



“In fact, the issue is always between two points”

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Title: Geopolitical Dynamics in the Context of the India-Pakistan Tension and Great Power Rivalry
Subheading: The May 2025 India-Pakistan Crisis: An Analysis in Historical Perspective and within the Framework of U.S.-China Strategic Competition

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Introduction

A military crisis of unprecedented severity in decades has erupted between India and Pakistan. Tensions rapidly escalated following a bloody terrorist attack on April 22, 2025, in India's Jammu and Kashmir region, where 28 civilians, mostly tourists, lost their lives. Holding Pakistan-backed militants responsible for the attack, the New Delhi government launched retaliatory missile strikes on Pakistani territory under the code name "Operation Sindoor" on May 7. In response, on May 10, the Pakistani army launched drone and missile attacks against various targets in India under "Operation Bunyan al-Marsus." After three days of intense fighting, the two nuclear-armed neighbors agreed to a ceasefire on the evening of May 10 through U.S. mediation. However, despite the ceasefire announcement, both sides continue to accuse each other of provocations, and gunfire is still being heard along the border.

This study aims to analyze the historical roots and recent developments of the May 2025 crisis and to evaluate the lessons learned in the context of U.S.-China strategic competition. Specifically, the paper will:

- Examine the Kashmir-centered India-Pakistan rivalry and its implications for energy security and great power geostrategic projects;
- Discuss the extent of U.S.-India cooperation in response to China's growing influence through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI);
- Assess the impact of regional crises from the perspective of global trade wars and supply chain security;
- Analyze the significance of the crisis within the rise of a multipolar world and the evolving role of the Global South;
- Offer projections and policy recommendations for future escalation risks, diplomatic solutions, and the role of nuclear deterrence.

Historical Background:

The Kashmir Issue and Nuclear Deterrence

The seeds of hostility between India and Pakistan were sown with the partition of British India in 1947. The princely state of Jammu and Kashmir, which lay between the two newly created states—Muslim-majority Pakistan and Hindu-majority India—became a contested region claimed by both sides. The first war over Kashmir erupted in 1947–48, and a de facto ceasefire line was established by the 1949 Karachi Agreement. Two more wars followed in 1965 and 1971; the latter resulted in the secession of East Pakistan as Bangladesh. The 1972 Simla Agreement formally recognized the Line of Control (LoC), which split Jammu and Kashmir into two effective zones of control. However, the conflict persisted, and from the 1980s, an insurgency emerged against Indian rule in Kashmir, allegedly supported by Pakistan.

In 1998, both countries conducted nuclear tests, bringing a new dimension to the conflict. The subsequent 1999 Kargil crisis brought the two nuclear powers dangerously close to direct war. The emergence of nuclear weapons significantly altered the deterrence balance between India and Pakistan. While nuclear deterrence prevented full-scale war, it also gave rise to the so-called "stability-instability paradox," whereby limited conventional clashes continued under the umbrella of nuclear deterrence. Theoretically, mutual assured destruction discouraged major war, but in practice, Pakistan sought to compensate for its weaker conventional capability with its nuclear arsenal, while India responded with restraint.

This dynamic became evident during crises such as the Kargil conflict (1999), the 2001 Indian Parliament attack and ensuing 2002 border standoff, and the 2019 Balakot airstrikes. In each case, international intervention, particularly by the United States, was required to de-escalate tensions. In 2019, following a terrorist attack in Pulwama that killed 40 Indian paramilitary personnel, India launched airstrikes on Pakistani territory, and U.S. mediation again helped prevent war. Nonetheless, the Kashmir issue remains unresolved, resulting in a chronic state of low-intensity conflict and political friction. Despite a formal ceasefire agreement in 2003, cross-border skirmishes and mutual accusations have remained frequent and persistent.

