

Pahalgam 2025

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Pahalgam 2025: India's Response to Cross-Border Terrorism

Context:

On **April 22, 2025**, a **terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir**, claimed the lives of **26 people**, including tourists and civilians. This was one of the deadliest attacks in recent years. Preliminary investigations by Indian security agencies confirmed **cross-border links to Pakistan-based terror groups**.

In light of this, the **Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS)**—India's top decision-making body on national security—announced a set of strong countermeasures, reflecting a shift in India's **strategic, diplomatic, and military posture** towards Pakistan.

India's 5-Point Action Plan Against Pakistan

1. Suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)

- India has **suspended the Indus Waters Treaty**, originally signed in **1960** under World Bank mediation.
- This treaty governs the sharing of the Indus River and its tributaries between India and Pakistan.
- The suspension is a **major diplomatic shift**, aimed at pressuring Pakistan to “**credibly and irrevocably abjure terrorism**.”

2. Closure of Attari-Wagah Integrated Check Post

- India has **shut down the Attari Integrated Check Post**, ceasing **all cross-border movement of people and goods**.
- Pakistani nationals already in India with valid documents may return by **01 May 2025**.

3. Cancellation of the SAARC Visa Exemption Scheme (SVES)

- The **SVES**, which allowed visa-free travel for certain categories of Pakistani nationals, has been **revoked**.
- All existing SVES visas for Pakistani nationals have been **cancelled**.
- Pakistani citizens under this scheme have been asked to **exit India within 48 hours**.

4. Expulsion of Pakistani Military Advisors

- All **Pakistani military, naval, and air advisors** stationed in the **High Commission in New Delhi** have been **declared Persona Non Grata**.
- India will also withdraw its military attaches from the **Indian High Commission in Islamabad**.

5. Reduction in Diplomatic Engagement

- India will **reduce its diplomatic staff in Islamabad** from **55 to 30** by **01 May 2025**, indicating a deliberate **scaling down of bilateral diplomatic engagement**.

Geopolitical Context: Pakistan's Increasing Isolation

A. Decline in Strategic Importance

- Post the **US withdrawal from Afghanistan (2021)**, Pakistan has **lost strategic leverage**.
- **Economic aid from the US** has significantly declined, weakening its geopolitical standing.

B. Erosion of Gulf Support

- Gulf nations like **Saudi Arabia and UAE** have **refused further bailouts**, citing frustration with **Pakistan's repeated financial mismanagement**.

C. Strained China-Pakistan Relations

- Despite major Chinese investments under **CPEC**, many projects are **stalled** due to:

- **Corruption**
- **Security concerns**, including attacks on Chinese workers
- As a result, **Beijing's trust** in Pakistan has eroded.

D. Hostile Relations with Afghanistan

- The **Taliban-led Afghanistan**, once considered a strategic ally, has turned hostile.
- Pakistan is witnessing **increased cross-border attacks** and instability along the **Afghan-Pakistan border**.

E. Rising Tensions with Iran

- Recent incidents, such as **the killing of Pakistani workers by Baloch militants in Iran**, have triggered **retaliatory cross-border strikes** by both nations.

Islamabad's Perspective: Perception of Indian Assertiveness

- Pakistan perceives India's moves as part of a larger strategy to **marginalise and isolate Islamabad**.
 - Developments feeding this perception:
 - **Abrogation of Article 370 (2019)** and growing **normalcy in Kashmir**.
 - **Record-breaking tourism** and economic stability in the Valley.
 - **US de-hyphenation policy**, treating **India and Pakistan separately**.
 - **PM Modi's visit to Saudi Arabia** and **US Vice President J.D. Vance's India visit**, with **no stop in Pakistan**.
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The Pahalgam Attack: Pakistan's Desperate Geopolitical Signal

- The attack is viewed by analysts as a **calculated provocation**, aimed at regaining international relevance.
 - Statements from **Pakistan Army Chief Gen. Asim Munir** invoked:
 - The **Two-Nation Theory**
 - Kashmir as the “**jugular vein**” of Pakistan
 - The timing of the attack, amid global diplomatic activity, may reflect Pakistan's intent to **assert itself as a regional stakeholder**, even via negative attention.
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India's Strategic Path Forward

A. Internal Security Response

- Conduct a **security audit** to identify lapses and improve operational efficiency.
- Prevent politicisation of the incident; encourage collaboration with **J&K state leadership**, such as the **National Conference**.
- Ensure continuity of **tourism and developmental projects** in Kashmir.

B. Diplomatic Strategy

- Maintain international focus on **Pakistan's support for terror networks**.
 - Prevent the normalisation of terrorism as a diplomatic tool.
 - Strengthen India's image as a **stable and responsible regional power**.
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Conclusion: Sustaining Stability and Development in Kashmir

India must ensure that the **Pahalgam terror attack** does not derail the ongoing efforts toward **peace and prosperity in Jammu & Kashmir**. The long-term goal should focus on:

- **People-centric development**
- **Infrastructure and tourism promotion**
- **Counter-terror preparedness**

India's response must reflect a **balance of assertiveness and strategic restraint**, keeping in mind regional stability and its global image.



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