



INDO-JAPAN CHAMBER OF COMMERCE & INDUSTRY

OPERATION SINDOOR:

A Rising, Resolute India in Asia Pacific



by
Vibhu Vaibhav



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PREFACE

Dear Readers,

The current issue of the Resource Paper “OP SINDOOR: A RISING, RESOLUTE INDIA IN ASIA PACIFIC” is quite different from our earlier issues, uniquely crafted to present the real nature of the operation India had performed recently. Efforts have been taken to make readers understand the power of the Indian Army, Navy and Air Force, their well-orchestrated network centric operations, their strength and planned strategies.

India, a peace-loving country, doesn't allow terrorism in any form on her soil. Also, India has been fighting against cross-border terrorism and promoting global understanding on tackling terrorism. The Author Col. Vibhu Vaibhav has presented the operation in detail and has also highlighted the lessons to be learnt for other countries from this exercise.

The author Vibhu Vaibhav is a Veteran technocrat (Colonel) with a demonstrated leadership in the Indian Army and in the corporate sector, specialising in Defence procurement, SCM, Infrastructure and Strategy. An analytical thinker and a problem solver, he has been instrumental in handling complex Procurement Projects of the Indian Army through project planning and process improvement strategies for Make in India vision.

Happy reading!

June 2025

Suguna Ramamoorthy
Secretary General, IJCCI

OPERATION SINDOOR: A Rising, Resolute India in Asia Pacific

“You can only have a humble voice of relevance if you are strong and powerful within. Else the tide will sweep you away to obscurity”.

Prologue

The recent terror episode at Pahalgam in India is one too many in a series of terror acts which India has been facing for last several decades in the state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). Indian response through OP SINDOOR has been decisive, swift, precise, punitive and a deterrent while ensuring that no collateral damage took place. As the most populous country which incidentally also happens to be the largest and most diverse democracy in the world, India is a responsible and a mature democracy with its roots enshrined in principles of peace. However, any act of terror and there have been one too many, needs to be responded to with an aim to clear the definite intent of the Nation as a response. The quantum of response to be given is also dependent upon the economic strength, the military might, as well as the political will, and these three together drive the nature of response that can be delivered. India did respond and in an emphatic way, clearly outlining its intent.

Pahalgam Carnage: A Blot on Humanity

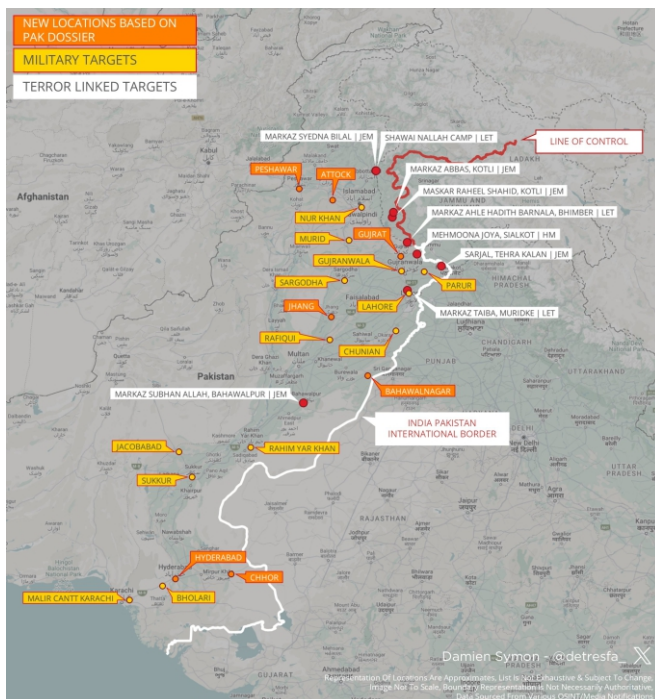
The State of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) in India has taken brave steps to nurture democracy despite years of terrorism, bloodshed and targeting by Pakistan. The recent successful completion of fair elections in the state saw a large turnout of voters eager to exercise their franchise, a popular State government was elected and started its process for economic growth of the State. The State of J&K relies heavily on tourism to drive the local economy. However, tranquillity was disrupted when on 22 April 2025, the Pakistan

sponsored terrorist attack in Pahalgam left 26 tourists dead and around 70 injured. Even more palpable was the fact that the tourists were segregated based upon identification of their religion and then massacred leading to a collective outrage against this inhuman act. This barbaric act was preceded by warlike overtures by the current Pakistan Army Chief Gen. Munir which was seen as a desperate act to whip up euphoria against India. The terror attack left the world stunned and parallels were drawn to the recent Hamas attacks which happened in Israel. In one stroke of this terror act, the entire tourism activity in Kashmir Valley came to a standstill, thus hitting hard the base of local economy of the state. The act sent shockwaves around the world and this dastardly act drew condemnation from one and all. Pakistan in its typical way, choose to disassociate itself from any links with this act even though considerable proof was given by India regarding the intimate involvement of Pakistan.

