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Edge of Conflict
Global efforts avert war

South Asian Quagmire
IDF changes rules of engagement

Economy of Pakistan
SBP reports steady recovery

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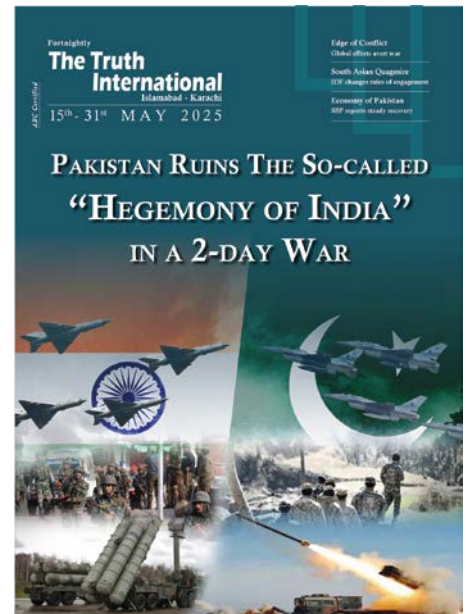
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“Precision and Power: How Pakistan’s Calculated Response Rewrote the Rules of Engagement”



Amid heightened tensions and talk of red lines and surgical strikes, it wasn't rhetoric that pulled the subcontinent back from the edge—it was Pakistan's deliberate, overwhelming, and precise military response. The current ceasefire, now praised by both sides, didn't emerge through diplomacy or goodwill. It was forced into existence by the scale, accuracy, and impact of Pakistan's retaliation. For once, the haze of war cleared just enough to reveal who truly dictated the terms of peace.

Pakistan's actions were neither impulsive nor reactionary. The counterstrike was disciplined and calculated, with a level of precision that left little room for misinterpretation. The targeting of Indian forward positions across the Line of Control was methodical. Despite tight media control within India, leaks from military circles pointed to unexpected casualties, confusion, and—perhaps most revealingly—shock. Shock not at the retaliation itself, but at its scale, coordination, and impact.

This brief but intense military exchange set a new operational benchmark. Global defense analysts will study not

just the strikes, but the clarity of intent, the restraint in execution, and the messaging they carried. Pakistan didn't just respond—it delivered a message with strategic clarity. That message landed.

In New Delhi, the official narrative stayed predictably defiant: no losses, no damage, no retreat. But such emphatic denials only highlighted the reality. Ceasefires are not negotiated from a position of dominance. India reached out behind closed diplomatic channels because it found itself off balance. Pakistan's reply was not merely defensive; it was assertive. It changed the dynamics and compelled recalibration.

One underappreciated consequence was Washington's renewed offer to mediate the Kashmir conflict. For decades, India has resisted third-party involvement. That the United States saw fit to offer, and that India didn't immediately reject it, speaks volumes. The global community witnessed the sequence of events: one nation initiated conflict, and the other replied with a maturity and precision that redefined the regional power narrative.

Now, Pakistan faces a crucial test—one not of arms, but of diplomacy. The military response was measured and effective; the political follow-up, however, lacked cohesion. As India signaled readiness for talks, Pakistan missed a moment to leverage its position: to demand verifiable commitments, or to push for third-party oversight of ceasefire violations. A rare window opened, but political will faltered.

Nonetheless, Pakistan exits this episode with renewed confidence and strategic clarity. It has reinforced deterrence at a time when adventurism dominates policy across the border. More importantly, it has repositioned the Kashmir issue in global conversations—not through appeals to sympathy, but through demonstrations of strength and restraint.

India's misjudgment offered Pakistan more than a military edge—it created a fleeting diplomatic opportunity. But such windows close quickly. The challenge ahead is to transform battlefield advantage into long-term diplomatic capital before the global focus shifts once again.

Pakistan ruins the so-called “hegemony of India” in a 2-day war



By Javed Mahmood

With powerful and unexpected strikes against India, Pakistan has practically ruined the might of India, which used to claim its hegemony and regional superpower. From crashing five fighter jets of India to destroying multiple bases and military bases of India, Pakistan has established its supremacy in the short-lived war against its arch-rival India. Pakistan's attacks were so powerful that India had to beg for a ceasefire by involving the US President Donald Trump, who earlier had said that “the US had nothing to do with the Pakistan-India war”. After seeing Modi and India in serious trouble in the war with Pakistan, Donald Trump quickly convinced Pakistan to a temporary and immediate ceasefire at the request of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

PAF achieves a decisive victory in the war against IAF

In a joint press briefing with Pakistan Army spokesperson Lieutenant General Ahmed Sharif, Air Vice Marshal Aurangzeb announced that the

Pakistan Air Force (PAF) achieved a decisive 6-0 victory over the Indian Air Force (IAF) in a recent military confrontation. Expressing gratitude to Allah for the success, Aurangzeb praised the PAF's readiness and discipline in responding to Indian aggression. “The PAF remained fully alert in both peacetime and conflict, and executed the Air Chief's orders to defend national airspace by engaging hostile elements,” he said.

He detailed the PAF's response, stating that all incoming Indian drones and missiles were promptly detected and tracked. The PAF effectively neutralized these threats through electronic warfare measures—jamming and disrupting drone communications—as well as the selective use of both soft and hard kill strategies. He emphasized that the hard kill tactics were employed judiciously to prevent civilian casualties. Aurangzeb confirmed that the PAF operated at full combat capacity to destroy all hostile drones and successfully intercepted Indian BrahMos missiles before they could impact targets. “These missile strikes posed a grave threat to Pakistan's sovereignty,” he noted.

He also disclosed a critical error by Indian forces, revealing that some missiles launched from Amritsar accidentally struck Indian civilian areas. In contrast, Pakistan's hypersonic missiles, drones, and precision-guided systems accurately hit their designated objectives. Concluding the briefing, Aurangzeb stated that the PAF shot down six Indian aircraft without incurring any losses, with all Pakistani fighter jets remaining operational throughout the encounter.

Modi begged for a ceasefire through Donald Trump: Ishaq Dar

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar has revealed that a phone call from U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio played a crucial role in facilitating a ceasefire between India and Pakistan amid heightened regional tensions. Speaking on the flagship program Rubaroo, Dar disclosed that Rubio informed him that the U.S. had been in contact with Indian officials, who expressed a willingness to agree to

a ceasefire, and urged Pakistan to reciprocate.

Dar stated that he immediately conveyed Pakistan's openness to the proposal, saying the country was "ready with an open heart" to pursue peace. Following this assurance, Rubio again contacted New Delhi, and subsequently confirmed to Islamabad that India had officially agreed to the ceasefire proposal. The Deputy Prime Minister said the U.S. was particularly concerned about the potential for escalation, especially after President Donald Trump made remarks alluding to the possibility of a nuclear conflict in the region. "We will not be bullied by anyone, nor will we try to bully others," Dar emphasized, underlining Pakistan's commitment to peace and regional stability.



He noted that Pakistan's consistent diplomatic posture helped shift the narrative internationally, increasing pressure on India to de-escalate. Dar reiterated that Pakistan was not the initiator of hostilities. "We offered investigations. Had we been guilty, we wouldn't have made such an offer," he said. He highlighted Pakistan's transparency and restraint during the crisis, asserting that "the world saw" the responsible conduct of the Pakistani state.

Condemning India's attempts to assert regional dominance, Dar noted that Western nations had increasingly acknowledged Pakistan's honest approach. "We don't need arrogance or empty boasts. Our record speaks for itself," he said, referencing Pakistan's heavy toll in the war on terror — over 90,000 lives lost and \$150

billion in economic losses. He emphasized that Pakistan remains open to dialogue at any neutral venue, without preconditions.

Meanwhile, Indian media confirmed that New Delhi initiated the ceasefire request. Reports suggested that Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar and NSA Ajit Doval reached out to the U.S. following fears that Pakistan might be preparing its nuclear arsenal. U.S. media outlets such as CNN reported that American intervention followed a series of significant intelligence warnings, countering earlier Indian narratives that suggested unilateral strength. The developments sparked controversy in India, where many initially believed the U.S. acted at Pakistan's request. However, once the truth surfaced, public opinion and anger began shifting towards Modi's regime.

In a dramatic illustration of the media's changing tone, controversial Indian anchor Arnab Goswami reportedly launched a fierce attack on President Trump during a live show, only to soften his stance after receiving a message during a commercial break. With mounting criticism at home, the Modi government is now under fire for allegedly seeking a ceasefire out of fear of Pakistan's nuclear deterrence — a move that contradicts New Delhi's earlier rhetoric of absolute control and strategic dominance.

Pakistan employed GPS jamming technology

Pakistan successfully employed GPS jamming technology to intercept and

neutralize Indian drones attempting to target civilian areas, according to Air Vice Marshal Aurangzeb. Speaking at a joint press conference alongside Director General ISPR Lieutenant General Ahmad Sharif Chaudhry and Vice Admiral Rab Nawaz of the Pakistan Navy, Aurangzeb detailed how Pakistan's radar systems and swift defensive response prevented any damage. He emphasized that Pakistan's air surveillance had been closely tracking the movement of Indian aircraft and drones. The strategic use of advanced jamming technology played a decisive role in thwarting the threats and ensuring civilian safety.

Aurangzeb stated that Pakistan Air Force (PAF) maintained clear dominance in the air conflict, claiming a "6-0" scoreline in favor of Pakistan. All Indian drones and aircraft, he noted, were intercepted before reaching their intended targets, with no major damage reported. He attributed the success to divine support and meticulous military planning, offering gratitude to Allah for the positive outcome. In a related update, Vice Admiral Rab Nawaz confirmed that the Pakistan Navy remained on high alert following what he described as an Indian false flag operation.

Highlighting the PAF's readiness, Aurangzeb said several Indian aircraft were downed, showcasing the strength and effectiveness of Pakistan's air defense systems. He praised Air Chief Marshal Zaheer Ahmad Babar for his strategic leadership, noting that the air force's preparedness reflects a modern and resilient defense posture.

Concluding his remarks, Aurangzeb credited the victory to teamwork, cutting-edge technology, and strong leadership—factors that, he said, helped safeguard Pakistan during a critical and high-risk period.

Pakistan's Warfare Supremacy Over Indian Rafale Jets

Pakistan's Defense Minister Khawaja Asif has made a bold assertion regarding a recent military encounter, claiming that on the night of April 29–30, four Indian Air Force (IAF) Rafale fighter jets were electronically jammed by Pakistani forces near the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir.

According to statements attributed to Asif and circulated via social media platform X, the jets were forced to retreat and conduct emergency landings in Srinagar after losing radar and communication functionality.

Asif stated that the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) deployed Chinese-built Chengdu J-10C fighters equipped with advanced electronic warfare (EW) systems to carry out the operation. These claims, which remain unconfirmed by Indian authorities, have sparked debate among military analysts over the growing influence of Chinese military technology and its potential to challenge Western-designed platforms like the French-made Rafale.

The reported incident occurred amid heightened Indo-Pakistani tensions, following a deadly April 22 terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Kashmir, which killed 26 tourists—mostly Indian nationals. India blamed Pakistan for the attack, a charge Islamabad denied. In the days that followed, cross-border skirmishes and increased air activity along the LoC added to the volatility.

Pakistan's state-run media, including PTV News, reported that Indian Rafales conducting reconnaissance were detected and intercepted by the PAF, prompting their "retreat in panic." Asif's remarks—amplified by outlets such as Clash Report—go further, alleging that the Rafales' sophisticated onboard systems were neutralized by Pakistani EW assets, a potentially significant demonstration of capability if true.

At the center of the claim is the J-10C, a Chinese single-engine multirole fighter introduced into the PAF in March 2022. Powered by the WS-10B turbofan engine, the J-10C can achieve speeds of Mach 1.8 and has a combat radius of over 1,250 miles with external tanks. The aircraft features an active electronically scanned array (AESA) radar, likely a variant of the KLJ-10, and carries an array of modern munitions, including the long-range PL-15 and short-range PL-10 missiles.

Pakistan has acquired at least 25 J-10Cs, explicitly describing the purchase as a counter to India's induction of 36 Rafales. What distinguishes the J-10C in this context is its reported integration of advanced EW systems—believed by defense analysts to be

similar to China's KG300G or KG600 jammers, capable of degrading enemy radar and communications.

These systems may use digital radio frequency memory (DRFM) technology to replicate and manipulate radar signals, potentially overwhelming enemy sensors or creating false targets. If effectively employed, such capabilities could target even advanced systems like the Rafale's SPECTRA suite, one of the most advanced electronic warfare defenses in service.

The Rafale, in service with the IAF since 2020, is a twin-engine, multirole fighter with a top speed of Mach 1.8 and a range of about 2,300 miles. It is equipped with the RBE2 AESA radar and India-specific upgrades, including the ability to deploy the BrahMos cruise missile. Central to its defense is the SPECTRA system—a comprehensive suite that integrates radar warning, jamming, decoys, and active signature cancellation to protect the aircraft from modern threats.



SPECTRA's reputation as a highly resilient system has led some experts to treat Pakistan's claim with skepticism. Successfully disrupting it would require precise coordination and high-powered jamming capability, possibly involving both airborne and ground-based assets. Analysts speculate that Pakistan may have used Chinese-supplied EW platforms to supplement its air-based systems.

The feasibility of this claim depends on numerous factors. While the J-10C is a capable fighter, it lacks the extensive combat experience of the Rafale, which has seen action in Libya, Syria, and Mali.

However, China has invested heavily in electronic warfare, and its systems, such as the KG600, are designed to counter even high-end AESA radars.

If verified, Pakistan's assertion would mark a significant moment in the regional arms race, suggesting that Chinese-origin technology has matured to the point where it can challenge Western-designed platforms. Whether this was an isolated success, a misinterpretation of events, or a broader trend in electronic warfare supremacy remains an open question.

200 Indian Soldiers were killed in Pakistani Strikes, says Minister Rana Tanveer

Federal Minister Rana Tanveer Hussain has made a bold assertion in the wake of the recent Pakistan-India military confrontation, claiming that approximately 200 Indian soldiers were killed during

precision strikes carried out by the Pakistan Army. Speaking to the media during "Youm-e-Tashakur" (Thanksgiving Day) celebrations in Sharaqpur, Hussain hailed Pakistan's military response as both swift and effective. The nationwide observance marked what many in Pakistan are calling a decisive military and diplomatic victory. The day was celebrated with drumbeats, fireworks, and large public gatherings.

Praising the armed forces, Hussain said the Pakistan Army's actions not only defended the country's sovereignty but also delivered a severe blow to Indian forces. "The Indian government, after facing a strong and

coordinated response, was compelled to seek U.S. mediation,” he stated. “Through diplomatic backchannels and the help of friendly nations, the United States conveyed India’s request for a ceasefire to Pakistan.”

He emphasized that Pakistan had demonstrated its military strength and resolve in the face of a larger adversary. “This is a powerful message not only for India’s current leadership but for future generations as well,” he said. “Despite their claims of superiority, they were forced to step back.”

Looking ahead, Hussain hinted at the possibility of peace talks between the two nuclear-armed nations, suggesting that Qatar or the United Arab Emirates (UAE) could serve as potential venues for negotiations. He stressed that genuine dialogue and mutual restraint would be key to achieving lasting peace in the region. Tanveer Hussain also aimed at the Indian media, accusing it of spreading “irresponsible and inflammatory content” that heightened tensions during the crisis. In contrast, he praised Pakistan’s media for maintaining professionalism and sticking to verified information.

The minister’s comments come amid a surge of national pride, with widespread public support for the military and the government’s handling of the situation. Across various cities, citizens expressed a sense of relief and satisfaction, viewing the outcome as a moment of strength that preserved both national dignity and regional stability.

Pakistan Army Crushed Modi’s ‘Akhand Bharat’ Dream

Punjab Information Minister Azma Bokhari delivered a powerful address on Sunday during a thanksgiving event in Shahdara, Lahore, declaring that the Pakistan Army had decisively shattered Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s vision of “Akhand Bharat.”

Speaking to a large and enthusiastic crowd gathered to mark what was widely hailed as a strategic military triumph, Bokhari praised the Pakistan Armed Forces for their vigilance and swift response to what she described as an imminent threat from India.

She asserted that India had planned to target Lahore, but Pakistan’s defence forces—particularly the Pakistan Air Force (PAF)—responded rapidly and forcefully, preventing any escalation. “India intended to strike Lahore, but our Shaheens soared into the skies and made them reconsider,” she declared. Using metaphorical language that drew applause, she added, “Our fighter jets served them breakfast and dinner,” referring to Pakistan’s air operations in response to Indian aggression.

Expressing deep gratitude, Bokhari said the country’s success was a result of divine support and the unwavering spirit of its people. “We thank Allah for protecting our homeland and blessing us with victory,” she stated, underscoring a strong sense of national pride.



She also extended congratulations on behalf of Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, the federal cabinet, and the armed forces. “We salute Chief of Army Staff General Asim Munir, the air chief, and the naval chief for standing firm in defence of our sovereignty,” Bokhari said.

Taking aim at the Indian media, she described its coverage as “angry and distorted,” claiming that the frustration in India was apparent. “They tried to twist the narrative, but the facts spoke for themselves,” she added.

Bokhari’s comments captured the prevailing mood of patriotic celebration and national confidence in Pakistan’s military strength. As cheers erupted from the crowd, the broader message was clear: Pakistan, in the view of its leadership and citizens, had

not only defended its territory but delivered a significant blow to its adversary’s ambitions.

Pakistanis celebrate victory in the war against India

In a powerful display of national unity, citizens across Pakistan took to the streets early Saturday to celebrate what they described as a decisive and calculated response by the armed forces to rising tensions with India. The jubilant atmosphere came after a ceasefire was announced, reportedly following diplomatic intervention by the United States. The celebration erupted in cities like Lahore shortly after Pakistan launched Operation

Bunyan-um-Marsoos, a coordinated military response to India’s earlier offensive, dubbed “Operation Sindoor.” The operation targeted Indian military infrastructure and was described by military officials as a direct retaliation for missile and drone attacks that had caused civilian casualties, including children.

Earlier in the day, Lahore endured its first missile strike of the conflict, with a projectile hitting the Sundar Industrial Estate. According to law enforcement, the missile embedded into the ground without causing casualties. The attack initially drew public criticism over what many saw as a delayed Pakistani response. However, confidence was quickly restored once the Pakistan Army confirmed the launch of a full-scale retaliatory operation.

Crowds gathered in public squares, waving national flags and chanting patriotic slogans such as “Pakistan Zindabad” and “Pakistan Army Paindabad”. Social media platforms were awash with images of military convoys and expressions of public gratitude toward the armed forces. In Lahore, the ruling PML-N organized a major rally on The Mall, where demonstrators praised the military and burned effigies of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, as well as Indian and Israeli flags.

