

JOURNEY OF TRANSFORMATION

India, the world's largest democracy, has undergone a remarkable transformation since its independence in 1947. From being a newly-liberated country struggling with poverty, illiteracy, and social inequality, India has emerged as a rapidly developing nation with significant advancements in technology, economy, education, healthcare, and social justice. Progressive India represents a dynamic blend of tradition and modernity, striving to ensure inclusive growth for all its citizens.

India's economic progress has been one of the most significant indicators of its advancement. Since the liberalization of the economy in 1991, India has transitioned from a closed, state-controlled system to a market-oriented one. This has led to the rapid growth of industries such as information technology, telecommunications, pharmaceuticals, and manufacturing. The rise of startups, digital platforms, and fintech solutions reflects India's innovative spirit. Initiatives like Make in India, Digital India and Startup India have empowered entrepreneurs and boosted employment.

The country's robust service sector, especially IT and software services, has made India a global outsourcing hub. Cities like Bengaluru, Hyderabad, and Pune are now recognized as global technology centers, showcasing India's capability in innovation and digital transformation.

Education has played a crucial role in India's progress. The expansion of schools, colleges, and universities across the country has increased literacy rates and improved access to higher education. Institutions like the IITs, IIMs, and AIIMS are globally respected for their quality of education and research output.

Moreover, India is investing heavily in research and development, especially in fields like biotechnology, space exploration, and renewable energy. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has made the nation proud with missions like Chandrayaan and Mangalyaan, placing India among the few countries capable of reaching the moon and Mars.

India has made commendable progress in public health. Eradication of diseases like polio, improvements in maternal and child health, and expanded access to vaccinations reflect strong public health policies. The Ayushman Bharat scheme, which aims to provide health insurance to over 500 million Indians, is a major step towards universal healthcare.

OPERATION SINDOOR: IMPACTS, CONSEQUENCES AND PSYCHOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF WAR ON STUDENTS

Operation Sindoor: A Strategic Military Response

ADHAMYA SHARMA, 8TH PEARL

Operation Sindoor was a humanitarian and military rescue mission undertaken by the Indian Army. The operation aimed to evacuate civilians and respond effectively to the terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, on 22 April 2025, which claimed the lives of 26 innocent civilians, predominantly Hindus. It was executed on 07 May 2025 and targeted nine locations in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), including areas in Muzaffarabad, Kotli, Bhimber, and the Punjab Province, known for housing terror camps.

Utilizing advanced indigenous military technology, the strikes were carried out with precision and lasted approximately 23 minutes. Rafale jets equipped with SCALP missiles and AASM Hammer bombs were used in the operation. Operation Sindoor marked a significant assertion of India's defense capabilities under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative and demonstrated the nation's unwavering stance against cross-border terrorism.

The Realities of War

ANAHITA, 11TH A

War - a word that may sound fascinating or heroic. After all, we have grown up watching extravagant, unrealistic war-based movies and TV shows. But is war truly what is shown on screen? Not at all. War is not a celebration; it is a harsh reality born out of conflict and division. It causes immense destruction - to people, nature, infrastructure, and the very fabric of society.

War must not be romanticized or promoted. It is never a true solution. At best, it is a temporary 'comma' in a long story that deserves a peaceful 'full stop'. It may appear to solve problems on the surface but fails to address the root causes of conflict.

Living in Jammu & Kashmir, which borders Pakistan, and having recently experienced a war-like situation (thankfully brief), my perception of war has changed. War is not glorious. It is ugly. No one truly wins. People die, nature is ravaged, technology is misused, and resources are wasted - all for the supposed glory of a few.

War does not guarantee civilian safety. Then what are we fighting for? My heart aches for the soldiers and their families, for the civilians who lost their loved ones - moments of joy shattered in an instant. War is not a solution; it is destruction. Dialogue, not violence, must be the path forward - one that preserves peace and planetary integrity.