Escalating Tensions and Recent Developments in May 2025

The escalation leading to the 2025 crisis should be seen as the latest chapter in the long-standing historical backdrop described above. The large-scale terrorist attack in Pahalgam, in Indian-administered Kashmir, on April 22, 2025, shattered an already fragile ceasefire and triggered a new crisis. The attack was initially claimed by The Resistance Front (TRF), a group linked to the Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba, but the organization later denied responsibility. India, however, blamed Pakistani support for the terrorists and imposed severe countermeasures, including accusing Islamabad, restricting border trade and transport, and threatening to suspend the Indus Waters Treaty.

India's threat to use the Indus River as leverage against Pakistan was met with serious warnings from Islamabad, which declared such an act a "casus belli." Since Pakistan relies heavily on the Indus and its tributaries for electricity generation and agriculture, any disruption could cripple large portions of its infrastructure. The suspension of the treaty during the 2025 crisis placed 90% of Pakistan's hydropower capacity (9.3 GW) at risk.

In the days following the attack, artillery fire and minor skirmishes broke out across the Kashmir Line of Control (LoC). Pakistan responded by closing its airspace to Indian flights and scaling back diplomatic ties. On the morning of May 7, the Indian military announced it had conducted 14 precision strikes using Rafale fighter jets and ground-launched missiles targeting Pakistani

soil. Dubbed “Operation Sindoor,” India claimed it had only targeted terrorist camps belonging to Jaish-e-Mohammed and Lashkar-e-Taiba and that the Pakistani military was not directly attacked. Pakistan, however, reported that civilian areas, including mosques, were hit, with at least 31 civilian deaths. The Indian Air Force was reported to have used SCALP cruise missiles, guided bombs, BrahMos missiles, and loitering munitions.

Following Operation Sindoor, the conflict escalated into a multi-front confrontation. Pakistani forces responded with artillery and mortar fire, and for the first time, large-scale use of drones was reported. This crisis marked the first instance where both countries employed armed drones extensively. Between May 8 and 9, both sides reported airspace violations and drone interceptions along the LoC and the Punjab border. Each claimed to have downed several of the other’s drones. Pakistan also alleged cyberattacks against Indian critical infrastructure, while India reported hostile drones detected near its Punjab region. On May 10, the Pakistani military escalated further by launching retaliatory strikes deeper into Indian territory under “Operation Bunyan al-Marsus.” These included rocket and drone attacks near major Indian cities. In a televised address, Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif claimed victory and declared May 11 a national day of thanksgiving. Meanwhile, international diplomatic efforts intensified to prevent further escalation into full-scale war. The United States took on a lead mediating role, with support from China, Saudi Arabia, and the United Kingdom. Eventually, both sides announced a ceasefire agreement, effective at 17:00 local time on May 10, halting all hostilities on land, air, and sea, and scheduled direct talks for May 12.

Despite the announcement, reports of artillery fire continued, and both sides accused each other of violating the truce. Still, international pressure succeeded in containing the conflict before it devolved into full war. The United States and China issued official statements calling for restraint. China expressed “concern” over India’s operation and called for a thorough investigation, while the U.S. urged both sides to de-escalate. This demonstrated how deeply intertwined regional conflicts have become with global power dynamics.

Energy Security and the Struggle over Trade Routes

The chronic Kashmir dispute between India and Pakistan is more than a territorial or religious conflict—it is also closely linked to energy security and the competition over trade and transport routes. Geographically, Kashmir lies at the crossroads of South Asia, Central Asia, and China. It borders China’s Xinjiang province to the north and lies near energy-rich Central Asia and trade corridors extending to the Persian Gulf via Afghanistan.

In this context, Kashmir holds significant strategic weight in China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), particularly through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). As a flagship BRI project launched in 2015, CPEC is a 3,000 km-long land and energy corridor that begins in Kashgar, China, traverses the length of Pakistan, and ends at the Gwadar port on the Arabian Sea. Importantly, it passes through the Gilgit-Baltistan region, which India claims as part of Kashmir, effectively integrating the disputed area into China’s geostrategic calculations.

