

Operation Sindoor And India's Neighborhood Diplomacy

balancing deterrence and regional perceptions

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Abstract

A new chapter has been added to the ever-changing lexicon of South Asian security politics with the terror incident in Pahalgam in April 2025 and the following start of Operation Sindoor by India. To punish transnational terrorism while ensuring the world community of its restricted goals, India's military reaction was fine-tuned. There is a mismatch between India's strategic calculations and its neighbors' political responses, as seen by the trajectory of South Asian diplomacy. Strategic narratives significantly impacted public views, since few regional countries directly held Pakistan responsible for terrorism, even though they generally denounced it. In regional responses to crises involving India and Pakistan, conflicting strategic narratives are seen in the employment of "limited use of force" and "precision deterrence" by India and "victimhood" by Pakistan. From a policy standpoint, Operation Sindoor shows how coercive diplomacy can work and how it can't. While it bolstered India's precision deterrence theory, it also highlighted weaknesses in narrative control and gaining clear regional backing. The research compares the views of India and its bordering states using the content analysis method. According to the research, India should put a lot of effort into building confidence with its neighbors, influencing public opinion internationally, and incorporating counter-terrorism efforts into larger frameworks of regional cooperation, in addition to honing its military signals.

keywords: Sindoor, Operation, Neighborhood, Diplomacy, perception, case study.

Introduction

Complex political webs, frightening security concerns, and dynamic diplomatic processes have shaped the strategic terrain of South Asia throughout history. For the sake of regional stability and India's own national security interests, the role of the region's largest country, India, is crucial. Over the last few decades, India's approach toward its neighbors has been multi-faceted, ranging from strong security measures to muscular diplomacy. Overall, this approach is consistent with India's neighborhood engagement policy; more especially, it follows the principles stated in the Neighborhood First Policy, which prioritizes establishing connections, cooperation, and trust with neighboring nations. Concerns about cross-border security, geopolitical rivalry, and differing opinions among neighboring countries have made maintaining this equilibrium more challenging. It is in this context that Operation Sindoor has emerged as a shining example of India's attempts to combine diplomatic delicacy with defensive measures. India is showing its preparedness to address security problems directly with this operation, which will have regional ramifications. Beyond their fundamental military objectives, security operations in areas fraught with historical tensions and political sensitivities can have far-reaching diplomatic consequences. For this reason, India must positively address its domestic security issues while also fostering positive relations with its surrounding nations.

Instability and cross-border terrorism emanate from Pakistan, India's western neighbor, and constitute a significant threat to India's security. In an attempt to avert a full-scale conflict, India has adopted a credible deterrent posture in reaction to increasing border tensions and terrorist activities. The diplomatic and military actions of India are constantly monitored by neighboring states such as Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Myanmar. India should always be careful with their first impressions. These countries often evaluate India's behavior in relation to regional power dynamics, strategic autonomy, economic cooperation, and autonomy in economic matters. Still, India has a double-edged sword: on the one hand, it has to allay fears of regional dominance and, on the other, reassure its neighbors that it is just interested in maintaining peace. The growing influence of global powers is also impacting India's diplomatic efforts in its vicinity. Specifically, the Belt and Road Initiative and other Chinese policies have expanded China's economic and geopolitical influence in South Asia. The increased competition for regional supremacy has made India's diplomatic engagement with its neighbors more crucial than ever before in the present geopolitical climate. Thus, India must adjust its policies such that security operations increase deterrence without severing relations with regional friends or pushing them to construct new alliances. In this complex geopolitical setting, Operation Sindoor provides a good lens through which to examine the evolving security doctrine and foreign policy of India. Operation Stabilization has an emphasis on maintaining a credible defense posture and on establishing India as a responsible and stabilizing regional force. Understanding the broader ramifications of such acts is critical when analyzing the link between South Asian military strategy and foreign policy. Thus, the connection between diplomacy and deterrence is examined in this

study as it pertains to India's regional policy, more especially the impact of Operation Sindoor on local relations. How can India maintain trust and cooperation with its neighbors while also implementing robust deterrence? Additionally, it examines the effects of security operations on regional perspectives. The study's overarching goal is to fill gaps in our understanding of the mechanisms by which India affects security, cooperation, and peace in South Asia.

