

India and Pakistan claim victory as peace holds

Nuclear-armed rivals both pulled back from the brink and chose diplomacy over war

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India and Pakistan are both claiming victory in the short, sharp confrontation that brought the nuclear-armed neighbours to the brink of war — but analysts say the US intervention that led to a ceasefire gave Islamabad the diplomatic upper hand.

By using missiles to strike air bases and alleged “terrorist infrastructure” deep inside Pakistan, Indian officials said they established a deterrent to any involvement by Islamabad in cross-border terrorism.

Pakistan, which claims to have shot down five Indian fighter jets last week, insists it scored a “historic victory” over its larger rival. In a first, both sides sent drones deep into each other’s cities.

“India will feel vindicated in its belief that there is more room than previously thought to trade barbs under the nuclear shadow,” said Ankit Panda, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington. “Pakistan’s military will be content with its retaliation and walk away with a sense that deterrence was re-established.”

India says at least 16 of its civilians and five soldiers were killed. Pakistan’s military says 11 soldiers and 40 civilians, including 15 children, have been killed since May 6. India has claimed as many as 40 Pakistani military personnel were killed.

However, analysts said Washington’s diplomatic intervention to avert full-scale war had rankled India by bracketing the world’s largest democracy and fifth-biggest economy with what it sees as a terrorism-backing rogue state.

US President Donald Trump, who saluted both sides for their “unwavering powerful leadership” to stop fighting, also asserted that “a solution can be arrived at concerning Kashmir”, the disputed Muslim-majority region at the heart of the conflict. Both countries claim the territory in its entirety, but New Delhi opposes any international mediation.

Pakistani diplomats celebrated Trump’s “willingness to support efforts aimed at the resolution” over Jammu and Kashmir, the Indian-controlled part of the region. Shyam Saran, a former Indian foreign secretary, said the episode was a setback for New Delhi’s



Students in Lahore, Pakistan, celebrate on Monday after schools reopened following the ceasefire with India

Arif Ali/AP/Getty Images

efforts to deter countries from treating it and Pakistan as on a par.

“Over the last several years we had managed to de-hyphenate India and Pakistan and not to be seen as the bad twins constantly fighting with each other,” Saran said. “That hyphenation is now back, whether you like it or not.”

The Indian National Congress, the country’s biggest opposition party, has also demanded Narendra Modi, prime minister, explains why Trump was first to announce the ceasefire over the

weekend and disclose its terms. New Delhi is locked in talks with Washington to avert a 26 per cent tariff on Indian goods. Trump claimed on Monday to have used trade to pressure both India and Pakistan to back down.

“I said: ‘C’mon, we are going to do a lot of trade with you guys, let’s stop it . . . If you don’t stop it, we’re not going to do any trade,’” Trump said.

An Indian external affairs ministry official who declined to be identified insisted “there was no reference to trade” in discussions of the conflict between New Delhi and Washington. In a triumphant televised address on Monday, Modi stressed instead what he called India’s military success.

The assault included using missiles to strike air bases and what India said was “terrorist infrastructure” far beyond Kashmir. Targets included the Noor Khan air base, near the nerve centre of Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal.

Modi said India had “only suspended” operations and would “strike precisely and decisively at the terrorist hide-outs developing under the cover of nuclear blackmail”. He also asserted that global terror attacks had originated from what he called “universities of global terrorism” in Pakistan.

Pakistan’s Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif also claimed a “historic victory”. In Islamabad’s telling, it deterred an

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aggressive India it said killed dozens of its civilians and terrorised its cities with missiles and drones. Pakistan also claimed to have fired ballistic missiles into India, targeting two dozen military installations at the weekend.

Indian Air Marshal Awadhesh Kumar Bharti on Sunday declined to confirm the jets were shot down, but said “losses are part of combat” and all Indian pilots were “back home”.

Analysts said the fighting set a new paradigm for rapid escalation between the rivals. But they added that New Delhi had failed to stress the issue of terrorism, its priority, as international attention instead focused on the nuclear threat.

India claimed its initial air strikes were retaliation for a massacre of tourists last month by what it said were Pakistan-backed gunmen in Kashmir. Pakistan denies supporting terrorism and says it was not responsible for the incident, calling for a “neutral investigation”, which India has refused.

“The world’s attention has again been drawn to the fact that this region is a nuclear flashpoint,” said Pratap Bhanu Mehta, senior fellow at the Centre for Policy Research think-tank in New Delhi. “That is becoming the bigger global talking point than terrorism.”
Additional reporting by Jyotsna Singh in New Delhi

Pakistan and India exchange strikes

Reported targets, May 7 to 10 2025