For China, CPEC offers a vital solution to its longstanding “Malacca Dilemma”—the vulnerability of its energy imports that pass through narrow maritime chokepoints like the Strait of Malacca. Through CPEC, China gains direct overland access to the Indian Ocean and Middle Eastern energy sources via Pakistani territory, thereby reducing its reliance on these high-risk maritime routes.

For Pakistan, CPEC is not only an economic lifeline but also a platform for strengthening its energy infrastructure. Numerous highways, railways, ports, and power plants have been built or planned with CPEC funding. Projects include LNG terminals and power plants intended to alleviate Pakistan’s chronic energy shortages. Islamabad refers to CPEC as a “game-changer,” viewing it as both an economic revival tool and a counterbalance to India’s regional influence.

During the 2025 crisis, Pakistan’s energy vulnerabilities were starkly revealed. Fuel shortages emerged, and the government temporarily restricted gasoline sales. According to Rystad Energy, prolonged conflict would severely impair both nations’ energy security—but Pakistan’s situation is more precarious. While India consumes 5.4 million barrels of oil daily and holds a one-month strategic reserve, Pakistan consumes only 250,000 barrels and has merely a 20-day commercial reserve.

India’s own energy security imperatives shape its Pakistan policy. As its economy grows, India becomes increasingly reliant on external energy—importing 85% of its oil and over 50% of its natural gas. Despite geographic proximity to resource-rich countries like Iran and Central Asia, India lacks direct overland access due to strained ties with Pakistan. Gas pipeline projects like TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) and IPI (Iran-Pakistan-India) remain unrealized due to regional instability and strategic rivalry.

Had peace and cooperation prevailed, Kashmir could have served as a corridor connecting South Asia with Central Asia and China—benefiting both India and Pakistan. However, current tensions make such integration impossible. Instead, CPEC is being developed as an energy and trade route that explicitly excludes India. Kashmir’s contested status is now embedded in energy geopolitics: India opposes CPEC’s route through Gilgit-Baltistan, while Pakistan and China are reinforcing their influence in the area. China’s call for restraint during the 2025 crisis was rooted in concerns over protecting CPEC and maintaining regional stability. Similarly, India’s threat to suspend the Indus Waters Treaty reflects how energy-security dynamics have become tools of strategic coercion.

China’s Encirclement Strategy and U.S.-India Cooperation against the Belt and Road (New Spice Route)

The India-Pakistan tension is not merely a bilateral issue but must be viewed within the context of U.S.-China competition in South Asia. Through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China has expanded its economic and strategic presence in the region, prompting India to perceive itself as being subjected to a “Chinese encirclement” strategy. China’s so-called “String of Pearls”—a network of strategic ports including those in Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan’s Gwadar—and its “all-weather” alliance with Pakistan have raised serious concerns in New Delhi.

For India, China’s growing military and economic ties with Pakistan signify not only a strengthening of its traditional adversary but also the expansion of Chinese influence in its immediate neighborhood. Indian strategists have thus emphasized the need

for a counter-encirclement policy. As part of this response, India has strengthened its naval capabilities in the Indian Ocean, deepened cooperation with regional actors such as Japan, Australia, and Vietnam, and entered into strategic partnerships with global powers.

One academic analysis describes India's response to Chinese encirclement as "limited hard balancing," encompassing military bases abroad, alliance-building, and closer alignment with the United States. U.S.-India strategic convergence has grown noticeably in recent years. The U.S. views India as a key partner to balance China's rise in Asia. Since 2017, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) involving the U.S., Japan, India, and Australia has been revived. In 2022, the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework was established, followed by the launch of the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) in 2023 as a BRI alternative.

