

## THE PAHALGAM ATTACK: THE CONTINUING SHADOW OF INDIA-PAKISTHAN BORDER TENSIONS

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### Absract

The Pahalgam Conflict represents a localized military engagement that unfolded in the higher reaches of the Anantnag district, Jammu and Kashmir, during a period of heightened tensions between regional militant groups and Indian security forces. Taking place in the early 21st century, this confrontation was emblematic of the broader insurgency dynamics in the Kashmir Valley. Pahalgam, traditionally a hub for tourism and pilgrimage, unexpectedly became a strategic flashpoint due to its terrain and proximity to key infiltration routes across the Line of Control (LoC). The conflict saw limited but intense firefights, counter-insurgency operations, and strategic deployment of mountain warfare units. While not a large-scale war, the Pahalgam conflict underscored the delicate balance of maintaining security in tourist-heavy yet geopolitically sensitive regions. This abstract evaluates the causes, course, and implications of the conflict while emphasizing

The so-called "Pahalgam War" is more metaphorical than literal—representing the silent battles faced by local residents, including restricted movement, disrupted livelihoods, and psychological stress from living in a militarized zone. In addition to this, the area has also experienced sporadic encounters between insurgents and security personnel, which have impacted the region's tourism-dependent economy and altered its social fabric. Despite these challenges, Pahalgam remains a symbol of resilience, where nature's serenity coexists with human endurance, and where the hopes for lasting peace remain as enduring as the surrounding Himalayan peaks.

### 1. Introduction

On April 22, 2025, the tranquil town of Pahalgam in Jammu and Kashmir, known for its stunning landscapes and status as a major tourist and pilgrimage destination, was thrust into the global spotlight following a deadly terrorist attack. The assault, which left 26 civilians dead and dozens injured, marked one of the most devastating terrorist incidents in recent times in India and has significantly escalated tensions between India and Pakistan. As investigations progressed and international scrutiny intensified, this attack not only shook national security frameworks but also strained diplomatic relations between the two nuclear-armed neighbours, pushing the subcontinent to the edge of heightened confrontation.

The attack occurred in the Baisaran Valley near Pahalgam, where a group of tourists—mostly Indian nationals and a few foreigners—had gathered. Heavily armed militants, disguised in military-style uniforms and equipped with modern weaponry such as M4 carbines and AK-47 rifles, stormed the area in a well-planned and coordinated ambush. The chaos was swift and brutal. Within minutes, 25 Indian nationals and one Nepali tourist were dead. Eyewitnesses described scenes of panic and confusion as gunfire echoed through the valley. Security forces responded, but the attackers managed to escape into the dense forested areas surrounding Pahalgam, triggering a massive manhunt that continues to this day.

Responsibility for the attack was claimed by The Resistance Front (TRF), a terrorist outfit believed to be a proxy of the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). Indian intelligence agencies have long accused TRF of being a rebranded version of LeT, created to operate under a different identity while continuing its jihadist agenda in the Kashmir Valley. According to reports, the group aimed to sabotage the upcoming Amarnath Yatra—a significant annual Hindu pilgrimage—by creating a climate of fear and disrupting the tourism sector, which is a major economic driver for Kashmir.

The Indian government's reaction to the attack was swift, firm, and multifaceted. Prime Minister Narendra Modi chaired an emergency session of the Cabinet Committee on Security within hours of the incident. The government declared the attack as an "act of war" and pointed fingers squarely at Pakistan, accusing its intelligence agencies and military establishment of supporting cross-border terrorism. In a bold diplomatic move, India announced the suspension of the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty, a significant water-sharing agreement brokered by the World Bank between India and Pakistan. Indian authorities stated that there could be "no cooperation with a state that sponsors terror."

Additionally, a major civil defense exercise—Operation Abhyaas—was launched across the country to bolster emergency preparedness and enhance coordination between the military, paramilitary, and civil authorities in the face of terror threats. The Home Ministry also sanctioned the permanent deployment of additional Army and paramilitary troops in Pahalgam and adjoining areas to secure vital routes, particularly ahead of the Amarnath Yatra set to begin in July 2025.

Internationally, the Pahalgam attack was met with widespread condemnation. The United Nations, United States, European Union, and several prominent global leaders expressed solidarity with the victims and urged Pakistan to crack down on terrorist groups operating from its soil. At the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore—Asia's leading security summit—India and Pakistan clashed publicly. Indian defense officials issued a stern warning, stating that "the limit of tolerance has been reached," while Pakistani delegates denied involvement and criticized India for escalating rhetoric without proof.