The ceasefire, welcomed by many as a necessary de-escalation between two nuclear-armed neighbors, was seen domestically as a strategic victory. Participants in the rallies called for continued diplomatic efforts, particularly to restore the Indus Waters Treaty and address the status of India-administered Kashmir.

PML-N leaders, including former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, and Punjab Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz, issued messages congratulating the armed forces for their composure and effectiveness under pressure. In public spaces, citizens were seen garlanding army personnel and presenting flowers in appreciation of their service.

The government also moved to restore normalcy. Airports resumed flight operations, and academic institutions began preparing to restart examinations. Students have called on the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Pakistan (ICAP) to withdraw its examination postponement and return to the previously announced schedule.

Meanwhile, Chief Minister Maryam Nawaz approved a Rs2 billion emergency package for security measures and volunteer training across all districts. The funds were released by the home department and made available online by the finance department, with instructions to ensure the availability of essential supplies, including food, medicine, and fuel.

Despite the ceasefire, authorities remain on high alert. The home department has instructed law enforcement, civil defense, and emergency services to maintain heightened vigilance. Citizens have been urged to refrain from sharing images or videos of military movements or installations on social media and to minimize non-essential

travel while adhering to civil defense guidelines.

The broader public mood was one of cautious pride, with social media flooded by memes and commentary mocking what many saw as failed Indian propaganda. Across party lines and societal divisions, Pakistanis came together in a rare moment of solidarity, applauding their military's performance and calling for vigilance on both military and diplomatic fronts.



Pakistan's Stock Market celebrates victory in the war against India

The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) opened Monday with a powerful rally as easing tensions with India and fresh support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) sparked a wave of investor optimism. The benchmark KSE-100 index surged by more than 9% in intra-day trading, prompting a temporary suspension of trading due to market volatility controls. The KSE-100 climbed by an unprecedented 9,928 points, reaching 117,104.11 — up from the previous close of 107,174.63 — marking the largest single-day points gain in PSX history.

This rally was fueled primarily by two key developments: a ceasefire agreement between Pakistan and India, which significantly reduced regional geopolitical risk, and the IMF's approval of critical financial support over the weekend. The IMF cleared a \$1 billion disbursement under the Extend-

ed Fund Facility (EFF), along with \$1.4 billion under the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF), providing a much-needed external financing boost.

Investor sentiment was further buoyed by improving macroeconomic signals. Arif Habib Limited, a leading brokerage, noted that the ceasefire agreement represents a major diplomatic breakthrough after weeks of escalated tensions triggered by the Pahal-gam attack. The ceasefire eased investor

concerns and encouraged renewed buying interest across the board.

Adding to the optimism was U.S. President Donald Trump's recent statement pledging support for resolving the Kashmir conflict and fostering stronger trade relations between India and Pakistan. The brokerage highlighted that Pakistan's exports to the U.S. reached \$4 billion so far in FY25, against imports of \$1.5 billion, resulting in a significant \$2.5 billion trade surplus.

Additionally, the State Bank of Pakistan's recent decision to cut the policy rate by 100 basis points to 11% — reflecting easing inflation — is expected to support equity valuations, especially in interest-rate-sensitive and cyclical sectors. Together, the de-escalation in regional tensions, IMF financial backing, dovish monetary policy, and improved trade dynamics with the U.S. form a strong foundation for market recovery. These developments arrive at a critical time, following a sharp market correction that began in late April amid heightened geopolitical risks.

Edge of Conflict: Global Efforts to Avert War Between India and Pakistan in 2025



By Romana Afsheen

The longstanding rivalry between India and Pakistan has been a defining feature of South Asian geopolitics for over seven decades. The two countries, both nuclear-armed, have engaged in multiple wars and skirmishes since their partition in 1947. However, in April 2025, the escalation of tensions reached new heights following a terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Kashmir, which marked a pivotal moment in the already fragile relations between the two nations. This event would not only trigger military strikes but also prompt urgent calls for international intervention to avert a broader conflict.

The Pahalgam Attack and the Immediate Fallout

On April 22, 2025, a deadly attack rocked Pahalgam, a popular tourist destination in Indian-administered Kashmir. A group of tourists, including foreign nationals, was caught in an ambush by armed militants,

resulting in the deaths of 26 people and the wounding of many more. The brutality of the attack immediately raised tensions between India and Pakistan, with Indian officials accusing Pakistan of harboring militants responsible for the assault. India, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, pointed to Pakistan-based terrorist organizations, claiming that the attack was coordinated from within Pakistan's territory.

In response, the Pakistani government categorically denied any involvement in the attack, labeling the Indian accusations as baseless and inflammatory. Pakistan's Foreign Minister, Shah Mehmood Qureshi, reiterated that Islamabad had no connection to the incident and called for an international investigation into the matter. Nonetheless, India's political leadership, along with its military brass, maintained a resolute stance, asserting that Pakistan must be held accountable for sponsoring terrorism.

India's allegations triggered a surge in

public sentiment and anti-Pakistan rhetoric. The Indian government began ramping up its military readiness, with military commanders discussing retaliatory measures. Within days, the situation took on a decidedly militaristic tone, and both sides began mobilizing their forces, heightening fears of an imminent escalation that could lead to a large-scale war.

India's Military Response: Operation Sindoor

In the wake of the Pahalgam attack, India swiftly responded with military strikes under the code name "Operation Sindoor," aimed at what it described as terrorist camps situated in Pakistan-administered Kashmir. On May 3, 2025, the Indian Air Force launched precision airstrikes targeting nine sites across various regions, including Bahawalpur, Muzaffarabad, and Muridke, areas believed to house militant training camps and infrastructure used by

groups alleged to be responsible for attacks against India.

The strikes were a calculated attempt to send a strong message to Pakistan, signaling that India would not tolerate cross-border terrorism. Official sources from India claimed that the airstrikes resulted in significant damage to militant infrastructure, with over 100 militants reportedly killed. However, Pakistan vehemently denied the existence of any such camps and maintained that the targets hit by India were civilian areas, leading to the loss of innocent lives.

According to the Pakistani military, the airstrikes killed at least 31 civilians, many of whom were women and children. The Pakistani government strongly condemned the strikes as an act of unprovoked aggression, citing the violation of its sovereignty. Pakistan's response came swiftly, with its military firing artillery shells across the Line of Control (LoC), the de facto border separating the two territories in Kashmir. The Pakistani military also claimed to have downed five Indian aircraft during retaliatory operations, marking the first major military exchanges since the 1999 Kargil War.

A Nuclear Flashpoint: Escalating Fears

The exchange of military strikes, missile launches, and artillery shelling raised serious concerns about the potential for full-scale conflict between India and Pakistan. Both nations are nuclear powers, and any large-scale conflict could have catastrophic consequences not just for the subcontinent but for the world at large. The international community was alarmed by the possibility of nuclear escalation and warned both countries to exercise restraint.

The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) convened an emergency session on May 4, 2025, urging both sides to immediately de-escalate tensions. The UNSC called for a return to dialogue and emphasized the importance of avoiding military actions that could lead to uncontrollable consequences. Secretary-General António Guterres also appealed to both countries to exercise restraint and respect international law, particularly the Geneva Conventions governing the conduct of war.

The UNSC's call for peace was echoed by major global powers, who were increasingly concerned that the two countries, both with vast nuclear arsenals, could spiral into a catastrophic war that would destabilize the entire region. The United States, China, and Russia all took active roles in trying to defuse the growing crisis, with each power recognizing the significance of the situation not just from a regional perspective but from a global security standpoint.



Global Reactions and Calls for Restraint

The response from the international community to the escalation between India and Pakistan was swift and widespread. Many countries, including the United States, Russia, and China, issued statements calling for de-escalation and dialogue. The United States, while maintaining its strong ties with India, expressed concern over the potential for a broader conflict and urged both sides to exercise restraint. President Joe Biden, in his remarks on May 5, 2025, reiterated Washington's support for India in its fight against terrorism but also emphasized the importance of avoiding military action that could lead to further civilian casualties.

The United States also offered to mediate between India and Pakistan, suggesting that an international forum could be established to facilitate a peaceful resolution. President Biden's special envoy for South Asia, who was already in the region on a diplomatic visit, was tasked with engaging both governments and exploring possible avenues for de-escalation.

China, another major player with deep interests in the region, also weighed in. China shares strategic partnerships with both India and Pakistan, making it a critical actor in the crisis. Beijing issued a call for peace, urging both sides to avoid military confrontation and seek dialogue. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi expressed concern that the conflict could spiral out of control, with dangerous repercussions not only for South Asia but for global stability.

As a key player in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) alongside India and Pakistan, China underscored its role in seeking a peaceful resolution through multilateral diplomacy.

Russia, which shares historical ties with both India and Pakistan, took a similarly cautious approach. While condemning terrorism in all its forms, Moscow called on both governments to refrain from military escalation. Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov stressed that both countries should consider their nuclear capabilities and the global consequences of a full-scale war, which would be devastating for not only South Asia but the broader international community.

Middle Eastern Responses: Divergent Interests

In the Middle East, reactions to the India-Pakistan crisis were notably divided, reflecting the complex geopolitical dynamics of the region. Saudi Arabia, traditionally a mediator in regional conflicts, took an active role in diplomatic efforts aimed at

de-escalating tensions. Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Adel al-Jubeir made urgent calls to both Indian and Pakistani leaders, urging them to exercise restraint and avoid actions that could trigger a broader regional conflict.

While Saudi Arabia tried to maintain a neutral stance, offering to mediate between India and Pakistan, other regional players were more outspoken. Turkey, a vocal supporter of Pakistan, condemned India's military actions and voiced support for Islamabad's stance. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan expressed solidarity with Pakistan, framing India's airstrikes as an act of aggression and a violation of international law. Turkey called for an immediate halt to military hostilities and urged both sides to engage in peace talks facilitated by neutral parties.



On the other hand, Israel, which shares a strategic relationship with India, openly expressed support for India's actions, condemning the terrorist attack and affirming India's right to defend itself. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu reiterated that terrorism should not be tolerated, and Israel stood by India in its fight against militant groups operating in the region. This statement sparked a diplomatic rift between Israel and Pakistan, with Pakistan accusing Israel of further inflaming the situation by siding with India.

The Role of Civilian Populations and Public Sentiment

As military operations intensified, the civilian populations in both India and

Pakistan bore the brunt of the consequences. In India, the government initiated an emergency preparedness program known as "Operation Abhyaas," which was designed to test the country's readiness for potential warfare. Civilian air defense systems were tested, and mock drills simulating airstrikes were conducted in major cities. The Indian public, largely supportive of the government's response to the attack, nonetheless expressed growing concerns over the possibility of an all-out war with Pakistan.

In Pakistan, there was widespread public concern over the security situation, especially following India's airstrikes. The Pakistani government put the country on high alert, with military presence increasing in major cities. In Islamabad and Lahore, civilians were subjected to power outages

and disruptions as part of security measures, and military checkpoints became a common sight. The public's mood was tense, and many called for diplomatic efforts to avoid further escalation.

The military escalation between India and Pakistan following the Pahalgam attack marked a dangerous juncture in South Asian history. The crisis drew in international actors and underscored the importance of diplomacy in preventing further violence. As both nations prepared for further military actions, the global community, with its collective power and influence, remained crucial in urging restraint and seeking a peaceful resolution.

As tensions lingered, the diplomatic efforts in the coming weeks would determine whether the region could avoid a

catastrophic war or whether the simmering conflict would boil over into full-scale hostilities. The next section of this analysis will delve deeper into the ongoing diplomatic efforts, the role of international organizations, and the prospects for lasting peace between India and Pakistan.

The Path Toward Diplomacy and De-escalation

As the military exchanges between India and Pakistan continued, the international community remained on high alert. Despite the military posturing, both countries understood the catastrophic potential of a full-scale war, particularly with the specter of nuclear weapons looming. The urgent task before world leaders was to find a pathway to de-escalation and prevent a larger, more destructive conflict. In the days following India's airstrikes and Pakistan's retaliatory actions, the global community intensified its diplomatic efforts, culminating in a series of high-level negotiations, interventions, and peace initiatives aimed at averting a catastrophic war in South Asia.

The Role of the United Nations: A Call for Peace

The United Nations (UN), having already issued a call for de-escalation during the initial stages of the conflict, continued to play a pivotal role in brokering dialogue between India and Pakistan. The UN Security Council (UNSC) convened additional emergency sessions to discuss the situation. In these meetings, the representatives of both countries were urged to avoid further military actions and to seek peaceful solutions through dialogue.

On May 7, 2025, UNSC President Lana Nusseibeh of the UAE delivered a strong statement urging both India and Pakistan to adhere to the principles of the UN Charter, particularly the prohibition on the use of force and the importance of resolving disputes through peaceful means. Her remarks were followed by a call for a ceasefire and the immediate restoration of diplomatic channels. The UNSC also expressed grave concern over the humani-

tarian toll of the conflict, particularly the rising number of civilian casualties from military strikes.

The UN Secretary-General António Guterres, who had been in constant contact with both India and Pakistan's leadership, appealed for the establishment of a neutral peacekeeping force along the Line of Control (LoC) to ensure the protection of civilians and maintain a buffer between the two sides. His call for a temporary ceasefire was met with cautious optimism, though both governments expressed their reservations.

In Pakistan, there was a widespread belief that the UN's call for de-escalation reflected the international community's commitment to addressing the root causes of the conflict, namely the disputed status of Kashmir. Pakistani officials viewed the UN's role as crucial not only in ending hostilities but also in facilitating the political dialogue that had long been needed to resolve the Kashmir issue once and for all.

In India, however, there was a sense that the UN's intervention was too late and not sufficiently forceful in condemning Pakistan's alleged sponsorship of terrorism. While India maintained that it was willing to engage in peace talks, the Indian government remained firm in its position that any dialogue must first include Pakistan's renunciation of support for militant groups operating in Kashmir and beyond.

Global Diplomatic Interventions: Major Powers Step In

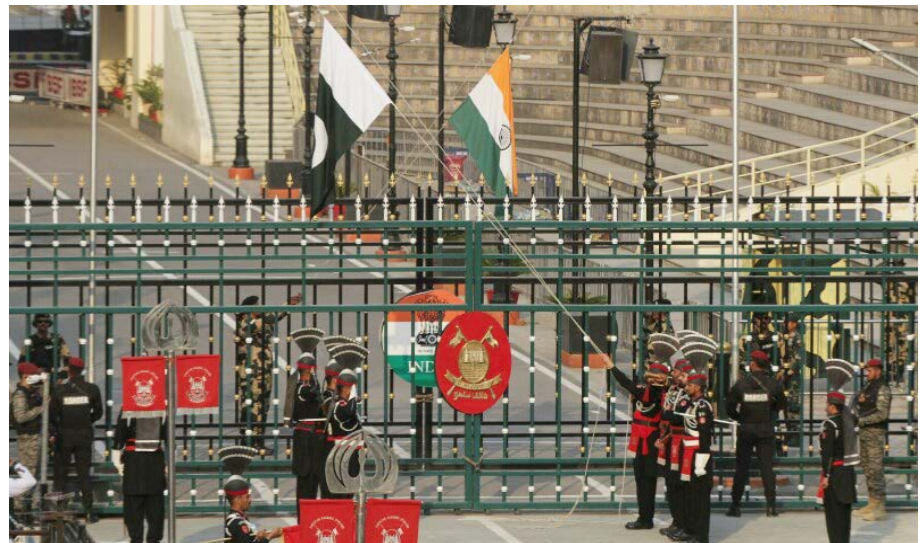
The involvement of key international players, especially the United States, China, and Russia, was crucial in averting an all-out war. Each of these powers had significant interests in South Asia and understood the global ramifications of a nuclear conflict between two of the world's most populous nations.

The United States: The U.S. played an active and balanced role throughout the crisis. President Joe Biden, in his initial statements, voiced strong support for India's right to defend itself against terrorism but quickly added that the situation

must not escalate into a full-scale war. The U.S. administration, recognizing the nuclear risks posed by any further escalation, deployed special envoys to both New Delhi and Islamabad. The diplomatic efforts were led by Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman, who made multiple trips to both capitals to meet with senior leaders and to advocate for immediate de-escalation.

In early May 2025, the U.S. facilitated a backchannel dialogue between Indian and Pakistani diplomats, aiming to create a framework for a ceasefire. While there were significant challenges in the negotiations, particularly around the sensitive issue of Kashmir, the United States made it clear that it would work with both countries to ensure that any conflict was contained and that dialogue could resume.

The U.S. also provided humanitarian aid to civilians affected by the conflict. As reports of civilian casualties began to mount, the U.S. government pledged to deliver food and medical assistance to the region, particularly in areas along the LoC, where both sides had engaged in heavy shelling.



China: China's response was one of cautious diplomacy. As a neighbor to both India and Pakistan and a member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), China understood that a war between India and Pakistan would have grave implications for regional stability. China, maintaining a historically close relationship with Pakistan, sought to mediate behind the scenes. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi called for an immediate cessation of hostilities, stressing

that both countries should avoid the use of force, particularly nuclear weapons.

China also offered to play a constructive role in facilitating peace talks, though its offer was met with mixed reactions. While Pakistan was receptive to China's intervention, India viewed China's involvement with caution, given the long-standing border tensions between India and China. Nonetheless, both India and Pakistan appreciated China's calls for dialogue, and Chinese diplomats played a key role in pushing for a ceasefire agreement.

Russia: Russia, with its historical ties to both India and Pakistan, was another influential actor. Russian President Vladimir Putin voiced deep concern over the growing tensions and spoke with both Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan. Russia offered to host peace talks between the two countries, a proposal that both sides accepted, albeit with reservations. Russia's influence in the region was significant, and its diplomatic efforts helped push both India and Pakistan toward a common

understanding, even if only temporarily.

On May 10, 2025, a series of preliminary talks were held in Moscow, with Russian diplomats facilitating discussions. The talks focused on the terms of a ceasefire and the conditions for further negotiations on Kashmir. While the Moscow talks were far from a breakthrough, they set the stage for a more comprehensive peace process, with both sides agreeing to meet again under Russian mediation.

The Role of Civil Society: Public Pressure for Peace

While governments and international organizations worked behind the scenes to negotiate peace, civil society movements in both India and Pakistan began to mobilize in large numbers, advocating for peace and dialogue. In India, activists, students, and ordinary citizens organized rallies calling for restraint and an end to military action. Some of these movements, including the popular "No War" campaign, gained significant traction on social media platforms and in mainstream media, urging the Indian government to consider the human cost of war.