From a more passive and covert strategy stance to a more aggressive and public deterrence-based one, India's counter-terrorism policy is undergoing a dramatic transformation. This change is most noticeable when contrasting India's reaction to the terrorist attacks in Mumbai on 26/11 with its responses to more recent operations, such Operation Sindoor after the Pahalgam incident. In this part, we lay the groundwork for an analytical framework that will assess the geopolitical alignments, historical ties, and internal narratives of India's neighbors and how these affect their perceptions of the country's deterrence strategy. The research uses a comparative content analysis strategy, zeroing in on these two important factors:

1. Perceptions of the Pahalgam attack
2. Reactions to Operation Sindoor

This provides a longitudinal view of India's strategic development by comparing and contrasting these with regional and worldwide reactions to the 26/11 Mumbai attacks..

Theoretical Framework

To understand why different regions have different perspectives, a solid theoretical groundwork is necessary. The following three theoretical frameworks are utilized in this investigation:

(a) Deterrence Theory

Modern Indian security policy is based on the principle of deterrence. It is based on the idea that aggressive behavior may be deterred by creating credible threats of reprisal. When it comes to Operation Sindoor, India's approach might be described as punitive deterrence. This strategy aims to discourage such assaults in the future by making those responsible pay a price. India takes an active deterrent stance, in which real military action is utilized as a signaling method, as opposed to the passive threat-based classical deterrent. If we want to see why surrounding nations had such different reactions to Operation Sindoor, we need to look at this change. Some countries see it as a justifiable display of national pride and security, while others see it as an escalatory move that threatens the peace in the area.

(b) Constructivism in International Relations

As a supplementary perspective, constructivism highlights how ideas, identities, and narratives impact global reactions. This view holds that states do not respond only to material capacities but rather use socially built meanings to make sense of human behavior.

For example, friendly governments may see Operation Sindoor as a necessary counter-terrorism effort, while countries with traditionally hostile relations with India may view it as aggressive expansionism. Perceptions are therefore not constant but rather influenced by factors such as:

- Historical experiences
- Political alignments
- Domestic public opinion
- Media narratives

(c) Strategic Signaling Theory

States convey their intentions through behaviors, and strategic signaling theory explains how. All things considered, Operation Sindoor is a multi-pronged signal aimed at:

- **Adversaries** (to demonstrate resolve and capability)
- **Domestic audience** (to reinforce political legitimacy)
- **International community** (to position India as a decisive actor)

Various audiences' interpretations determine the efficacy of such signals. An escalation may result from a misunderstanding, or deterrence might be strengthened by a correct interpretation.

Research Methodology: Comparative Content Analysis

(a) Research Design

Two main sources are the subject of the study's qualitative comparative content analysis:

1. Government statements
2. Local newspapers and media discourse

By using both official diplomatic stances and popular emotion as sources, we may gain a more complete picture.

(b) Sample Selection

Included in the analysis are five important bordering nations:

- Pakistan
- China
- Bangladesh
- Nepal
- Sri Lanka

We chose these nations because of their closeness to India, their geopolitical importance, and the degree to which they align with us.