This diplomatic clash reflected deeper, unresolved tensions that have plagued Indo-Pak relations for decades. The Kashmir dispute, at the heart of the conflict, has been a flashpoint since the partition of British India in 1947. While wars were fought in 1947, 1965, and

1971, and a limited conflict occurred in Kargil in 1999, recent years have seen a shift from traditional warfare to proxy battles and asymmetric tactics, including the use of non-state actors like TRF. The Pahalgam attack, much like the 2019 Pulwama attack, represents a continuation of this dangerous trend.

Following the incident, security in Jammu and Kashmir has been significantly tightened. The Indian Army launched large-scale counter-insurgency operations in South Kashmir, particularly in the forests surrounding Pahalgam, believed to be hiding spots for militants. Drones, thermal imaging, and satellite surveillance have been deployed to aid the search. The Ministry of Home Affairs also introduced a new counterterrorism framework focusing on border security, cyber surveillance, and community policing to prevent future attacks.

On the domestic front, the attack led to widespread outrage across India. Candlelight vigils were held in major cities, while opposition parties and civil society groups called for national unity against terrorism. The Indian diaspora across the world also organized protests outside Pakistani embassies, demanding stronger global action against Pakistan-based terror networks.

However, the fallout from the attack extends beyond immediate security and diplomacy. The suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty signals a deeper breakdown in bilateral ties and could have long-term implications for regional stability. This move, though largely symbolic in the short term, sends a powerful message of India's willingness to take bold steps in response to continued acts of terrorism. Water experts warn that the politicization of water resources could escalate tensions further, especially in a region where water scarcity is already an emerging crisis.

Despite international calls for restraint, the risk of escalation remains real. While both countries are unlikely to engage in full-scale war due to the presence of nuclear weapons and global pressure, the chances of limited military skirmishes, such as surgical strikes or cross-border raids, cannot be ruled out. In fact, unconfirmed reports have suggested increased activity along the Line of Control (LoC), raising fears of retaliatory operations by Indian armed forces.

In conclusion, the Pahalgam attack is a grim reminder of the fragile peace in South Asia and the unresolved tensions that continue to endanger lives and regional stability. It has reopened painful wounds in Kashmir, shattered the illusion of returning normalcy, and served as a wake-up call for both Indian policymakers and the international community. While India gears up to prevent future attacks and ensure the safety of its citizens, the onus is now on the global community to pressure Pakistan into dismantling terror infrastructure and embracing a path of peaceful coexistence.

Until there is a genuine commitment from both sides to end the cycle of violence and engage in constructive dialogue, incidents like the Pahalgam attack will remain tragically common. For now, the Valley mourns, the nation braces, and the world watches — as two old adversaries stand once again on the brink.

Security was ramped up across Jammu and Kashmir, particularly along routes leading to the upcoming **Amarnath Yatra**, a major Hindu pilgrimage that passes through the Pahalgam area. Additional **Army and paramilitary forces** were deployed permanently in and around the region to prevent further attacks and ensure the safety of pilgrims and tourists. Large-scale **counter-insurgency operations** were also launched in the forests and mountains surrounding Pahalgam, where militants were suspected to be hiding.

International reactions were swift and sympathetic to India. Countries including the **United States, France, and Japan** condemned the attack and called on Pakistan to take immediate action against terror groups operating on its soil. Meanwhile, tensions between Indian and Pakistani officials flared at international platforms such as the **Shangri-La Dialogue** in Singapore, where both sides traded accusations and warnings.

The **Pahalgam attack** not only caused a tragic loss of life but also reignited concerns about the fragile peace in **South Asia**. It demonstrated how non-state actors continue to threaten regional stability and highlighted the challenges India faces in ensuring security in Kashmir. With diplomatic ties further strained and the potential for military escalation on the horizon, this attack may have long-term consequences for the subcontinent's geopolitical landscape. Unless concrete steps are taken to dismantle terror networks and revive dialogue, incidents like the Pahalgam attack will continue to pose a grave threat to peace in the region.

