

Why India is annoyed by its ceasefire with Pakistan

America's intervention irked India's leadership and many of its people

5月 15, 2025 06:13 上午 | Delhi



NARENDRA MODI, India's prime minister, sounded as defiant as he did triumphant in speaking to the nation two days after a [ceasefire](#) with Pakistan. India's four-day [military operation](#), he said on May 12th, established a "new normal" for responding to terrorist attacks, such as last month's one in Kashmir. India had only paused that operation and would carefully monitor Pakistan's actions in the coming days. In future, India would not differentiate between

terrorists and the government that supports them. Nor would it bow to nuclear blackmail.

The speech was designed to warn Pakistan and reassure Indian critics of the ceasefire. But it also conveyed Indian frustration at America's role in freezing the nuclear-armed neighbours' worst fighting in 25 years. There was no mention of [President Donald Trump](#)'s claim to have brokered the truce. Mr Modi said Pakistan had requested it after suffering heavy losses. And he stressed that, despite America's promise of broader peace talks, any such negotiations would cover only terrorism and the future of the part of Kashmir that Pakistan controls.

Pakistan seems happier with the outcome. It too claims victory. It denies requesting the ceasefire and has thanked America and other mediators. While denying any links to terrorism, it welcomes the proposal for broader talks. And it wants them to cover the status of the Indian-ruled portion of Kashmir, India's suspension of a river-sharing treaty and Pakistan's allegations that India backs insurgencies on Pakistani soil. Pakistan agreed to the ceasefire "in the spirit of peace" but will not tolerate violations of its sovereignty, said Shehbaz Sharif, its prime minister.

For now, the ceasefire seems to be holding. After the two sides accused each other of violating it on May 11th, their military operations chiefs spoke on a hotline again the next day and agreed to consider immediate measures to reduce the number of troops in border and forward areas. But the two countries are now locked in a fierce battle of narratives.

America's intervention allowed both sides "to claim victory and climb down from a war footing", says Lisa Curtis, who was the top South Asia official in the White House during the last big India-Pakistan crisis in 2019. She expects the ceasefire to endure. But she says Indian officials are clearly irked by comments from Mr Trump.

America will have to back away from its promise of broader talks if it wants to keep building closer ties with India.

Mr Modi has reason to be upset. He prides himself on improving relations with America, especially under Mr Trump, based largely on a shared fear of China. But while Pakistan demonstrated new Chinese warplanes and missiles, which it claims shot down five Indian fighters (although India has not confirmed this), India has less to show in terms of American backing.

Indian officials say they were blindsided by Mr Trump's announcement of the ceasefire, which prevented India from first presenting it as coming at Pakistan's request. They were further put out when Mr Trump offered on May 11th to help negotiate a deal over Kashmir, despite India's longstanding objection to third-party involvement. Indian officials also deny that trade was mentioned in any ceasefire talks, despite Mr Trump's assertion on May 12th that he had threatened not to trade with either side if they continued to fight.

In India's view, America first neglected the crisis, then bowed too easily to Pakistan's demands after its nuclear signalling. American officials say they intervened after receiving alarming intelligence as fighting escalated on the night of May 9th. They have not given details. But on May 10th Pakistani military officials circulated a notice announcing a meeting of the country's National Command Authority, which controls its nuclear arsenal. Pakistan's defence minister later denied that. But India saw it as another example of Pakistan—the weaker conventional power—resorting early to nuclear threats, as it did in stand-offs in 1990 and 1999.

Indian officials also fear that America's proposal of broader talks and mediation on Kashmir is drawing international attention to that region rather than to Pakistan's ties to jihadist groups. And Mr Trump, who also upset India in 2019 by offering to mediate on Kashmir, has again implicitly questioned India's insistence on

handling the issue bilaterally. "Have we opened the doors to third-party mediation?" asked a spokesman for the Congress party, the main opposition.

Criticism came even from within India's military elite. V.P. Malik, a retired general who was India's army chief during its last major conflict with Pakistan, in 1999, praised India's armed forces. But in an interview on Indian television, he questioned whether India achieved its goal of preventing future terrorist attacks. He also suggested that by allowing America to intervene, India sacrificed the "strategic autonomy" it has long sought and allowed itself to be "re-hyphenated" with Pakistan after years of portraying itself as an emerging economic giant that should be dealt with on different terms. "Have we been in a bit of a hurry to accept the ceasefire?" he said.

Many Indians saw America's praise for both countries' leaders as implying equal treatment, whereas India sees its military action as a legitimate response to the attack in Kashmir's Pahalgam region on April 22nd. "How on earth can Trump equalise between what has happened in Pahalgam and what has happened thereafter?" asked Arnab Goswami, a nationalist Indian television anchor, in a viral social-media clip. "It's a clear overstretch."

India's narrative of the combat is under scrutiny at home, too. It has shown satellite imagery of the damage it says was done at 11 Pakistani airbases. It claims to have killed more than 100 militants as well as 35-40 Pakistani soldiers. It also claims to have shot down some "high-tech" Pakistani aircraft. But despite mounting open-source evidence that some Indian aircraft were lost, India has yet to confirm or deny Pakistan's claim to have downed three of India's new French Rafale jets and two Russian models. Pakistan, meanwhile, says that only one of its aircraft was lightly damaged. It claims to have inflicted heavy losses on 26 Indian military installations, sent drones as far as Delhi and killed between 40 and

50 Indian soldiers. But its air defences may not have performed as it claims against incoming Indian missiles and drones.

Whatever the exact losses on each side, one lesson from this crisis is that India can strike key Pakistani military targets in response to a terrorist attack without triggering a full-blown war or a nuclear stand-off. The more alarming conclusion is that next time India will try to hit even harder—and to keep going even after Pakistan rattles its nuclear sabre. ■