In Pakistan, similar movements gained momentum. Large-scale protests calling for peace with India were organized in major cities like Islamabad, Karachi, and Lahore. The protests were not only a response to the immediate threat of war but also reflected growing disillusionment with the cycles of violence and war between the two nations. Prominent Pakistani peace activists, such as Asma Jahangir's Foundation and the Citizens' Peace Committee, worked tirelessly to raise awareness of the importance of diplomacy and dialogue. These grassroots efforts played a significant role in influencing public opinion in both countries. While the governments of India and Pakistan were still engaged in tense negotiations, the civilian pressure for peace grew louder, forcing political leaders to reconsider the cost of continued military conflict.

The Ceasefire Agreement: A Fragile Peace

By May 12, 2025, after weeks of intense diplomatic negotiations, a fragile ceasefire agreement was reached.

The agreement, brokered by the United States, Russia, and China, called for an immediate halt to military operations along the Line of Control (LoC). Both India and Pakistan agreed to the deployment of a UN peacekeeping force along the LoC to monitor the ceasefire and ensure the protection of civilians.

The ceasefire, while a significant achievement, was only a temporary measure. The agreement called for further talks to address the underlying issues between the two countries, particularly the Kashmir dispute. The international community, particularly the United States, pledged continued support for these peace efforts, emphasizing that the resolution of the Kashmir issue must be pursued through dialogue, not force.

While the ceasefire held, the question of Kashmir remained unresolved. Both countries, though publicly expressing commitment to the peace process, knew that the path forward would not be easy. However, the diplomatic breakthrough marked a significant turning point in the crisis, and it was hoped that further negotiations could pave the way for a more lasting peace.

Conclusion: A World Awaiting Stability

The escalation between India and Pakistan in 2025, though terrifying and fraught with peril, ultimately underscored the importance of international diplomacy, civil society activism, and multilateral engagement in averting disaster. As tensions gradually eased, the world witnessed the critical role of global powers in preventing a catastrophic war, with each country contributing to the efforts to restore peace in South Asia.

The crisis was a stark reminder of the precarious nature of peace in regions with unresolved territorial disputes and nuclear capabilities. While a fragile peace had been achieved, the road to lasting stability remained fraught with challenges. The future of India-Pakistan relations, and the potential for a lasting resolution to the Kashmir dispute, would depend on the continued commitment to dialogue, mutual understanding, and restraint.

In the wake of the crisis, the international community remained vigilant, understanding that the lessons of 2025 were far-reaching. South Asia, once again, had narrowly avoided the specter of war, but the struggle for peace in the region was far from over.

The coming years would determine whether the fragile ceasefire would pave the way for a comprehensive peace agreement or whether the threat of renewed conflict would continue to loom over the subcontinent.



India-Pakistan Hostilities Escalate: Airstrikes, Retaliation, and Rising Fears of War



By Kanwal Munir

Introduction

The already-tense relationship between South Asia's nuclear neighbors, India and Pakistan, plunged into a new phase of hostility following an unprecedented military escalation in the early hours of May 7, 2025. In a surprise pre-dawn operation dubbed Operation Sindoor, Indian forces launched multiple airstrikes into Pakistani territory, claiming to have hit terrorist infrastructure connected to the April 22 Pahalgam attack that killed 26 civilians in Indian-administered Kashmir. Pakistan, however, has forcefully denied these claims, stating the Indian strikes targeted civilian locations, including mosques and villages, killing at least eight civilians and wounding over 35 more.

The exchange, which also saw heavy cross-border artillery fire along the Line of Control (LoC), marks the worst military confrontation between the two nations in over two decades. It has already drawn global concern and calls for restraint from the United Nations, United States, China, and others. With diplomatic lines strained and both militaries on high alert, the region faces the gravest risk of open war since the 1999 Kargil conflict.

Why It Happened: The Pahalgam Attack and Rising Tensions

The roots of the escalation lie in the Pahalgam terrorist attack of April 22, 2025. In one of the deadliest acts of terror in Kashmir in recent years, unidentified gunmen opened fire on a tourist group in Pahalgam, killing 26 Hindu pilgrims and injuring dozens more. India blamed the attack on Pakistan-based militants, accusing Islamabad of providing sanctuary and logistical support to extremist networks.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who cut short an official trip abroad, held an emergency security meeting within hours of the incident. Senior officials, including National Security Advisor Ajit Doval, reportedly pushed for decisive military retaliation. According to Indian media, intelligence intercepted by Indian agencies pointed to follow-up plots being hatched by the same network in Pakistan. Operation Sindoor, named after the vermilion worn by married Hindu women (a symbolic nod to the widows created by the Pahalgam attack), was greenlit and executed with strategic precision, Indian officials said.

What Happened? The Night of the Strikes

According to official Indian sources, the military operation that sparked the latest hostilities began in the early hours of May 7. The Indian Air Force reportedly deployed precision-guided munitions and long-range missiles, launching strikes against nine identified locations across the border—five in Pakistan's Punjab province and four in Pakistan-administered Kashmir.

Indian authorities assert that these strikes were aimed at terrorist infrastructure. In a press briefing, Indian Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri stated that the targeted sites were training camps operated by Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), two banned militant organizations that India accuses of orchestrating cross-border terrorism. Misri claimed that intelligence confirmed these camps were actively involved in preparing militants for attacks, including the April 22 massacre in Pahalgam, which left dozens of civilians and paramilitary personnel dead.

However, Pakistan has presented a starkly

different version of events. Lt. Gen. Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, the spokesperson for the Pakistan Armed Forces, vehemently rejected India's claims, insisting that the strikes were not on militant hideouts but rather on civilian areas. He stated that six civilian locations were hit, including schools, mosques, and residential buildings in Ahmedpur East, Muzaffarabad, and Kotli. Lt. Gen. Chaudhry condemned the operation as a "blatant act of war" and vowed that Pakistan would retaliate "at a time and place of our choosing."

Pakistan's Response: Civilian Tragedy and Military Retaliation

Pakistani authorities have strongly rejected India's allegations of involvement in the recent Pahalgam massacre, insisting that the country had no links to the attackers. In a firmly worded statement, Pakistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs dismissed New Delhi's justification for the strikes as fabricated and politically motivated. The ministry further emphasized that no evidence had been shared through diplomatic or intelligence channels to substantiate the Indian claims. Rather than targeting militant infrastructure, Islamabad alleges that Indian forces intentionally struck civilian areas, resulting in significant loss of innocent life and damage to non-military infrastructure.

According to Pakistani officials, the following sites were hit during the early-morning raids:

In Ahmedpur East, located in the Bahawalpur region of Punjab, Indian airstrikes allegedly struck a mosque compound. Five civilians were killed in the attack, including a three-year-old girl, while over 30 others sustained injuries. Many of the wounded were women and children, prompting local officials to condemn the attack as a deliberate targeting of non-combatants.

In Muzaffarabad and Kotli, both situated in Azad Jammu and Kashmir, two separate missile strikes reportedly destroyed mosques during morning prayers. Among the casualties were a 16-year-old girl and an 18-year-old boy. Several others suffered injuries, and the destruction of the religious sites has further inflamed public outrage

across the region.

Although no fatalities were reported in the cities of Sialkot and Muridke, Pakistani authorities noted that marketplaces and residential neighborhoods were partially destroyed, with extensive structural damage to commercial and private property.

Pakistan's military spokesperson, Lt. Gen. Ahmed Sharif Chaudhry, stated that air defense units responded swiftly to the Indian incursion, intercepting and shooting down several Indian aircraft. While these claims have yet to be independently verified by international observers, Pakistan's state-run media aired footage purportedly showing the wreckage of a downed Indian Su-30 fighter jet. The video featured fragments of metal debris with markings claimed to belong to the Indian Air Force.

India, however, has firmly denied these reports. The Indian Air Force dismissed the footage as staged and labeled the claims as a fabricated propaganda attempt. The Indian Ministry of Defence has so far refrained from issuing a detailed comment, citing the sensitivity of ongoing military operations and the need for internal review.

The sharply conflicting accounts coming from both sides highlight the deepening information war accompanying the military escalation. With growing casualties and heightened regional instability, international observers remain deeply concerned about the prospects of a wider confrontation.

Exchanges Along the Line of Control

In the hours following the initial airstrikes, hostilities rapidly intensified along the Line of Control (LoC), with both Indian and Pakistani forces engaging in heavy artillery and mortar exchanges. Pakistani military sources reported that their retaliatory shelling targeted Indian military installations in Indian-administered Kashmir, resulting in the deaths of 10 civilians and injuries to 48 others. Local officials in the region described the bombardment as sustained and widespread, affecting several border villages.

On the other side, Indian authorities

claimed that seven of their civilians were killed and at least 35 others were wounded in artillery fire originating from Pakistani positions. The Indian Ministry of Defence described the shelling as anticipated in light of the cross-border tensions and confirmed that defensive measures and return fire had been initiated.

Pakistan, however, dismissed India's narrative, asserting that its response was proportional and limited to defending its territory against what it labeled as unprovoked Indian aggression.

Official Statements and Media Briefings

India's Stand

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri held a press conference in New Delhi, emphasizing that India acted out of "necessity and self-defense." He said, "We had credible, verified intelligence that further attacks were being plotted from Pakistani soil. Operation Sindoor neutralized those threats before they could materialize."

India also emphasized that "every effort was made to avoid civilian casualties," claiming the strikes were surgical and based on satellite intelligence. The Indian military released drone footage allegedly showing armed militants entering and exiting the targeted compounds in the days before the attack.

Prime Minister Modi tweeted, "We will not tolerate terrorism. India stands united in defense of her people."

Pakistan's Rebuttal

In a fiery address, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif accused India of "naked aggression" and warned that "Pakistan's patience must not be mistaken for weakness." He summoned an emergency session of the National Security Committee (NSC) and raised the matter with the UN Security Council.

Foreign Minister Ishaq Dar stated, "The world must see that India is provoking a full-scale war under false pretexts. We are prepared to defend every inch of our territory."

Pakistan also offered a joint investigation

into the Pahalgam attack, which India promptly rejected.

Casualties and Damage: Conflicting Accounts

Indian Military Casualties and Aircraft Losses

On the Indian side, official and media sources reported that at least 10 Indian military personnel were killed in Pakistani retaliatory strikes, particularly in the Poonch sector of Jammu and Kashmir. More than 35 Indian soldiers were reportedly injured due to artillery shelling and airstrikes on forward positions and military infrastructure.

India has also claimed significant aircraft losses, although these reports are disputed. Indian sources indicate the downing of:

- 3 Rafale fighter jets, shot down over Bathinda and Awantipora
- 1 MiG-29, downed near the Akhnoor sector
- 1 Sukhoi Su-30, allegedly struck during a patrol
- 1 Indian surveillance drone, reportedly neutralized over the Barnala sector

Though Indian authorities have not confirmed all these losses, they have acknowledged “operational setbacks” and are reportedly conducting internal assessments. The Indian Air Force dismissed footage of debris circulated by Pakistan as “staged propaganda”.

Pakistani Civilian Casualties

On the Pakistani side, initial reports suggested 26 civilian fatalities across Punjab and Azad Jammu and Kashmir, though the official number was revised to eight confirmed deaths, with 35 people injured. Pakistani authorities assert that no military targets were hit and that the casualties were purely civilian, occurring in mosques, schools, and residential areas in Ahmedpur East, Muzaffarabad, and Kotli.

Casualties Along the Kashmir LoC Zone

In the Kashmir LoC zone, artillery

exchanges have resulted in civilian deaths on both sides. According to Pakistani sources, 7 to 10 civilians were killed and over 40 injured due to Indian artillery fire targeting villages in the Neelum Valley, Leepa, and Tattapani areas. On the Indian side, 10 civilians were killed, and over 48 others were wounded, particularly in Poonch, Rajouri, and Kupwara.

Accusations of Targeting Civilians

Both India and Pakistan have accused each other of intentionally targeting civilian populations, complicating efforts to independently verify the full extent of the losses. The continued military escalation raises concerns about further civilian casualties, and international observers have urged both sides to engage in dialogue to prevent further bloodshed.



Global Reaction: Concern, Condemnation, and Calls for Calm

United States

President Donald Trump, speaking to reporters in New York, expressed concern over the escalating violence, stating, "It's a shame. I hope it ends very quickly. We've seen enough bloodshed in that region." His comments highlighted the growing international alarm over the intensifying conflict between India and Pakistan.

Secretary of State Marco Rubio confirmed that U.S. national security officials were in contact with both Indian and Pakistani

counterparts, urging both nations to engage in dialogue and show restraint to avoid further escalation. The United States has emphasized its interest in de-escalation, though it has refrained from taking sides in the dispute.

United Nations

UN Secretary-General António Guterres called for “maximum restraint” from both India and Pakistan, stressing the importance of avoiding further bloodshed and instability. Guterres also dispatched a fact-finding mission to Pakistan-administered Kashmir to assess the damage caused by the airstrikes and artillery exchanges.

In addition to diplomatic pressure, Pakistan formally filed a complaint with the UN Security Council, accusing India of violating international law and Pakistan's

sovereignty. This move has raised the stakes of the conflict, bringing it to the attention of the international body tasked with maintaining global peace and security.

China

China, a traditional ally of Pakistan, expressed “grave concern” over the developments. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin urged both India and Pakistan to remain calm and avoid further escalation, underlining China's interest in maintaining peace in the region. As a close strategic partner of Pakistan, China has consistently called for restraint, though it has been careful to avoid taking an overtly confrontational stance against India.

Russia & Japan

Both Russia and Japan issued near-identical statements calling for de-escalation and advocating for peace in the region. Russia, which has a close relationship with India, and Japan, a key ally of the United States, emphasized the importance of regional stability and warned against the dangers of retaliation spiraling into a larger war. Japan notably condemned the Pahalgam attack but expressed concern that further military action could lead to catastrophic consequences.

conflict. This led to significant travel disruptions, with passengers facing cancellations, delays, and alternative flight arrangements.

Stock Market Reactions:

The financial markets in Mumbai and Karachi saw sharp declines in stock values, reflecting investor fears of prolonged instability. Defense stocks in particular took a hit as concerns over the potential for further escalation of military actions weighed heavily on market sentiment.



Israel

Israel took a clear stance in favor of India. Ambassador Naor Gilon voiced strong support for India's right to self-defense, stating, "There is no place in the world for terrorists. India has every right to defend its people." This statement reflects Israel's consistent policy of supporting nations facing terrorist threats, as well as its close ties with India, particularly in defense and intelligence cooperation.

Tourism stocks also suffered due to the impact on regional travel and tourism.

Surge in Oil Prices:

Oil prices surged amid mounting concerns about broader regional instability. The conflict raised fears that it could disrupt oil supply routes in the region, particularly through the Strait of Hormuz and the broader Middle East. This caused an uptick in global oil prices, adding pressure on economies worldwide.

Currency Depreciation:

Both the Indian rupee and the Pakistani rupee fell sharply in international currency markets, reflecting the economic uncertainty surrounding the conflict. The depreciation led to concerns about rising inflation and further financial instability in both countries.

Central Bank Interventions:

In response to the rapid depreciation of their currencies, both the Reserve Bank of

India and the State Bank of Pakistan took emergency stabilization measures. These included interventions in the foreign exchange markets to stabilize the value of their respective currencies and prevent further economic fallout from the escalating military situation.

What's Next? Diplomacy, De-escalation, or Wider War?

The trajectory of the conflict remains dangerously uncertain. While India described its action as "measured and non-escalatory," Pakistan views it as a declaration of war. Analysts warn that both nations now find themselves caught in a dangerous tit-for-tat dynamic.

Retired Indian General H.S. Panag stated in an interview with NDTV, "We've crossed the line. Pakistan will respond—it must, for political reasons. The next 72 hours are critical."

Pakistani defense analyst Ayesha Siddiqua echoed the sentiment, warning, "This is no longer a skirmish. It's a confrontation that could spiral if cool heads don't prevail."

Behind the scenes, diplomatic backchannels remain active. Sources suggest that the U.S. National Security Council is trying to broker a backdoor ceasefire, while the UN, China, and Russia are urging both capitals to hold emergency talks.

Conclusion

The events of May 7, 2025, mark a chilling escalation in the long-running and deeply rooted conflict between India and Pakistan. Sparked by a brutal terror attack and fueled by decades of mistrust, the current confrontation has taken both countries, and the region, into uncharted and perilous territory.

With nuclear arsenals in play, a long-standing territorial dispute over Kashmir, and a deadly new cycle of violence underway, the eyes of the world now rest heavily on New Delhi and Islamabad. Whether they step back from the brink—or slide further into conflict—will determine not only the fate of millions in South Asia but the future of global peace.

Economic and Civil Fallout

The conflict's impact extended beyond the battlefield:

Airline Cancellations and Rerouting:

Several international airlines, including Air India, Qatar Airways, and Etihad Airways, were forced to cancel or reroute flights over northern India and Pakistan due to airspace closures as a result of the escalating

The South Asian Quagmire

IDF Changes the rules of engagement



By Naqi Akbar

At the time of publishing the analysis, there are fair chances that the military tensions between India and Pakistan might have transformed into a full-blown conflict or degenerated into a biting attrition, eating away resources of both the economies and attention of the public discourse. Whatever might be witnessed in the coming days, there are a few takeaways that cannot be ignored for the sake of analysis and learning as a humble student of geopolitics and strategy.

When the Pahalgam crisis erupted, the general public in India and Pakistan thought over that the incident will follow the trajectory which will be similar to that of Pulwama in 2019. There will be the beating of the drums of war, followed by limited strikes and then an artificially brokered peace by some international stakeholder.

The Pahalgam incident seems to be developing on an entirely different trajectory. To begin with, the otherwise interventionist US administration has clearly stated

that the two neighbors need to sit together and sort out things. That has been said by the President of the United States Trump, and again by the vice president Vance. If there has been voices of restraint, they have been faint and not pressing. A bland diplomatic interpretation of the response can be that USA is apparently concerned over conflict in South Asia. A deeper and between the lines look at the responses reveals another story.

Going back, in 1971, Pakistan was in the CENTO and SEATO camp and the military administration was close to the Nixon administration. Despite all the closeness and promises of intervention through the aircraft carriers, the US preferred to stand idle and allow the events to take their turn as they were. At that time Pakistan was faced with an insurgent situation in East Pakistan and India was looking for intervention since the summers; and was held back only due to the advice of ace military commander Manekshaw; to wait till the winters set in. Pakistani

establishment regrettably failed to read between the lines and what happened is history. Move to 1990, in an audience with US ambassador to Iraq, Ms. April, Saddam suggestively toyed the idea of invading Kuwait. Over which the US top diplomat in Baghdad said that US has no particular opinion on that. Taking it as an acceptance of Iraq stance, the Baathist government invaded Kuwait. What happened next for 13 years is well documented. Fast forward to Syria in December 2014. The United States preferred to concentrate on IDF and allowed the events to take turn as Turkey wanted it in league with the IDF. As things stand, the US role is diminishing there and IDF and Turkey seems to be joining forces to make things work.