## 2. Literature Review and Background

### 2.1 A Tranquil Valley Turns Into a Battlefield

Pahalgam, a scenic town in Jammu and Kashmir known for its lush meadows and serene rivers, became the site of a horrific terrorist attack on **April 22, 2025**. Located in the Anantnag district, Pahalgam is a major tourist destination and an important base for the **Amarnath Yatra** pilgrimage. On the day of the attack, militants ambushed a group of unarmed tourists at Baisaran Valley, resulting in the deaths of **26 civilians**, including 25 Indian nationals and one Nepali. Armed with advanced rifles and dressed in military-style uniforms, the attackers created panic and chaos in what should have been a peaceful holiday destination. The incident not only shocked the nation but also drew international condemnation. The **Resistance Front (TRF)**, a Pakistan-linked terrorist organization, claimed responsibility. The attack reminded the world of the ongoing instability in Kashmir and brought renewed focus to India's battle against cross-border terrorism. More than just a security lapse, the Pahalgam attack was a strategic attempt to derail normalcy, discourage



**Figure 1: Pahalgam Attack**

tourism, and challenge Indian sovereignty in a region already strained by political tension. The psychological and political aftershocks of the attack were felt far beyond the valley.

## **2.2 A Pre-Planned Act of Terror:**

The Pahalgam attack was not a spontaneous act of violence—it was a **well-orchestrated terrorist operation**. According to official reports, a group of militants infiltrated the area wearing **army-style uniforms**, making it difficult for locals and initial responders to identify them as hostile. The attackers carried high-powered weapons, including **M4 carbines and AK-47 rifles**, and opened fire on civilians who were enjoying the scenic beauty of Baisaran Valley. The nature of the attack indicated prior reconnaissance, logistical planning, and possibly local support. After causing widespread carnage, the militants fled into the dense forests nearby, prompting a large-scale **search operation** by Indian security forces. The **Resistance Front (TRF)** claimed responsibility via social media platforms, describing the attack as a “strike against Indian occupation.” TRF is believed to be a **proxy of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)** and operates with suspected backing from Pakistani intelligence agencies. The timing of the attack—just before the Amarnath Yatra and the tourist season—suggests a clear intent to disrupt peace and instill fear. The attackers sought not only to cause physical harm but also to send a symbolic message against India's presence in the region.

## **2.3 Strong Measures and Global Diplomacy:**

India's response to the Pahalgam attack was swift and multi-layered. Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** called it an “act of war,” signaling a zero-tolerance policy toward terrorism. One of the most significant decisions was India's announcement to **suspend the Indus Waters Treaty**, a historic water-sharing agreement between India and Pakistan. This marked a sharp escalation in diplomatic posture, demonstrating India's willingness to use every tool available to counter state-sponsored terrorism. Simultaneously, India launched a nationwide emergency preparedness drill called **Operation Abhyaas**, aiming to train civilians and improve readiness against terror threats. On the military front, additional **Army and paramilitary forces** were deployed permanently in and around Pahalgam to secure tourist routes and prevent similar attacks. Security was especially tightened for the upcoming Amarnath Yatra, and intelligence agencies intensified

surveillance operations. Internationally, India received widespread support. Nations including the **United States, France, Japan, and Australia** condemned the attack and urged Pakistan to take concrete action against terror groups operating from its soil. The Indian diaspora also held global protests, demanding that Pakistan be held accountable. India's diplomatic campaign reflected both its anger and determination to isolate terrorist networks on international platforms.

#### **2.4 Pakistan's Denial and Rising Tensions:**

Following the attack, Pakistan's official response was one of **denial and deflection**. Pakistani authorities rejected claims of involvement, labeling India's accusations as politically motivated. However, India's security agencies presented evidence pointing toward TRF's links with Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba and alleged support from **Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI)**. This deepened the mistrust between the two nations. The diplomatic strain became more visible at the **Shangri-La Dialogue** in Singapore, where Indian and Pakistani representatives exchanged sharp criticisms on the international stage. Indian officials warned that its patience was running out, while Pakistan accused India of using the incident to divert attention from internal issues. This blame game, while predictable, further destabilized any hopes of renewed dialogue. Cross-border skirmishes along the **Line of Control (LoC)** were also reported in the days following the attack, raising fears of escalation. Although both countries are nuclear-armed and aware of the costs of war, the situation remains volatile. The growing influence of proxy terror groups complicates the scenario, as they provide plausible deniability while executing devastating attacks. The Pahalgam attack has thus widened the gulf between the two nations, pushing diplomatic relations to a new low.