Op SINDOOR: Timelines, Dynamics, Conduct and Impact

Of late, India has taken a strong stance against terrorism of all kinds with the belief that acts of terrorism needs to be held accountable and targeted. This changed stance was evident by the way India had conducted Surgical Strikes in 2016 and later, the 2019 Balakot Strikes. The stance was clear. The terror hubs were targeted, due precautions were taken so that no collateral damage took place. More than anything else, a message was sent across the globe that India will definitely respond to any terror activities on its soil. India did respond to the Pahalgam carnage but after due diligence, identifying the terror targets, and ensuring that no collateral damage took place. The strikes, counterstrike and its riposte were all conducted between 7-9 May 2025. Nine terror bases were struck with five being in Pakistan and four being in Pakistan occupied J&K. In response, Pakistan hit back with massive drone and missile attacks. No concern was shown to places of worship and in some instances, temples, gurdwaras and churches were targeted with utter disdain, especially in J&K where The Shambhu Temple in Jammu, the Gurdwara in Poonch, and Christian convents were attacked. (2025, 12 May 2025 Press Note by PIB Govt of India). However, Pak attacks were brutally blunted with a spectacular show of integrated Air Defence by India. The Indians struck at 11 military installations which greatly reduced the efficiency of these stations causing grave loss to vital military assets, as

well as huge loss of face as the entire weaponry including fighter aircrafts, AEWs, AD system, drones and missile systems of all kinds supplied by China failed to live up to its hype. The overhyped Turkish drone systems were thoroughly decimated and were well exposed in terms of their claimed capabilities. Even the US supplied fighter aircrafts and radar systems were rendered largely ineffective. Major airfields were struck and made out-of-circulation while the destroyed radar systems left a gaping hole in Pak AD capabilities. The intensity, promptness, decisiveness and spread of the definitive counter strikes by India took everyone by surprise and forced Pakistan to take the first step to seek a nonmilitary solution. While claims have been made by the US President regarding his initiatives for diffusing tensions, the reality is that the call to deescalate has been taken by the Indian Polity alone based upon the request made by Pakistan. The following analysis made by OSINT expert Damein Symon who operates the well-known and respected twitter handle @detresfa and the image reproduced below is from his tweet of 03 June 2025. (@detresfa, 03 June 2025)



This clearly reflects the extent of Indian strikes across Pakistan undertaken in near time-frame. While all this was happening, the Indian Navy undertook massive maritime posturing in the Arabian sea with a CBG (Carrier Battle Group) led by the indigenous aircraft carrier INS Vikrant with its fleet effectively advocating and threatening the blockage of Pakistan coastline. With this stance, India has redefined a new strategic red line duly backed up with its ability to launch precision measured strikes without letting loose control over the escalation matrix. India has also clearly depicted that it is well capable of taking its own bold decisions and to protect its people, it is fully capable of taking balanced decisions without any outside interference or influence.

Dawn of New India and Shattered Past Myths

Strong Political Posturing. India made it clear that National interests will come first and foremost forever. While mentioning that *trade and terror will not go together hand in hand*, India took the steps to close its borders for the border trade. The Indian airspace has been closed for all flights operating to Pakistan thus straining their aviation resources. The visas of Pakistan nationals on visit to India have been revoked and all Pakistan artists working in the hugely profitable Indian entertainment industry have been asked to go back. Emphasis by the Indian Prime Minister Mr. Modi that *both blood and water will not flow together*, India has revoked the biased IWT (Indus Water Treaty) which has been a largesse from India towards Pakistan. India is now free to choose the use of the river waters giving priority to its own people and in the manner that it chooses to, thus putting our national interests first. By equivocally stating that *terror and talks do not go together*, India has made its political stance crystal clear. These actions by India have caused quite a stir and these proactive actions of strategic policymaking, information dominance, and psychological operations have strengthened the Indian political posturing.

Shift in Indian Geostrategic Stance. India has shown a well thought of geopolitical stance in this entire episode. First and foremost is the belief that India alone will decide what action should be taken in similar scenarios and that India alone will decide the level of calibration and escalation desired to achieve the impact. India has also realised that very few will come out in

open support of its actions and therefore, India needs to strengthen itself internally in all aspects, have a clear focus to achieve self-reliance and that will reduce outside dependence, as well as look out for a few good friends who can be trustworthy partners for long term.

