

A Pakistani perspective on root cause of India-Pakistan conflict

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An Indian guard stands by a blocked street during a lockdown in Srinagar, Kashmir, after the Indian government stripped the region of constitutional rights in 2020.

The brief but intense conflict between India and Pakistan has been widely described not only as a military confrontation but a war of narratives. Occurring in the aftermath of the deadly Pahalgam attack in Kashmir on April 22, 2025, International observers noticed the stark contrast in responses: India's aggressive stance and Pakistan's call for de-escalation. This scrutiny was prompted by the Indian state and media's use of dehumanizing propaganda and their repeated, unsubstantiated accusations labeling Pakistan as a "terrorist" state, raising concerns about India's domestic policies concerning its 200 million Muslim population.

The two nuclear-armed countries share over a 3,000-kilometer (2,000-mile) border. The ceasefire declared on May 10, 2025, marked the end of a dangerous escalation. However, the deeper battle — driven by vilifying narratives and Islamophobia, exacerbated by India's ambition for regional dominance — continues to reverberate across the region and the world.

From Pahalgam to ceasefire: A timeline of escalation

On April 22, a brutal terrorist attack in Pahalgam, Jammu and Kashmir, killed 26 civilians, mostly tourists. A little-known group, The Resistance Front, claimed responsibility for the attack. India swiftly blamed Pakistan for backing the attackers, a claim that Islamabad vehemently denied. From the political leadership to celebrity figures across the board, Pakistan condemned the Pahalgam attack.

The sympathy, which may have come from Pakistanis knowing all too well the pain of losing innocent lives — [nearly 70,000 from 2000 to 2019 in terrorist attacks](#) — was seen on the other side of the border as hollow words reeking of complicity. While Pakistan called for an independent investigation into India's claim of Pakistan's involvement, what followed was a rapid military escalation. India launched "[Operation Sindoor](#)" and began attacks in Pakistani cities and Azad Jammu Kashmir on May 7. India claimed that its strike killed [100+ "terrorists"](#) and Pakistan reported the Indian missiles hit residential areas, killing 40 civilians, including

children, apart from 11 military personnel.

Three days of cross-border artillery exchanges, drone warfare, and missile strikes brought the two nuclear-armed neighbors to the brink of full-scale war. By May 10, after international diplomatic pressure (U.S. President Donald Trump included), a ceasefire was brokered.

Background of the Kashmir Valley: silenced, occupied, and sanitized

The Pahalgam attack happened in Indian-occupied Kashmir, which is one of the most heavily militarized zones in the world, with estimates of over 600,000 Indian troops stationed in the region. Following the controversial accession of the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir to India in 1947, the region has remained a flashpoint between India and Pakistan. While initially granted special autonomy under Article 370 of the Indian Constitution, this status was revoked unilaterally by the Indian government in August 2019, effectively dissolving the region's limited self-governance and converting it into a territory ruled directly from New Delhi.

Kashmir may be portrayed as a picturesque valley in India's media, but the state's pervasive military strategy impacts every corner of civilian life:

- Checkpoints, surveillance towers, and armed patrols are a daily reality
- Mass arrests, including minors, and curfews are frequently imposed
- Journalists, academics, and human rights defenders face harassment, imprisonment, and censorship

The Indian government has also employed advanced surveillance technologies, including facial recognition and drone monitoring, often with support from foreign allies like "Israel."

Post-Pahalgam: Retaliation instead of reflection?

What ensued after the Pahalgam attack, however, was not a reckoning of the Kashmir occupation. The Indian mainstream media, largely aligned with the ruling government, blamed Pakistan for meddling in India's internal affairs — implying Kashmir was a strictly Indian affair — and raised calls for retribution. On platforms like X (formerly Twitter), hashtags calling for the complete destruction of Pakistan trended for days. Users drew comparisons between Pakistan and Gaza, invoking imagery of total annihilation and dehumanization.

Normalization of media propaganda

Indian actress-turned-politician [Kangana Ranaut](#) took to Instagram to say that Pakistan “is full of bloody cockroaches. A horrible, disgusting country full of terrorists that needs to be wiped off the world map.” Concurrently, mainstream Indian media falsely reported and celebrated the complete destruction of major Pakistani cities by Indian attacks.

This rhetoric in India reflected a deeper, more troubling trend: the growing acceptance of Islamophobia in its public discourse, where rejoicing in a neighboring country's destruction is justified by consistently dehumanizing its population. Over the years, Pakistanis have increasingly been portrayed as monolithic extremists, a narrative that found fertile ground in a media ecosystem that is dominated by nationalist voices.

This certainly has not happened overnight. India's profound ideological transformation met its height when Narendra Modi assumed office in 2014. The fuel of this shift is Hindutva, a form of Hindu nationalism that envisions India as a Hindu-only nation, marginalizing its religious minorities, particularly Muslims and Christians.

Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is closely aligned with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a right-wing paramilitary organization that has long

advocated for a Hindu-first identity. Under Modi's rule, the RSS has gained unprecedented influence over state institutions, education, and media.

As a result, Muslims, who make up over 200 million of India's population, have faced increasing discrimination. From lynchings over beef consumption to discriminatory citizenship laws like the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), the state has institutionalized exclusion.

The global power illusion and internal contradictions

While fuelling a deep-seated Islamophobic exclusion, India paradoxically promotes its diversity — enabled by its billionaires, technology sector, iconic film industry, and religious tourism — as it pursues global aspirations. This projection contrasts with its domestic realities: suppressing indigenous communities, marginalizing religious and ethnic minorities, and weaponizing nationalism to consolidate power.

This internal contradiction was laid bare during the May 2025 India-Pakistan escalation. The calls for Pakistan's destruction by Indian politicians and media were not isolated outbursts: They were the culmination of years of state-sanctioned Islamophobia, nurtured by a political ideology that sees diversity as a threat rather than a strength.

A turning point for global Islamophobia?

Pakistan's measured response, juxtaposed with India's aggressive media campaign, has prompted some international voices to reconsider long-held biases within South Asia's geopolitical landscape.

As the dust settles over what the world witnessed in real time — the dangers of unchecked hate, misinformation, and digital radicalization — one question looms large: Could this moment mark a much-needed and perhaps awaited turning point in the global conversation around Islamophobia?

Whether the unmasking of India's terrorism accusation leads to meaningful change remains to be seen. But one thing is clear: The war may have ended on May 10, but the battle for truth — and justice for Kashmir — is far from over.