The diplomatic lessons derived point out to the fact that if the big powers like United States look the other way it means that they want the dominant player to act out as they deem fit. Probing deeper into the issue, the August 5, 2019 removal of Article 370 of the Indian constitution meant that India

did away with the special status to the Kashmir valley. The silence on part of Pakistan also suggested to the USA and India that they can go ahead with their plans on the later dates. Practically the removal of 370 meant that the rest of Kashmir means AJK is open bet for the Indians or for that matter the world opinion, given the fact that the Pakistani establishment silently accepted that arrangement.

The current made up conflict and the continuation of “Sindoor” suggests that the hitting of targets across Pakistan based on obsolete intelligence were only the pretext for something bigger and that bigger thing has been designed on the experiences derived by the IDF in the one-and-a-half-year long conflict in Gaza.

To begin with the conflict as it is advancing has been unconventional when compared to the earlier ones. Even the red lines set by the Indian military establishment has been crossed by the current Indian leadership. The Golden Temple debacle forced the Indian establishment to fine tune the art of restraint. In 1993, the Hazrat Bal incident was painstakingly managed without any loss of sanctity and life. In other instances, the civilian sensitivities were taken care of.

The relentless attack's on purely civilian targets like Mosques and hostels signal a radical shift on part of Indians imitating the IDF experiences in Gaza and against Hezbollah in Lebanon. In both the cases the IDF did not differentiate between the civilian and military red lines and went about with its relentless campaign. The pre-dawn Indian strikes seem to mimic the IDF strategy. If that mimicking was not enough IDF manufactured hardware was unleashed the other day across Pakistan, not realizing that there is a difference of forces line up when Hezbollah, Hamas and the military machine of a nation state like Pakistan is compared.

Having discussed the changes in the strategy on part of the Indians, it is not a concern among few analysts that the global intention formalized in the form of Indian designs is to do away with the Kashmiri issue, God forbid on the same patterns as was the decapitation of Hamas and destruction of Gaza. It can be safely concluded in that context that the ‘terror alarm’ over long archived outfits are only a pretext for a much bigger design. Pushing for a bigger conflict on part of India is not the brainchild of a rabid Indian anchor like Arnab Goswami and his like, rather a well thought out strategy.

The big powers reluctance to jump into the quagmire and state that the regional powers fend for themselves means that they like the dominant power to decide on its own what needs to be done. Back home, it is imperative that the diplomatic dependence on United States on the pattern of 1971 is given a second thought and the decades old log books of diplomacy are questioned and strategies revisited.

If the United States and the world at large still intervenes, it will be a good development; however, if the 1971 looking the other way policy takes precedence in vital world capitals, then Pakistan needs to review its overall strategy to deal with the crisis. As the Indian Defence Minister has made it clear that “Sindoor” is still on; means testing the patience as well as air defence coverage of Pakistan, it squarely means the nation state of Pakistan is at stake.

Towards that end, the public opinion might be educated on much serious lines than the much jingoistic approach to the matters at hand. What looks like a small shooting match God forbid may not spiral into a bigger conflict, on the faulty premise that this again might be business as usual.



Echoes in the Fog: The 2025 India-Pakistan War of Shadows, Strategy, and Perception



By Kainaat Asad

The India-Pakistan rivalry has shaped the geopolitics of South Asia since the 1947 partition, with Kashmir at its heart. While tensions have ebbed and flowed, 2025 marked a critical new chapter one shaped not only by military confrontation but also by high-stakes diplomacy, cyber warfare, and modern propaganda. The brief but intense conflict that erupted between the two nuclear powers that year did not culminate in a decisive victory on the battlefield. Instead, it ended in a haze of ambiguity, speculation, and competing narratives. India claimed it had achieved its targeted strategic goals, while Pakistan highlighted its successful demonstration of cutting-edge military and technological capabilities. As misinformation clouded facts, public perception diverged sharply. This analysis seeks to untangle that complex web critically evaluating what each country gained, what was lost, and whether anyone truly won.

Prelude to the Storm: Setting the Stage

By early 2025, the subcontinent was already simmering. Skirmishes along the

Line of Control (LoC) had increased, diplomatic relations were strained, and both governments were under domestic political pressure. India, driven by a government seeking to consolidate its nationalist credentials before upcoming state elections, had adopted an increasingly assertive posture regarding Kashmir. Pakistan, recovering from economic setbacks but armed with new Chinese-backed military technology, had vowed to respond forcefully to any violation of its territorial claims.

A series of provocations—including the downing of an Indian drone, the arrest of alleged Pakistani spies, and cross-border artillery exchanges—set the tone for escalation. But the spark came in March 2025, when a terrorist attack in Indian-administered Kashmir killed over 40 paramilitary personnel. India blamed Pakistani-based militants and responded with targeted airstrikes deep into Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK), a move reminiscent of the Balakot strikes in 2019. This time, however, Pakistan retaliated immediately—not just with conventional force but through cyber attacks and long-range drone strikes, marking a new kind of warfare.

India's Strategic Objectives: Limited War, Political Leverage

From the outset, India's goals were clear and limited. Rather than wage a prolonged campaign, Indian forces sought to swiftly degrade militant infrastructure in PoK, reinforce its control over Jammu and Kashmir, and send a political message both domestically and internationally.

India's military conducted high-precision airstrikes and cross-border commando operations targeting camps it alleged were being used by terrorist groups like Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba. Unlike past conflicts, India avoided civilian areas and emphasized surgical precision. Indian media was immediately mobilized to showcase these operations as proof of the country's ability to strike decisively and unilaterally.

Domestically, the ruling party used the conflict to galvanize nationalist support. In a polarized political environment, the government's narrative of strength and sovereignty played well, helping shift focus

from economic challenges and governance issues. The military response was timed closely with state elections, allowing political capital to be extracted from the perception of tactical success.

Internationally, India framed the strikes as an anti-terrorist operation rather than a war with Pakistan. Through its allies in the Quad—particularly the United States and Australia—India gained diplomatic cover for its actions. Western powers, while urging restraint, broadly endorsed India's right to self-defense, signaling a growing strategic tilt toward New Delhi in global diplomacy.



From a purely strategic point of view, India achieved what it set out to do: inflict targeted damage, avoid escalation into full-scale war, and reinforce its position in Kashmir. Yet, beneath the triumphal rhetoric lay unresolved questions: Had the militant threat really been neutralized? Had India strengthened long-term security or simply delayed inevitable retaliation?

Pakistan's Technological Posture: Deterrence and Demonstration

While India celebrated quick tactical wins, Pakistan approached the 2025 conflict with a different set of goals. Knowing that a conventional war with India would be risky and costly, Pakistan aimed instead to showcase its evolving deterrence capability—particularly in drone technology, electronic warfare, and cyber operations. The goal was not to hold territory or retaliate symmetrically, but to demonstrate that

Pakistan could defend itself and inflict serious costs even with asymmetrical tools.

In this regard, Pakistan succeeded. Within days of India's initial strikes, Pakistan launched a coordinated drone and cyber offensive. Advanced drone swarms targeted Indian military supply lines and radar stations. Simultaneously, Pakistan's cyber units crippled banking systems in parts of northern India, and briefly knocked out satellite communication in sensitive border zones. These actions disrupted Indian logistics without escalating into widespread civilian casualties, earning Pakistan praise

among some neutral observers for its “measured yet modern” response.

Perhaps most consequential was Pakistan's communication to the international community. Through press briefings, satellite imagery, and diplomatic channels, it sought to portray India's actions as reckless and destabilizing. It reminded the world that both nations were nuclear-armed and accused India of violating international norms. Though this narrative did not completely override India's diplomatic momentum, it resonated in China, Turkey, Iran, and parts of the Muslim world, where Pakistan was seen as the aggrieved party forced to defend itself. Technologically, Pakistan demonstrated that it was no longer reliant solely on conventional forces. Its use of indigenously developed UAVs, electronic jamming systems, and deepfake counter-propaganda showed a country evolving into the domain of hybrid warfare where influence and disruption matter as much as tanks and jets.

The War of Narratives: Propaganda, Disinformation, and Ambiguity

The fog of war in 2025 was unlike any previous India-Pakistan conflict. While tanks rumbled and jets soared, another war played out in cyberspace, on television, and across social media platforms. Here, the lines between truth, spin, and outright fiction blurred dangerously.

Both India and Pakistan waged sophisticated information warfare campaigns. News channels broadcasted exaggerated claims, often based on unverified sources. Viral videos of alleged strikes—some real, some AI-generated—flooded the internet. Deepfake videos misattributing political statements to leaders circulated widely, fueling public anger and confusion. Twitter bots and troll farms, many state-sponsored, dominated discourse with hashtags like #IndiaStrikesBack and #PakistanDefends.

Within this narrative chaos, a new kind of ambiguity took root. The world struggled to discern what had truly happened. Did India really eliminate high-value terrorist targets? Was Pakistan's cyberattack as far-reaching as it claimed? Even independent media and international observers found themselves relying on satellite imagery and leaked intelligence often incomplete or doctored.

This war of perceptions created a climate where each side could claim victory regardless of facts. For Indian audiences, the government's version—swift strikes, minimal casualties, and diplomatic support—was seen as evidence of a matured, muscular India. For Pakistanis, the emphasis on deterrence, resilience, and technological parity reinforced national pride. In reality, the situation was more complex: casualties were higher than reported, neither side achieved a strategic shift, and the potential for further conflict remained dangerously alive.

International Responses and Regional Consequences

The 2025 conflict sparked urgent reactions from global powers, though most stopped

short of intervention. The United States, wary of antagonizing either side, called for de-escalation but avoided assigning blame. Russia urged both countries to resume dialogue, while the European Union offered to mediate peace talks. China, while not overtly aggressive, used the opportunity to strengthen its support for Pakistan, including covert arms shipments and economic assistance.

The United Nations Security Council convened in an emergency session, but as in past conflicts, its resolutions were non-binding and largely symbolic. However, what was different in 2025 was the clear recognition that future Indo-Pak conflicts would no longer be fought solely on battlefields. The integration of cyber warfare, information operations, and autonomous weapons systems marked a shift in regional security architecture.

In South Asia, smaller countries like Nepal, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka watched nervously, aware that any prolonged conflict would destabilize the region. Afghanistan, still grappling with internal turmoil, became a potential flashpoint for proxy engagements.

The most critical fallout was on the Kashmir issue itself. Far from resolving anything, the conflict hardened positions on both sides. India doubled down on its administrative control of Jammu and Kashmir, implementing new surveillance and demographic policies. Pakistan, meanwhile, internationalized the issue further, lobbying at forums like the OIC and forming new strategic pacts with Turkey and Iran. Thus, the 2025 conflict left Kashmir not as a solved issue but as an even more volatile powder keg.

Ambiguous Endings: Ceasefire Without Closure

Despite the intensity of military and cyber engagements, the 2025 conflict ended as abruptly as it began. A backchannel ceasefire agreement was brokered with help from the UAE and the UN. Neither side publicly disclosed terms. No treaties were signed. There was no clear victor. Yet, both governments declared success.

This ambiguous ending gave each country room to maneuver domestically. India claimed that its strategic objectives had been met without triggering a full-scale war. Pakistan presented the ceasefire as evidence that it had deterred India through credible threats and modern military capabilities.

Yet the costs were real. Dozens of soldiers died. Civilians in Kashmir, on both sides, endured blackouts, shortages, and trauma. Economic markets in both countries suffered dips. International airlines rerouted flights away from the region. And perhaps most worryingly, the conflict had brought the two nuclear powers to the brink once more—only to walk back into a haze of incomplete information and unhealed tensions.



Critical Evaluation: Who Really Won the 2025 War?

Assessing the outcome of the 2025 conflict requires moving beyond surface-level narratives. India did achieve several short-term goals: it neutralized specific targets, reinforced its political position, and maintained favorable international optics. Pakistan, meanwhile, proved that it could counter with agility, technological edge, and credible deterrence, thereby preventing a rout.

But this dual achievement obscures a more unsettling truth: the war's ambiguity left both countries locked in a deeper cycle of mistrust. Rather than resolving differences, it entrenched them. The use of modern

technologies—from cyber tools to disinformation blurred the line between tactical success and strategic paralysis. Each country won its own version of the war, but neither won peace.

Victory in modern conflict is no longer about land or surrenders—it is about shaping perceptions, avoiding catastrophic losses, and recalibrating future deterrence. In this sense, both India and Pakistan secured tactical validation. Yet, the ambiguous ending, laced with misinformation and mutual suspicion, ensured that the shadow of future conflict looms large.

Conclusion: A Dangerous Balance

The 2025 conflict between India and

Pakistan represents a new template for 21st-century warfare—limited in duration, expansive in domain, and inconclusive in outcome. Both nations claimed success—India through targeted strategic goals and Pakistan through technological demonstration and deterrence. Yet, beneath those claims lies a fragile and dangerous balance, sustained not by diplomacy but by ambiguity and deterrence.

As long as core disputes like Kashmir remain unresolved, and as long as misinformation continues to distort reality, such conflicts will recur. Only a shift from military bravado to sustained diplomatic engagement can break the cycle. Otherwise, the subcontinent will remain trapped in a state of ambiguous war—where victories are declared but peace is perpetually deferred.

Landmark \$142 Billion U.S.-Saudi Defense Deal: A Strategic Shift in Regional Security

By Hina Urooj

During his visit to Riyadh on May 13, 2025, former U.S. President Donald Trump and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman unveiled a landmark \$600 billion agreement, marking a significant milestone in U.S.-Saudi relations. The deal encompasses a \$142 billion defense pact, the largest of its kind between the two nations, alongside substantial investments in artificial intelligence (AI), energy infrastructure, and technology partnerships.

\$142 Billion U.S.-Saudi Defense Deal

At the heart of the recently signed U.S.-Saudi agreement lies a historic \$142 billion defense package, marking the largest arms deal ever inked between the two nations. The comprehensive agreement is designed to significantly enhance Saudi Arabia's military capabilities across multiple domains—air, sea, cyber, and space—and deepen the strategic alliance between Riyadh and Washington.

Key Components of the Defense Package

The defense deal, brokered during President Donald Trump's visit to Riyadh, involves over a dozen major U.S. defense contractors. The scope of the package reflects Saudi Arabia's ambition to modernize its armed forces amid rising regional tensions and evolving threats. Key areas of focus include:

- **Advanced Air and Missile Defense Systems:** These include the latest interceptor missiles, radar systems, and anti-ballistic technology aimed at protecting Saudi airspace from hostile threats, especially from neighboring adversaries.
- **Naval and Air Force Modernization:** The agreement will equip the Royal Saudi Navy and Air Force with cutting-edge American warships,



aircraft, precision-guided munitions, and support systems to strengthen operational readiness.

- **Space and Cybersecurity Capabilities:** Recognizing the growing importance of non-traditional warfare, the deal incorporates cooperation in satellite defense systems, space surveillance, and cybersecurity infrastructure to defend against digital threats and enhance intelligence capabilities.
- **Training and Maintenance Support:** The agreement also includes a long-term framework for training Saudi personnel, establishing maintenance facilities, and transferring technological know-how, ensuring the Kingdom's military can operate and sustain these advanced systems independently over time.

Strategic Goals and U.S. Oversight

The U.S. Department of Defense will supervise the phased implementation of this defense package to ensure proper integration and security compliance. The intention is not only to arm Saudi Arabia but to transform it into a more self-reliant regional security partner.

According to the White House, this initiative aligns with broader American goals of counterterrorism, regional stability, and economic engagement through defense exports. It also fits into Saudi Arabia's "Vision 2030" plan, which seeks to diversify its economy and bolster its domestic defense industry through international partnerships.

President Trump's Statement

President Trump, in remarks during the signing ceremony, highlighted the strategic and symbolic weight of the deal, saying:

"This historic defense deal is a testament to the enduring partnership between our nations and our shared commitment to peace and security in the Middle East. It will provide Saudi Arabia with the tools it needs to protect itself and help contribute to the stability of the region."

He further emphasized that the agreement would:

- Generate thousands of American jobs in the defense manufacturing sector.
- Encourage further investment from Gulf states in U.S. industries, including technology and infrastructure.

- Send a message of deterrence to common adversaries in the region.

Implications and Future Outlook

This monumental arms sale is being viewed as a strategic pivot that deepens Saudi Arabia's reliance on U.S. military technology while also strengthening Washington's influence in the Gulf. While the deal has drawn criticism from human rights groups and political opponents (especially regarding Saudi actions in Yemen), supporters argue it:

- Reinforces U.S. leadership in the Middle East.
- Creates economic opportunities at home.
- Helps contain threats from Iran and other destabilizing actors in the region.

As global power dynamics continue to shift, this defense agreement is poised to reshape the security architecture of the Middle East—anchored in a U.S.-Saudi military-industrial alliance that spans air, sea, cyber, and space.

Strategic Investments in Technology and Infrastructure

Beyond defense, the agreement outlines significant investments by Saudi Arabia in the U.S. economy. The Kingdom plans to invest \$20 billion in energy infrastructure and data centers for artificial intelligence in the United States. Saudi Arabia's state-owned AI company, Humain, is set to collaborate with major U.S. tech firms, including Nvidia, AMD, and Amazon, to enhance AI capabilities and infrastructure. This initiative aligns with Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030, aiming to diversify its economy and establish itself as a global AI hub.

The U.S.-Saudi Investment Forum in Riyadh, attended by prominent business leaders such as Elon Musk, Sam Altman, and Larry Fink, underscored the growing economic ties between the two nations. The forum highlighted opportunities for collaboration in AI, energy, and infrastructure development.

Implications for Regional Diplomacy

The agreement also has implications for broader regional diplomacy. While Saudi Arabia has not yet established formal diplomatic relations with Israel, the U.S. has encouraged the Kingdom to consider normalization. However, the ongoing conflict in Gaza and concerns over human rights have complicated these efforts. Saudi Arabia has emphasized that any normalization with Israel should be part of a comprehensive agreement addressing Palestinian statehood, a stance that remains a point of contention in the region.

Ethical Considerations and Criticisms: A Closer Look at the US-Saudi Defense Deal

The recently announced \$142 billion U.S.-Saudi weapons deal, part of a broader \$600 billion investment agreement, has triggered significant ethical and geopolitical debate. While the agreement is being hailed as a landmark in defense and economic cooperation, it has also raised serious concerns about its potential humanitarian, legal, and political ramifications—particularly given the regional context and the actors involved.

