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EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

Operation Sindoor: Gains, Losses and Deterrence

THE HINDU

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Operation Sindoor: Gains, Losses and Deterrence

 **The Hindu**

30 June 2026

GS3

GS2

 Source: ujyari.com — researched, fact-checked & UPSC-mapped


INTERVIEW ANGLE

"A strike can destroy a terror camp in minutes. Can it change a state's decades-old policy of using terror as statecraft? Where does military success end and deterrence begin?"

 Source: [Original editorial](#)
[The Hindu](#)
 **Every fact web-verified against primary sources** (<https://ujyari.com/how-we-verify/>)

WHY THIS MATTERS NOW

Marking one year, **Operation Sindoor** (<https://ujyari.com/terms/operation-sindoor/>) (May 7, 2025) remains the reference point for India's counter-terror doctrine. It answered the **Pahalgam attack** (April 22, 2025) by striking terror hubs at **Bahawalpur and Muridke** inside Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied territory. **Cross-border terrorism continues to emanate from Pakistan; India exercised its right to self-defence; Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India.** For an aspirant, this is a GS3 and GS2 case on **deterrence** (<https://ujyari.com/terms/deterrence/>), **terrorism and strategic doctrine.**

THE CRUX IN 60 WORDS

Operation Sindoor proved India's will and reach: it struck terror infrastructure deep inside Pakistan and rejected nuclear blackmail. But military success is not the same as changed behaviour. Pakistan's use of terror as statecraft persists, and rapid escalation showed the risks. Sindoor demonstrated capability and resolve; the strategic calculus shifts only with **sustained deterrence**, diplomacy and escalation control.

THE ISSUE, DECODED

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CONCEPT	WHAT IT MEANS	WHY IT MATTERS
Operation Sindoor	May 2025 strikes on terror bases in Pakistan / PoJK	Established a new response doctrine
New doctrine	No sanctuary across LoC or in Pakistan for terror	Raises the cost of sponsorship
Strategic calculus	Pakistan's cost-benefit on using terror	The thing a single strike has not yet changed
Deterrence over time	Restraint internalised through repetition	Why one operation is necessary but not sufficient

THE ANALYSIS: CAPABILITY SHOWN, CALCULUS UNCHANGED

- ① **The signalling gain.** Sindoor established that neither the LoC nor Pakistani territory is a sanctuary when terror originates there.
- ② **The moral and legal ground.** It was a proportionate exercise of self-defence against cross-border terrorism emanating from Pakistan.
- ③ **The escalation risk.** Retaliation and a short, intense conflict showed how fast cross-border strikes can spiral.
- ④ **The unchanged habit.** Pakistan's use of terror as statecraft has not been dismantled by a single operation.

DATA AND INSTITUTIONS VAULT

the Pahalgam terror attack, April 22, 2025, which killed 26 people. Operation: Operation Sindoor, launched May 7, 2025, a tri-service strike on terror hubs including Jaish-e-Mohammed (Bahawalpur) and Lashkar-e-Taiba (Muridke). Doctrine: no sanctuary across the LoC or in Pakistan; nuclear blackmail will not deter a response; right of self-defence. India's stand: cross-border terrorism emanates from Pakistan; Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir is an integral part of India. Concept: deterrence by punishment; escalation control; sub-conventional warfare; terror as statecraft.

THE DEBATE

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Argument that the calculus has shifted: Sindoor raised the cost of sponsorship, broke the myth of nuclear immunity, and set an expectation of forceful response, so deterrence is being re-established.

Argument that it has not: Pakistan's structural reliance on terror as statecraft persists, escalation nearly spun out of control, and one operation cannot undo a decades-old policy.

Balanced verdict: Sindoor was a justified, capable assertion of resolve and a real signalling gain, but deterrence is proven over time. The calculus changes only if India sustains credible force, diplomacy and escalation control.

HOW TO THINK ABOUT THIS (TRANSFERABLE SKILL)

A dramatic action sends a message, but the message only matters if the other side changes behaviour. When you assess any deterrent, coercive or reformist act, ask: what was demonstrated, and what actually changed? Sindoor demonstrated much; whether it changed Pakistan's conduct is the separate, harder test. Hold both truths at once.