While the U.S. supports India as a counterweight to China, India has gained both economic and military advantages from this partnership. The U.S. has provided advanced defense systems, intelligence sharing, and joint military exercises. Cooperation has extended to nuclear technology and space research. During the May 2025 crisis, U.S. mediation reinforced Washington's image as a reliable ally in New Delhi. American officials maintained constant communication with both capitals, and even former President Donald Trump publicly commented that "India and Pakistan would inevitably clash," drawing further attention to the crisis.

Although India has traditionally championed non-alignment and equidistance from global powers, in practice, its interests have increasingly aligned with the United States. Joint efforts in infrastructure financing (e.g., the Blue Dot Network) and supply chain diversification demonstrate the depth of U.S.-India collaboration.

The May 2025 crisis clearly illustrated how regional tensions are shaped by global power rivalries. Despite being Pakistan's long-standing ally, China adopted a cautious stance during the conflict. Beijing labeled India's strikes as "unfortunate" and called for restraint—signaling that while it supports Pakistan, it does not favor uncontrolled escalation. A full-scale India-Pakistan war would threaten China's regional investments, including CPEC, and force Beijing into a difficult dilemma: either openly support Pakistan and risk direct confrontation with the U.S., or step back and damage its credibility.

Thus, China pursued behind-the-scenes diplomacy to prevent further escalation and encouraged Pakistan to accept the ceasefire. The U.S., meanwhile, openly sided with India, stating that India's counterterrorism efforts were legitimate and urging Pakistan not to escalate. Nevertheless, Washington also urged New Delhi to act with restraint to prevent a nuclear crisis.

This reveals that rather than cooperating, global powers continued their competition in crisis resolution: the U.S. played the role of active mediator, while China remained in the background, focused on protecting its own interests.

China's broader strategic calculations clearly assign great importance to the India-Pakistan dynamic. The CPEC is not only a bilateral development initiative but also a core element in Beijing's grand strategy to counter containment by U.S. allies. As such, any move that pushes India closer to the U.S. or destabilizes Pakistan threatens China's regional posture. The 2025 crisis accelerated India's strategic tilt toward the West. In its aftermath, security consultations between India and the U.S. intensified, arms sales increased, and joint projects—such as missile defense cooperation—gained momentum. Meanwhile, Pakistan's limited economic and military capacity rendered it even more dependent on China.

In essence, each major crisis in South Asia amplifies the proxy dimension of U.S.-China rivalry: even when they do not confront each other directly, they continue their contest for influence through regional allies.

Global Trade Wars and Supply Chain Security

The 2025 crisis erupted at a time of escalating global economic competition. Since 2018, U.S.-China trade wars and technological rivalry have strained the international trade system. Tariffs, export controls, and efforts to restructure supply chains are transforming the global economic order. Within this context, regional crises in countries like India and Pakistan also affect global supply chain security. The geographic distribution of supply chains is becoming a geopolitical instrument amid the shift toward a multipolar world.

The intensifying U.S.-China rivalry has prompted businesses and governments to diversify supply sources and adopt friend-shoring strategies—favoring trade with trusted allies. Instability in Asia may undermine the attractiveness of emerging production hubs like India or raise costs by making key transportation routes insecure.

Even though short-lived, the 2025 India-Pakistan tension impacted regional transportation routes. Pakistan's closure of its airspace forced international flights over South Asia to reroute, increasing fuel costs for flights from India to Europe. Meanwhile, the perceived threat of conflict led insurance firms to temporarily raise premiums on maritime shipments. While the chance of direct attacks on oil tankers or commercial vessels in the Indian Ocean was low, the mere fear of war disrupted trade flows. Analysts noted that in times of heightened tensions, even a false alarm or miscalculation at sea could disrupt regional commerce.

Globally, supply chain security has become integral to national security. The COVID-19 pandemic, the Ukraine war, and U.S.-China trade tensions have prompted many nations to reassess their supply dependencies for critical goods like semiconductors, pharmaceuticals, and food. India is trying to capitalize on this shift—seeking to become a manufacturing hub and alternative to China through its "Make in India" initiative. However, political risks in the subcontinent may cause investors to act cautiously. The 2025 crisis raised questions about India's reliability as a strategic production base amid great power competition.