1. Humanitarian Concerns and the Yemen Conflict

One of the most prominent ethical criticisms centers on Saudi Arabia's long-standing military involvement in Yemen, a country devastated by civil war since 2015. The Saudi-led coalition's operations—backed by U.S.-made arms—have been accused of numerous civilian casualties, destruction of infrastructure, and worsening a humanitarian crisis that the United Nations has described as one of the worst in the world.

Critics argue that continuing to sell advanced weaponry to Riyadh:

- Enables the prolongation of the conflict.
- Increases the likelihood of civilian harm, even if indirectly.

- Contradicts international norms and potentially violates human rights obligations if weapons are used in ways that breach international humanitarian law.

Human rights organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have repeatedly urged Western nations to reconsider arms sales to countries involved in such conflicts.

2. Potential Conflicts of Interest

Another layer of criticism relates to potential conflicts of interest stemming from the involvement of prominent U.S. business figures in the deal—many of whom have close personal, financial, or political ties to Donald Trump, both during his first presidency and amid his renewed political ambitions.

Some specific concerns include:

- The possibility that the deal was designed to benefit individuals or entities with connections to Trump, rather than being solely based on U.S. strategic interests.
- Tech and defense firms involved in the negotiations may receive lucrative contracts or favorable treatment due to their proximity to Trump or past campaign donations.
- The appearance that public foreign policy decisions are being shaped by private business interests, rather than transparent, democratic deliberation.

Such issues raise constitutional and ethical red flags, particularly under the U.S. Emoluments Clause, which restricts public officials from receiving gifts or payments from foreign governments without congressional approval.

3. Undermining Democratic Oversight

Large arms deal often require Congressional review, yet the structure and speed of this agreement have drawn attention for possibly circumventing full legislative oversight. Critics warn that this undermines the checks and balances designed to prevent misuse of executive power in foreign policy—especially when military aid and weapons sales are involved.

There is also concern that important national and international debates, including those about Saudi Arabia's human rights record, are being sidelined in favor of economic or political expediency.

4. Broader Geopolitical Ramifications

From a diplomatic standpoint, the timing of the agreement—amid growing unrest in the Middle East, particularly in Gaza—has led to questions about its impact on regional peace efforts. Critics suggest that:

- The deal may embolden Saudi Arabia militarily at a delicate time for the region.
- It could further destabilize efforts for peace, especially if used as leverage to press weaker actors.
- It sends a mixed message about U.S. commitments to peace, diplomacy, and human rights.

While the defense deal may yield economic and strategic benefits for both the U.S. and Saudi Arabia, it is impossible to ignore the ethical complexities it introduces. The intersection of business, politics, and military power requires greater transparency, accountability, and public debate. Without this, critics fear such deals risk compromising both American values and international stability in pursuit of short-term gains.

Trump Lifts U.S. Sanctions on Syria, Signaling New Era in Middle East Diplomacy

In a significant policy shift, President Donald Trump announced on May 13, 2025, that the United States would lift all sanctions imposed on Syria, marking a dramatic change in U.S. foreign policy. This decision follows the ousting of President Bashar al-Assad in December 2024 and the establishment of a new government led by interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa.

Background and Context

The United States had imposed sanctions on Syria for decades, citing concerns over

terrorism, human rights abuses, and the Assad regime's alignment with Iran and Russia. These sanctions severely hindered Syria's access to international financial systems and development aid. However, with the fall of Assad's regime and the rise of a new government, the U.S. administration has reassessed its stance.

President Trump made the announcement during an investment forum in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. He stated that the sanctions had "served their purpose" but that it was now time for Syria to move forward. Trump emphasized the opportunity for Syria to rebuild and achieve "greatness," suggesting that the lifting of sanctions would provide the country with a chance at peace and reconstruction.



Diplomatic Engagement

Following the announcement, President Trump met with Syria's interim President Ahmed al-Sharaa in Saudi Arabia. This meeting marks the first direct engagement between U.S. and Syrian leaders in over a decade. During the meeting, Syria presented proposals including access to oil reserves, security assurances for Israel, and the establishment of a Trump Tower in Damascus. While these proposals are still under consideration, the meeting signifies a thaw in relations between the two nations.

Syrian Foreign Minister Asaad al-Shibani hailed the lifting of sanctions as a "new start" for Syria's reconstruction efforts. He expressed gratitude toward Saudi Arabia for its role in facilitating the removal of these sanctions. The United Nations also welcomed the move, viewing it as vital for

Syria's reconstruction and the return of stability to the region.

However, the decision has raised concerns among some U.S. allies, particularly Israel, due to President al-Sharaa's past associations with Islamist groups. Despite these concerns, the Trump administration remains optimistic about the potential for peace and stability in Syria.

The lifting of sanctions opens the door for increased humanitarian aid, foreign investment, and international cooperation in Syria's rebuilding process. The U.S. administration has indicated a willingness to normalize relations with Syria's new government, contingent on continued progress in governance and regional stability.

This development represents a significant shift in U.S. foreign policy and could have far-reaching implications for the Middle East's geopolitical landscape. As Syria embarks on its path to recovery, the international community will be closely monitoring the country's progress and the evolving dynamics in the region.

The \$142 Billion U.S.-Saudi Arms Deal: Strategic Implications for Israel

The \$142 billion U.S.-Saudi arms deal carries significant strategic consequences for Israel, reshaping the balance of power in the Middle East and introducing new layers of complexity to regional dynamics.

Threat to Israel's Qualitative Military Edge (QME)

Israel has long relied on its Qualitative Military Edge — a U.S.-guaranteed policy ensuring that Israel maintains superior military capabilities compared to its neighbors. The influx of advanced U.S. weapons systems to Saudi Arabia, including missile defense technology, cybersecurity platforms, and aerial combat systems, may challenge this delicate balance. Israeli defense planners are now closely monitoring the nature and scope of the transferred technologies to ensure that their edge remains intact.

Shared Regional Concerns About Iran

On the positive side, both Israel and Saudi Arabia share a common adversary: Iran. A stronger Saudi military could complement Israel's strategic goals by helping to contain Iran's influence in the region. The arms deal could act as a force multiplier in this shared effort, potentially easing some Israeli concerns — provided there are safeguards against misuse or redistribution of U.S.-supplied weaponry.

Normalization and Diplomatic Leverage

The deal may also have diplomatic benefits for Israel. By increasing U.S.-Saudi strategic alignment, Washington could use this growing partnership as leverage to encourage Riyadh to normalize ties with Israel, a process that gained momentum under the Abraham Accords. However, Saudi Arabia has made clear that normalization is contingent on progress toward a Palestinian state — a condition the current Israeli leadership is unlikely to meet.

Security Uncertainty and Contingency Planning

Despite shared interests, Israel remains wary of Saudi Arabia's long-term intentions. Political shifts or instability in Riyadh could one day redirect advanced weaponry or shift alliances. As a result, Israeli military intelligence is recalibrating its threat models and exploring enhanced missile defense and early warning systems to preempt any future risks.

The recent \$142 billion arms agreement between the United States and Saudi Arabia, announced during President Donald Trump's visit to Riyadh, marks a significant shift in Middle Eastern geopolitics. While the deal aims to bolster Saudi Arabia's defense capabilities and counter regional threats, it introduces complex considerations for Israel's national security.

Iran Proposes Nuclear Enrichment Partnership with Saudi Arabia and UAE

Iran has proposed forming a regional consortium with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to jointly enrich uranium, aiming to ease U.S. concerns over its nuclear programme and involve key Gulf states as stakeholders.



The initiative, floated by Tehran, would create a shared enrichment programme based at Iranian facilities. In a potential concession, Iran would grant its Gulf neighbours access to its nuclear technology and include them in the decision-making process—an effort to build trust and present its enrichment activities as peaceful.

The plan is seen as a strategic move to gain regional support and counter long-standing Western accusations that Iran's nuclear ambitions have military dimensions. The consortium would operate under the enrichment cap of 3.67% set by the 2015 nuclear deal—well below the 90% needed for weapons-grade uranium. Former U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew the U.S. from that agreement in 2018, prompting Iran to gradually exceed its enrichment limits, which now stand at 60%.

While it's unclear whether Iranian Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi formally presented the consortium proposal during recent three-hour talks with U.S. officials in Oman—part of a series of direct diplomatic engagements—it is reportedly under serious discussion in Tehran. After the talks, Araghchi visited Dubai to meet with UAE Foreign Minister Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan. Notably, the UAE does not currently enrich uranium, despite operating the fully functional Barakah nuclear power plant.

The consortium idea, first advanced in an October 2023 article by former Iranian nuclear negotiator Seyed Hossein Mousavian and Princeton physicist Frank von Hippel, envisions the Saudis and Emiratis as financial contributors and shareholders. Their involvement would serve as an additional safeguard, reinforcing the civilian nature of Iran's nuclear efforts and increasing transparency through the presence of Gulf engineers on-site—complementing oversight by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

Iran sees this regional partnership as a constructive compromise. Deputy Foreign Minister Majid Takht-Ravanchi said Tehran could accept temporary restrictions on enrichment levels and stockpiles under a broader agreement. Meanwhile, the U.S. has demanded Iran halt all enrichment and dismantle key nuclear infrastructure, though internal divisions in Washington have prevented a definitive stance.

U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio recently criticized Iran's current enrichment levels, arguing they far exceed what is necessary for civilian purposes. However, no final U.S. position has been announced. Oman's foreign minister, Badr Al Busaidi, referenced “useful and original ideas” emerging from the talks, possibly alluding to Iran's proposal.

The Barakah nuclear plant, west of Abu Dhabi, is the Arab world's first fully operational nuclear power facility, now meeting about 25% of the UAE's electricity needs.

With the complexity of negotiations increasing, initial hopes of reaching a deal within two months appear optimistic. Talks are now expected to continue into the summer.

SBP reports steady economic revival in Pakistan in the first half of FY25



By Javed Mahmood

Pakistan's macroeconomic conditions improved further in H1-FY25, according to the State of Pakistan's Economy, Half Year Report FY25, released today by the State Bank of Pakistan (SBP). The report noted that headline inflation fell sharply, the current account balance turned into a surplus, and the fiscal deficit was contained to the lowest level since FY05. The calibrated monetary policy stance, fiscal consolidation, benign global commodity prices together with approval of IMF's Extended Fund Facility (EFF) program mainly underpinned these favorable outcomes, the report said.

The upgrade of the country's credit rating by international agencies was mentioned as recognition of the improving macroeconomic environment. The report highlighted that inflationary pressures have receded notably, as headline inflation reached a multi-decade low of 0.7 percent by March 2025. This steep disinflation was attributed to a confluence of factors, including tight monetary policy stance and fiscal consolidation that

kept the domestic demand in check, improved supply conditions, respite in energy price adjustments, and subdued international commodity prices.

As a result of cooling inflationary pressures and improving inflation outlook, the SBP reduced the policy rate by 1000 basis points from June 2024 – February 2025. The report further noted that the consequent ease in financial conditions, coupled with a slight uptick in economic activity and ADR-related lending, contributed to a substantial growth in private sector credit during H1-FY25. The moderation in real GDP growth was attributed to lower production of important kharif crops and contraction in industrial activity during H1-FY25. A broad-based decline in Kharif crops was seen to be caused by falling area under cultivation and lower yields.

The report pointed to the key role of agriculture policy uncertainty, last year's low crop prices, unfavorable weather conditions, and lower use of certified seeds and other inputs for this lackluster performance. It also mentioned that lower contraction in

industry during H1-FY25 compared to the previous year was supported by small scale manufacturing, utilities and slaughtering, whereas mining & quarrying, construction and large scale manufacturing contributed negatively. Moreover, the report observed that the services sector performed relatively better in H1-FY25, compared to the same period last year.

According to the report, a steady increase in exports and workers' remittances during H1-FY25 outweighed a notable increase in imports, leading to a surplus in the current account balance. These developments, together with the disbursement of the first tranche under the IMF's EFF and a slight pick-up in private inflows, were noted to have strengthened SBP's FX reserves. The report also includes a special chapter titled 'Pakistan's Low Competitiveness: A Case for Investing in Productivity'.

The analysis underscores that weak growth in labor productivity and total factor productivity has adversely affected the country's economic competitiveness over time, which has contributed

to the frequent boom-bust cycles. The chapter finds that Pakistan's performance over time across most drivers of productivity and underlying structural factors has been notably weak when compared to peer economies. Therefore, emphasis is placed on addressing the macroeconomic and structural constraints to productivity growth. Different box items in various chapters of the report highlight the structural issues in the economy, with relevant recommendations in light of cross-country experiences. The report notes a significant improvement in the inflation outlook.

IMF approves new tranche for Pakistan, ignoring India's opposition

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has approved the first review of Pakistan's \$7 billion Extended Fund Facility (EFF), releasing an immediate \$1 billion tranche. This brings total disbursements under the arrangement to approximately \$2.1 billion. Additionally, the IMF Executive Board has granted Pakistan access to about \$1.3 billion under the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF), aimed at enhancing climate resilience and long-term economic stability.

Pakistan's 37-month EFF, approved in September 2024, focuses on macroeconomic sustainability, structural reforms, and climate resilience. The program has led to significant progress, including a primary fiscal surplus of 2.0% of GDP in the first half of FY25, a historic low inflation rate of 0.3% in April, and an increase in gross reserves to \$10.3 billion by the end of April. The State Bank of Pakistan has also reduced the policy rate by 1,100 basis points since June 2025.

The RSF will support efforts to reduce vulnerabilities to natural disasters and build economic and climate resilience. Key priorities include improving public investment processes, enhancing water resource efficiency, strengthening disaster response coordination, and improving climate-related risk disclosures.

IMF Deputy Managing Director Nigel Clarke commended Pakistan's progress in

restoring macroeconomic stability but cautioned that risks remain, particularly from global economic policy uncertainty, rising geopolitical tensions, and persistent domestic vulnerabilities. He emphasized the need for continued implementation of sound macroeconomic policies and accelerated reforms to safeguard gains and promote sustainable growth.

The IMF also highlighted the importance of fiscal consolidation, broadening the tax base, reforming state-owned enterprises, and enhancing governance to unlock Pakistan's competitiveness and attract private investment. Additionally, addressing vulnerabilities to extreme weather events is crucial for enhancing macroeconomic stability and fiscal sustainability.



Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb expressed confidence in the government's strategy, highlighting the role of IMF support in stabilizing Pakistan's economy and averting a potential default. The government is optimistic about maintaining economic stability and continuing its reform agenda, which includes structural changes in taxation, energy, and state-owned enterprises.

Finance Minister Highlights Pakistan's Economic Recovery

Federal Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb declared that Pakistan had reached "a pivotal moment of economic recovery" during his address at Harvard University's annual conference on Pakistan, Bridging Divides, Building

Tomorrow: Pakistan's Path to Inclusive Growth and Governance. Addressing policymakers, academics, and business leaders at the largest student-led forum on Pakistan in the United States, Aurangzeb highlighted the government's recent economic achievements, while also laying out a roadmap for continued reform and resilience.

Despite the World Bank's slight downgrade of Pakistan's GDP growth forecast from 2.8% to 2.7% for the current fiscal year—citing persistent pressures from tight fiscal and monetary policies—the finance minister painted a cautiously optimistic picture. "After inheriting an economy facing significant challenges — from contracting GDP to depleting reserves —

we have stabilised the fundamentals, restored confidence, and reignited growth," he stated.

Aurangzeb outlined several notable achievements:

- Inflation dropped to 0.7%, reportedly the lowest in 60 years.
- Foreign exchange reserves doubled.
- The Pakistani rupee appreciated by 3%.
- The current account recorded a surplus exceeding \$1 billion in March 2025.

He also reported a 44% rise in foreign direct investment (FDI) and a 24% increase in IT exports during the current fiscal year. Remittances have also surged, now projected to reach \$38 billion.

Citing growing international confidence, the minister referenced Fitch's upgrade of Pakistan's sovereign credit rating to B- and stated that the country had achieved its highest fiscal surplus in 24 years. A key fiscal milestone, he noted, was the reduction of the public debt-to-GDP ratio from 75% to 67.2%, with a medium-term goal to bring it below 60% through prudent fiscal policies, enhanced domestic financing, and comprehensive tax reforms.

Aurangzeb also emphasized efforts to streamline government expenditures and privatize unprofitable state-owned enterprises — measures expected to save up to 2% of GDP annually. He also stressed the importance of transparency and competitiveness to strengthen investor confidence. Looking ahead, the finance minister outlined plans to deepen Pakistan's financial sector by expanding digital banking, capital markets, and green finance.



"Stability is not an end but a means to an end," he remarked, underscoring the government's strategy to sustain momentum through fiscal discipline, inflation control, and deep structural reforms in energy, taxation, governance, and public sector management. Aurangzeb also emphasized the vital role of human development in achieving long-term, inclusive growth, citing promising opportunities in the IT sector and green energy.

Concluding his remarks, he stated, "Pakistan's future will be shaped by bold, necessary choices. By investing in our people, modernising our economy, and staying committed to reform, Pakistan will emerge

stronger, greener, and more competitive."

The Harvard conference, focused on exploring Pakistan's economic, political, and social future, served as a platform to showcase not only the country's current challenges but also the resilience and creativity of its people. It remains a vital forum for promoting collaborative solutions and fostering global engagement with Pakistan's development trajectory.

The stock market gains 10,000+ points after victory in the war against India

The Pakistan Stock Exchange (PSX) opened Monday with a powerful rally as easing tensions with India and fresh support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) sparked a wave of investor optimism. The benchmark KSE-100 index

surged by more than 9% in intra-day trading, prompting a temporary suspension of trading due to market volatility controls. The KSE-100 climbed by an unprecedented 9,928 points, reaching 117,104.11 — up from the previous close of 107,174.63 — marking the largest single-day points gain in PSX history.

This rally was fueled primarily by two key developments: a ceasefire agreement between Pakistan and India, which significantly reduced regional geopolitical risk, and the IMF's approval of critical financial support over the weekend. The IMF cleared a \$1 billion disbursement under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF), along with \$1.4

billion under the Resilience and Sustainability Facility (RSF), providing a much-needed external financing boost.

Investor sentiment was further buoyed by improving macroeconomic signals. Arif Habib Limited, a leading brokerage, noted that the ceasefire agreement represents a major diplomatic breakthrough after weeks of escalated tensions triggered by the Pahal-gam attack. The ceasefire eased investor concerns and encouraged renewed buying interest across the board.

Adding to the optimism was U.S. President Donald Trump's recent statement pledging support for resolving the Kashmir conflict and fostering stronger trade relations between India and Pakistan. The brokerage highlighted that Pakistan's exports to the U.S. reached \$4 billion so far in FY25, against imports of \$1.5 billion, resulting in a significant \$2.5 billion trade surplus.