The attack was carried out by militants disguised in military-style uniforms, armed with high-powered weapons like M4 carbines and AK-47 rifles. They ambushed a group of unarmed Indian and foreign tourists, killing **26 civilians**, including 25 Indians and one Nepali national. The operation was swift and ruthless, catching the victims and local authorities off guard. The Resistance Front (TRF), a terrorist organization with suspected links to Pakistan-backed Lashkar-e-Taiba, claimed responsibility. After the attack, security forces launched a massive manhunt to track down the militants who fled into surrounding forests. The violence left a deep psychological scar on the people of Kashmir and the entire nation, raising concerns over the security of pilgrims and tourists in the region.

### **3. MAIN THEME OF PAHALGAM ATTACK**

#### **3.1 Destabilization of Peace and Normalcy in Jammu and Kashmir:**

Kashmir has long been a region marked by conflict, but in recent years, there have been efforts by the Indian government to restore normalcy, promote development, and encourage tourism. The Pahalgam attack directly challenged these efforts by violently disrupting a peaceful tourist destination. Such attacks aim to instill fear among the local population and travelers, making people wary of visiting or investing in the region. Historically, militant groups have used terrorism to derail peace talks or political progress,



and the Pahalgam attack was no exception. By striking at the heart of civilian life, the terrorists sought to send a message that peace in Kashmir remains fragile and vulnerable to disruption.

### **3.2 Targeting Tourism and Economic Disruption:**

Tourism is a lifeline for Kashmir's economy, supporting thousands of families through jobs in hospitality, transport, and local businesses. The Amarnath Yatra, in particular, attracts hundreds of thousands of pilgrims annually, contributing significantly to local income. The attack came at a crucial time, intended to discourage pilgrims and tourists from coming, thereby crippling the local economy. Similar strategies have been used before, such as attacks on the Jammu railway station in 2002 and in other tourist hubs like Gulmarg. By hitting tourism, militants aim to create economic instability, which can increase unemployment, poverty, and local dissatisfaction, conditions that can be exploited for further recruitment and unrest.

### **3.3 Undermining Indian Sovereignty in Kashmir:**

Kashmir remains a disputed territory between India and Pakistan, and the region is heavily militarized with both countries claiming sovereignty. By executing a high-profile attack in Pahalgam, militants aimed to demonstrate that India's control is tenuous and can be challenged. Such attacks symbolize defiance against Indian authority and are intended to inspire further militancy. Historically, cross-border infiltration and terrorism have been tools used by Pakistan-backed groups to contest Indian governance. The attack was a reminder that despite heavy security presence, militant networks continue to operate and launch attacks, challenging India's claim of effective control and administration.

### **3.4 Provocation of a Strong Indian Security and Diplomatic Response:**

Militant attacks often aim to provoke an overreaction or escalation. After the Pahalgam attack, India suspended the Indus Waters Treaty and ramped up military presence in Kashmir. While India's response was framed as defensive, it also raised tensions between India and Pakistan. Historically, provocations have led to skirmishes along the Line of Control (LoC) or diplomatic stand-offs, increasing the risk of broader conflict. Terrorist groups benefit from this cycle because heightened conflict keeps the Kashmir issue in the spotlight and hinders any peace process. The Pahalgam attack was a strategic move to exacerbate this cycle of hostility.

### **3.5 Continuation of Proxy Warfare and Cross-Border Terrorism:**

The Pahalgam attack fits into a long pattern of Pakistan-based groups using proxy militants to wage war against India without direct confrontation. Groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammed, and the Resistance Front operate from Pakistan-administered Kashmir or Pakistan itself. This proxy warfare allows plausible deniability for Pakistan while destabilizing Kashmir. Such groups are often trained, funded, and equipped with support from elements within Pakistan's security establishment. The use of proxies complicates

diplomatic efforts and security operations. Historically, proxy terrorism has fueled decades of violence in Kashmir, with the Pahalgam attack being the latest in this pattern.

### **3.6 Instilling Fear Among Civilians and Pilgrims:**

Attacking unarmed civilians has a deep psychological impact, far beyond the immediate loss of life. It shatters the sense of safety and normalcy, causing fear that deters social and economic activities. Targeting tourists and pilgrims maximizes this effect, as these groups are symbolic of peace and coexistence. Terrorist groups use such attacks to spread terror, undermine government claims of security, and reduce public morale. The Pahalgam attack evoked memories of previous massacres like the 2000 Amarnath pilgrimage attack and 2002 Kaluchak massacre, where civilians were deliberately targeted to create fear.

