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Operation Sindoor Anniversary: India's New Security Doctrine

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Operation Sindoor Anniversary: India's New Security Doctrine

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WHY IN NEWS

The first anniversary of Operation Sindoor — launched in May 2025 — has prompted extensive strategic assessments of how India’s cross-border precision strikes reshaped its national security doctrine, military signalling, and approach to nuclear-threshold conflict.

BACKGROUND: THE PAHALGAM ATTACK AND ITS AFTERMATH

Since the Pahalgam terror attack of April 2025, in which 26 civilians were killed, India has been reassessing its counter-terrorism doctrine. The Resistance Front (TRF), a shadow group of Lashkar-e-Taiba, claimed responsibility. India’s intelligence agencies attributed planning to Pakistan-based outfits operating with ISI backing.

India initially pursued diplomatic pressure — demarching Pakistan’s ambassador, suspending the Indus Waters Treaty in its operative protocols, and closing airspace to Pakistani aircraft. When these produced no satisfactory response, the government authorised a military operation.

THE OPERATION: SCOPE AND EXECUTION

Operation Sindoor — launched in 2025 on May 7 — was a coordinated tri-service operation:

PARAMETER	DETAIL
Targets struck	9 terror infrastructure sites
Locations	PoJK (5 sites) + Pakistan’s Punjab (4 sites)
Weapons used	BrahMos cruise missiles, precision-guided munitions
Aircraft deployed	100+ (largest aerial engagement since 1971)
Duration of strikes	~25 minutes (Phase 1)

Sites included training camps and logistical hubs linked to **Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT)**, **Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM)**, and **Hizbul Mujahideen (HuM)**. No civilian infrastructure was targeted.

Pakistan retaliated with drone swarms and missile strikes on Indian forward air bases on May 9-10, 2025. The Indian Air Force intercepted the majority using the **S-400 Triumph** (Sudarshana Chakra) and **Akash** air defence systems. India then struck **11 Pakistani military air bases** — including **Nur Khan (Rawalpindi)**, **Sargodha**, **Murid**, **Bholari**, **Rafiqi**, **Sukkur**, **Sialkot**, **Pasrur**, **Chunian**, **Skardu**, and **Jacobabad** — demonstrating the capacity to reach deep inside Pakistani territory.

Since 2025, specifically since May 10, 2025, when Pakistan’s DGMO initiated a hotline call to India’s DGMO at 17:00 IST, a ceasefire has been in effect.

THE STRATEGIC DOCTRINE SHIFT

From Restraint to Zero-Tolerance Deterrence

For decades, India adhered to a doctrine of **strategic restraint** — absorbing terrorist provocations while pursuing diplomatic redressal, premised on nuclear caution and international opinion management. Operation Sindoor marks a structural break:

OLD DOCTRINE	POST-SINDOOR DOCTRINE
Absorb, demarche, de-escalate	Strike precise, signal capability, manage escalation
Cross-border action = nuclear risk	Sub-threshold precision strikes can be calibrated
“Pakistan nuclear umbrella” deters India	India can operate <i>within</i> the nuclear threshold
Reactive — after multiple attacks	Pre-emptive disruption of terror infrastructure

Operating Under Nuclear Overhang

The most consequential strategic lesson: India demonstrated it can conduct **offensive kinetic operations against a nuclear-armed adversary without triggering nuclear escalation** — provided the strikes are precise, limited in scope, and managed with graduated escalation.

This recalibrates Pakistan’s nuclear deterrence calculus. The “threat of nuclear first use” as a shield for conventional aggression is weakened.

Role of Technology

- **BrahMos** (Mach 2.8+ supersonic cruise missile): demonstrated deep-strike accuracy
- **S-400 Triumph (Sudarshana Chakra)**: intercepted Pakistani aerial counter-attacks
- **Akash missile system**: proven effective in layered air defence

- **Space-based ISR (RISAT-2BR series):** real-time targeting intelligence

INDIA'S POST-SINDOOR DIPLOMATIC MANAGEMENT

- Briefed **P5 nations** and key partners within hours to prevent narrative capture by Pakistan
- Presented evidence to UN Security Council of terror infrastructure links
- **US** played a key role in facilitating ceasefire dialogue
- India suspended Indus Waters Treaty talks; normalisation conditional on Pakistan-side action
- Pakistan's counter-narrative ("Operation Marka-e-Haq") found limited international resonance

UPSC RELEVANCE

GS Paper 3 — Internal Security and Defence

- India's counter-terrorism doctrine evolution
- Sub-conventional warfare and proxy conflicts
- Nuclear deterrence and threshold management

GS Paper 2 — International Relations

- India-Pakistan bilateral dynamics
- Role of **multilateral** institutions (UNSC) in regional conflicts

Mains Angles

- ❶ Critically evaluate whether Operation Sindoor represents a structural shift or tactical exception in India's security doctrine.
- ❷ How does India's strike capability affect the stability of nuclear deterrence in South Asia?
- ❸ Examine the role of technology (BrahMos, S-400) in changing India's strategic options.

FACTS CORNER — KNOWLEDGEPEDIA
OPERATION SINDOOR (SINCE MAY 2025 ANNIVERSARY):

9 terror infrastructure sites struck (5 PoJK + 4 Pakistan Punjab)

Weapons: BrahMos missiles, 100+ aircraft

Largest aerial operation since India-Pakistan 1971 war

Air bases struck in retaliation phase: 11 bases – Nur Khan, Sargodha, Murid, Bholari, Rafiqi, Sukkur, Sialkot, Pasrur, Chunian, Skardu, Jacobabad

Ceasefire (since 2025): Pakistan DGMO-initiated hotline call; effective May 10, 2025, 17:00 IST

Air defence used: S-400 Triumf (Sudarshana Chakra), Akash

Doctrine shift: Strategic restraint -> Zero-tolerance deterrence

Targets: LeT, JeM, HuM infrastructure

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