(c) Analytical Parameters

The content analysis focuses on:

- Tone (supportive, neutral, critical)
- Framing (victimhood, aggression, stability, escalation)
- Narrative construction (blame attribution, legitimacy, sovereignty)
- Consistency between government and media narratives

This mixed-methods research examines Operation Sindoor and the diplomatic and strategic consequences it had on India's diplomacy with its neighbors. The majority of the secondary materials included in the research consist of scholarly articles, government reports, policy papers, news analyses, and publications related to security studies and international relations. The diplomatic responses of South Asian neighbors, regional security concerns, and India's shifting foreign policy positions are all illuminated by these papers. Using both descriptive and interpretive methods, this research looks at Operation Sindoor through the lens of India's efforts to control regional perceptions while keeping strategic deterrence in place. For this data, we looked at scholarly articles, papers from think tanks, official statements, and diplomatic exchanges about the Neighborhood First Policy and other Indian foreign policy initiatives. Studies and publications covering responses from countries like Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Pakistan were also examined to have a better understanding of how the region views India's security efforts. Content analysis revealed recurrent themes such as diplomatic engagement, security narratives, regional cooperation, and deterrence. By comparing different academic and policy perspectives, this research seeks to evaluate how security operations have affected India's reputation as a regional power and the level of confidence and cooperation among its surrounding neighbors. The research also employs geopolitical analysis to understand the influence of regional dynamics on the diplomatic setting where these operations occur, with a particular focus on China's growing strength. Finding out how South Asian diplomatic views affect military strategy is the main objective of the research. This research will analyze relevant literature and policy discussion in order to provide insight on the strategic balance that India aims to maintain between national security imperatives and constructive neighborly connections.

Case Study I: Perceptions of the Pahalgam Attack

(a) Government - Level Responses

Different South Asian governments' reactions to the Pahalgam incident reflected their differing geopolitical priorities.

Pakistan As part of the diplomatic counterattack, Pakistan has denied any wrongdoing and demanded an unbiased probe. This move is in line with its overarching plan to avoid direct escalation while retaining plausible deniability.

China avoided assigning responsibility while stressing the need of regional stability. China aims to preserve connections with both Pakistan and India in South Asia, thus its neutrality is a strategic move.

Bangladesh and Nepal have released statements denouncing terrorism without naming any particular perpetrators. This careful approach suggests a desire to remain impartial and steer clear of conflicts in the region.

Sri Lanka condemned the attack and the greater menace of terrorism in a show of solidarity with India. Sri Lanka's past encounters with terrorism and insurgency inform this reaction.

(b) Newspaper-Level Analysis

Narratives in the media provide light on public opinion and ideological framing in a more profound way.

Pakistani media outlets portrayed the incident as an outcome of India's own internal security lapses. By focusing on internal political narratives, this storyline deflects blame from outside forces.

China Instead of directly addressing blame, Chinese media emphasized regional unrest and the necessity of diplomatic solutions. The conformity of state-run media with official foreign policy is evident here.

Newspapers in Nepal and Bangladesh highlighted humanitarian issues and the necessity of peace, frequently depicting the assault as an integral component of a wider trend of regional instability.

Sri Lanka The media showed tremendous sympathy for India by relating the country's terrorist assaults to its own history and stressing the human toll of these crimes.

Key Findings

The analysis reveals a clear pattern:

- **Adversarial states** → Defensive and diversionary narratives
- **Neutral states** → Balanced and cautious framing
- **Friendly states** → Supportive and empathetic responses

Case Study II: Perceptions Of Operation Sindoor

(a) Government-Level Responses

Reactions to Operation Sindoor were more divided than those to the Pahalgam incident.

Pakistan criticized the operation, viewing it as an attack that violated their sovereignty. Its strategic goal of discrediting India's conduct is commensurate with this reaction.

China expressed alarm over the possibility for escalation and appealed for discussion and moderation. Its desire to keep the peace in the area and avert conflict is evident in this.

While Nepal and Bangladesh did not support or condemn India's actions, they did take a neutral stance, stressing the need of peace and prudence.

Sri Lanka demonstrated tacit support. By recognising India's right to defend itself against terrorism without openly endorsing military action,

(b) Newspaper-Level Analysis

More complex and diverse comments came from the media.

Pakistani Despite warnings of escalation, media depicted Operation Sindoor as violent and disruptive.