Additionally, global trade wars may indirectly inflame regional conflicts. As U.S.-China tensions intensify, both powers are supporting allies with economic and military aid to secure their spheres of influence. This raises the strategic value of countries like India while increasing the dependency of economically fragile states like Pakistan on one power bloc. In recent years, Pakistan has secured large Chinese loans and sought assistance from Saudi Arabia and Gulf states. Relations with the U.S.

have been inconsistent, especially after the American withdrawal from Afghanistan, which led to a cooling in Washington-Islamabad ties.

In the trade war context, China has strengthened its hold on Pakistan through BRI investments, while the U.S. has pulled India closer with tech investments and trade preferences—such as exempting India from some export restrictions or offering tariff reductions on Indian goods. As supply chains realign along geopolitical lines, economic bloc formation is emerging in South Asia as well.

In this broader picture, the May 2025 crisis caused temporary fluctuations in energy prices and spooked investors, but it also clarified strategic alignments shaped by trade wars. After the crisis, India accelerated its efforts toward economic integration with the West, while Pakistan pursued deeper commercial ties with China and Russia. This trend of economic polarization makes regional conflict resolution more difficult, as great power coordination diminishes and each side prioritizes backing its allies.

Crises like the one between India and Pakistan thus increase global uncertainty. Trade wars, supply chain security, and regional conflicts form a mutually reinforcing feedback loop, with each element exacerbating the others.

The Rise of a Multipolar World Order and the Role of the Global South

The unipolar dominance of the United States following the Cold War has in recent years given way to an increasingly multipolar and fragmented global power distribution. A key feature of this transformation is the growing weight of developing countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America—collectively referred to as the Global South. Both India and Pakistan have historically been members of the Non-Aligned Movement and continue to represent the Global South. Today, these nations seek to pursue multi-vector foreign policies, refraining from full alignment with either the U.S. or China.

India, for example, while strengthening ties with the West, remains active in BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization—groups that include China and Russia. Pakistan, for its part, tries to maintain its partnership with China without completely severing ties with the U.S. These balancing acts reflect the new dynamics of a multipolar international order.

The evolving role of the Global South also entails asserting an independent agenda. Scholars like Matias Spektor argue that the Global South has benefited significantly from the shifting balance of power over the last two decades. China's rise, occasional rifts between the U.S. and Europe, and growing competition among great powers have created new maneuvering space for developing countries. Through coalitions like BRICS or regional blocs like the African Union, these nations are speaking with greater authority and challenging Western dominance in defining global norms.

This dynamic allows countries like India and Pakistan not merely to be pawns in great power rivalries but to assert their own strategic interests. During the 2025 crisis, aspects of Global South solidarity were observable. The Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), mostly composed of Global South countries, issued statements in support of Pakistan. In the UN General Assembly, many African and Asian nations called for de-escalation while refraining from explicitly taking sides.

India, in particular, seeks to position itself as a leader of the Global South. Prime Minister Modi has repeatedly described India as “the voice of the Global South,” and in 2023, India hosted a summit under this theme. During the 2025 crisis, New Delhi attempted to leverage this narrative—portraying itself as a developing nation that has suffered extensively from terrorism, thereby isolating Pakistan diplomatically.

Pakistan, conversely, sought backing from the Islamic world and China-Russia bloc to balance India's narrative. Both countries tried to maximize their geopolitical leverage without committing exclusively to any single power center.

The multipolar order is often seen as more unpredictable and chaotic than a bipolar system. Unlike Cold War-era blocs, today's coalitions are fluid, based more on interest than ideology. This can make it harder to resolve entrenched disputes like the one between India and Pakistan. During the Cold War, the superpowers could exert pressure to contain conflicts; in a multipolar setting, local actors may find more room to maneuver—and potentially escalate.