India's Stand Against Terrorism

CHANIKA, 7TH KAVERI

India is a great nation, unified in its rich and vibrant diversity. Operation Sindoor was a courageous military action launched by the Indian Army following the Pahalgam terrorist attack in Jammu & Kashmir. The attack triggered immense sorrow and anger across the country. In response, our brave soldiers initiated Operation Sindoor to locate and eliminate terrorist launch pads in Pakistan.

This operation proves that our country will never remain silent in the face of terrorism. The entire nation stands with our soldiers, praying for their safety. It reminds us to remain united during challenging times and to wholeheartedly support our armed forces. Let us honor our soldiers and salute them for their fearless service to the nation.

Psychological Effects of War on Students

PARISHA SAINI, 10TH B

In my heart I felt the fear,
The drones and missiles
Made me scared,
Yet I had only one hope,
That the Indian Army
would never stop.
There were drones
Up in the sky,
I thought I was gonna die,

Then there came
A ray of hope,
S-400 was its name.
Again, with the news of war,
The hearts of people
Filled with awe,
The schools were shut,
The shops were closed,
Then came the ceasefire
That Pakistan proposed.

We thought once again
Emergency was over,
But the enemies said
That it would never.
Oh dear God!
Tell me just once,
Oh dear God,
When will the war stop?
When will the war stop?
(The writers are students of JK Public School Kunjwani)

Operation Sindoor: India's Calculated Thunder Red Lines Redrawn. Deterrence Restored. A Doctrine unveiled

RAHUL KHULLAR

When history looks back at South Asia's security architecture in 2025, Operation Sindoor will stand as a watershed. For the first time, two nuclear powers engaged in high-intensity drone warfare in the week following the horrific Pahalgam attack-an atrocious sectarian massacre that shook the nation to its core.

This time, India didn't just react-it roared with thunder, that was calculated, deliberate & precise. This article cuts through the fog of war to analyse the full spectrum of this watershed moment: from the operational brilliance of Sindoor's execution to its wider strategic and doctrinal implications. It will unpack how India redefined nuclear deterrence, asserted escalation dominance, showcased indigenous military capabilities, and signaled a doctrinal recalibration. It also explores the ease for updating India's nuclear posture, and countering the 0.5 front that threatens national cohesion from within.

OPERATIONAL BRILLIANCE OF SINDOOR

Operation Sindoor was conceived with strategic clarity: to punish the perpetrators and planners of the Pahalgam massacre and to dismantle the cross-border terror infrastructure. Under this operation India targeted precisely 9 terror hubs across Pakistan, this time India's precision strikes extended well beyond PoJK- penetrating deep into Pakistan's heartland, marking a bold shift in operational scope.

This operation initially was not against the Pakistan military, but Pakistan's blatant escalatory response in shielding the non-state actors necessitated the expansion of the operation's scope. As a result, India in just four days of calibrated action, met all its intended targets, including the successful neutralisation of the nine terror infrastructures across

Pakistan and further secured a decisive operational edge in the widened conflict theatre by neutralising nearly every drone and UCAV launched by the PAF, enabled by India's formidable Integrated Air Defence architecture. Further SEAD/DEAD (Suppression/ Destruction of Enemy Air Defences) operations carried out by the Indian Air Force, in retaliation to Pakistan's drone strikes, struck 11 key airbases & incapacitated 20% of Pakistan's frontline air defence infrastructure, including key radar installations in Lahore and near Gujranwala-rendering them inoperable.

In stark contrast, Indian military assets remained virtually untouched, with minimal to no confirmed damage sustained across operational theatres. This fact remains unchallenged by any credible defence analyst, global military observer, or third-party satellite imagery firm, further undersecoring the precision, preparedness, and supremacy of India's calibrated strike doctrine under Operation Sindoor.

