

BUILDING A STRONGER FUTURE

Youth empowerment is one of the most powerful investments any society can make. With nearly half of the world's population under the age of 30, young people are not just the leaders of tomorrow—they are change-makers of today. Investing in their development is not just a matter of social responsibility; it is an economic, political, and cultural necessity.

Empowering youth means giving them the tools, opportunities, and support to lead fulfilling lives and contribute meaningfully to their communities. This includes access to quality education, skill development, meaningful employment, healthcare, and a platform to voice their opinions. When youth are empowered, they are more likely to become productive citizens who drive innovation, support democratic values, and promote peace and stability.

However, young people around the world continue to face multiple challenges—ranging from unemployment and poverty to limited access to education and exclusion from decision-making processes. In many developing countries, these challenges are even more pronounced. Without proper support, young people are at risk of falling into cycles of marginalization, crime, or even radicalization.

Education is the cornerstone of youth empowerment. But beyond formal schooling, there must be a strong emphasis on vocational training, digital literacy, critical thinking, and life skills. Equipping youth with market-relevant skills increases their chances of finding meaningful work and becoming self-reliant. Governments and private sectors must collaborate to bridge the gap between education and employment by aligning curricula with industry needs.

Youth unemployment is a global crisis. Investments must focus on creating jobs through entrepreneurship, innovation, and support for small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Young people should be encouraged and financially supported to start their own businesses. Incubation centers, startup grants, and mentorship programs can make a significant difference.

Young people must be included in decision-making processes at all levels of governance. When youth are given a voice in shaping policies and community initiatives, they develop a sense of ownership and responsibility. Leadership development programs, youth parliaments, and participation in civil society organizations can help nurture the next generation of political and social leaders.

A healthy youth population is a productive one. Investments in mental health awareness, counseling services, sports, and recreational facilities are critical. Addressing issues such as substance abuse, depression, and anxiety is essential to ensure the overall well-being of young individuals.

In the digital age, access to technology can be a game-changer. Youth must be equipped with the tools and platforms that allow them to innovate, learn, and connect globally. Programs that provide free or low-cost access to the internet, digital tools, and training in emerging fields such as AI, robotics, and coding can transform communities.

Operation Sindoor: Where National Security meets National Honour

■ LAKSHMI PURI

Operation Sindoor makes clear that India does not seek validation. It seeks justice. Indian restraint must never be mistaken for weakness.

India's response to the Pakistan-sponsored terrorist act in Pahalgam—Operation Sindoor, which is still ongoing—signals a tectonic shift in its counterterrorism and military doctrine and posture. In his impassioned speech that resonated across India and reverberated across world capitals, Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared that a new normal of decisive military action against any act of cross-border terror has been established.

Any country harbouring, funding, and nurturing terrorist infrastructure, integrating it with its own military forces and targeting India for brutal attacks against innocent civilians, will face swift, punitive, and retributive consequences. Calibrated military operations will dismantle terrorist networks not only in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir but also across the International Border into the heart of Pakistan's Punjab province, regardless of how intertwined state-sponsored terror hubs are with official security structures.

The Sindoor Doctrine, rooted in upholding India's sovereignty and civilisational ethos, aims to protect its territorial integrity, ensure internal unity, harmony and peace, and keep India on the path of accelerated economic growth to becoming a Viksit Bharat by 2047. It affirms a zero-tolerance stance towards cross-border terrorism and commits India to act decisively in defence of its security interests thus redefined and elaborated.

PM Modi is unequivocal: any act of terror against India is an act of war—no grey areas anymore, no brooking war by other means, no resignation to haemorrhaging by terror. The Prime Minister's address to the nation and the international community following the operation was more than an affirmation of success. Delivered on the sacred occasion of Buddha Purnima, it unveiled a new strategic grammar—firm, dignified, and grounded in India's civilisational values.

It conveyed a simple yet resolute message: India believes in peace, but peace must be backed by strength. At its core, PM Modi's Sindoor Doctrine asserts three distinct and non-negotiable principles. First, India will

engage in no dialogue with those who perpetuate terror; dialogue, when resumed, will be bilateral and address only terrorism and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir. Second, India unequivocally rejects economic ties with nations supporting terrorism, drawing a firm line between trade and national honour. Finally, India will no longer tolerate nuclear intimidation—Operation Sindoor decisively shattered any illusions that nuclear threats could shield acts of terror.