Indian Communication Strategy. There has been a marked shift in the Indian communication strategy. While earlier, details were often sketchy and delayed, this time prompt, precise and impactful communication was delivered at all levels. There was one common stance adopted. Facts and figures backed up by foolproof evidence was always made available. Detailed press briefs giving out factual details were conducted and India's stance was conveyed explicitly. The Indian Govt. sent out teams comprising of MPs (Members of Parliament) from all political parties to 32 countries including EU, and across all continents where they interacted with and explained the dynamics of the entire episode and India's stance on the war on terror. This move has been unprecedented in Indian history. Another positive aspect was the overall unanimity amongst all political parties on this issue. The united front put up by them is notable.

Non-Kinetic Posturing by India. While the Kinetic operations by India did the talking during the period of 7-9 May 2025, it is the Indian Non-Kinetic posturing stance which has come of age. This stance has greatly shaped and whipped up the international support leading to both economic and diplomatic isolation of Pakistan.

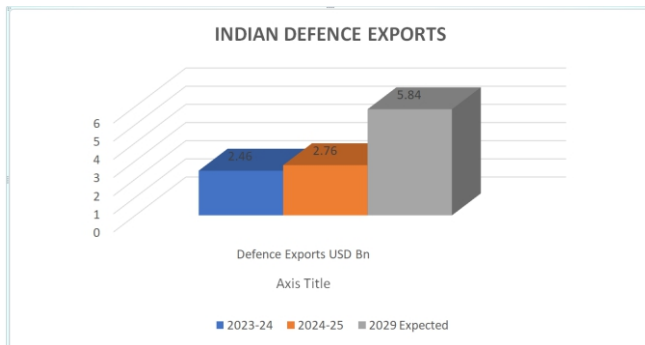
Superb Tri-Services Synergy. In the fast-paced operations, the complete conduct was a flawless demonstration of the Tri-services synergy between the Indian Army, the Indian Air Force and the Indian Navy. Apart from this, the synergy between the various Govt. departments and ministries to make the entire operation happen is quite encouraging. This reflects the coming of age in Joint Operations in the true sense which has a major implication in the Indian Ocean as well as in Asia-Pacific.

Self-Reliance has Emboldened India. Needless to say, that initiatives taken by India towards promoting self-reliance have gone a long way in giving confidence and emboldening our stance. A major factor which has worked behind the scene is the growing economic strength of India. The efforts being put in over the last few years to promote indigenisation and self-

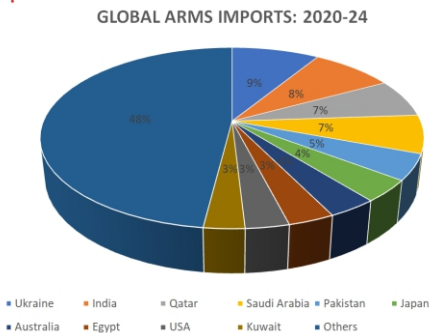
reliance especially in the **DASH (Defence, Aerospace, Space and Homeland)** sector, has to a large extent given a positive fillip to the Indian industry. For far too long the archaic and cumbersome defence procurement process was the bane of procurement for the Indian Armed Forces. However, sustained and credible improvements have brought in a fair quantum of reforms and while the process remains dynamic towards further improvements, it has become much better than the days of yore, with an ample opportunity to finetune it further and enhance procurement efficiencies.

On Path of Growth in DASH Sector. The question is why and how India can be a dynamic powerhouse in DASH? India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world having a massive captive consumption. Thankfully, a lot is changing with a definite desire to promote indigenisation with an overall aim to strive for 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' or self-reliant India. With this push towards indigenisation, there is ample scope for likeminded partners to get together and become a part of this interesting journey. Not only economically but also geostrategic imperatives are going to be major drivers in this context. The recent flareup has brought out a very interesting factor to notice. That novelty of Indian innovations which have led to creation of cost effective, scalable and reliable weapon systems and war fighting capabilities is in stark contrast to the costly, complex to integrate systems which at times are difficult to operate and prohibitable to use platforms being touted as game changers. This also has become the test bed, unintentionally though, of the resilience and innovation of India as also brought to fore the strong resolve to nurture a strong, able and capable domestic DASH setup. For those who can partner in this immense opportunity, it is going to be a win-win situation.

