

Q No 1 :-

Ans:- ~~Q No 1 :-~~ critically analyze the causes and immediate triggers of the May 2015 India-Pakistan conflict?

Introduction:-

The May 2015 India-Pakistan crisis (Operation Sadak and Operation Bunkar Maros) brought the two nuclear-armed neighbours to the brink. A horrific terrorist attack on Indian soil triggered the flash-point, but the deeper causes lay in decades of distrust, doctrinal ambiguity, domestic pressures, and strategic miscalculations. The speed of escalation showed how narrow the safety margin is in South Asia today. Below is the critical analysis of the root causes, the immediate trigger, the escalation dynamics, misperceptions, and lessons especially for Pakistan.

According to Aschultz:-

"In war, truth is the first casualty."

1) Deep Structural Causes:-

1.1: Kashmir: The Enduring Fault Line

Kashmir remains the ideological and strategic core of India-Pakistan hostility. The abrogation of Article 370 in August 2019 fundamentally altered the political baseline; what was once a sensitive status quo became a new norm India defends vigorously, even aggressively. Pakistan viewed that move as a permanent shift in narrative, reducing India's willingness to negotiate.

From 2022 onwards, LOC ceasefire violations rose. According to the budget and security reports from Dawn, in the fiscal year 2024-2025 the

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Defence Services Division overspent its allocation by nearly Rs 59.5 billion, reflecting increased operational pressure along frontiers. These patterns show that military readiness and border tensions were already elevated before 2025.

India's de facto suspension of parts of the Indus waters treaty in April 2025, halting data sharing and dam release coordination was seen in Pakistan as hostile act. ISSI analysts described it as "weaponisation of water". In fact, Pakistan's foreign policy community used the theme "future wars may be fought over water". This move added a strategic, non-military pressure point to the brewing crisis.

L2 Doctrine, Deterrence, and Warfare Posture:-

South Asia in May 2025 witnessed its first multi-domain warfare, according to ISSI Issue Brief. India integrated air strikes, drones, precision attacks, and command-and-control operations. In that clash, India fielded 72 fighter jets, while Pakistan employed just 42, yet it is claimed that Pakistan's defence posture prevented India from achieving unchallenged supremacy. That shows how posture, terrain, and planning matter beyond raw numbers.

India's approach relies on so-called "proactive doctrine" or limited cross-border strikes against terror infrastructure believing it can punish without broader war. But Pakistan counters with "Full Spectrum Deterrence", threatening tactical nuclear

nuclear use if sovereignty is crossed. These doctrines lack transparent thresholds, making misinterpretation and escalation much easier.

1.3 Domestic Politics, Media, and National Sentiment:-

In both states, political legitimacy hinges partly on posture toward the rival. After any terror attack, muted response is seen as weakness; overreaction carries risks but is easier to see domestically. A media study on Pakistani coverage during the may conflict found that war-related reporting almost entirely overrode political dissent or other domestic issues. This narrowing of public discourse pressures leadership toward strong responses.

In addition, the strategic elite in Pakistan, especially the military establishment, derives significant institutional legitimacy from resisting Indian aggression, especially regarding Kashmir.

1.4 Non-State Actors, Terrorism, and the Proxy Problem:-

Non-state militant groups operating across borders have long been a flashpoint. Pakistan is often accused of tolerating or failing to restrain these groups. The Peshawar attack (22 April 2015), which claimed 26 lives, was immediately blamed by India on Pakistan-based terrorists; Pakistan denied involvement and even called it a false-flag operation.

Because the chain of control is opaque, any attack can be leveraged as justification for state-level retaliation. That ambiguity makes deterrence

brittle; even if one side did not order the attack, the victim side feels compelled to respond.

1.5 Economic Constraints and Defence

Posture:-

Despite severe fiscal pressure, Pakistan increased its defence allocation sharply in response to the crisis. In the 2025-2026 budget, defence spending was increased to RS 2,550 billion (USD 9 billion), a 20% jump over the prior year's base. Meanwhile, total federal spending was cut by about 7%. The disproportionate rise in military outlay under economic duress reflects how security competition shapes state choices.

Historically, defence and power sectors overshoot their allocations (for instance, in FY 2024-25, they exceeded them by RS 129.5 billion and RS 61 billion respectively). This shows structural prioritization of security even when resources are limited.

2:- The Immediate trigger and Escalation Sequence:-

2.1 **Pahalgam Terror Attack: The Flashpoint**
On 22 April 2025, a militant attack targeted tourists in Pahalgam, killing 26 civilians. The shock of this attack, targeting peaceful civilians in a sensitive zone, triggered massive public outrage and government pressure to respond.