The choice of the name "Sindoor" carried profound cultural symbolism. Sindoor—the red vermilion worn by married Hindu women—was invoked not as a metaphor of victimhood, but as a symbol of sacred duty and national pride. The terrorists sought to defile this honour; India responded with strength. The personal became political, the cultural became strategic. Also, since the terror attack happened in Kashmir, which is the geographic and metaphoric forehead of Mother India, Operation Sindoor is to safeguard and salute her. India's response follows a doctrinal lineage.

From Kautilya's Arthashastra to the Indira Doctrine of the 1980s, Vajpayeeji's bold nuclear assertion in 1998 through the Pokhran-II tests—which reaffirmed India's sovereign right to self-defence despite global pressures and sanctions, and established a policy of credible minimum deterrence—to the Modi Doctrine as demonstrated in Uri and Balakot, Indian statecraft has long emphasised the need for sovereign decision-making in times of crisis and in matters of vital national security importance.

The Sindoor Doctrine carries this forward, backed by a confident India determined to act independently and robustly in defence of its core interests and the safety and security of its citizens. Geopolitically, the operation has reset regional expectations. Pakistan, accustomed to using nuclear posturing as a shield for terrorism, has been confronted directly. The illusion of impunity is broken.

China, though formally neutral, must contend with its ally's vulnerability. And global powers—from the United States to Russia—are witnessing India act without waiting for external prompting or endorsement. Other neighbours must now weigh the consequences of their ill will and anti-India actions.

In the last 11 years, India has successfully built up a dense and deep network of bilateral strategic partnerships across many geographies and with major powers. It has engaged in plurilateral and multilateral, regional and interregional cooperation arrangements and is negotiating FTAs. During Operation Sindoor, many strategic and defence relationships of India with major powers and these partnerships went through a trial by fire.

After Pahalgam, it was gratifying that there was universal condemnation of terrorist attacks by our partners. After Pakistan's escalation in response to Operation Sindoor; however, there were concerns expressed about escalation between nuclear-armed neighbours. Reactions were also coloured by how their weapon systems performed or failed to perform in this military engagement. As we go forward, we must not only choose our strategic partners carefully but also make sure that these partnerships incorporate the Sindoor Doctrine.

This means they must use their influence on Pakistan to dismantle its terror infrastructure and give up terrorism as a state policy, and in the event of our having to use military force to act against Pakistani terrorist-military infrastructure, they must show solidarity with us. No sanctuary for the wicked, no rescue. Importantly, the terror infrastructure India targets is not just a threat to India and its role as a bastion of democracy and an engine of global economic growth and development.

From Pakistan, terrorism is exported globally—towards Europe, the UK, the United States, and beyond. Yet, much of the international community continues to look away, even as UN-designated terror groups operate openly in the terrorist haven that Pakistan was and remains. During Operation Sindoor 1.0, the Defence and Foreign Ministers of Pakistan publicly admitted as much. India, by acting against this hydra-headed monster of terror, has performed a global service.

It stands as a frontline warrior in the fight against international terrorism. The world must be awakened to act and stop drawing moral equivalence between perpetrators of terror and those acting against it—whatever their blinkered, short-term, optical considerations may be. The economic dimension of the

Sindoor Doctrine also carries significant weight. By clearly stating "no trade with terror," India has operationalised economic tools in service of national security.

Actions such as the suspension of trade and treaties like the Indus Waters Treaty underline India's resolve to ensure economic relations align firmly with national security objectives. These measures send a clear message: economic engagement must follow, not precede, the elimination of terror.

Blood and water cannot flow together is the existential message. A powerful gender narrative reinforces the operation's message and puts it in the spotlight: the role of women in India's national security framework. Two female officers prominently leading briefings after the operation symbolised the rising importance of women in India's defence landscape. This moment of "Nari Shakti" (women's empowerment) reinforced India's civilisational respect for women, echoing historical examples from Rani Lakshmi Bai to contemporary female military leaders, thereby intertwining national pride with gender inclusivity.