Indian Defence Exports and Imports Paradigm: A New Dawn. With the second largest standing army, the fourth largest Air Force and the fifth largest Navy by tonnage in the world, it was ironical that India should be amongst the top four arms importer in the world for decades. The Indian defence exports have shown a strong upswing and have risen to INR 23,622 crores (USD 2.76Bn) in Fy 2024-25 which is an increase of over 12% over Fy 2023-24 (USD 2.46Bn). A promising target of INR 50,000 Crores (USD 5.84Bn) by 2029 has been set by the Indian govt. (pib.gov.in, 01 April 2025).



As far as Arms imports are concerned, while India is the second largest importer of arms in the world after Ukraine, the arms imports have gradually tapered off and the silver lining is that this share is on a downswing with more boost being given to Self-Reliance. Between 2020 and 2024, India ranked as the world's second-largest arms importer, with an 8.3% share of global arms imports with Ukraine at 8.8%, Qatar 6.8%, Saudi Arabia 6.8%, Pakistan 4.6%, Japan 3.9%, Australia 3.5%, Egypt 3.3%, USA 3.1%, Kuwait 2.9%. ((Sipri) 2024).



Promising Growth Towards Indigenisation. India has taken numerous steps to promote indigenisation. India is implementing a strategic change aimed at reducing reliance on foreign suppliers while bolstering its own defence manufacturing industry. This evolution from a largely import-dependent military force has largely been possible due to clear focus on self-reliance and indigenous production. In a major boost to defence exports, a

wide range of items from ammunition, arms, sub-systems/systems and parts & components have been exported to around 80 countries in the just-concluded FY. 1762 export authorisations have been issued in FY 2024-25 as compared to 1507 in FY 2023-24. The number of exporters have also grown by about 17.4% in the same time-frame. India today produces 88% of its ammunition requirements, a far cry from only 32% in 2014 just a decade back. The domestic Indian production is high on quality and this aspect was clearly demonstrated during Operation SINDOOR when India's indigenous AD systems demonstrated exceptional performance and accuracy. Even the legacy weapon systems have been indigenously upgraded for better efficacy and were instrumental in intercepting the majority of Pakistan drones, missiles, projectiles with not even one worthwhile hit being reported in India.

India as a Mature Nuclear Power. The complete flow of events clearly reflects Indian actions as that of a mature nuclear power. The way in which the calibrated response and responsible escalation matrix was followed clearly and aptly, demonstrates the capacity of India to launch coercive precision operations and well-calibrated strikes with due restraint.

2.5 Front Predicaments for India. With the well-known Sino-Pak collusion and the half front which is the terror part, India has a major challenge to face when it comes to the 2.5 front to be handled. This takes away a lot of resources, commitment and peace of mind. However, this is something that India will have to live with for the time being. The Half Front though should be a cause of concern to all countries as terror has no permanent base or friends and this can come to haunt any country at any time.

Challenges and Lessons for Asia Pacific

Paradigm Changes in Information Warfare (IW). Perception moulding is the in thing and in a big way. Social media, AI dynamics and the way any narrative can be twisted to suit one's requirements is mindboggling. IW has

the power to change perception in any way. IW has to be planned, built and fought for at the national level. An example is the ongoing Russian-Ukraine conflict. There is a different war being fought on the IW front.

Blurred Escalation Matrix. Op SINDOOR has brought out a critical issue regarding the sanctity of an escalation matrix. The time period in which escalatory responses went away was extremely short and this is a lesson for both the Polity as well as the Military in Asia-Pacific, so that respective Escalation matrices can be planned, war-gamed and made into more practical, responsive and pragmatic matrices. It also uncomfortably brings out the dynamics of rogue state actors and how they might play, leading to uncertainty which will need to be planned for with definite planned responses.

The Chinese Collusion Conundrum with Lessons for Asia-Pacific. Use of Pak as a pawn by China is a well-known fact. That China is using its BRI (Belt Road Initiative) to push ahead its own agenda is an open secret. Infrastructure projects, soft loans, subsidised defence packages etc. all come with hidden strings which then get pulled as and when required. In the current scenario in SCS (South China Sea) China is a cause of concern to the sovereignty of all affected countries. The pushing of 9 Dash line and volatile issues like Spratly Islands are just the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the host of simmering issues and uncertainty. How the sensitive situation may pan out in future is very difficult to answer. Will the sanctity of the perceived escalation matrix still hold out, or will maturity and rationale make way for loss of control and irrationality? These are some difficult questions to answer but yet cannot be wished away.

