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South Asia

From the front line: a critical look at Indo Pak War 2025

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On the morning of 7 May, when I answered my doorbell and went outside looking for who rang, my neighbor loudly asked me to turn off all my lights. This command signaled to me that we are living in a moment of war.

Living near the Wahgha border, we heard a deafening noise around 8.30 am, followed by a blast. An Indian Harop drone, made by Israel, struck a close by military installation. We later heard that four soldiers were injured.

Armed with a 50-pound warhead, the Harop uses its camera system to track and engage moving targets. The drone can fly for about six hours or about 600 miles after being launched from a truck.

Apart from the target near our homes, many of the Harop drones were brought down by Pakistani armed forces before they hit their targets. But in most cases, they fell on civilians. Out of curiosity, hundreds of people then gathered to see where these drones were brought down. People seem to be worried but not panicked.

Many friends and comrades have asked if I thought a full-fledged war is now erupting between two nuclear-armed neighbors. I replied that war had already erupted.

The Modi government launched "Operation Sandoor" to hit nine sites inside Pakistan. The intended targets were madrassas and mosques Modi believes are the base of religious terrorists.

According to figures released by the Pakistani army, most of the 31 who died in the one-hour attack by over 125 Indian jets were civilians, including children and women. There would have been more casualties had madrassas not evacuated just after the religious fundamentalist attack in Indian-occupied Kashmir. Twenty-six people, mainly tourists, were killed in the Pahlgam area on 22nd April 2025.

At that time my brothers and sisters encouraged me to move from my home in Lahore. I refused since there are military installations or cantonments in most Pakistani cities. In fact, Unlike the previous wars between Pakistan and India in 1965 and 1971, there has been no mass exodus from the cities.

This is first time that Indian missiles have hit nine Pakistani cities. A violation of Pakistan sovereignty, it has been condemned by almost all of the country's political groups from right to left. But unlike the right-wing political religious parties, most of the left groups demand an immediate halt to the war. Although much smaller in proportion to the Indian left, the Pakistani left was unanimous.

Unlike the mainstream Indian community parties who have given up any independence from the Modi's BJP government, there is no warmongering in Pakistan. A 8th May Gallup Pakistan survey reported that the majority of Pakistanis are not in favor of war with India; peace should be the goal under all circumstances. However, this may change when the war escalates.

This is second time that India and Pakistan has gone to full fledge war despite having the nuclear weapons, the other time was Cargill war in 1999. India carried out its first nuclear test in May 1974 and in May 1998, conducted another five tests, declaring itself a nuclear weapon state. Pakistan carried out its nuclear tests on 28th May 1998, thus officially becoming a nuclear state. In reality, it means nuclear weapons are not a deterrent to war.

Pakistan has an estimated 170 nuclear warheads, roughly equivalent to those in India. With such undeniably high stakes, the India decision to strike inside Pakistan for the third time (2016, 2019 and now in 2025) reveals that all the pride of having nuclear bombs is not a deterrent to war between the two.

Nuclear weapons are the most inhumane and indiscriminate weapons ever created. They violate international law, cause severe environmental damage, undermine national and global security and divert vast public resources away from meeting human needs. It is not a weapon of war but a weapon of total destruction. A single nuclear bomb detonated over a large city could kill millions of people.

While both countries bear responsibility for proxy warfare, the Modi regime has clearly instrumentalized the Pahalgam tragedy to divert from its failures in Kashmir, boost domestic popularity, and advance strategic goals regarding the Indus River system and regional hegemony.

Pakistan is accused of supporting the terrorist group that has led to the terrible loss of lives in Pahalgam Kashmir. However, the present realities paint a different picture.

Although there is no doubt that Pakistan government had supported and promoted these religious fanatic groups for decades after the Saur revolution of Afghanistan in 1978, this was with the wishes and whims of U.S. imperialism. Since 2022, when the Imran Khan government was dissolved after a vote of no confidence, the relationship between the military establishment and these fanatic groups has been at odds. There has been an escalation of attacks by the fanatics on Pakistan state institutions since Taliban has returned to power in Afghanistan.

The Taliban government in Afghanistan supports the Pakistani Taliban in its attempts to capture the government.

This includes carrying out bomb blasts, suicidal attacks, occupying areas and forcing people to support them. The Pakistani Taliban were strengthened by the Afghan Taliban by giving them NATO weapons left behind when the Americans left Afghanistan.

In 2024, Pakistan experienced one of the most violent years in over a decade. The religious fanatics took over control of several areas of Pakhtunkhwa province. Almost every day, there were attacks and casualties the Tehreek Taliban Pakistan (TTP) inflicted on the Pakistan armed forces.

Contrary to cooperating with each other, there are now open hostilities. The Pakistani state now longer supports these fanatic groups, who are now relying on the Afghan Taliban.

Of course, there are religious fanatic groups still active in Indian-occupied Kashmir and the question about the extent local support to large extent may still be strong. But it is difficult to believe that the current Pakistani government had anything to do with the April 2025 attack.

The Pahalgam terrorist attack seems to be an act of an independent religious fanatic group.

The danger is that the war can linger on. Both governments have claimed victory. But if it were to continue, it will not be like the one in 1965 and 1971, when the ground forces fought. Instead, India is using the same tactics as Israel is using in Gaza. Missiles and drone attacks could destroy infrastructure, perhaps only then introducing ground forces. Pakistan is not Palestine. It has a large, well-trained and equipped army. Yet it lacks the modern weapons India has.

Clearly the situation is very volatile and unstable. This means anything is possible.

What we do know is that war brings destruction and no one wins. Continuing the war will only result in more loss of lives. But if you listen to the Indian and Pakistani mainstream media, each side claims victory.

Yet a durable peace requires respecting sovereignty, ending proxy warfare, and demilitarizing Kashmir. Any war between nuclear-armed nations would be catastrophic regionally and globally.

Progressive forces throughout South Asia must unite against war hysteria and work toward a peaceful future.

We demand an independent inquiry into the Pahalgam attack in order to establish facts and accountability.

PS:

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