DIAGRAM-IN-WORDS

Pahalgam attack -> Operation Sindoor strikes terror hubs in Pakistan / PoJK -> capability and resolve demonstrated + nuclear bluff rejected -> Pakistan retaliates, short conflict, ceasefire -> terror-as-statecraft persists -> deterrence requires sustained force + diplomacy + escalation control

THE WAY FORWARD

- ① **Sustain deterrence.** Keep credible conventional capability and intelligence-led counter-terror operations, not one-off strikes.
- ② **Pair force with diplomacy.** Maintain global pressure on terror finance and sponsorship (FATF, partners).
- ③ **Manage escalation.** Set clear thresholds and off-ramps to keep crises below uncontrolled escalation.
- ④ **Hold the line firmly.** Reiterate that PoJK is integral to India and that self-defence against cross-border terror is legitimate.

THE TAKEAWAY BOX

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Argue that Sindoore is a doctrine-defining signal whose deterrent value depends on sustained follow-through, not a single decisive blow.

“Deterrence is a marathon, not a strike; the calculus changes only when the cost of terror is made consistently unbearable.”

Operation Sindoore (May 7, 2025); Pahalgam attack (April 22, 2025); Bahawalpur, Muridke; JeM, LeT; PoJK integral to India.

How should a state balance proportionate self-defence against the risk of uncontrolled escalation between nuclear neighbours?

UPSC has asked about cross-border terrorism, deterrence and India’s security doctrine. This editorial evaluates a real case against those concepts.

counter-terrorism, nuclear deterrence, India-Pakistan relations, escalation management, self-defence in international law.

Sources: *The Hindu* (<https://www.thehindu.com/opinion>), *PIB* (<https://www.pib.gov.in>), *RUSI* (<https://www.rusi.org>)

Source: Operation Sindoore: Gains, Losses and Deterrence — [Ujijari.com](https://ujijari.com) | Free UPSC & State PCS Editorial Analysis

KEY ARGUMENTS AT A GLANCE

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Operation Sindoor showed India's willingness and capability to strike terror infrastructure deep inside Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied territory, but this military success has not permanently changed Pakistan's support for cross-border militancy; the new doctrine has demonstrated reach without yet altering the adversary's strategic calculus.


SUPPORTING

- The operation established that neither the Line of Control nor Pakistani territory is off-limits when terror originates there, a clear signalling gain responding to the Pahalgam attack of April 2025.
- It exercised India's right to self-defence against cross-border terrorism that continues to emanate from Pakistan, striking recognised terror hubs at Bahawalpur and Muridke.
- Yet Pakistan's use of terror as statecraft persists, and rapid escalation to a short conflict showed the risks of normalising cross-border strikes without a settled off-ramp.


COUNTER

One view holds that Sindoor did change the calculus by raising the cost of terror sponsorship and by breaking the myth of nuclear immunity, so deterrence is being re-established even if slowly.


WAY FORWARD

Sustain credible conventional deterrence and intelligence-led counter-terror operations, pair force with diplomacy that keeps global pressure on terror finance, manage escalation through clear thresholds, and hold firm that Pakistan-occupied territory is integral to India.


MAINS ANSWER FRAMEWORK

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QUESTION

"Operation Sindoor demonstrated capability and resolve, but deterrence is proven over time, not in a single strike." Critically examine. (250 words)

INTRODUCTION

Deterrence is not declared; it is demonstrated repeatedly until an adversary internalises restraint. Operation Sindoor showed India can and will strike terror infrastructure inside Pakistan. Whether it has changed Pakistan's behaviour is a separate, harder question.

BODY

The gains are real. Launched on May 7, 2025, in response to the Pahalgam terror attack of April 22, 2025 that killed 26 people, Operation Sindoor struck recognised terror hubs, including Jaish-e-Mohammed at Bahawalpur and Lashkar-e-Taiba at Muridke, in Pakistan and Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir, which are integral parts of India.

It established a doctrine that neither the Line of Control nor Pakistani territory is a sanctuary when terror originates there, and it asserted India's right to self-defence against cross-border terrorism that continues to emanate from Pakistan, while signalling that nuclear blackmail will not deter a response. Those are meaningful signalling and moral gains.

The losses and limits are equally real. Pakistan retaliated the next day and exchanges escalated into a short, intense conflict before a ceasefire, showing how quickly cross-border strikes can spiral.

More fundamentally, a single operation, however precise, has not dismantled Pakistan's long habit of using terror as an instrument of statecraft. Deterrence is proven over time.

The honest assessment is that Sindoor demonstrated capability and resolve and raised the cost of sponsorship, but the strategic calculus shifts only if India sustains credible deterrence, keeps international pressure on terror finance, and manages escalation with clear thresholds.

CONCLUSION

Operation Sindoor was a necessary and justified assertion of India's resolve against cross-border terrorism. But deterrence is a marathon, not a strike; the calculus changes only when the cost of terror is made consistently unbearable.


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