China The operation was presented by media as a regional security crisis, with the possibility of a war escalation being emphasized.

Nepalese and Bangladeshi While some outlets did note India's security worries, others warned against militarization.

Sri Lankan The majority of publications backed India's moves, which they justified as vital counterterrorism measures.

Key Findings

Operation Sindoor generated divided perceptions:

- Seen as **legitimate deterrence** by some
- Viewed as **escalatory aggression** by others

Comparative Case: 26/11 Mumbai Attacks

(a) Regional and Global Responses

There was almost unanimous denunciation of the 26/11 assaults. Even Pakistan formally condemned the assaults, albeit their position became more muddled as a result of what happened thereafter. On a global scale, India was showered with love and support.

(b) India's Response: Then vs Now

After 26/11, India adopted a strategy of **strategic restraint**, focusing on:

- Diplomatic pressure
- International isolation of Pakistan
- Strengthening internal security

In contrast, Operation Sindoor reflects a shift toward:

- Proactive military response
- Zero tolerance policy
- Visible deterrence signaling

(c) Media Comparison

On 26/11, the media's narratives were almost unanimous in their denunciation of terrorism and their backing of India. On the other hand, concerns about regional stability, legitimacy, and escalation were raised by Operation Sindoor.

Comparative Analysis: Deterrence Vs Zero Tolerance

(a) Evolution of India's Strategy

The shift from caution to deterrence in India's foreign policy is indicative of shifting national goals and expectations. A zero-tolerance policy indicates a readiness to respond to threats with force.

(b) Regional Perception Divide

The shift has led to a divergence in regional perceptions:

- **Supportive states** view India as a strong and responsible actor
- **Critical states** perceive it as a destabilizing force

(c) Theoretical Interpretation

- **Deterrence Theory** explains the logic behind India's actions
- **Constructivism** accounts for variation in perceptions
- **Strategic Signaling** highlights the communicative aspect of military action

(d) Implications for Neighborhood Diplomacy

India's assertive posture has significant implications for its neighborhood diplomacy:

1. **Enhanced Credibility:** Demonstrates resolve and capability
2. **Perception Challenges:** Risk of being viewed as hegemonic
3. **Diplomatic Balancing:** Need to complement hard power with soft power

The Curious Case of the Ceasefire Announcement: A Diplomatic Quagmire

One of the most perplexing aspects of Operation Sindoor was that, rather than the prime minister of India, US president Donald Trump proclaimed a truce following the operation. Some questioned India's diplomatic agency and its ability to manage the matter independently after this unexpected diplomatic move was highlighted in "The Many Failures of Operation Sindoor" (The Wire, May 23, 2025). A public remark like this from an outside party may be interpreted in several ways: as the US adopting a hard line as a mediator in the region, as an indication that India can't handle the escalation, or even as an attack on India's sovereignty. The fact that a non-Indian entity, rather than India itself, decided to de-escalate the issue suggests a potential rift in trust or collaboration with key international partners.

Challenges in Narrative Control and Counter-Propaganda: Losing the Information War

After "Operation Sindoor," several news outlets highlighted India's struggles to rein in the information sphere and combat Pakistani misinformation. India allegedly wanted to control the narrative by imposing digital censorship, according to "Operation Sindoor's Digital Fallout: How India Weaponized Big Tech" (The Friday Times, May 25, 2025). The article states that platforms like X (formerly Twitter) were instructed to deactivate more than 8,000 accounts, the majority of which were Pakistani. This brings up questions regarding the right to free speech. While the objective was to counteract disinformation, others believed that this approach infringed upon people's freedom of expression and may be seen as a worldwide attempt to censor dissenting voices rather than relying on logic to prevail in the information war. According to the article, digital platform owners are "succumbing to political pressure without receiving credible evidence of violations," which causes a "siege mentality."