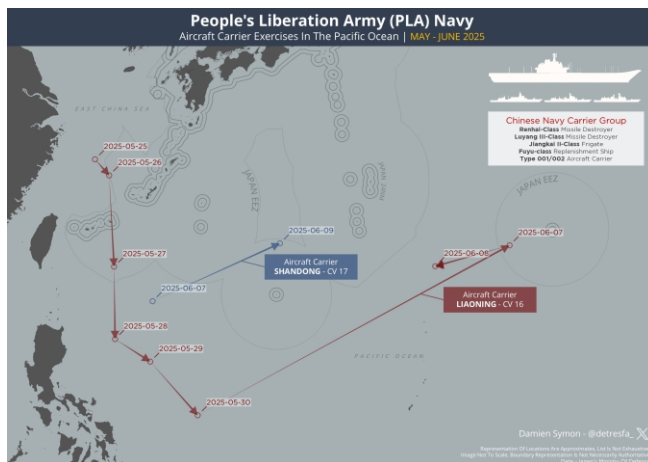
Geostrategic compulsions and mutual concerns ask for key partnerships. Not surprisingly, China is yet to have no land or maritime border issues rectified with any of its neighbours except for North Korea which is a different geopolitical condition in itself. Today, each of its neighbours is wary of the Chinese intentions. There is an aggressive push

from China, more of being a bully in the neighbourhood, which does not augur well for the rest of the countries. So is the time right to get together and seek new partnerships to safeguard mutual interests or risk being cut down to size one by one at a great economic, political and geostrategic loss. Taiwan still remains a sensitive issue and a boiling pot which threatens to escalate any day if China so desires. Can these neighbours come together in a platform akin to ASEAN to protect their national and mutual interests? These are complex questions with no ready answers but the answers still need to be thought of somehow.

The Key Lies in Reinforcing Own Sovereignty. There is no denying the fact that reinforcing own sovereignty is the only way ahead for the neighbours of China to have some say. The way China has set its eyes on exploiting the natural resources in the SCS and beyond with utter disdain reflected towards its neighbours is a clear sign of tough times to come up ahead. Brazen show of strength, repeated violations of the sanctity of respective EEZs is just the start point. The right of navigation through the sea lines cannot and should not be exploited as a show of might to subdue the rightful and legitimate aspirations of the neighbours.

Japan-India Ties in Complex Geostrategic Play. All the above-mentioned aspects point towards having key players and their mutual understandings and thought processes to come together on same party line. Both Japan and India are such key players who have the requisite economic and military capabilities which does not make them pushovers. As two ancient civilisations and mature flourishing democracies, both Japan and India have a major role in maintaining the balance of power and maturity in the Asia-Pacific. The ongoing geostrategic play demands that both India and Japan look into much more mutually beneficial economic ties which will enable the overall growth potential of both the countries. We need to look together in the areas of semiconductors, DASH, maritime domain, AI and Robotics, skill enhancement, cyber and associated new generation technologies. Japan too has a major exposure to China in terms of economic

inputs. There is an ample scope to reduce this vulnerability by looking at avenues to connect with India. This will not only be an association of two strong and functional democracies but also an effort by two ancient civilisations who are the beacons of peace and tranquillity in the world today. Japan too faces the dilemma of a strong China trying to flex its muscles. A recent example is when two Chinese aircraft carriers were operating in the Japanese EEZ. As per Damein Symon who is a well-known OSINT expert with twitter handle @detresfa_ tweet of 09 June 2025 (reproduced below is the image from that tweet) there was movement of two Chinese navy carrier groups operating in the Western pacific, and they supposedly intruded in the Japanese EEZ. (@detresfa_ D. S., 09 June 2025). While right of navigation is well respected, courtesy demands that due restrain be exercised and provocation is not resorted to. Such activities can be an exception but not a norm and needs to be dissuaded and guarded against.



Synthesis

Operation SINDOOR has heralded the coming of age of new India. This well calibrated use of force with a clear intention to degrade terrorist infrastructure clearly demonstrates the capability. India is very clear about

its strategic aspirations and has an intent to take any bold action beyond its borders in case the sovereignty of the country is threatened. It has also embarked upon strengthening its industrial infrastructure with utmost emphasis on self-reliance. India has realised that very few countries will actually stand for our side of the story and if we desire to make a point, then it has to be backed not only by steely resolve but also definite industrial and economic strength to back it up. The contours of Indian response toolkits have clearly been redefining and are aligned with the overall National Strategy. As the largest and a responsible democracy in the world, India has explicitly demonstrated that no act of terror will be tolerated and for any such action, there will be a commensurate both kinetic and non-kinetic response. The Asia-Pacific needs to take a leaf out of this and act decisively in a manner that protects their national interests. Terror acts are not only by the perpetrators of terror but also the silent players behind the scenes who are the root cause where collusion, backing and negative encouragement is the key to cause unrest. India needs active, mature partners and geostrategic concerns and compulsions demand for Japan and India to come together to maintain the sanctity of the Asia-Pacific.

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