Additionally, the State Bank of Pakistan's recent decision to cut the policy rate by 100 basis points to 11% — reflecting easing inflation — is expected to support equity valuations, especially in interest-rate-sensitive and cyclical sectors. Together, the de-escalation in regional tensions, IMF financial backing, dovish monetary policy, and improved trade dynamics with the U.S. form a strong foundation for market recovery. These developments arrive at a critical time, following a sharp market correction that began in late April amid heightened geopolitical risks.

Indian executive director in the IMF board sacked

In a surprising move just days before a crucial International Monetary Fund (IMF) board meeting, the Indian government has terminated the services of Dr. Krishnamurthy Subramanian as its Executive Director at the IMF, effective immediately. According to a government order dated April 30, the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC), chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, approved the sudden termination.

Subramanian, also known as KV Subramaniam, assumed the IMF role in November 2022, representing India, Bangladesh, Sri

Lanka, and Bhutan. His three-year term was originally set to conclude in November 2025. The timing of his removal has drawn attention, coming just ahead of the May 9 IMF Board meeting, which is expected to consider new financial assistance for Pakistan. India has expressed concerns about such financing, though final decisions rest solely with the IMF.

Subramanian previously served as India's 17th and youngest Chief Economic Advisor from 2018 to 2022. His recall at a moment of increased geopolitical and economic sensitivity has prompted speculation about internal deliberations and possible political motivations.



SBP Governor Confirms External Debt Stability; Reserves to Hit \$19bn by June

The State Bank of Pakistan (SBP) has reaffirmed the country's strong external debt management position, with \$16 billion of the \$26bn due in FY25 already rolled over, \$8bn repaid, and the remaining \$1.3–1.5bn scheduled for payment in the coming months. The update came during a post-Monetary Policy Statement (MPS) analyst briefing, where SBP Governor Jameel Ahmad announced a 100 basis point cut in the policy rate, bringing it down to 11% effective May 6, 2025.

"We are comfortably managing our obligations, and the external account is on solid footing," Governor Ahmad said, reflecting confidence in Pakistan's external financial position.

Remittances Set to Surpass \$38bn

Highlighting strong inflows, the Governor stated that monthly remittances are averaging \$3bn, with \$4.1bn recorded in the latest month. Full-year remittances are expected to exceed \$38bn, significantly bolstering the current account, which is now forecast to post a surplus for FY25.

Foreign Exchange Reserves on Track to Reach \$19bn

While acknowledging a temporary dip in

foreign exchange reserves earlier in the year, Ahmad said upcoming official inflows in May and June would help raise total reserves — including commercial bank holdings — to \$19bn. SBP's own reserves are projected to reach \$14bn by the end of June 2025.

The central bank also succeeded in reducing forward foreign exchange liabilities from a peak of \$5.7bn to \$2.6bn. "Had we not reduced these obligations, reserves would have been \$3bn higher," the Governor noted, reinforcing the SBP's active risk management approach.

Stable Currency and Improving Reserve Buffers

Despite regular market interventions, the Pakistani rupee has remained stable. The SBP anticipates further strengthening of

reserve buffers into FY26, contributing to macroeconomic resilience.

Growth and Inflation Outlook

Following stronger-than-expected Q3 performance, the SBP retained its GDP growth forecast for FY25 at 2.5–3.5%, with Q1 and Q2 growth reported at 1.3% and 1.7%, respectively. Inflation continues to ease, helped by lower food and energy prices. The SBP projects average inflation at 4.5–5.5% in FY25 and 5.5–6.5% in FY26 — both within its medium-term target range of 5–7%.

The recent 100 bps rate cut leaves real interest rates strongly positive, estimated at 400–500 basis points, providing policy flexibility to support growth without compromising price stability.

Sectoral Policy Notes

Regarding the Rs3 million cap on car financing, the Governor confirmed the restriction remains in place but could be reviewed depending on the auto sector's performance.

On credit to the private sector, he emphasized the SBP's intent to facilitate private lending as government borrowing needs decrease, signaling a shift toward credit-driven economic activity.

Impact of U.S. Tariffs

Addressing concerns over the impact of newly imposed U.S. tariffs, Ahmad acknowledged potential pressure on exports but said the positive effect of declining global commodity prices would offset any immediate downside risks to the economy.

Macro Fundamentals Improving

Concluding the briefing, Governor Ahmad stressed that Pakistan's economic fundamentals have markedly improved, justifying the recent monetary easing. He pointed to Fitch's upgrade of Pakistan's sovereign credit rating as evidence of growing investor confidence and macroeconomic stability.

Pakistan's FY2025-26 Budget: A Turning Point for the Salaried Class and Automotive Sector



By Romana Afsheen

Introduction

As Pakistan prepares to unveil its FY2025–26 federal budget, the nation stands at a pivotal juncture. Confronted with overlapping economic challenges—including a burdensome energy sector, climate vulnerabilities, fiscal imbalances, and mounting public debt—the government aims to present a reform-oriented fiscal blueprint. Central to this agenda are proposed tax relief measures for the salaried class and significant reforms in the automotive sector, aligning with the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) expectations.

Tax Relief for the Salaried Class: A Strategic Move

Background and Rationale

Historically, Pakistan's salaried class has been a significant contributor to the national exchequer. In the first ten months of the current fiscal year, salaried individuals contributed over Rs450 billion in taxes, surpassing other sectors such as retail and

export. This marks a substantial increase from the Rs368 billion collected during the previous fiscal year.

Recognizing the disproportionate tax burden on salaried individuals, the government is considering a reduction in income tax rates across various salary brackets. Proposals include a 2.5% reduction in tax rates, with specific adjustments such as lowering the tax rate for individuals earning Rs100,000 per month from 5% to 2.5%, and for those earning Rs333,000 per month from 30% to 27.5%.

Projected Impact

The proposed tax relief aims to reduce the tax burden for salaried individuals by up to Rs50 billion. This move is expected to provide much-needed financial respite to middle-income earners, who have been grappling with rising inflation and stagnant wages. Moreover, it is anticipated to stimulate consumer spending, thereby invigorating economic activity.

IMF's Role and Considerations

While the tax relief measures are poised to benefit the salaried class, they are subject to

approval by the IMF. The government has presented these proposals to the IMF, with discussions scheduled to finalize the budget and reconcile any financial gaps arising from the proposed tax relief. The IMF's endorsement is crucial, as it ensures that the relief measures align with broader fiscal consolidation goals.

IMF's Push for Auto Tariff Reforms: Balancing Protectionism and Competitiveness

Current Tariff Structure and Challenges

Pakistan's automotive sector is characterized by high tariff protection, with taxes and duties on locally produced vehicles exceeding 40%. This protectionist approach has led to inflated prices for consumers and reduced competitiveness within the industry. The IMF has highlighted these issues, urging the government to rationalize auto tariffs and permit the commercial import of used cars.

Proposed Reforms and Industry Response

In response to the IMF's recommendations, the government is considering a gradual reduction of 5–10% in additional customs duty (ACD) and regulatory duty (RD). Larger reductions are expected for completely built units (CBUs) with higher engine capacities. The aim is to alleviate pressure on consumers facing high prices for domestically produced cars and parts, while still supporting the local market's development.

However, the domestic auto industry has expressed concerns that such reforms could threaten long-term sustainability and derail progress made in building a robust local manufacturing base. Industry representatives have voiced fears that allowing commercial imports of used cars and reducing tariffs on CBUs below a certain threshold could lead to the collapse of the local industry.

Government's Stance and Future Outlook

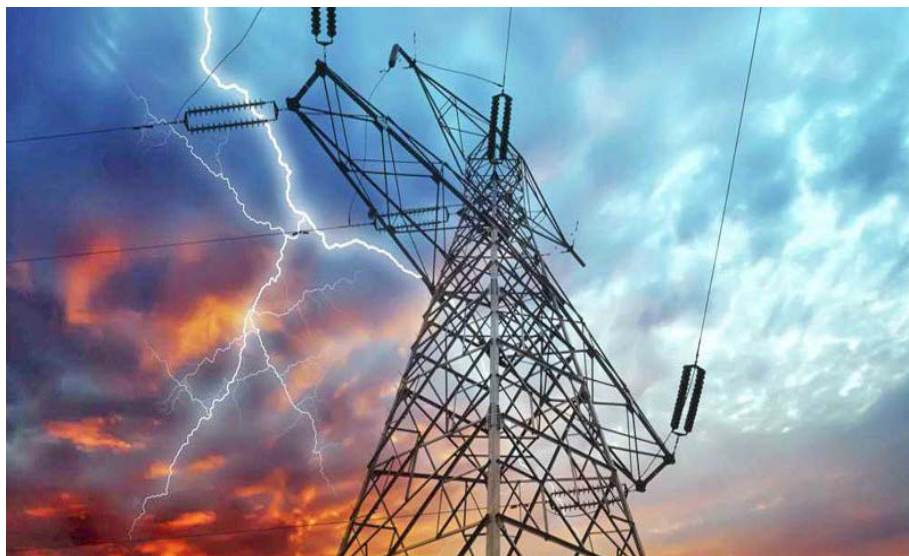
The government has assured industry stakeholders that any reforms will be carefully calibrated to balance the IMF's recommendations with the interests of the local auto industry. Special Assistant to the Prime Minister Haroon Akhtar Khan emphasized that the government intends to strike a balance between aligning with IMF recommendations and safeguarding the interests of the local auto industry.

The FY2025–26 budget does not operate in a vacuum—it is shaped by years of accumulated structural inefficiencies, with the energy sector emerging as perhaps the most severe pain point. Over the past decade, the energy crisis has morphed into a chronic economic illness, feeding inflation, slowing industrial productivity, and piling up public debt. At the heart of the problem lies a staggering circular debt, ballooning subsidies, and mismanaged distribution systems. In response, the new budget attempts a course correction—albeit a politically difficult one—through tariff rationalization, targeted subsidies, and privatization of loss-making state-owned enterprises (SOEs).

Tackling the Energy Crisis and Fiscal Imbalances in the FY2025-26 Budget

The Energy Sector as a Critical Fault Line

Pakistan's energy sector has long been plagued by inefficiencies, mismanagement, and mounting debt. The circular debt crisis—now ballooned to over Rs2.6 trillion—is emblematic of the broader structural decay in this crucial domain. FY2025–26's federal budget attempts to break the status quo by introducing targeted subsidies, cost-reflective tariffs, and restructuring of loss-making state-owned enterprises (SOEs). These reforms are not only economically necessary but also critical to fulfilling IMF program conditionalities and restoring fiscal balance.



Circular Debt: A Threat to Macroeconomic Stability

Anatomy of the Crisis

Circular debt arises when power distribution companies (DISCOs) fail to recover full payment from consumers, forcing delays in payments to power producers and fuel suppliers. This chain of unpaid bills eventually leads to liquidity crunches, requiring repeated government bailouts.

This year, the Ministry of Energy disclosed that circular debt had surged to Rs2.6 trillion, primarily owed to Independent

Power Producers (IPPs) and gas companies. This debt fuels inflation, crowds out development spending, and remains one of the largest fiscal drains on the national budget.

Political and Economic Costs

The implications are vast:

- The government spends billions annually on subsidies to prevent a complete breakdown in energy supply.
- Inflation rises as cost-push dynamics enter through fuel and electricity pricing.
- Foreign investors are discouraged by delayed payments and opaque regulatory structures.

Thus, reducing circular debt isn't just about fiscal cleanup—it is essential for macroeconomic confidence and energy security.

Budget 2025–26 Response: A Three-Pronged Strategy

1. Energy Subsidies with Targeted Relief

The new budget allocates Rs359 billion to energy subsidies—up from Rs322 billion in FY2024–25. However, the shift lies in how the subsidies are distributed:

- Rs253 billion is earmarked for payments to IPPs.
- Rs85 billion is allocated for gas subsidies, especially for agriculture and export-oriented sectors.

Unlike previous years, this budget focuses on targeted relief for the most vulnerable households and productive sectors. The emphasis is on phasing out untargeted subsidies that benefit affluent households and instead using data-driven mechanisms to protect the poor through digital cash transfers or tariff slabs.

2. Tariff Rationalization: Towards Cost Recovery

A major pillar of reform is shifting to cost-reflective tariffs. Simply put, electricity prices will more closely reflect the true cost of generation and transmission. The rationale is twofold:

- Improve collection efficiency for distribution companies.
- Minimize future accumulation of circular debt.

However, this is politically sensitive. With inflation already near double digits, the government faces pushback from opposition parties, industrialists, and even middle-income urban voters. To manage this, the government plans incremental price increases and cross-subsidization—charging more from high-end users to subsidize lifeline consumers.

3. Smart Metering and DISCO Reform

In urban centers, smart meters will be deployed to improve billing accuracy, detect theft, and reduce technical losses. Additionally, DISCOs will undergo partial privatization or management outsourcing, starting with the most inefficient ones like Hyderabad and Sukkur Electric Supply Companies.

If implemented, these reforms could significantly cut losses and reduce government dependence on expensive emergency loans and bailouts.

Privatization of State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs): A Long-Delayed Reform

The budget has revived the stalled plan to privatize or restructure SOEs, starting with PIA, Pakistan Steel Mills, and several power plants under the GENCOs.

- Privatization Commission has identified over 25 entities for divestment in

FY2025–26.

- The expected revenue from privatization is Rs400 billion, which will be used to reduce debt and invest in social safety nets.

The idea is not just to reduce the financial burden, but also to attract private investment, improve service delivery, and professionalize management.

However, political resistance from unions and vested interests remains a key bottleneck. Therefore, the government is pairing these plans with retrenchment packages and transition funds to soften the blow.

Fiscal Consolidation: Broader Tax Reforms Beyond Salaried Class Relief

While the salaried class is set to receive much-needed tax relief, the government has also announced parallel steps to broaden the tax base and improve compliance.

Key Measures:

- Documentation drive: Businesses without NTN (National Tax Number) will be penalized starting FY2025–26.
- Real estate taxation: Capital gains and rental income to be taxed at more consistent and progressive rates.
- Retail sector digitalization: All point-of-sale terminals must be integrated with FBR systems by December 2025.
- Sin taxes: Increased excise duties on sugary drinks, tobacco, and luxury items to generate non-distortionary revenue.

With a tax-to-GDP ratio below 9%, Pakistan lags significantly behind regional peers. The aim is to increase this to 11% by FY2026–27.

Social Protection in a Time of Austerity

While IMF programs often lead to austerity, the government is keen on maintaining a human-centric lens. The Benazir Income Support Programme (BISP) allocation has been increased to Rs580 billion, up from Rs450 billion in FY2024–25.

- Monthly stipends for eligible women beneficiaries have been raised from Rs8,500 to Rs10,000.
- Special education incentives are included for female children and differently-abled children.

Furthermore, the government plans to digitize and centralize all social welfare programs to reduce leakages and duplication, using NADRA and Ehsaas data platforms for better targeting.

Climate and Resilience Financing

Pakistan remains one of the most climate-vulnerable countries globally. In FY2025–26:

- Rs120 billion has been earmarked for climate resilience projects.
- Initiatives include flood protection infrastructure, solarization of government buildings, and early warning systems in disaster-prone areas.

The budget also introduces green bonds and climate risk insurance in partnership with international donors like the World Bank and Asian Development Bank.

IMF Negotiations, Economic Targets, and the Political Path Forward

Budget Under Watchful Eyes

Pakistan's FY2025–26 budget is not just a domestic financial plan—it is a litmus test for credibility before global financial institutions, particularly the International Monetary Fund (IMF). As the government seeks a new Extended Fund Facility (EFF), the IMF is carefully reviewing key elements of the budget, including fiscal discipline, tax reforms, and sectoral restructuring, especially in the automotive, energy, and SOE segments.

The next few months will determine whether this budget merely ticks boxes or represents a real shift in Pakistan's long-troubled economic trajectory.

IMF Negotiations: Alignment and Tensions

The Need for a New IMF Program

Pakistan's previous Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) expired in April 2024. Since then, the government has been negotiating a longer-term EFF, potentially ranging between \$6 to \$8 billion. The FY2025–26 budget is seen as a foundational document for the IMF's decision.

Key IMF conditions include:

- Primary surplus of 1.5–2.0% of GDP.
- Elimination of untargeted subsidies.
- Cost-recovery in the energy sector.
- Improved tax compliance and digitalization.
- Rationalization of import tariffs, especially in the automobile sector.

Auto Tariffs and IMF's Structural Demands

The IMF has flagged auto tariff protectionism as a distortion that raises prices for consumers and discourages competition. Pakistan imposes over 40% in taxes and duties on locally manufactured cars, making vehicles unaffordable for middle-class buyers.

The Fund has urged Pakistan to:

- Reduce additional customs duties (ACDs) and regulatory duties (RDs) on imported vehicles, especially Completely Built Units (CBUs).
- Permit commercial import of used vehicles, arguing that monopolistic pricing by local assemblers is hurting consumers.
- Create a competitive market environment with price transparency and import liberalization.
- The government, while acknowledging the IMF's concerns, is attempting a gradual approach:
- Proposing a 5–10% reduction in ACDs/RDs on CBUs with higher engine capacities.
- Holding consultations with PAAPAM (Pakistan Association of Automotive Parts & Accessories Manufacturers) and PAMA (Pakistan Automotive

Manufacturers Association) to ensure local industry protection.

- Developing a five-year Auto Industry Development and Export Policy (AIDEP) to reduce dependence on imports through structured incentives, rather than blanket protectionism.

Macroeconomic Framework: Targets for FY2025–26

The FY2025–26 budget outlines a cautiously optimistic macroeconomic trajectory, aiming to balance growth, stabilization, and external viability.

GDP Growth and Inflation

- Real GDP growth target: 3.6%, up from a dismal 1.9% in FY2024–25.
- Inflation target: 12%, down from the current average of over 17%, owing to expected reduction in global oil prices, exchange rate stabilization, and better food supply management.



Fiscal Indicators

- Overall budget deficit: Targeted at 5.8% of GDP, down from an estimated 7.2% this year.
- Primary surplus: Expected at 1.6% of GDP, mainly through improved tax collection and rationalized expenditure.

Tax Collection and Revenues

- Federal Board of Revenue (FBR) tax collection target: Rs11.5 trillion, up from Rs9.8 trillion in FY2024–25.

- Key revenue sources:

- o Income tax reforms, especially relief for salaried class but tightening enforcement elsewhere.
- o Sales tax broadening via GST on retail and real estate sectors.
- o Excise duties on luxury items and sin goods.

The government aims to increase the tax-to-GDP ratio to 10.8%, a significant improvement from the sub-9% level in FY2023–24.

Political Economy of the Budget: Challenges and Opportunities

Public Expectations vs Austerity

The inclusion of tax relief for the salaried class is one of the most politically popular components of the budget. Middle-income earners have faced the brunt of rising inflation, depreciation, and fixed salaries.