India's military strength is increasingly bolstered by home-grown innovation. While some foreign systems were used, the successful deployment of indigenous missiles, drones, and surveillance platforms highlights the operational maturity of Atmanirbharta in defence. It enhances our export thrust and demand. We also tested weapon systems we have imported and co-produced in India vis-à-vis those used by Pakistan, and these have reaffirmed the right choices we made. Operation Sindoor makes clear that India does not seek validation—it seeks justice.

Indian restraint must never be mistaken for weakness. The Sindoor Doctrine is not merely reactive; it is a proactive assertion of doctrinal clarity. The life, dignity, wellbeing, and honour of India's people—especially its women—are non-negotiable. This is where national security meets national honour. This is where ancient values meet modern strength. And this is where India stands—unafraid, unbowed, and united. *Jai Hind.*

(The writer is former Assistant Secretary-General of the United Nations and Deputy Executive Director of UN Women; and a former Ambassador of India)

The Armenian genocide by Turkey
The Armenian Genocide—A Bitter Truth Buried in Silence

I didn't hear of the Armenian Genocide in my school or college. It wasn't part of any Indian history textbook or lecture.

The truth about Armenian Genocide came to me, through the silver screen—at a film festival in 2007, in the form of an Italian film called *The Lark Farm*.

A devastating, gut-wrenching film that shook me to the core. It told the story of an Armenian family caught in the whirlwind of the first and one of the most horrifying genocides of the 20th century. The setting was Anatolia, in present-day Turkey—a region once home to thousands of Armenian Christians who had lived there for generations. They spoke the Turkish tongue, ate Turkish food, and lived in harmony with their neighbours. But they were targeted by the Ottoman Turks. Their only "fault"? They were Christian. And the Ottoman rulers of Turkey were fanatical Islamists.

There is one scene in *The Lark Farm* that I will never forget.

The movie is set around the time of the First World War. All the Armenian men of the village—including young boys and infants—are rounded up and brutally murdered. The women—old, young, pregnant—are herded like cattle and

forced to march across the scorching deserts of Syria with no food or water.

One such woman is heavily pregnant. She has just seen her husband, her brother-in-law, her father-in-law, and even her toddler son brutally butchered before her eyes. As she marches through the unforgiving terrain of the Syrian desert, she keeps whispering desperate prayers that her child should be a girl. Because if it's a boy, the Turks will ensure he dies a horrible, painful death. But fate is cruel. She gives birth to a baby boy.

Even as she holds the fragile, wailing infant in her trembling arms, a fellow captive tells her, "What the Turks do to boys, you don't want your son to endure." The other women had seen it already—baby skulls smashed against rocks, infants set ablaze.

So, with a trembling heart and shaking hands, the mother makes the most harrowing choice any woman could make. With the help of the other women, she smothers her own newborn son to death. Not out of cruelty but out of mercy to spare him the unthinkable.

That scene broke me. Even now, I can't forget the look in that mother's eyes.

At first, I thought it was dramatic

licence. Cinematic exaggeration. Surely no human would be forced into such a nightmare? But being who I am, I went home and dug deeper. I researched. I read. I cried.

Because the truth was far, far worse than anything any film could show.

Between 1915 and 1923, over 1.5 million Armenian Christians were systematically slaughtered by the Ottoman Turks in a carefully planned, state-sponsored genocide. Armenian men were lined up and shot. Women were gang-raped. Children were thrown off cliffs or burned alive. Churches were razed. Hundreds of thousands of women and children were marched into the deserts of Syria without food or water and left to die.

Many women—because they were Christian—were raped and then crucified in the middle of the desert. Over 200,000 women and children were forcibly converted to Islam and distributed as slaves into Turkish Muslim households.

This was not a war. This was not collateral damage. This was the annihilation of an entire civilisation—its religion, its language, its memory—erased by the sword of religious fanaticism.

And even today, Turkey denies that

the #ArmenianGenocide ever happened. Speak the words "Armenian Genocide" in Turkey, and you could be arrested under Article 301 of their Penal Code. Historians, journalists, and survivors have been silenced, harassed, and prosecuted. But the world has not forgotten.