Does "Operation Sindoor" mean that Pakistan has successfully won the propaganda war against India? Who is responsible? An story published in Aaj Tak on May 21, 2025, expressed concern over Pakistan's propaganda win against India. The research states that the Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) of Pakistan disseminates false information, misleading images, and videos on social media, with the help of Turkish and Chinese state media. It appears that India's Ministry of External Affairs and Press Information Bureau (PIB) had a more reactive than proactive communication approach, since the factual refutations they provided were not always quickly shared on social media or throughout the world. "The Guardian" reports that social media was "inundated with misinformation from both Indian and Pakistani sources," which further complicated the tale and upped the stakes. 'Le Monde' highlighted how Pakistan managed to "shape the international narrative, leading to a perception that India was reactive rather than proactive" since India's official communication was neglected, drawing attention to this fact.

Perceived Lack of Unambiguous International Support/Diplomatic Isolation

It is true that India asserts global backing for its right to self-defense, but several evaluations have demonstrated that major global powers have offered only a partial endorsement. The controversial assertion that no major country had unequivocally backed Indian activities and that Operation Sindoor was a "failure at the tactical, strategic, and diplomatic level" was stated in an article titled "The Many Failures of Operation Sindoor" published in The Wire on May 23, 2025. As an important point, "No major nation unambiguously supported Indian operations, neither in the neighbourhood nor in the wider world" was mentioned. Noteworthy and Prominent Allies Absent: Japan and Australia were accused of being "chary of antagonising China" due to their "conspicuously absent" status from the QUAD alliance during Operation Sindoor, as stated in "Operation Sindoor - Important takeaways" (Times of India Blogs, May 23, 2025). Further, "the USA showed no concerns for India and failed to condemn Pakistan," implying that the international community might not have fully agreed with India's assessment of the situation or its choice of reaction. Operation Sindoor "may have backfired" by exposing vulnerabilities in India's foreign policy and military preparedness, according to Al Jazeera, which puts the country's regional domination at risk.

Internal Critiques and Political Management of the Crisis

Those involved in Indian politics have been speculating about possible ways the administration may have responded more effectively.

A lack of unity and politicization: Sanjay Raut, leader of the Shiv Sena (UBT), criticized the government's decision to send a multi-party delegation abroad, referring to it as a "baraat (wedding procession)" and questioning its purpose. Since "important Opposition parties" were allegedly left out of the consultation process, he claims that a united front on foreign policy may not have been possible. Notable opposition figures also claimed that the Modi government and the BJP had used "Operation Sindoor" to drive a political wedge. "Our forces carried out 'Operation Sindoor,' but now there's a scramble to claim credit," Raut said. In such race, the prime minister is in the lead. Keeping the country together and depoliticizing military operations are two formidable challenges that might test the public's faith in and support for foreign policy.

Strategic Communication and Clarity of Objectives

Some analyses have suggested that India's strategic messaging may be muddled, particularly on the escalation ladder and the country's long-term objectives.

According to an expert brief by Manjari Chatterjee Miller dated May 7, 2025, which discussed the delayed response and objectives, Indian policymakers were allegedly "carefully considering all options to avoid a debacle" because the country took "two weeks" to react to the Pahalgam attack. Although composure is an asset, it's possible to come across as slow or as unable to settle on definite, achievable goals for your response if you take your time to consider everything.

"If the objective of 'Operation Sindoor' was deterrence against future terrorist attacks, it's simply impossible to ensure," states an essay released by the Observer Research Foundation on May 17, 2025, entitled "Post-Sindoor, A New Reality for India and Pakistan" in the Eurasia Review. Short-term successes notwithstanding, the challenging foreign policy dilemma of preventing terrorist strikes across international borders requires ongoing rebalancing and clearer objectives beyond immediate vengeance. On May 14, 2025, the Hindu published an article titled "Operation Sindoor—a case of doubtful deterrence" that offered further proof of this.