The brilliance of Operation Sindoor lies not only in its kinetic operations, but also in its non-kinetic offensive, which profoundly carries long-term strategic consequences. One of the most critical among them was the decision to place the Indus water treaty in abeyance- a move that introduced a powerful economic pressure point, and effectively weaponised the geography without firing a single shot. Furthermore, India meticulously documented its stated objectives and claims through time-stamped satellite images. Indian space assets corroborated by private satellite firm Maxar Technologies, provided high resolution images capturing the destruction inflicted on Pakistan's terror camps and military infrastructure. This set a global standard for transparency in hybrid warfare. In contrast, Pakistan under operation BUNYAN-UN-MAR-SOOS, made exaggerated claims, but failed to produce any credible evidence

to substantiate its retaliatory narrative-therby weakening its diplomatic standing and strategic legitimacy. That said, Operation Sindoor met and exceeded its strategic aims completely.

RULES OF ENGAGEMENT REDRAWN

Operation Sindoor marked a decisive departure from India's long-standing Political-military posture of strategic restraint to a new, assertive doctrine of offensive deterrence. Under this recalibrated doctrine, India has made it unambiguously clear: any major terror attack on Indian soil will be treated as an act of war-not merely a law-and-order issue. The response will not be limited to symbolic retaliation, but will involve decisive, disproportionate, and potentially escalatory force to establish escalation dominance at every rung of the conflict spectrum. This is not about reaction-it is about pre-empting future aggression by forcing the adversary to reconsider the cost of any hostile action. The new red lines are no longer ambiguous. The message is sharp and uncompromising: "Waha se goli chalegi, yaha se gola."

INDIA'S NUCLEAR RESET

Prime Minister Modi unequivocally declared, "India will not tolerate nuclear blackmail." This declaration, reinforced by the precision strike on the Nur Khan Airbase in Rawalpindi-located in close proximity to Pakistan's Strategic Plans Division, which over-vees its nuclear arsenal of over 170 warheads-sent a calculated signal: India can and will strike deep into Pakistan, even near its critical nuclear command infrastructure, using conventional force if necessary. While India outrightly denied hitting the Kirana Hills, it made no such denial about the Nur Khan strike. The result was clear-Pakistan's long-practiced nuclear sabre-rattling has lost its credibility. The myth of nuclear immunity is broken. For years, Islamabad had used the shadow of its nuclear arsenal to shield terror proxies, projecting a

doctrine of first-use ambiguity to paralyse Indian responses. Operation Sindoor flipped that script.

In light of this strategic shift, India must now revisit and recalibrate its nuclear doctrine. The long-standing 'No First Use' (NFU) policy, though born out of moral conviction, no longer serves India's security interests in an evolving threat landscape. A shift toward a Conditional First Use doctrine-wherein a credible threat to national security or nuclear posturing by the adversary may invite a preemptive strike that would ensure Pakistan operates under continuous psychological pressure, seriously considering the real possibility of a first nuclear strike by India. There should be no room for Islamabad to feel mentally secure or at ease, thinking that India will always stick to a No First Use policy. In nuclear deterrence, controlling the enemy's mindset is half the battle won and we need to leverage it.

COMBAT TESTED ATMANIRBHAR ARSENALS

Operation Sindoor was not merely a tale of tactical success-it was a defining demonstration of India's indigenous and co-developed weapon systems operating in seamless synergy, validating years of sustained investment in defence self-reliance and cutting-edge technology. At the forefront of this operation were the BrahMos supersoncruise missiles, Sukhoi-30 MKI jets, Akash and Barak-8 missile systems, and the formidable Russian-made S-400 Triumf supported by a robust Integrated Air Defence Network (IADN) and sophisticated real-time command-and-control infrastructure. Even our legacy systems, often underestimated in today's high-tech warfare environment, rose to the occasion. The L-70 anti-aircraft guns, ZU-23 mm twin-barrel cannons, and upgraded Shilka systems proved to be formidable point defence weapons, effectively countering Pakistan's low-flying, hard-to-detect drone swarms that had threatened Indian airspace. India exe-

cuted a devastating first strike while simultaneously neutralising retaliatory missile and drone threats behind an impenetrable shield. Operation Sindoor marked the combat debut of several indigenous systems-and they did not just perform; they excelled. The indigenous Akasteer system showcased stellar operational reliability and countered most of the enemy aerial attacks. IAF successfully jammed and bypassed Pakistan's Chinese-supplied air defence systems (HQ-9 & H-16) using advanced Indian-Israeli drones and missile technology. The mission's swift execution within 23 minutes highlighted India's operational precision, technological prowess, and strategic readiness. This operation shattered long-held myths that Chinese defence equipment are state of the art and Turkish drone technologies hold a qualitative edge over Indian systems. Operation Sindoor single handedly proved the contrary.