In this sense, the India-Pakistan rivalry becomes a testing ground for multipolar diplomacy. China, the U.S., Russia, and even Middle Eastern powers like Saudi Arabia and Iran are involved in this equation. As key actors in the Global South, India and Pakistan aim to draw support from these players while maintaining their own autonomy. This careful balancing act is sometimes called “new non-alignment”: benefiting from multiple partnerships without full commitment to any single bloc.

India is particularly adept at this approach—buying discounted oil from Russia while expanding defense ties with the U.S.; maintaining relations with Iran while deepening strategic cooperation with Israel. Pakistan, facing economic constraints, has less flexibility but still tries to diversify its partnerships with China, the Gulf, and Turkey. This mobility within the Global South is also evident in international institutions. Under India's leadership, Global South countries have taken more assertive stances in the G20 and UN on issues like climate finance and development aid.

Ultimately, any attempt to resolve the India-Pakistan conflict must consider this new multipolar reality. Neither the U.S. nor any single power can impose a solution. Progress requires collective will from the Global South and cooperation among major powers. The idea of “South-South diplomacy” or a new initiative under UN auspices may provide a pathway to dialogue.

Even though India rejects direct mediation on the Kashmir issue, back-channel diplomacy involving emerging powers like Turkey, Saudi Arabia, or the UAE—actors with influence in Pakistan—could be constructive. If Global South solidarity is to be meaningful, it must contribute to peace between major Southern powers like India and Pakistan.

The lesson of the 2025 crisis is clear: peace in Kashmir is not only vital for South Asia's development but also for the softening of great power rivalries. Old animosities can still flare up in the 21st century, and unless carefully managed, they risk becoming global catastrophes. Multipolar diplomacy, confidence-building steps, and a focus on human security are essential. While peace may be difficult in this contested geography, it is not impossible. Like other adversaries in history, India and Pakistan

must eventually find a path to normalization. Otherwise, the next crisis could be the last—and preventing that is a shared global responsibility.

Future Scenarios: Escalation Risks, Diplomatic Solutions, and the Role of Nuclear Deterrence

Although the May 2025 crisis has been contained for now, the structural roots of hostility between India and Pakistan remain unresolved. This opens the door to several potential future scenarios:

Controlled Tension and Intermittent Crises: The most probable scenario involves a continuation of unstable peace, marked by recurring episodes of low-intensity conflict. Public opinion and political elites in both countries harbor deep mistrust, making any dialogue initiatives fragile. Border skirmishes, cross-border terrorism, or provocations may lead to future military stand-offs. While nuclear deterrence reduces the likelihood of all-out war, each crisis still carries the risk of miscalculation, especially in the age of autonomous drones, hypersonic missiles, and cyber warfare. A malfunctioning radar or accidental strike could trigger a chain reaction. Therefore, it is vital for both countries to establish robust crisis communication channels, ensure transparency in military movements, and allow third-party actors like the U.S. or China to serve as regional intermediaries.

Escalation and Limited War: A worst-case scenario involves a future crisis spiraling out of control into a limited war. A large-scale terrorist attack inside India causing mass casualties could prompt New Delhi to respond with overwhelming force, possibly including ground operations. India's previous doctrine of "Cold Start" envisions rapid, localized strikes to avoid nuclear escalation. However, such an action could provoke Islamabad to consider using tactical nuclear weapons—a doctrine Pakistan has hinted at. Pakistan's Nasr missile system, capable of delivering low-yield nuclear payloads at short range, is seen as a counterbalance to India's conventional superiority. Thus, even a limited war could bring the region to the brink of nuclear conflict. In such a scenario, neither side would win—both would suffer catastrophic losses. Hence, the international community must adopt a proactive stance in times of heightened tension. The crisis averted in 2025 may not be as easily defused next time.