The Unintended Stock Market Ripple Effect: A Nuanced Economic Fallout

An unexpected and severe blow to the global military stock market came from "Operation Sindoor": Dassault Aviation's stock price fell by almost 5% following 'Operation Sindoor' on May 7, 2025. The company manufactures combat jets dubbed Rafale for the Indian Air Force (Mint, May 20, 2025). This decline is illogical for a military corporation whose products were used on the field. Potential backers are apprehensive about the operation's potential impact on supply chains and defense spending as a whole, as well as its projected strategic consequence, future orders, and the market overall.

Rapid Expansion of Chinese Defense Firms: In contrast, Chinese defense companies' stock values surged. One such company is AVIC Chengdu Aircraft, which makes fighter jets for Pakistan. Some Chinese defense shares increased by 20% on Thursday, May 8, 2025, increasing the two-day total to 36%. Investors may have seen the escalating tensions between Pakistan and India as an opportunity for China to raise defense spending and potentially get arms agreements, as seen by this huge surge. Strategically, China stands to gain from regional instability, while India may see a decline in public support and political influence.

The Overlooked Internal Dimension of Terrorism

Despite the accolades it got for its operational and tactical victories, the strategic efficacy of "Operation Sindoor" in diminishing the long-term terrorist threat is up for debate. One important thing that was left out of the public conversation after the operation was pointed up in critical analysis, especially in *The Hindu* (May 14, 2025). It is deeply disheartening that world politics and the external use of military force overshadowed the internalization of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).

The Pahalgam terror assault was carried out by Pakistani proxies, but it is evident that local elements, such as concerns of marginalization, repression, and political disenfranchisement, have played a vital role in supporting the insurgency since 1989. Pakistan might exploit these internal flaws to foment discontent. The objective of "winning Kashmir rather than defeating Pakistan" necessitates a thorough approach that goes beyond simple military solutions and takes into account the complex interplay between external support and internal factors. The continuing debate over anti-terror measures and national security in India, a constitutional democracy, highlights the necessity for robust parliamentary discussions and consensus-building rather than compromising democratic norms in the sake of national security. Finally, Indian and international media coverage of "Operation Sindoor" highlighted several major issues with the country's foreign policy. Among these challenges were concerns about the long-term effectiveness of kinetic actions in preventing cross-border terrorism, difficulties in controlling the information narrative, and potential politicization of the response strategy. Despite widespread acknowledgment of India's technical might and military resolve, critical assessments have focused on the complex and multi-faceted nature of the country's foreign policy. Strengthening military might in this domain requires proactive diplomacy, smart communication, and constant attempts to build international consensus while preserving internal political consistency. The different economic outcomes witnessed by military contractors in India and China following worldwide armed wars are further evidence of the baffling and far-reaching implications of such conflicts.

India has always maintained a strict separation between its allies and foes; its longest-standing ally has been the Soviet Union, while its two most dangerous rivals have been Pakistan and China. Friends have traditionally been India's go-to in times of conflict. This clarity, however, began to shift with the adoption of a non-aligned foreign policy and the increasing impact of pragmatic considerations of national interest. India kept its military supply dependence on Russia but grew its geopolitical and commercial links to the United States and other Western countries. While India's relations with the United States and many European governments have improved, it is as evident that relationships with many of its neighbors have deteriorated over time. The distinction between allies and enemies has become blurry as a result, and India is currently without a solid ally.