Many countries, having closely observed the performance of India's indigenous systems during Operation Sindoor, are now expressing interest in acquiring Indian-made defence equipment. This marks a turning point-not just in India's military posture but in its emergence as a credible global defence exporter. Operation Sindoor has thus not only showcased India's military and technological ascendancy, but also significantly bolstered its defense industrial base, reinforcing the strategic value of Atmanirbharta.

NARRATIVE WARFARE: THE 0.5 FRONT

While India asserted dominance across its western frontiers through Operation Sindoor, a more insidious battle unfolded within the borders - what the late General Bipin Rawat aptly termed the "0.5/half front". Unlike conventional threats from Pakistan or China, this internal front operates in the cognitive realm. It doesn't attack territory, it attacks national will, cohesion, and legitimacy, precisely when the country needs

it the most.

In the immediate aftermath of the Pahalgam massacre, these actors rushed to label this horrendous act an insider job or a politically staged event. When India retaliated with calibrated force and achieved all intended objectives, the same voices turned again-accusing the government of stopping short, demanding a march into Pakistan, questioning ceasefire, equating strategic restraint with weakness. This front distorted a limited and objective-driven military operation into a loud demand for marching deep into Pakistan and reclaiming PoJK-completely missing the point that Operation Sindoor was never about territorial conquest, but about the retribution of the Pehlgham massacre & achieving specific strategic goals with precision and restraint which we unequivocally achieved. This half front is arguably more lethal than the conventional threats from Pakistan or China as it attacks India's will to fight from within.

To counter it, India must harden its information domain, amplifying credible voices, and launching civic awareness campaigns that inoculate the public against misinformation. Narrative control must become as critical as air superiority.

Operation Sindoor has not been declared over-it is currently in a strategic pause, not a ceasefire. This is not a celebration, but a moment of careful watchfulness. India has deliberately avoided triumphalism because the objectives go beyond battlefield gains. Our focus is not just on what we have achieved, but on what must still be secured.

While Pakistan rushes to claim success despite suffering critical blows, India remains grounded. We are a nation guided by foresight, not applause. Tactical success is only one part of the equation-the real goal is long-term strategic stability, on India's terms.

Zeesta Mata Temple: A Living Testament to Kashmiri Pandit Heritage

BAIRAJ CHAWALGAMI

Zeesta Mata, a revered deity among the Kashmiri Pandits, holds a special place in the hearts of devotees who have cherished her blessings for generations. Nestled in the peaceful surroundings of Srinagar, the temple of Goddess Zeesta is not merely a physical structure but a spiritual beacon that symbolizes faith, resilience, and the enduring cultural heritage of Kashmiri Hindus. The name "Zeesta" evokes deep reverence, and her temple stands as a solemn reminder of a once-vibrant community rooted in the traditions and spiritual practices of the Kashmir Valley. The history of Zeesta Mata is shrouded in sacred lore and the oral traditions passed down through generations. Though not as widely documented in mainstream texts, the goddess Zeesta is believed to be a form of Shakti, the divine feminine power that embodies creation, preservation, and destruction in Hindu cosmology. In Kashmir, which has long been a crucible of Shaivism and Shaktism, such manifestations of the divine mother were deeply woven into the spiritual

fabric of daily life. The temple dedicated to Zeesta Mata reflects this connection and serves as a cultural and religious nucleus for the community.