By lowering tax rates—such as reducing the 5% tax on monthly income of Rs100,000 to 2.5%—the government aims to offer financial breathing space to over 3.5 million taxpayers. However, this is being done while facing pressure from the IMF to maintain revenue neutrality. To offset the Rs50 billion shortfall from salaried tax cuts, the government plans:

- Broadening the tax net through digital monitoring.
- Clamping down on non-filers and undocumented sectors.

- Increasing indirect taxes like fuel levies and excise duties.

This balance is politically precarious. Urban professionals may welcome tax relief, but price hikes on utilities and indirect taxes could neutralize their gains.

Provincial Coordination

Much of the budget's success also depends on provincial governments, especially in areas like agriculture support, education, and public health. Under the NFC Award, provinces receive 57.5% of federal divisible revenues, but their capacity to spend wisely remains uneven.

The federal government has proposed a National Fiscal Coordination Council (NFCC) to better align federal-provincial development priorities and fiscal targets.

External Accounts and Financing Needs

Pakistan's external financing needs are estimated at over \$25 billion for FY2025–26. The government hopes to bridge this through:

- A new IMF EFF program.
- Bilateral rollovers from China, Saudi Arabia, and UAE.
- Eurobond issuance in the second half of FY2025–26, pending credit rating improvement.
- Privatization proceeds from SOEs, especially PIA, RLNG-based power plants, and financial institutions.

The foreign exchange reserves currently

stand at around \$9.2 billion, barely enough for 2 months of imports. Therefore, the IMF program remains non-negotiable for unlocking multilateral and market-based funding.

Risks and Mitigating Factors

Key Risks:

- Political backlash from price increases, especially energy tariff hikes.
- Implementation slippages on reforms due to bureaucratic inertia.
- Global shocks, such as oil price volatility or geopolitical instability.
- Climate-related disasters, which remain a persistent threat to food security and infrastructure.

Mitigating Plans:

- Social protection cushion via BISP and utility relief for the poorest 30%.
- Real-time monitoring through newly launched Digital Budget Dashboard for transparency.
- Green financing and disaster resilience programs supported by ADB and World Bank.

The Road Ahead: A Turning Point or Another Missed Opportunity?

The FY2025–26 budget reflects a serious attempt to restore macroeconomic order, fulfill IMF prerequisites, and lay the groundwork for sustainable growth. With reforms in the energy, automotive, and

fiscal domains, the government has signaled its intent to break from past inertia. However, this is not a transformational budget yet. Success will depend on:

- Execution: Without consistent follow-through, even the best-designed reforms falter.
- Consensus building: Political buy-in across parties and provinces is essential.
- Monitoring and transparency: Public trust requires open reporting on targets, achievements, and shortfalls.

If Pakistan can overcome its implementation gap, this budget could mark the beginning of structural transformation. If not, it risks being another incremental document in a long line of half-hearted plans.

Conclusion

Pakistan's FY2025–26 federal budget represents a bold but challenging attempt to recalibrate the country's economic priorities. It provides tax relief to the salaried class, responds to IMF demands for tariff reforms, addresses the energy sector's circular debt, and outlines plans to broaden the tax base, privatize SOEs, and improve climate resilience.

Yet, the budget's true success will depend not on paper targets but on real-world implementation, political consensus, and sustained institutional reform. In a fragile economic environment with high public expectations and global scrutiny, FY2025–26 will be a defining year for Pakistan's quest toward stability and inclusive growth.



Rafale vs J-10C: Aerial Titans in the Skies of South Asia - Technology, Tactics, and the 2025 India-Pakistan Conflict



By Kanwal Munir

Introduction

In the evolving theater of modern aerial warfare, victory is not merely defined by the number of jets a nation fields or their maximum speed. Instead, it lies in the sophistication of avionics, the range and precision of missiles, the efficiency of sensor fusion, and the seamless integration of electronic warfare systems. The May 2025 India-Pakistan air skirmishes, precipitated by the terror attack in Pahalgam, brought two of Asia's most capable 4.5-generation fighter jets face-to-face: France's Dassault Rafale and China's Chengdu J-10C. These aircraft, products of entirely different industrial legacies and strategic doctrines, locked horns in the largest aerial engagement in South Asia since the 1971 Indo-Pak war.

This article explores the Rafale and J-10C from a technical, doctrinal, and strategic lens, anchored in their real-world performance during the short but intense aerial conflict in May 2025. The outcome of this confrontation not only highlighted evolving

military capabilities in the region but also sparked global debate on the effectiveness of Western and Chinese combat platforms in high-stakes engagements.

A Tale of Two Fighters: Rafale and J-10C

The Dassault Rafale and Chengdu J-10C are both advanced multirole fighters that represent the pinnacle of 4.5-generation design philosophy. The Rafale, designed and built by Dassault Aviation, is the pride of French aerospace engineering. A twin-engine canard-delta fighter, it was envisioned as an "omnirole" platform—capable of executing air superiority, interdiction, reconnaissance, and nuclear strike missions within a single sortie. Since its induction into the Indian Air Force (IAF) between 2020 and 2022, the Rafale has symbolized India's technological leap in aerial warfare.

In contrast, the J-10C, the third and

most advanced iteration of the J-10 series, marks China's coming-of-age as a military aviation power. While the J-10 traces its roots back to a period of Chinese technological inferiority, the C-variant—operational in Pakistan as the J-10CE since 2022—stands as a product of three decades of sustained investment, reverse engineering, indigenous innovation, and strategic partnerships. Though initially dismissed by critics as a "poor man's F-16," the J-10C's debut in actual combat during the 2025 conflict has dramatically shifted perceptions.

Engineering and Flight Characteristics

The Rafale's design philosophy centers around versatility and survivability. Its two Snecma M88 engines deliver a combined afterburning thrust of 150 kN, ensuring redundancy and endurance in long-range missions. The canard-delta wing configuration, combined with a high thrust-to-weight ratio and fly-by-wire control system,

provides excellent agility and sustained high-G performance. Despite its heavier frame, the Rafale exhibits remarkable maneuverability in both subsonic and supersonic regimes.

The J-10C, though a single-engine aircraft, compensates for its lighter weight with a powerful WS-10B turbofan engine capable of afterburning thrust up to 135 kN. This gives it a thrust-to-weight ratio comparable to the Rafale and enhances its vertical agility—a critical asset in close-range dogfights. The aircraft's use of a diverterless supersonic inlet (DSI), an innovation borrowed from stealth technology, also contributes to reduced radar signature and drag.

In sheer airframe performance, both jets boast similar top speeds—hovering around Mach 1.8. However, the J-10C reportedly reaches up to Mach 2.2 under optimal conditions. While the Rafale boasts a higher payload capacity and a more diverse weapons suite, the J-10C is no slouch, offering impressive strike capability relative to its cost and weight.

The Sensors and the Eyes of the Jet

Combat in the skies today is won not just by who shoots first, but who sees first. In this domain, the Rafale has long enjoyed a reputation as a benchmark setter. Its Thales RBE2-AA Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radar is capable of tracking

multiple targets simultaneously over long ranges. Complementing this is the OSF (Optronique Secteur Frontal), anIRST system allowing passive detection of aircraft, including stealth ones. The SPEC-TRA electronic warfare suite is another standout feature, offering a tightly integrated defensive network combining radar warning receivers, jammers, missile approach warning systems, and automatic countermeasure deployment.

The J-10C, however, has made remarkable strides. Its indigenous KLJ-10 AESA radar has been claimed by Chinese sources to rival or even surpass older Western radar systems. Coupled withIRST and electro-optical tracking—delivered either through internal architecture or external targeting pods like Blue Sky—the J-10C provides a respectable level of battlefield awareness. The aircraft also integrates into the PLA Air Force's growing network-centric warfare doctrine, allowing it to receive target data from AWACS and ground systems, thus significantly extending its engagement range and situational awareness.

The 2025 conflict revealed that while Rafale still holds an edge in sensor fusion and pilot-friendly interface, the J-10C's sensors and electronic capabilities are no longer second-rate. Several Indian pilots reportedly struggled to detect the J-10C until missile warning systems activated, suggesting credible stealth and jamming capabilities.

Missiles, Munitions, and the Art of the Kill

Air combat ultimately comes down to who can shoot first—and hit. In this regard, both jets are equipped with cutting-edge munitions. The Rafale's ace in the hole is the MBDA Meteor, a long-range BVR missile with a ramjet engine capable of maintaining high speeds deep into its engagement envelope. The Meteor's no-escape zone (NEZ) is considered the largest of any missile in service today. Complementing this are the MICA IR and EM variants, which serve dual roles as both short-range dogfight missiles and medium-range BVR weapons. For ground attack, Rafale's arsenal includes SCALP cruise missiles, AASM precision glide bombs, Exocet anti-ship missiles, and even nuclear-capable ASMP-A.

The J-10C, meanwhile, fields the PL-10 and PL-15 missiles—the former a high off-boresight infrared missile comparable to the AIM-9X, and the latter a long-range radar-guided missile with a speculated range of up to 200 km. In the 2025 clashes, the PL-15 emerged as a decisive tool, reportedly responsible for at least two confirmed kills of Indian aircraft. Unlike the Meteor, the PL-15 relies on a dual-pulse solid-fuel motor, offering impressive acceleration and sustained high-speed flight.

During Operation Sindoor, Rafales used SCALP missiles to strike targets inside



Pakistani territory from standoff ranges, reportedly destroying key militant hideouts and communication infrastructure. Notably, Indian aircraft did not cross the Line of Control. In retaliation, J-10Cs used their superior reach through networked PL-15 launches to create air denial zones near the Punjab-Kashmir border. These engagements marked the first real-world kill for both the PL-15 and the Rafale platform.

Electronic Warfare and Survivability in Combat

The Rafale's SPECTRA suite is perhaps its most praised subsystem, offering unmatched survivability for a 4.5-gen fighter. It can jam multiple frequencies, deceive incoming missiles with decoys, and deliver real-time alerts on threats. It also includes laser warning systems and integrated chaff/flare dispensers, allowing the Rafale to actively counter both radar- and IR-guided threats.

J-10C's electronic warfare capabilities are more modular, relying on external pods like the KG600. However, Chinese advancements in digital radio-frequency memory (DRFM) jamming, coupled with passive warning systems and directional jamming antennas, have narrowed the gap. In the May 2025 skirmishes, the effectiveness of J-10C's ECM systems became apparent as multiple Rafale and Su-30MKI missile shots reportedly missed their targets. Moreover, the J-10C's survivability during missile engagements indicated both competent pilots and reliable onboard defense systems.

While Rafale may still hold a slight technological edge, especially in integrated protection, the J-10C has proven itself battle-ready and resilient under fire—a major evolution from Chinese aircraft of previous generations.

Stealth, Design, and Radar Cross-Section

Neither the Rafale nor the J-10C is a stealth aircraft in the fifth-generation sense, but both integrate low-observable technologies. The Rafale utilizes 70% composite materials, serrated panel edges, engine shielding, and minimized IR signature for reduced

radar cross-section (RCS). The J-10C, likewise, incorporates DSI inlets, composite materials, and aerodynamic shaping to lower head-on RCS.

In real-world detection terms, both aircraft can be tracked by modern AESA radars and AWACS, but the Rafale is generally considered stealthier overall, especially from oblique angles. However, Pakistani AWACS and ground radar systems effectively tracked Rafale ingress during Operation Sindoor, suggesting that stealth alone did not assure invisibility.



Combat Performance: The 2025 India-Pakistan Skirmish

The terror attack in Pahalgam on April 22, 2025, which resulted in the deaths of over 40 Indian civilians and security personnel, marked a grim turning point in the already tense relationship between India and Pakistan. Within hours, intelligence pointed towards a militant group allegedly operating from Pakistani-administered Kashmir. The Indian government, under immense domestic pressure, convened an emergency session of its National Security Council and authorized a swift and decisive military response.

India's military launched Operation Sindoor, a limited but high-impact aerial campaign designed to dismantle suspected terror infrastructure across the Line of Control (LoC) without escalating into a full-scale war. Central to this operation was

the deployment of Rafale fighters from Ambala Air Base, which executed precision strikes using SCALP EG cruise missiles. These air-to-ground missiles, launched from standoff distances of over 500 km, allowed Indian pilots to strike deep inside Pakistani territory without breaching airspace boundaries. Targets reportedly included weapons depots, training camps, and communication hubs used by militant groups. The operation demonstrated the Rafale's exceptional range, precision, and survivability during offensive deep-strike missions.

However, as the initial success of Operation Sindoor made headlines, Pakistan's military prepared a swift counter-response, activating high readiness levels across its air defense network. On May 7 and 8, the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) launched Operation Bunyan-um Marsoos, designed as a retaliatory and defensive operation aimed at neutralizing Indian incursions and asserting control over its airspace. In this operation, Pakistan scrambled a combination of J-10C and F-16 squadrons, supported by Karar-class AWACS platforms. These aircraft engaged Indian fighters patrolling near the LoC in multiple Beyond Visual Range (BVR) skirmishes, some of which spilled into contested airspace.

In these engagements, the J-10Cs, armed with PL-15 long-range air-to-air missiles, capitalized on their data-linked coordination and extended missile range. According to Pakistan's Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR), at least two Indian aircraft were downed. Open-source intelli-

gence (OSINT) analysts, using satellite imagery and intercepted communication, later confirmed the wreckage of one IAF Rafale in Pakistani-administered territory. This revelation sent shockwaves through global defense circles, as it marked the first confirmed combat loss of a Rafale anywhere in the world.

Western defense media later cited anonymous sources within Dassault Aviation, who discreetly acknowledged the loss of a Rafale fighter, though the exact circumstances remained unclear. Additionally, U.S.-based intelligence firm StratView reported that another Su-30MKI had also been shot down, bringing India's total confirmed losses in the May skirmish to two fixed-wing aircraft.

India, for its part, neither confirmed nor denied the losses. The Ministry of Defence maintained a strategic silence, likely to control domestic narratives and avoid triggering wider escalation. Nevertheless, the May 2025 aerial confrontations marked the most intense India-Pakistan dogfights since the Kargil conflict in 1999 and served as a critical testbed for the performance of modern multirole fighters in real-world combat.

The incident also forced a re-evaluation of India's assumptions about air dominance, missile superiority, and the survivability of

its most advanced platforms. Conversely, Pakistan leveraged the engagements to project the efficacy of its Chinese-supplied J-10C fighters and PL-15 missiles, showcasing a credible deterrent to Indian air superiority.

Strategic and Doctrinal Fallout

The air battles of May 2025 have already begun to reshape defense policies in both nations. India, while achieving its immediate strike objectives, must now reassess its assumptions about BVR superiority and survivability. The loss of a Rafale, even under ambiguous circumstances, dented its aura of invincibility. This could prompt greater investment in stealth drones, AI-assisted EW systems, and next-gen aircraft procurement, such as the AMCA or an expanded Rafale fleet.

Pakistan, on the other hand, has found validation for its heavy investment in Chinese technology. The J-10C's performance, particularly with the PL-15, bolstered its standing as a serious 4.5-gen threat. The PAF is reportedly pursuing additional J-10CE units, and interest from countries like Iran and Egypt has spiked.

Doctrinally, both countries are expected to shift towards greater integration of

AWACS, ISR drones, and AI-assisted combat planning. The 2025 skirmish proved that in BVR warfare, information dominance and networked missile launches often matter more than raw aircraft performance.

Conclusion

The May 2025 air clashes marked a pivotal moment in South Asian aerial warfare, with the Rafale and J-10C, two 4.5-generation fighters from opposing sides, facing off in real combat for the first time. The Rafale's advanced avionics and multirole capability proved vital for surgical strikes, but the J-10C, representing China's growing aeronautical prowess, secured significant victories that challenged Western assumptions. The aftermath of the conflict extends beyond the battlefield. The success of the J-10C is reshaping global defense markets, prompting nations to reconsider their future fighter procurement strategies. For India, the confrontation may accelerate efforts toward developing indigenous stealth technologies and next-gen warfare systems. Meanwhile, Pakistan's reliance on the J-10C reinforces China's position as a trusted defense partner. The 2025 conflict, sparked by retaliation, has set the stage for a new aerial arms race in Asia, with lasting implications for regional and global military dynamics.



Sip, Scroll, Repeat the Dangerous Drift of Disinformation

By Hammad Hassan

It started, as these things often do, over a steaming cup of chai. I was sitting with a friend at a roadside tea stall in Islamabad, enjoying a brief escape from deadlines and digital noise. That's when it happened — we stumbled into a heated argument. Not over politics, sports, or the usual tea-time banter, but over a post he saw on Instagram claiming that the Pakistan army planned and attacked India, in mooring also had deployed troops across the Line of Control in response to recent Indian aggression. I looked at him, surprised. I'd seen no such news in any credible outlet. As a journalist, my radar for misinformation is constantly humming, and this one rang all the alarms.

"I saw it myself — a video of soldiers, tanks moving, the works!" he insisted. It didn't matter that the footage was actually from an old military parade. The post had gone viral, shared by hundreds, liked by thousands. The caption? "Breaking: Pakistan responds to Indian provocation!" No date. No source. No context.

Welcome to the digital Wild West.

In the age of social media, misinformation spreads faster than wildfire, shaping public opinion, stoking tensions, and muddying the waters of truth. This isn't a new problem, but it's getting more dangerous. While traditional media had editors and fact-checkers, social media has algorithms. And these algorithms don't prioritize truth — they prioritize engagement.

Just recently, a doctored video of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi seemingly endorsing military action against Pakistan surfaced online. It was shared widely before fact-checkers could flag it as manipulated. On the Pakistani side, similarly deceptive posts claimed India was planning a "false flag operation," citing vague sources and dramatic visuals. In both countries, millions watched, shared, and believed.

The consequences are real. Public sentiment hardens. Online rage spills into real-world policies. And in a region as



volatile as South Asia, where history is heavy and borders tense, fake news isn't just misinformation — it's a match near dry grass.

But it's not just geopolitics that suffers. In the 2024 general elections in India, fake videos circulated showing opposition leaders making inflammatory speeches — videos later proven to be deep-fakes. In Pakistan, a fabricated voice note of a prominent female politician allegedly conspiring with a foreign power made rounds on WhatsApp, tarnishing reputations and distracting from real issues.

What makes this age of misinformation so insidious is how personalized it is. On our phones, the truth is tailored. Algorithms feed us what we want to see, not what we need to know. So if you're inclined to believe your country is always right or your leader is always honest, there's content curated just for you — true or not.

And this isn't just a South Asian issue. Globally, from the January 6th Capitol riots in the U.S. to vaccine conspiracies in Europe, misinformation has moved from the fringe to the center, distorting democracy and public health alike.

