

## ➤ EDITOR'S NOTE

The barbaric attack on 26 innocent tourists in Pahalgam on April 22, 2025 brought India-Pakistan relations to yet another unforeseen abyss. With intelligence inputs pointing towards Pakistan, India undertook a string of measures, suspending the Indus Water Treaty, revoking the visas of all Pakistani nationals, stopping all trade, closing the borders and expelling the military attaches, along with reduction of diplomatic staff. On the night of May 6/7, 2025, the Indian Air Force (IAF), along with the Indian Army, carried out attacks on nine terror camps, indoctrination centres and staging areas across Pakistan and Pakistan Occupied Kashmir. The headquarters of the Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba were also hit with impunity. Pakistan responded with attacks by unmanned aerial systems and missiles on Indian cities and military installations; however, these were repulsed effectively by the Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS) of the IAF in coordination with the Army Air Defence. When Pakistan reacted to India's calibrated, focussed and non-escalatory attacks on its terror infrastructure, the escalation by Pakistan led to the IAF carrying out attacks on its airfields and command and control centres, resulting in widespread damage. This spiral of military action was brought to an end with Pakistan requesting for a ceasefire on the afternoon of May 10, 2025. This conflict has brought India-Pakistan relations to an unprecedented low and a new normal that is unlikely to change unless Pakistan stops employing terror as an instrument of state policy.

In this issue of the journal, we have articles covering a diverse range of issues.

*India-Pakistan Crisis and Pakistan's Strategic Partnerships* explores the recent conflict between India and Pakistan and the dynamics of Pakistan's strategic partnerships with China and Türkiye. India will need to cater for the implications of these deep and evolving partnerships of Pakistan which are going to be instrumental in Pakistan's military modernisation. India is already having a relook at its diplomatic relations with Türkiye while being cognisant of a two-front scenario with both Pakistan and China.

*Operation Sindoor: India's Atmanirbharta Success Story* takes a look at the indigenous weapon systems and platforms that were employed during the India-Pakistan conflict. The Brahmos Air Launched Cruise Missiles (ALCMs), Skystriker drones, Akaash Surfaces-to-Air Missiles (SAMs) and Medium Range Surface-to-Air Missiles (MRSAMs) worked to neutralise enemy targets and protect Indian Vulnerable Areas/Vulnerable Points (VAs/VPs). The indigenously designed and developed IACCS provided an impregnable shield to India's sovereign airspace, preventing any damage to Indian military infrastructure and cities. Self-reliance in defence manufacturing is going to be critical for India in its journey of becoming 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047.

The ousting of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh in August 2024 and her subsequent asylum in India has led to a new low in India-Bangladesh relations. This has grave implications for India's security as the anti-India rhetoric gains traction in Bangladesh. *India-Pakistan Crisis and Bangladesh's Anti-India Rhetoric* takes a deep look at all these issues, analysing them in detail, contextualising the role of China and Pakistan, along with the security implications for India.

*Dynamics of Modern Conflict: Breaking the Myths* takes an analytical look at some of the recent and ongoing conflicts against the prism of long standing tenets of employing military power. The use of technology for battlefield transparency and preventing collateral damage, the requirement of air superiority for victory, impregnable modern air defence systems, short and decisive wars and the obsolescence of manned fighters are some of the myths that have been critically analysed and commented upon in this well-written article.

Hypersonic missiles provide speed, manoeuvrability and low flying capability that help evade radar detection. The race to develop and deploy these systems, particularly in view of China's Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) capabilities, has been a challenge for the United States. *US Hypersonic Developments: Breaking Barriers*, examines recent developments that led to the cancellation of the US Navy's much solicited Hypersonic Air Launched Offensive (HALO) programme. It also looks at the US Navy's Strategic Systems Programme (SSP) that has successfully tested a hypersonic missile under the umbrella of the Conventional Prompt Strike (CPS) capability that is under development.

*Potential Expansion of Quad: Compelling Motivations*, examines the need for the expansion of the Quad to make it more inclusive by including countries in the South and Southeast Asian regions that are affected by China's hegemonic ambitions. The article also looks at issues that ail the current organisation in its functioning and suggests remedial measures and the advantages that would accrue from an expanded Quad, especially for India and the region.

The space domain has increasingly become critical for national security. Cyber and space permeate seamlessly with other domains of warfighting and the disruption of any one of these can have a debilitating impact on national security. *Navigating Cyber Risks: Fortifying India's Space Infrastructure* examines the cyber security landscape as far as the space domain is concerned. It takes a look at the threat spectrum, the risks and contemporary cyber security challenges facing the space industry, along with mitigating measures to counter them.

India-China relations have been under stress due to unresolved border disputes and military standoffs that have occurred at regular intervals. The Doklam standoff which took place in 2017 was followed by the Eastern Ladakh crisis in 2020. The Shaksgam Valley, bordered by the Karakoram Mountains in the south and the Kunlun Mountains in the north, is a high-altitude desert region with inhospitable terrain. *The Shaksagam Siege: Chinese Interests and Intent* analyses the infrastructure development of this region by China post Doklam 2017 and its strategic ramifications for India. This region, claimed by India and occupied by China, is rich in mineral resources, and its

strategic location, along with the development of road infrastructure in collusion with Pakistan, increases India's security concerns in the region.

In the 'Book Review' section, *Embracing Communist China: America's Greatest Strategic Failure* by James E. Fannel and Bradley A. Thayer has been analysed. This book looks at China's rise, attributing it to a deliberate strategy of 'threat deflation' by the United States along with the greed and avarice of American elites who promoted business models that benefited China in the long term at American cost. The book suggests a U-turn in America's domestic and foreign policy to deal effectively with China.

The esteemed Editorial Advisory Board of the journal reflects the growing reach and acceptance of the publication from the Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS), New Delhi. The journal is now also available on the Open Source Journal platform, giving it global reach and accessibility. We continue to look forward to comments and suggestions from our esteemed readers in our quest for further improvements.

Happy Reading!



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