34 countries, including France, Russia, Germany, Canada, and finally in 2021—the United States, have officially recognised the Armenian Genocide.

But India? India, which has every reason to call out Islamist barbarity? India remains silent.

If India truly wants to send a message to Turkey—a country that supplies drones to Pakistan and gives safe haven to radical Islamists—it must recognise the Armenian Genocide.

And now comes the uncomfortable truth that most Indian secularists will never want to confront. While the deserts of Anatolia were soaked with the blood of innocent Armenians, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi—yes, the same 'apostle of non-violence' was busy trying to 'save' the Ottoman Caliphate through the Khilafat Movement.

Let that sink in.

While Armenian women were being raped, their babies burned alive, their men butchered for being Christian—Gandhi and Maulana Azad were pleading for the preservation of the very Caliphate that ordered their deaths. The same Ottoman Empire that crucified priests in public squares. The same Caliph whose troops made pregnant Armenian women walk until they dropped dead. The same regime that forcibly converted women and sold them off to the highest Muslim bidder as slaves.

And yet, our textbooks praise the Khilafat Movement. No mention of the Armenian dead.

Not one word of this genocidal truth. But why blame just that?

We don't even talk about the countless genocides committed on Indian soil by Islamic invaders. We hush up the massacres of Hindus under Khilji, Aurangzeb, Tipu Sultan. Partition Genocide, Kashmiri Hindu Genocide.

We're trained to forget. Because that's what Indian version of 'secularism' demands—a collective, selective and convenient amnesia towards the violence committed against Hindus.

But the Armenians haven't forgot-

ten. Every year, on April 24th, Armenian communities across the world gather to remember. Not just to mourn. But to remind. To keep alive the memory of the first state-sponsored religious genocide of the 20th century.

And Turkey? Today, under Erdoğan, Turkey is drifting back into radical Islamist waters. Gone are the days of Atatürk's secular dream. Today, Turkey supplies drones to Pakistan, shelters terrorists, and yet rolls out the red carpet for Indian Instagram influencers.

Yes, please go ahead. Sell your soul and go to Turkey for "content creation." Pose in pretty dresses against palaces that once housed butchers. Sip your Turkish coffee on a land drenched in the blood of 1.5 million Armenians.

But know this—That same land is also soaked in the blood of 26 innocent Hindu pilgrims killed in Pahalgam, just for being Hindu.

This is not just history. It is a mirror.

And what you see in it is not always comfortable.

#ArmenianGenocide #Boycott Turkey #OperationSindoor.

The New Face of Valour: 21st Century India

■ RISHI YADAV

"Veer Bhogya Vasundhara"—a profound and timeless Sanskrit saying—declares that only those filled with courage, sacrifice, and a strong sense of duty are truly worthy of the earth's riches and honor. India, a sacred land, has long been the birthplace of such brave souls whose unmatched valor is etched into history. Legendary figures like Maharana Pratap, Rani Lakshmi Bai of Jhansi, and Subhas Chandra Bose proved that defending the motherland isn't just about wielding weapons, but about possessing extraordinary inner strength and selfless devotion. However, valor isn't confined to historical battlefields. In today's modern India—where a technological and social renaissance is underway—the definition of bravery is evolving.

India now contributes not only to border defense but also to fields like science, healthcare, education, agriculture, environment, and innovation. The scientist who propels the nation for-



ward in space missions, the doctor who saves lives during pandemics, the teacher who ignites minds in remote villages, the young entrepreneur fueling the spirit of self-reliance through startups, or the girl who breaks societal barriers to chase her dreams—each one represents the new-age hero, the true heirs of this sacred land. Today, India is home to a young, capable generation ready to defend the unity and integrity of the nation with unwavering resolve.

"Veer Bhogya Vasundhara" is no longer just a battle cry—it is a call to fulfill our cultural and societal responsibilities. It

urges us to live in a way where every action contributes to the nation's progress. This phrase symbolizes that the beauty and rewards of the Earth belong to those who pass the tests of hard work, courage, and service. Bravery now lies not just in wielding swords, but in kindling hope in darkness, creating in the face of adversity.