### **3.7 Sabotage of Religious and Cultural Harmony:**

Kashmir's complex religious and cultural tapestry is often exploited by militants to create division and violence. By attacking pilgrims and tourists, the terrorists aimed to disrupt communal harmony and heighten tensions between religious communities. The Amarnath Yatra, being a Hindu pilgrimage in a Muslim-majority region, is sensitive and sometimes politicized. Attacks on such religious events are designed to provoke reactions and deepen divides, making reconciliation harder. Historically, attempts have been made to use religion to fuel separatism and conflict in Kashmir, and the Pahalgam attack was a continuation of that tactic.

### **3.8 Internationalizing the Kashmir Conflict:**

Terrorist attacks like the one in Pahalgam draw global media attention and bring international focus to Kashmir. By doing so, militant groups and their supporters hope to pressure India diplomatically, portraying Kashmir as an unresolved conflict needing external intervention. Pakistan has often sought to highlight Kashmir internationally as a disputed territory where human rights are violated. The attack increased calls from foreign governments for Pakistan to act against terrorism on its soil, but it also complicated India-Pakistan relations on the world stage.





Figure 2 :The First Sketch Of Pahalgam Attack Of Suspets

Table of India’s Security and Diplomatic Responses

Response Type	Action Taken	Date/Period
Military	Increased troop deployment in Kashmir	April 2025 onwards
Diplomatic	Suspension of Indus Waters Treaty	April 2025
Civil preparedness	Launch of Operation Abhyaas	May 2025
International	Global condemnation & support for India	April-May 2025

4. OPERATION SINDOOR

Operation Sindoor is an initiative launched by the Indian government to tackle the deeply entrenched social evil of **dowry harassment and dowry deaths**, primarily targeting the protection of women and promoting gender justice. Dowry-related crimes have been a persistent issue in India, despite legal prohibitions, causing immense suffering to countless women and families. Operation Sindoor represents a concerted effort to curb such practices through coordinated action by law enforcement agencies, social organizations, and government bodies.

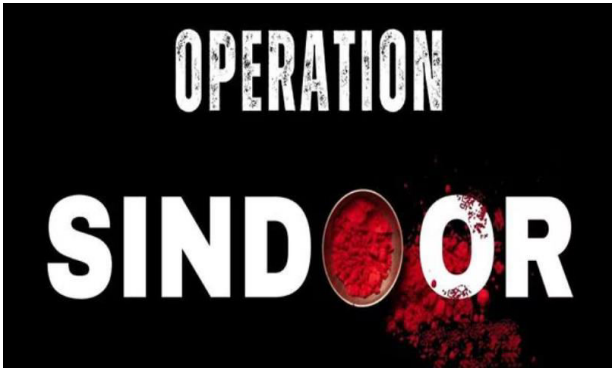


Figure 3: Operation Sindoor

The operation uses a blend of military tactics, intelligence gathering, surveillance, and community engagement. Special forces conduct targeted raids on suspected militant hideouts, while intelligence agencies work on intercepting communications and tracking suspicious movements. Checkpoints and patrols are intensified in vulnerable areas, especially along the Line of Control (LoC).

### **5. Impact and Challenges**

Operation Sindoor has been credited with reducing terrorist activities in certain areas by eliminating key militant leaders and disrupting their networks. It has also helped restore a degree of stability and confidence among local populations.

However, challenges remain significant:

- Militants adapt quickly, using rugged terrain and local sympathizers.
- Civilian safety is always a concern during operations.
- Cross-border infiltration attempts continue despite tightened security.
- Political and social tensions sometimes complicate security efforts.
- Operation Sindoor represents India's determined efforts to tackle terrorism and insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir through a combination of military precision and intelligence-led strategies. While it has achieved notable successes in curbing militant activities, the operation is part of a larger, ongoing struggle for peace and stability in a complex and sensitive region.

### **6. Conclusion**

Operation Sindoor symbolizes India's unwavering commitment to combating terrorism and restoring peace in the troubled region of Jammu and Kashmir. Through coordinated intelligence and military efforts, the operation has successfully weakened militant networks and reduced violence, contributing to greater security and stability. However, the evolving nature of insurgency and geopolitical challenges means that sustained vigilance and adaptive strategies remain essential. Ultimately, Operation Sindoor plays a crucial role in India's broader mission to ensure lasting peace, protect its citizens, and uphold the nation's sovereignty.

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