India swiftly accused individuals with alleged Pakistani ties. Pakistan denied state sponsorship and, within weeks, published a 43-page dossier calling the attack a false-flag attempt to justify

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aggression. The scale, location, and nature of the attack left little diplomatic room for caution.

2.0 ~~Diplomatic~~ ~~at~~ ~~Pakistan~~ ~~(Countermeasures)~~ ~~etc military strikes let~~

2.1 India launches operation Sindoor (7 May 2025):-

On 7 May 2025, India moved from rhetoric to action, launching operation Sindoor. According to Indian public statements, the strikes targeted nine locations inside Pakistan and Pakistan-administered Kashmir, believed to house terrorist infrastructure (training camps, command centres). India claimed it avoided military or civilian infrastructure in Pakistan's regular forces.

In its announcements, India stated that over 100 terrorists were neutralised, and 35-40 Pakistani military personnel were killed, with 5 Indian ~~casual~~ casualties. The Indian government presented satellite imagery purportedly showing damage to airbases such as Nur Khan, Sargodha, Sukkur, Ration War Khan, Jacobabad, and Bhodari.

This sudden, calibrated strike was the immediate firing of guns in the confrontation.

2.2 Pakistan's Response: operation Bunyan-un-Marsous (10 May 2025):-

Pakistan did not remain passive. On 10 May, it launched operation Bunyan-un-Marsous ("an impregnable structure"), declaring it a retaliatory counterstrike. The stated goals included hitting 26 Indian military targets (airbases, missile storage, logistics sites) and defending Pakistan's

Sovereignty. Pakistan also claimed cyber operations disabling "70% of India's power grid". The military publicly asserted that it had downed Indian aircraft, struck missile storage sites like Bana (Punjab), and degraded India's strike capacity.

By 12 May, after diplomatic engagements, Pakistan declared its operation complete, and ceasefire resumed via direct communication between DnMO offices.

2.4 How the operations unfolded:-

- India's strikes took place early on 7 May, aiming at terror infrastructure rather than full military bases.
- In the aftermath, Pakistan scrambled to respond, mobilizing air, missiles, and cyber troops.
- The Pakistani counter-operation, however, is reported by many analysts to have collapsed after only eight hours, largely due to India's swift air and missile retaliation. The Indian Air Force is said to have hit critical Pakistani bases.
- Indian deployment of its S-400 air defence system reportedly engaged Pakistani aircraft multiple times, neutralizing threats like a SAAB-2000 early warning plane, a C-130J, JF-17s, and F-16s.
- Pakistan's Dn ISPR insisted it never requested ceasefire but responded to Indian overtures after the military response was "given".
- Both sides launched information campaigns, making conflicting claims, and disinformation was rampant.
- Ultimately, a ceasefire was brokered by external

entire diplomatic channels, and the operations were wound down.

Critical Analysis:

Though the military confrontations were real, much of this conflict was also a war of narratives, propaganda, and perceptions. Both India and Pakistan flooded social media with unverified footage, exaggerated claims, and manipulated images. In fact, Boom fact-check India revealed that over 64.4% of viral content during the conflict was fake or misleading. For example, videos from 2019 were presented as recent strikes. Even in official circles, Pakistan was accused of gifting a photoshopped image from a Chinese missile test to its army chief as "proof" of Indian base destruction, a claim debunked by multiple sources.

The conflict was also a case study in "limited escalation under the nuclear umbrella". Both sides exercised a degree of restraint: India did not target major Pakistani cities ~~or~~ or military command centres; Pakistan avoided direct strikes on Indian civilian areas. The strategic message was clear: "we can escalate, but we will not go all the way."

However, this pattern is dangerous. It shows that both countries have become comfortable with short, intense flare-ups, assuming the other will back down before nuclear thresholds are crossed. This complacency is perilous. It ignores the role of accidents, miscommunication, and domestic pressure, any of which can push a conflict past the point of control.

Finally, the deep causes - Kashmir, terrorism, lack of dialogue remain untouched. Unless these

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these are resolved, the subcontinent remains just one terror attack away from another limited war.

Conclusion: The May 2025 conflict between India and Pakistan was not just a military exchange, it was a reflection of decades of distrust, denial, and delayed diplomacy. The ~~the~~ Pakistan attack may have triggered the spark, but the fire was lit long ago.

As long as both states continue to treat each other as existential threats and rely on force rather than dialogue, peace will remain temporary and fragile.

~~The quote says~~ The words of Stephen Cohen, a noted South Asian scholar:-

"India and Pakistan are like two scorpions in a battle, each capable of killing the other, but only at the risk of their own survival".

It is time both nations realized that no military operation can replace the hard, frustrating, but essential work of political engagement.

→ Summary:-