When a young person steps out of their comfort zone to drive change, when a farmer cultivates crops despite harsh conditions, or when a woman rises above family and social constraints to become self-reliant—they are all modern-day warriors. The world has

seen the valor of India's daughters in military operations against adversaries like Pakistan, proving that bravery still thrives, albeit in new forms. Thus, we must not just remember this phrase—we must embody it. Let every small act of ours be filled with sincerity, effort, and purpose. Only then can we become true custodians of this land.

"Veer Bhogya Vasundhara" is not just a phrase; it is a way of life. It teaches us that only those who elevate the Earth through their deeds are worthy of its glory. Today, as the war for nation-building is no longer fought just on borders but also through ideas, technology, environment, and social harmony—every Indian must strive to be a warrior in their own field. This spirit connects us to our glorious past and drives us toward a strong, prosperous future where every citizen can proudly say:

"Yes, I am worthy of this land, because I have struggled for it, shaped it, and honored it."

The Superpower in the Subcontinent

■ TUSHI DEB

India has been the land of Chanakya-Chaitanya-Gandhi-figures whose philosophies have shaped the nation's diplomatic and ethical frameworks. In this digital age, Chanakya's strategic acumen continues remains a touchstone for India's foreign policy. This enduring legacy is evident in India's evolving role as a dominant force in South Asia, exemplified by Operation Sindoor—a decisive military response that underscores India's ascent as the region's preeminent power. No wonder, India positions itself as a nation that advocates peace, thrives on prosperity and yet has thwarted terrorism with a precise military kinetic matrix.

"There is no flag large enough to cover the shame of killing innocent people," stated Howard Zinn. Operation Sindoor aptly adjudicates that motive. Fundamentally, Pakistan incubated terrorism has boomeranged on that nation itself from the time of the 'thousand cuts' policy purported by Zia-ul-Haq himself. And this conflict is the wedge that will consolidate base for India as the sub continental superpower.

The question is: Then, where does India stand diplomatically as the superpower in South Asia subverting China and Russia? Even though the Sino-Pak axis stands solid with China supplying 61% of its defence exports

to Pak. It's an obvious understatement that Pak will need to stiek to the dragons to simmer in their terror cauldron. On the other hand, convergence of interests between India and Taliban is inevitable to make Pakistan sweaty. This should make the Pakistani generals in Rawalpindi GHQ whimper. After all, the Pakistani ISI-military establishment has fretted a strategic pincer assault not only from India but both its eastern and western wings. Moreover, India has been harbouring and cultivating strong ties with the Gulf nations. For them, India has been a trusted ally who cannot be shrugged off for the sake of terror seeking Pakistan.

This display of military prowess sends a clear message to Southeast Asian nations: India is a credible security partner capable of addressing transnational threats, including terrorism and maritime insecurity, which plague the region. Countries like Indonesia, Malaysia, and Philippines, grappling with insurgencies and extremist groups, now view India as a potential collaborator in counterterrorism and intelligence-sharing. India's ability to execute Operation Sindoor without triggering a full-scale war also has reassured ASEAN nations of its strategic maturity—a critical factor in a region wary of great-power rivalries.

In line with its strategic objectives, India aims to enhance its defence capabilities and exports. India's Defence exports which have steadily escalated over the past decade are set for another major boost. "Our defence exports should reach Rs 50,000 crore by the year 2029," asserted Defence Minister Rajnath Singh. India aims to replace Russia in the arms market and for this New Delhi has been concentrating its strategies on Africa, Armenia, South America and Southeast Asian nations.

The doctrines India thrives on are diplomacy, peace and freedom. Operation Sindoor has catapulted India into a new echelon of strategic influence, with Southeast Asia as a critical theatre for its ambitions. By blending military decisiveness with economic and diplomatic outreach, India's outreach has been as that of a trusted partner. And it's this move that all set to thwart the antediluvian way of both Chinese hegemony and Western unpredictability.

As Southeast Asia watches India's next moves, one thing is clear: Operation Sindoor has not only avenged the Pahalgam attack but has also redefined India's role as a power that is set to shape the Indo-Pacific's future. The region, long a battleground for competing influences, now has a new player—one that brings both strength and stability to the table.