Located in the lush, scenic environment of Srinagar, the temple is surrounded by natural beauty, enhancing its aura of tranquility and divinity. The murmuring streams, towering chinar, and crisp mountain air create an atmosphere that invites meditation and reflection. The temple itself is modest in architecture, yet rich in spiritual intensity. Unlike the grand shrines of southern India or the ornate temples of Varanasi, Zeesta Mata's abode is characterized by a sense of quiet devotion, where faith takes precedence over form. Devotees who visit the temple often speak of a palpable energy, a sense of being watched over and blessed. It is said that Zeesta Mata is a guardian of the soul, offering strength in times of personal turmoil and guidance during moments of spiritual seeking. For the Kashmiri Pandit community, particularly those who were displaced from the valley during the troubled years of conflict and migration, the temple represents an

anchor to their roots. Many who live far from Srinagar still carry memories of the temple-its serene courtyard, the scent of incense, the flickering of oil lamps, and the soft chanting of mantras echoing in the crisp morning air.

The temple of Zeesta Mata also becomes especially vibrant during religious festivals, particularly during Navratras, when the goddess is worshipped in all her nine forms. On these days, the temple witnesses an influx of devotees who offer flowers, light diyas, and perform aarti in honor of the goddess. These moments transform the quiet shrine into a pulsating center of communal devotion. It becomes a space not only for religious observance but also for cultural affirmation. Songs and bhajans praising the goddess fill the air, and the communal preparation of prasad fosters a sense of unity and shared purpose. The priests who serve at the temple are often from traditional Pandit families, maintaining the liturgical practices that have been handed down through generations. Their role is not just to perform rituals but to serve as custodi-

ans of a spiritual heritage. They are the storytellers of Zeesta Mata's divine acts, keepers of the sacred flame, and guides for the spiritual journeys of the devotees. They often recount how the goddess appeared in dreams or visions, protecting her devotees in times of danger or despair. These stories, while personal, carry the weight of collective belief and offer solace to those who hear them.

Despite its spiritual importance, the temple of Zeesta Mata, like many other Hindu shrines in Kashmir, has witnessed the ebb and flow of political and social changes over the years. The turmoil that forced a large section of the Kashmiri Pandit community to leave their ancestral homes also affected the upkeep and accessibility of the temple. Many of these sacred sites were left unattended, and the memory of them lived on more vividly in the minds and hearts of the diaspora than in the physical upkeep of the structures themselves. However, in recent years, there has been a growing movement to reclaim and restore these temples, driven by a renewed sense of identity and purpose among the younger

generations of Pandits. In this context, Zeesta Mata's temple serves as a powerful symbol of survival and continuity. It reminds the community that their faith has endured despite immense challenges. In recent years, pilgrimages to the temple have increased, with Pandit families making it a point to visit during special occasions. Some even travel from far-flung cities and countries, bringing their children and grandchildren along, ensuring that the younger generation can witness the living traditions that define their heritage. The temple, thus, is not merely a place of worship but a living classroom of culture, memory, and devotion.

The resilience of Zeesta Mata's devotees is also evident in how the goddess continues to be invoked in diaspora communities. Even in cities far from Kashmir, temples and homes have small altars dedicated to her. Her name is remembered in daily prayers, and her protection is sought in times of personal need. This deep, abiding connection transcends geography and politics, revealing the profound spiritual bonds that define religious identity. Moreover, the temple is also a site

where the philosophical and metaphysical aspects of Kashmiri Shaivism find resonance. Zeesta Mata, as an embodiment of Shakti, connects the devotee to the cosmic feminine principle-an idea central to Kashmiri's spiritual tradition. Worship at her temple is not only an act of devotion but also a contemplative engagement with the ultimate truths of existence: the unity of the self with the divine, the impermanence of worldly suffering, and the redemptive power of grace. For those who have experienced the temple - whether through physical presence or through memory and imagination - Zeesta Mata remains a radiant symbol of divine grace. Her presence continues to bless those who seek her, and her temple in Srinagar endures as a sacred link between past and present, between longing and belonging. In a time where the cultural identities of displaced communities often face the risk of dilution, the temple of Zeesta Mata stands firm as a testament to faith's ability to transcend even the greatest of upheavals. It calls its devotees back - not just to a place, but to a sense of spiritual wholeness.