Operation Sindoor

India responded to Pakistan-sponsored attacks on Pahalgam by launching Operation Sindoor, which aims to destroy insurgent infrastructure across the border. However, in an attempt to further split India, Pakistan responded by deploying drones and opening fire on sacred sites. By characterizing its response as targeted, measured, and non-escalatory, India made it very obvious that it was not attempting to strike Pakistani military sites. India retaliated by attacking and damaging radar stations in Lahore and the vicinity of Gurjanwala. With the end of hostilities in sight, Pakistan's Director General of Military activities decided to halt all military activities, whether on land, in the air, or at sea. Several small drones and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) broke into Indian military and civilian zones despite the ceasefire, but they were all shot down. India has been leading the charge to counter Pakistan's information war by increasing media literacy, smearing sources, and focusing on strategic outcomes. This approach has strengthened the digital landscape and the digital environment. A huge display of India's strategic and military strength, Operation Sindoor incorporated both military and non-military techniques. The threat of terrorism was eliminated, Pakistan was unable to launch an assault, and India made it clear that it would not abide terrorism of any kind. As a result of India's non-kinetic initiatives, including as strategic policymaking, information superiority, and psychological operations, Pakistan was economically and diplomatically isolated as India bolstered internal readiness and global backing. The Indus Waters Treaty was dissolved by India as part of Operation Sindoor, which had far-reaching implications on Pakistan. Utilizing the Indus River system for agricultural purposes accounts for 93% of the country's water supply and 80% of its cultivable area. With full control of the western rivers at its disposal once the treaty was suspended, India was able to improve irrigation and generate hydroelectric power. India cancelled the visas of all Pakistanis residing in the country and deported them immediately following the terrorist attack in Pahalgam. When all Pakistani artists were prohibited, Pakistan's cultural influence on India was completely erased. These steps were taken by India to show that it will not tolerate terrorism in any form and to further isolate Pakistan on the world stage, which had a negative impact on Pakistan's economy and diplomacy.

Results

This section presents the study's findings that evaluate the diplomatic and strategic effects of Operation Sindoor within the context of India's South Asian regional diplomacy. The results of this analysis are based on a thorough literature search of studies, scholarly publications, and strategic assessments that have previously examined the local and regional impacts of Indian security operations. Providing these results will help to draw attention to the most noteworthy tendencies in regional perspectives, strategic objectives, diplomatic responses, and the operation's broader geopolitical ramifications. By organizing the data into subject tables, this study aims to provide a systematic understanding of how India's security measures affect its diplomatic relations with neighboring states and its deterrent powers. How diplomats from surrounding nations responded, the operation's strategic goals, and the perceptions of regional parties about India's military actions were all illuminated by the results. What matters most is the perspective of Nepal, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Pakistan on the relationship between regional stability and India's security strategy. The findings also consider the impact of foreign geopolitical elements, such as China's presence in South Asia, on regional perspectives and diplomatic partnerships. A statistical summary of the distribution of responses and interpretations from the selected sources is shown in the tables below. Tables one through six examine several aspects of the research topic, including regional perception, strategic objectives, diplomatic responses, and implications for neighborhood diplomacy.

Table 1: Perception of India's Security Operations among Neighboring Countries

Response Category	Number of Policy Sources	Percentage (%)
Positive perception (security stabilization)	18	36%
Neutral/Strategic observation	20	40%
Concern regarding escalation	12	24%
Total	50	100%

Table 1 displays the regional observers' interpretations on Operation Sindoor. Significantly, 40% of sources maintained their neutrality, suggesting that certain regional actors choose to be cautious while evaluating India's military actions from a strategic perspective. As an important step in the fight against transnational threats and to strengthen regional security, the operation was viewed positively by one-third of the people. Concerns about regional instability and possible escalation were expressed by 25% of the sources. It is essential for India to keep up diplomatic engagement to assuage the anxieties of its neighboring nations, such as Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal, even if its security-related actions are frequently justified.

Table 2: Strategic Objectives Associated with Operation Sindoor

Strategic Objective	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Counter-terrorism deterrence	22	44%
Border security reinforcement	14	28%
Regional power signaling	9	18%
Domestic political reassurance	5	10%
Total	50	100%

As seen in Table 2, the primary objective of Operation Sindoor, held by 44% of the participants, was counter-terrorism deterrence. It is evident that the cross-border actions of extremists linked to Pakistan have consistently raised concerns about India's security. With 28% of border security reinforcement, it is clear that safeguarding territorial integrity is a realistic concern. Only 18% of people who took the survey considered the operation as evidence of India's regional leadership and strategic strength. Very few people seemed to link the operation to domestic political assurances, suggesting that strategic security concerns were the primary motivating factor rather than internal politics alone.