So what's the solution?

It starts with education. Digital literacy must be treated as a core subject — not just for students but for adults too. People need to learn how to verify sources, cross-check facts, and recognize bias. Media organizations need to collaborate with tech platforms to promote reliable information, while tech companies must be pushed to refine their content moderation practices, especially in high-risk regions.

But most importantly, we need a cultural shift — a return to skepticism, a habit of questioning before sharing, a willingness to pause before reacting. Because sometimes, the enemy isn't the country across the border. It's the lie whispering on our timelines. That day at the tea stall, I opened a fact-checking site on my phone and showed my friend the truth. He blinked, laughed sheepishly, and said, "Yaar, mujhe laga asli tha." I nodded, not smugly, but with concern. Because next time, the post might not be about troops or speeches. It might be about vaccines. Or elections. Or people's lives.

And by then, chai won't be enough to fix what misinformation has broken.

The Role of Metallic Fancy Yarns in Jewelry: A Comprehensive Review University of Agriculture Faisalabad, Pakistan

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Abstract:

Metallic fancy yarns have gained significant popularity in contemporary jewelry design due to their unique aesthetic qualities and versatility. These yarns, which combine metallic fibers with traditional textiles, offer designers a wide range of possibilities for creating intricate and visually striking pieces. This article reviews the various types of metallic fancy yarns, their properties, applications in jewelry making, and their cultural significance. Additionally, we examine the materials used in the creation of these yarns, their sustainability, and the future of metallic fancy yarns in the jewelry industry.

Introduction:

Metallic yarn is a dynamic and resilient material that has revolutionized the world of textiles and jewelry making. Its luxurious charm, adaptability, and resistance to environmental factors make it a sought-after choice among designers, artisans, and creatives. Metallic fancy yarn, a unique material in the world of jewelry design, has gained popularity due to its versatility, texture, and aesthetic appeal. Combining metallic threads with traditional yarns, it brings a modern twist to jewelry-making. Among the myriad yarns available to jewelry designers, two major categories have emerged: conventional yarns and metallic fancy yarns. metallic fancy yarns are a more recent development, combining traditional fibers with metallic filaments such as aluminum, copper, or stainless steel to add a shimmering, reflective quality to the material., two major categories have emerged: conventional yarns and metallic fancy yarn. Silver and gold metallic yarns are particularly prized for their timeless allure, and are often used in the production of space suits, protective clothing, and cutting-edge smart textiles. In the realm of fashion, metallic yarns add a luxurious touch to clothing lines, accessories, and even footwear.

Metallic Fancy Yarns:

Metallic fancy yarns are made by mixing metallic fibers with materials like cotton, silk, nylon, or acrylic. The metallic

elements, such as foil, glitter, or metal-coated strands, give the yarn a shiny, reflective look. These yarns are popular in jewelry design because they can create detailed textures and add a touch of sparkle and luxury to any piece.

Types of metallic fancy yarn:

There are several types of metallic fancy yarns available, each offering different aesthetic and functional properties for designers. Each type of metallic fancy yarn has unique attributes, distinctive features, adding glamour and variety to jewelry

These include:

- **Metallic Thread Yarns:** Coated with metals like aluminum or copper, offering sleek finishes for delicate detailing.
- **Lurex Yarns:** Metallic thread wrapped around a core fiber, ideal for high-glamour, shimmering accents.
- **Metallic Ribbon Yarns:** Flat and wide, perfect for bold, structured, and modern creations.
- **Metallic Boucle Yarns:** Looped textures for playful and artistic looks.

Composition :

The composition varies depending on the manufacturer, with variations in color,

thickness, and texture. Metallic fancy yarn typically consists of following main components:

Metallic Threads: These are often made from fine metals like aluminum, silver, or gold, which give the yarn its signature sheen.

Blending Materials: Commonly, nylon or polyester is mixed with the metallic threads to provide durability and flexibility.

Lurex and Other Additives: Special additives like Lurex or metallic-coated fibers are often used to enhance the visual impact of the yarn. The fibers mixed with these metallic threads vary, with silk, cotton, nylon, and even synthetic fibers being commonly used. This blend results in yarns with a lustrous sheen and durability, ideal for use in jewelry making. Metallic threads are often twisted or braided into the yarn to enhance the reflective quality, giving the yarn a shimmering effect.

Characteristics of Metallic Fancy Yarns:

Metallic fancy yarns are celebrated for their shine and reflectivity, offering a brilliant luster that enhances the glamour of jewelry designs. Available in a variety of textures, from glossy to crinkled, they allow for intricate patterns and dimensional details. Their versatility supports both delicate and bold creations, as they can be braided, twisted, or woven into various designs.



Despite being lightweight, these yarns are strong and durable, maintaining their shape over time. They also come in a wide range of colors, from classic metallic shades to vibrant multicolored options, ensuring limitless design possibilities. Comfortable to wear, they exude luxury when paired with materials like silk or acrylic. Suitable for techniques such as knitting, crocheting, weaving, and knotting, they encourage creativity and innovation. Eco-friendly options made from recycled materials further appeal to sustainable practices. With their ability to add intricate details and customization, metallic fancy yarns remain a versatile and elegant choice for jewelry crafting.

Challenges and Considerations:

While metallic fancy yarn shines as a versatile and glamorous material for jewelry making, it comes with its own set of challenges. Designers need to handle it carefully, as its delicate fibers can fray or break during crafting. Over time, exposure to elements like water or perfumes may cause its luster to fade, requiring thoughtful maintenance to preserve its shine. Additionally, its slippery nature can make it tricky to work with, demanding skill and precision. On the bright side, metallic fancy

yarn is an eco-friendly alternative to traditional metals, often made from recycled materials and supporting sustainable practices in jewelry design. By reducing reliance on precious metals and offering lighter, luxurious designs, it appeals to both environmentally conscious creators and consumers. Despite its challenges, metallic yarn strikes a balance between creativity, elegance, and ethical appeal, making it a compelling choice for modern jewelry-making.

Applications of Metallic Fancy Yarns in Jewelry Making:

Metallic fancy yarn is a versatile material used in crafting various types of jewelry and accessories, including necklaces, bracelets, earrings, rings, and hair accessories. Its shiny finish adds a modern and luxurious touch to designs, whether braided, woven, or knitted. It can be combined with beads, gemstones, and other decorative elements to create intricate patterns and textures. Techniques like macramé, bead embellishment, wire wrapping, and crochet take advantage of its reflective qualities, offering durability and elegance. Metallic yarn enhances both casual and formal jewelry

pieces, providing unique and stylish aesthetic.

Sustainability of Metallic Fancy Yarns:

Metallic fancy yarn is a sustainable choice, utilizing recycled materials, energy-efficient production, and reduced chemical usage. It is durable, recyclable, and minimizes environmental impact with lower carbon footprints and waste. Innovations like bio-based alternatives and nanotechnology enhance its eco-friendliness. Ethical practices, biodegradability, recycling, and sustainable packaging further support its appeal as an environmentally responsible option.

Conclusion:

Metallic fancy yarns represent a fascinating intersection of traditional textile art and modern jewelry design. Their ability to combine beauty, texture, and versatility has made them a key material in the creation of jewelry pieces that appeal to a wide range of tastes and trends. As the industry moves toward more sustainable practices and innovative designs, the role of metallic fancy yarns in jewelry is likely to continue evolving, offering exciting possibilities for both designers and consumers alike.

Met Gala 2025: Key Information & Overview & Anna Wintour: The Force Behind Fashion's Most Powerful Night



By Hina Kashif

The Met Gala 2025 was held on May 5th at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, continuing its legacy as one of the most prestigious and talked-about fashion events in the world. Organized annually to raise funds for the Costume Institute, the gala also serves as the unveiling of the institute's spring exhibition. This year's theme, "Superfine: Tailoring Black Style," marked a shift toward culturally and historically rich storytelling through fashion. Drawing attention to the artistry and symbolism of tailored clothing within Black communities, the event blended fashion, politics, and history in a way that resonated globally.

Theme: "Superfine: Tailoring Black Style"

The 2025 theme celebrated the legacy of Black dandyism—an often overlooked yet deeply powerful cultural expression. The exhibition explored how tailored clothing has historically allowed Black individuals, particularly men and gender-nonconforming

people, to reclaim dignity and power through personal style. Inspired by Monica L. Miller's book *Slaves to Fashion*, the theme dissected how fashion, especially refined tailoring, became a means of challenging stereotypes and asserting identity. With garments dating back to the 18th century, the exhibition showcased both resistance and elegance, examining how a sharp suit could be as revolutionary as a speech.

Dress Code: "Tailored For You"

The dress code for Met Gala 2025 encouraged guests to embrace tailoring in all its forms—traditional, radical, gender-fluid, and culturally significant. "Tailored For You" was both a style cue and a call for personal storytelling through clothes. Attendees were encouraged to wear custom, bespoke pieces that reflected their own heritage, identity, or interpretation of dandyism. This led to a breathtaking array of suits, frock coats, fitted gowns with lapels, and modern adaptations of classic

tailoring. It was a rare night where structured fashion took center stage, but with modern twists that honored the past and future.

Hosts & Co-Chairs

The event was co-chaired by a diverse and stylish lineup: Pharrell Williams, Colman Domingo, Lewis Hamilton, A\$AP Rocky, and Anna Wintour, with LeBron James serving as an honorary co-chair. Each brought a unique perspective to the table—Pharrell with his fashion design background, Domingo with his theatrical elegance, Hamilton and Rocky as fashion-forward icons, and Wintour as the enduring steward of the Met Gala. Their leadership set the tone for a night of style that was culturally rooted and fashionably bold.

Fashion Highlights & Standout Looks

The red carpet was an explosion of creativity, authenticity, and historical reference. Zendaya stunned in a white

structured suit gown reminiscent of Bianca Jagger's '70s style, designed by John Galliano. Rihanna confirmed her pregnancy in a jaw-dropping black cloak by Rick Owens, while A\$AP Rocky paid tribute to West African fashion with a pearl-embellished kilt. Colman Domingo wore royal blue Valentino, lined with excerpts from Black poets, symbolizing the fusion of art and identity. Alex Newell's tuxedo gown turned heads with its daring neckline and train, redefining what masculinity can look like on the red carpet. Diana Ross, a legend in her own right, made a powerful return after 22 years in a sequined cape gown that embodied glamour and legacy.

Designers & Brands Represented

The evening was also a showcase of groundbreaking designers. Wales Bonner blended British tailoring with Afro-Caribbean themes. Telfar reimaged unisex tailoring with sleek, minimalist designs. LaQuan Smith and Thebe Magugu brought bold color and silhouette innovation, while Kenneth Nicholson incorporated spiritual elements into his structured pieces. The late Virgil Abloh was honored posthumously with pieces inspired by his Off-White collections. Classic fashion houses like Dior Men, Valentino, and Thom Browne presented some of the most talked-about looks of the night, all tailored with clear reverence to the theme.

Costume Institute Exhibition Highlights

The exhibition itself, "Superfine: Tailoring Black Style," was one of the most intellectually rich presentations the Costume Institute has ever mounted. Split into twelve thematic galleries, it featured over 70 garments spanning centuries. Visitors were taken through the journey of the Black dandy—from enslaved individuals who dressed above their station as acts of resistance, to Harlem Renaissance icons, to modern-day celebrities. One gallery explored ball culture and its influence on fashion, while another focused on tailoring in hip-hop and pop culture. The exhibition was both deeply informative and visually stunning, combining fashion history with archival footage, photography, and written word.

Cultural Moments & Media Buzz

Beyond the fashion, the 2025 Met Gala was culturally significant. It offered a platform for Black excellence to be celebrated not as a trend, but as a foundation. The evening was full of poignant moments—Zendaya's gown sweeping across the Met steps, Rihanna's emotional maternity reveal, and a tribute segment honoring André Leon Talley and Virgil Abloh. The media buzzed with praise for the gala's intentional theme and the diversity of designers, models, and creatives involved. Publications across fashion, art, and politics acknowledged that the 2025 Gala did more than just display couture—it sparked meaningful dialogue.



Social Media Trends

On social media, #MetGala2025 and #TailoredForYou dominated the conversation. TikTok creators posted breakdowns of historical references in celebrity outfits. Instagram was flooded with side-by-side comparisons of modern and vintage Black fashion icons. Fashion commentators praised the night's focus on tailoring, while others used platforms like Twitter to discuss the deeper political messages sewn into the seams of many outfits. The event was a rare intersection of virality and substance—both trendy and timeless.

Criticism and Controversies

Despite the overall acclaim, the night was not without critique. Some fashion critics pointed out instances of superficial engage-

ment with the theme, particularly among a few high-profile attendees who wore generic suits without context. A minor controversy also arose regarding the representation of lesser-known Black tailors, with some commentators arguing that commercial fashion houses overshadowed more grassroots voices. However, these criticisms were part of broader conversations about inclusion, cultural respect, and the future of themed fashion galas.

Closing Notes

Met Gala 2025 succeeded not only as a spectacle of fashion but as a celebration of culture, resilience, and storytelling. It honored the artistry of Black tailoring and elevated narratives that are often left on the

margins of high fashion. With its blend of glamour and historical depth, this year's gala set a new standard for what fashion events can achieve—making it one of the most impactful and meaningful Met Galas in recent memory.

Anna Wintour: The Force Behind Fashion's Most Powerful Night

The Met Gala is often remembered for its daring outfits, meme-worthy red carpet moments, and a galaxy of A-list stars. But behind this glittering spectacle stands one formidable figure whose influence has shaped the event into what it is today: Anna Wintour. As the editor-in-chief of Vogue and the artistic director of Condé Nast, Wintour is not just a tastemaker—she is the visionary architect of modern fashion culture.

Her control over the Met Gala extends beyond selecting themes; she crafts every detail of the event, from the exclusive guest list to the intricate table arrangements. But her significance doesn't start—or end—at the Met steps. Anna Wintour's career tells a story of bold ambition, fearless reinvention, and relentless dedication to fashion as both art and industry.



Born Into Journalism, Drawn to Fashion

Anna Wintour was born into a world of media influence. Her father, Charles Wintour, was a highly respected editor at London's *Evening Standard*. From an early age, she was immersed in the world of publishing and storytelling. Recognizing her budding passion for fashion, her father arranged for her to work at a boutique when she was just 15. Even as a teenager, Wintour displayed a rebellious and self-assured spirit—challenging school dress codes and debuting the now-iconic bob haircut that remains her signature look.

As a teen, she not only consumed fashion voraciously but also provided her father with tips on how to make his paper more appealing to younger readers. These early glimpses of her editorial instincts foreshadowed the sharp, decisive voice that would later redefine *Vogue* and the broader fashion world.

Climbing the Fashion Media Ladder

Wintour's path to power was neither smooth nor conventional. She began with

stints in fashion boutiques before entering magazine publishing in the UK. A brief role at Harper's & Queen exposed her to the editorial process, but internal politics and limited creative freedom prompted her to look abroad. Encouraged by a relationship at the time, she relocated to New York City—a move that would prove to be career-defining.

In the U.S., she held several high-profile editorial positions, including at New York magazine and *House & Garden* (which she controversially rebranded as HG). She became known for her bold visual style and innovative covers. During a pivotal interview with then-*Vogue* editor Grace Mirabella, Wintour famously declared, "I want your job." Though audacious, the statement revealed her clarity of purpose and unshakeable ambition.

Revolutionizing Vogue

In 1987, Wintour finally achieved her goal: she was named editor-in-chief of *American Vogue*. Her arrival signaled a seismic shift in the magazine's aesthetic and cultural tone. She moved away from the heavily posed, polished imagery that had defined earlier eras. Instead, she ushered in a style marked by minimalism, realism, and relatability—models with messy hair, casual poses, and approachable charm.

But Wintour didn't lower fashion's standards—she elevated its meaning. She blended commercial appeal with editorial excellence, transforming *Vogue* into a platform that both shaped and reflected the zeitgeist. Her editorial choices went beyond

trends. She launched careers, defined super-model culture, and turned fashion journalism into a global cultural force.

Fashion's Hollywood Muse

Wintour's commanding presence and mysterious aura made her an irresistible muse for pop culture. The most notable representation came in the 2006 film *The Devil Wears Prada*, where Meryl Streep portrayed a character allegedly inspired by Wintour—Miranda Priestly, the icy editor-in-chief feared and revered in equal measure. The film, based on the novel by Wintour's former assistant, painted a vivid (if dramatized) portrait of life under her leadership.

Beyond fictional portrayals, Wintour has starred in fashion documentaries such as *The September Issue* and *The First Monday in May*, giving audiences rare access to her world. These films offered a glimpse behind the editorial curtain, showcasing her perfectionism, vision, and unmatched work ethic.

Reimagining the Met Gala

Since taking over as chair of the Met Gala in 1995, Anna Wintour has transformed the fundraiser from a modest museum benefit into the Super Bowl of fashion. Under her leadership, the Met Gala became an annual cultural event that blends art, fashion, celebrity, and spectacle. Each year's theme reflects a carefully curated concept tied to the Costume Institute's exhibition, often exploring nuanced social, historical, or cultural ideas.

From *Heavenly Bodies* to *Camp*, Wintour's themes have challenged designers and celebrities to interpret fashion as narrative. The 2025 theme, "Superfine: Tailoring Black Style," celebrated the tradition of Black dandyism and the political power of tailoring. Once again, it reflected her ability to lead with cultural relevance and creative vision.

She controls everything—from who gets an invitation to what's served at dinner. Celebrities, designers, and influencers all know: if you're not on Wintour's list, you're not part of the conversation.

Her Legacy: Beyond Fashion, Into Culture

Anna Wintour's influence stretches far beyond glossy pages and glamorous nights. She is not only a curator of fashion but a cultural gatekeeper, deciding who and what defines style at any given moment. Her advocacy for emerging designers, her eye for marketable talent, and her collaborations with industry giants have made her a force that bridges fashion, business, and media.

She is also a mentor and power broker—known for helping launch the careers of designers like John Galliano, Alexander McQueen, and Marc Jacobs. Through *Vogue*'s pages and her influence at Condé Nast, she has championed political activism, diversity in fashion, and artistic innovation.

Final Thoughts: The Woman Behind the Curtain

To many, Anna Wintour represents fashion's ultimate authority—a woman who, with a glance, can crown the next



style icon. But her real power lies in her longevity, adaptability, and vision. She has not only kept *Vogue* relevant in a rapidly changing world, but also built the Met Gala into the ultimate convergence of culture and couture.

As trends come and go, Wintour's position remains unshaken. Through her lens, fashion is not just what we wear—it's how we express who we are. And for that, she will remain at the center of fashion's story for years to come.





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