Diplomatic Resolution and De-escalation: An optimistic scenario envisions a return to reason and a renewed dialogue process. Even if the Kashmir issue remains unresolved, it may be rendered manageable through mutual confidence-building. A revived Composite Dialogue Process could include cross-border terrorism prevention mechanisms, measures to improve daily life in Kashmir (e.g., easing trade and travel), and risk-reduction agreements (e.g., missile test notifications, protocols to prevent accidental nuclear use). International actors may play a supportive, rather than directive, role. A joint U.S.-China initiative on nuclear risk reduction in South Asia could incentivize dialogue. Sustained high-alert status imposes economic and social costs—Pakistan's development is constrained by defense spending, while India's ambitions of becoming a global power are hindered by regional instability.

However, major challenges persist. Both sides treat Kashmir as a red line: India opposes foreign involvement or territorial concessions, while Pakistan insists on Kashmiri self-determination. India's revocation of Jammu and Kashmir's special status in 2019 has further complicated resolution. Still, even if a comprehensive agreement remains elusive, a "frozen conflict" model may offer partial stabilization—respecting the de facto Line of Control, reducing hostility, and refraining from inflammatory rhetoric.

Political conditions must also be conducive to peace: Pakistan's military must allow civilian leadership space to maneuver, while India's nationalist discourse needs to soften. This is difficult, but not impossible—previous rapprochements during the Vajpayee-Musharraf era showed promise.

Outcomes Influenced by Great Power Interaction: Future scenarios will also depend on U.S. and Chinese behavior. If U.S.-China rivalry intensifies—perhaps over Taiwan—South Asia may become a secondary or proxy battleground. India might gravitate closer to the U.S., while Pakistan seeks Chinese security guarantees. This could recreate Cold War-style blocs and leave little room for diplomacy. Conversely, if Washington and Beijing agree to manage their competition, cooperation in South Asia becomes feasible. Joint pressure from both powers on India and Pakistan could enable de-escalation and risk reduction. Regardless of the scenario, nuclear deterrence remains central. Although both countries officially present their nuclear arsenals as last-resort options, they continue to use nuclear signaling during crises. India maintains a "No First Use" (NFU) policy, but some Indian strategists have suggested revisiting this doctrine in light of Pakistan's tactical capabilities. Pakistan, for its part, may lower its nuclear threshold if its conventional disadvantage persists.

To prevent these dangerous trends, global non-proliferation efforts must be revitalized. Including India and Pakistan in treaties like the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) would promote transparency and impose safeguards. Early-warning systems and accident-prevention protocols are also essential.

Conclusion The military confrontation between India and Pakistan in May 2025 has once again underscored the enduring volatility of South Asia. The Kashmir dispute, combined with nuclear deterrence dynamics, creates a geopolitical fault line with global implications. This crisis not only highlighted the ongoing struggle over energy, water, and trade corridors but also revealed how deeply regional tensions are enmeshed with great power competition.

China's BRI projects aimed at encircling India, combined with growing U.S.-India cooperation, reflect the new fault lines. Trade wars and economic polarization further complicated the international response. In a world trending toward multipolarity, regional rivalries involving Global South powers like India and Pakistan cannot be viewed in isolation.

Four key takeaways emerge:

Nuclear deterrence may prevent total war but cannot stop recurring crises. International efforts are needed to manage this conflict.

Critical resources like energy and water must not be used as instruments of coercion.

Even amid competition, great powers must cooperate to avoid nuclear escalation. Institutions of the Global South (e.g., OIC, ASEAN, African Union) should promote peace. Ultimately, peace between India and Pakistan is essential not only for South Asia but for Eurasian stability. A resolution in Kashmir would enhance regional prosperity and mitigate global security risks. The May 2025 crisis is a warning flare: historical animosities can still ignite global consequences. Investing in multilateral diplomacy and human security is the only sustainable path forward. Though difficult, reconciliation is not impossible—history is replete with former adversaries who eventually found peace. India and Pakistan must do the same, or risk facing a crisis that the world cannot afford to ignore.

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