push South Asia towards either **greater confrontation or conditional stability**, depending on how both states internalize its lessons. Some of the predicted insights from the operation's aftermath calculus following seems likely:

- a. **Magnification of Militarization of zonal landscape:** The strategic insights drawn from 90 days' war suggest likely increase in militarization of the area with special push for immediate acquisition, enhancement and deployment of cutting-edge surveillance system, forward deployments of ISR, and positioning of rapid-response capacity on ground, in sea and in air.
- b. **Multi domains operation:** The technology and platforms deployed by Pakistan's side in operation Bunyan al Marsoos played havoc on Indian side and dividends' for Pakistan. The 90 days' war has set new trends for future wars where "multi domains" operations would be order of the day. Ground forces, air and naval platforms would be integrated to response to sharpen their kill chain on real time intelligence. Multi domains include ground-based radar and weapon system, ISR platforms including air and naval radars, Broad and long range electromagnetic spectrum via satellite and space based observation and tracking system, electronic warfare to cause interruption in enemy's communication and technological operational settings, cyber war to obstruct and injured enemy systems software thereby making them redundant and dead.
- c. **Managed Hostility:** This increases **in frequency, duration and spectrum of conflict are most likely in any future war. Acquisition, training, deployment and operational**

engagement with the latest and cutting edge technologically laced platforms, and their reach into the targets in far depth raises the cost of war. In any future war, seems likely to be quick, fluid and destructive in nature without having any difference between forward and deep targets thereby military, economy, development and people will be engaged simultaneously. The fear of unbearable losses and corresponding cost will paradoxically compel the leadership for adherence to controlled deterrence, and *managed hostility*. Hence, return to large-scale war remains unlikely, but **border crises may become more frequent, with rapid escalation potential due to new technologies (stealth aircrafts, hypersonic precision missiles, drones, smart weapons and munitions, ISR systems).**

- d. Wartime Crises Diplomacy: South Asian pattern of war and corresponding diplomacy has its own design. The operation is checked and slowed through reactivation of freeze diplomatic engagement. The diplomatic cycle prevents long drawn war, and evades total breakdown of infrastructure. The rise in bilateral tension cause freeze in diplomatic front thereby intensifying magnitude of crises horizontally and vertically. The rapid inflation of crises triggers pressure from global powers and resumption of limited talks amongst the warring side with or without facilitators on the table. External pressure

and internal losses, public fear and uncertain future shape design of stalemate thereby avoiding a total breakdown or exhaustion of resources and war stamina. The insight from such a future war pattern doesn't predict comprehensive settlement of Kashmir issue militarily but it can shape paradigm shift in domestic politics and realization settlement of Kashmir dispute through pacific means.

Conclusion

This study has argued that Kashmir continues to occupy a central position in the strategic relationship between India and Pakistan, with Operation Sindoor serving as an important case for examining the evolving dynamics of regional security. Rather than representing an isolated military episode, the operation illustrates how limited military engagements can reshape strategic signalling, crisis behaviour, and geopolitical calculations without fundamentally resolving the underlying sources of conflict. The findings suggest that Kashmir should be understood not only as a contested territory but also as a strategic space where military, political, and geopolitical interests converge.

The analysis further demonstrates that contemporary India–Pakistan relations remain characterised by deterrence-based stability, in which the risk of large-scale conventional conflict is constrained by nuclear deterrence, yet recurring crises continue to expose the limitations of

existing conflict-management mechanisms. At the same time, the growing influence of external actors, evolving regional alignments, and broader Indo-Pacific strategic competition have expanded the geopolitical significance of Kashmir beyond its traditional bilateral framework. The study therefore concludes that the future trajectory of India-Pakistan relations will depend less on military coercion than on the capacity of both states to institutionalise dialogue, strengthen crisis-management mechanisms, and address the political dimensions of the Kashmir dispute. Without meaningful progress in these areas, Kashmir is likely to remain a persistent source of strategic competition and a critical determinant of regional stability in South Asia.
