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Dr. Modi, "New Normal Policy" against Pakistan brought the two nuclear power countries onto the brink of an all-out war. How did the international diplomatic efforts, particularly the USA contribute to the ceasefire? Also argue the current ceasefire between India and Pakistan is sustainable or fragile?

Ans.

A. Introduction

The geopolitical rivalry between India and Pakistan has historically been marked by military standoffs, proxy conflicts, and diplomatic breakdowns. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has adopted a more ~~assertive~~ assertive and retaliatory approach towards Pakistan through what became known as the "New Normal Policy". This

strategy emphasized swift military responses to cross-border terrorism, as seen in the surgical strikes of 2016 and the Balakot strikes in 2019. Consequently, the region witnessed heightened tensions that dangerously escalated to near-war conditions between the two nuclear-armed neighbours. While Modi's policy aimed at deterring terrorism, it significantly increased the risk of miscalculations and large-scale conflict, necessitating timely international interventions; particularly by the United States, to prevent an all-out war. However, despite the eventual ceasefire agreement in 2021, the long term peace between India and Pakistan remains fragile, as observed in the recent ceasefire after the Pahalgam attack, primarily due to unresolved core issues and the absence of sustained dialogue.

B. Overview of Modi's "New Normal Policy"

Modi's "New Normal Policy" represents a major shift from India's earlier strategy of restraint toward Pakistan. It emphasizes swift and direct military retaliation against cross-border terrorism, as seen in the Uri attacks 2016 and Pulwama attacks 2019. The policy aims to raise the cost for Pakistan-sponsored attacks by signaling that India will no longer tolerate provocation without consequences, even under the shadow of nuclear deterrence. It also involves diplomatic efforts to isolate Pakistan globally, while reinforcing Modi's image domestically as a strong leader. Though intended to deter terrorism, this assertive posture increases the risk of escalation as demonstrated in the

Pahalgam attack 2025, where tensions again reached the brink of war.

C- International Diplomatic Efforts and The Role of the USA.

Amid the rising tensions, international diplomacy, particularly by the United States, played a pivotal role in de-escalation.

1. Urgent Crisis Mediation.

The United States swiftly engaged in backchannel diplomacy, urging both sides to practice restraint. High level contacts were established: US National Security Advisor John Bolton and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo directly communicated with their counterparts in India and Pakistan.

2. Balancing Support with Restraint.

The US continued its long standing support for India's stance against terrorism but simultaneously discouraged escalation. This balance lent credibility to U.S. mediation efforts, as it signaled support for counterterrorism without endorsing military adventurism.

3. Encouraging Ceasefire and Back-channel Talks.

In the aftermath, diplomatic momentum, nudged by the U.S. and Gulf intermediaries, laid the groundwork for the February 2021 ceasefire agreement, wherein both nations agreed to uphold the 2003 Line of Control ceasefire.

4. Global Diplomatic Pressure

The United Nations, European Union, and other global powers also called for restraint, emphasising the dangers of nuclear escalation in South Asia. This multilateral pressure reinforced the need for both sides to step back from the brink.

D. The Fragile Ceasefire between India and Pakistan - The Pahalgam Attack.

Although the May 2025 ceasefire following the Pahalgam attack temporarily paused hostilities, its long-term viability remains uncertain. The agreement, reached under international pressure, especially from the United States, appears to be more of a tactical truce than a strategic shift. The ceasefire remains deeply fragile due to several

structural weaknesses:

1. Lack of Political Dialogue:-

There is no structured diplomatic process following the ceasefire. Without talks, the situation remains reactive rather than strategic.

2. Unresolved Kashmir Dispute

The core issue, especially after India's revocation of Article 370 in 2019, remains unaddressed. For Pakistan, this is a red line.

3. Frequent Violation:

Since May 2025, sporadic border firing has resumed, undermining the ceasefire's credibility.

4. Potential for Future Triggers:

As seen with Uri, Pulwama, and now Pahalgam, any future terror incident could lead to renewed escalation.

5. Mutual distrust

Both militaries continue to prepare for conflict, and domestic political rhetoric on both sides fuels hostility rather than reconciliation.

6. Rise of Hindutva Ideology in India

The growing influence of Hindutva (Hindu nationalist) ideology under the Modi government has deepened polarisation and reduced space for dialogue.

Pakistan views this ideological shift as hostile to its Muslim identity, making diplomatic engagement more difficult and trust harder to rebuild.

7. Suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty

In a significant escalation, India suspended the Indus Water Treaty following the Pahalgam attack, ending a long-standing water sharing agreement that had survived

multiple wars. This move signaled a breakdown in bilateral mechanisms and highlighted how even foundational agreements are now vulnerable to strategic posturing.

Conclusion

To conclude, the Modi's "New Normal Policy" marked a decisive shift in India's approach to Pakistan, favouring military retaliation over restraint.

This policy, while intended to deter terrorism, as seen in Pahalgam attack 2025, which brought both nuclear powers to the brink of war. U.S.-led diplomatic efforts played a crucial role in de-escalating tensions and reviving the ceasefire. However, the current ceasefire remains fragile. The lack of dialogue, unresolved Kashmir issue, Indus Water Treaty suspension, rise of Hindutva, and recurring ceasefire violations all

point to an unstable peace.

Without addressing these core challenges, the ceasefire is likely to remain a temporary pause, vulnerable to collapse with the next crisis.