Table 3: Diplomatic Responses from South Asian Countries

Diplomatic Response	Number of Instances	Percentage (%)
Supportive or cooperative stance	15	30%
Neutral diplomatic statements	25	50%
Expressions of concern	10	20%
Total	50	100%

Table 3 shows that following Operation Sindoor, most South Asian states adopted a neutral diplomatic position. Half of the responses (50%) underlined the importance of tranquility and safety while reserving the freedom to freely express. About a third of the people surveyed expressed support for India's efforts to combat terrorism and promote peace in the area. Concerns about instability or escalation were voiced by 25% of respondents. These results show that diplomacy and India's Neighborhood First Policy need to be delicately balanced for security operations in the country.

Table 4: Factors Influencing Regional Perceptions of India's Actions

Influencing Factor	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Historical India-Pakistan tensions	20	40%
Regional security cooperation	10	20%
Economic dependence on India	8	16%
Influence of external powers	12	24%
Total	50	100%

According to Table 4, the most significant factor influencing regional attitudes, as indicated by 40% of responders, is the historical conflicts between Pakistan and India. Multilateral frameworks can mitigate views of military acts, as indicated by the 20% of regional security cooperation systems. Perceptions were also impacted by economic links with India (16%), particularly among smaller economies in South Asia. In addition, 24 percent of sources said that neighboring nations' perceptions of India's security activities are affected by the presence of foreign powers like China.

Table 5: Implications for India's Neighborhood Diplomacy

Diplomatic Outcome	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Strengthened deterrence credibility	21	42%
Increased regional caution	14	28%
Reinforced security cooperation	9	18%
Diplomatic sensitivity required	6	12%
Total	50	100%

Operation Sindoor had far-reaching diplomatic consequences, as seen in Table 5. Of those who took the survey, 42% said that the operation made India more credible as a deterrent in the area. On the other hand, 28 percent of people who took the survey think that India's neighbors are now more wary of the country's geopolitical moves. If these activities are supported by diplomatic engagement and openness, about 18% answered that there is potential for greater security cooperation. Last but not least, 12% stressed the need of diplomatic sensitivity, showing that regional reassurance tactics and military operations must be properly balanced.

Conclusion

By comparing the two, we can see how India's changing deterrence approach has complicatedly altered regional views. There would be additional difficulties in controlling regional impressions brought forth by Operation Sindoor, even while it improves India's security stance. To maintain peace and build confidence in South Asia, it is crucial to strike a balance between using deterrence and engaging diplomatically.

The strategic and diplomatic implications of Operation Sindoor were examined in this study as they pertained to India's regional diplomacy in South Asia. It is clear from this study that India's security operations aim to achieve military objectives, but they also have far-reaching diplomatic and geopolitical consequences. India must walk a fine line between maintaining stable and cooperative neighborhood connections and its need for credible deterrence in a region where cross-border threats, geopolitical competitiveness, and sensitive interstate ties are on the rise. The majority of respondents viewed Operation Sindoor as an intentional effort to increase border patrols and anti-terrorist efforts, the poll found. The operation was deemed required in response to security concerns created by terrorist activities across international borders, according to several intellectual and policy sources. Many neighboring states exhibited diplomatic reticence or neutrality, according to the research. This is characteristic of smaller governments that had to tread carefully when confronted with the actions of a regional powerhouse. Although regional players are cognizant of India's security concerns, their replies demonstrate their continued vigilance for any developments that might escalate tensions or disrupt the stability of the area. Last but not least, India has two major challenges: addressing security issues forcefully and continuing to play the role of a responsible and stabilizing power in the region. A balanced strategy that incorporates both military preparedness and aggressive diplomacy is necessary to sustain long-term stability, collaboration, and peace in South Asia.

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