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“Breaking the Bias”

BY: MRUGAJA JOSHI, YASHADA MATHAD



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Tariffs, Trade Wars, and Trump: The Global Showdown of 2025

By : **Arya Mhaske, Ameya Dusane, Chinmay Joshi**

Introduction

Since taking office again on 20th January 2025, Trump has made tariffs the main focus of his trade policy. He planned 2nd April as "Liberation Day", that's when his reciprocal tariff plan kicked in. The idea is pretty straightforward: if a country charges America 10% to sell there, we'll charge them 10% to sell here. Makes sense, right? Let's analyze the situation together.

Trump pushed these tariffs because he thinks global trade treats American businesses unfairly. He keeps saying American companies face huge barriers when selling overseas, but foreign companies have it way easier getting into the huge American markets. This unfair situation is basically why he's so determined to use tariffs.

The administration didn't even wait for April to start with the tariffs. They've already put 25% tariffs on goods from Canada and Mexico (though some things are exempt), increased the tariffs on Chinese imports from 10% to 20%, with some products later facing rates as high as 145%, and added these big 25% tariffs on steel and aluminum from pretty much everywhere!

These moves have started what people call trade wars. When America puts tariffs on other countries, they then respond with their own tariffs on American products. The EU, Canada, and China have all done this, and have put counter tariffs on all sorts of American exports.

Trump insists these tariffs will bring back American manufacturing, create tons of jobs, and bring in money. He always points to America's trade deficit (which was around \$600 billion last year) as proof that something's wrong with the American trade deals. He's also claimed somehow tariffs will stop illegal immigration and reduce the flow of dangerous drugs like fentanyl.

Most economists disagree with Trump's approach though. They warn that these trade fights could slow down global growth, maybe even cause a recession here, while making everyday products more expensive for Americans.





The tariffs are already changing global trade patterns. Countries that sell a lot to America, especially Mexico, are getting hit hard, while some other countries might actually benefit as companies scramble to rearrange their supply chains. Nations now have to decide- either stand up to Trump's demands or just give in to avoid more economic trouble. What parameters will influence the future of American tariffs and the global economy?

Let's sail on a journey to evaluate and understand the current global trade war.

Gold to Dust?

Trump's bold, unfiltered, and audacious tariff plans reveal a multi-layered approach, combining immediate retaliatory measures with visionary, longer-term structural adaptations and improvements for ambitious domestic revivals. The US holds a significant portion of its trade power in its trade deficit relations, as it has hit countries with tariffs depending majorly on the trade deficit America has with that specific country. The layers are, however, prone to erosion as the world attunes its orientations to brace minimal impact.

The European Union, a formidable trade bloc, has sharpened and narrowed its retaliatory spear from the earlier proposed stance of 2nd April 2025 - the EU planned tariffs on €26 billion (\$28 billion) of U.S. imports - meat, cereals, wine, clothing, dental floss, diamonds, in response to Trump's 25% steel and aluminum duties and 20% blanket tariff on EU goods. However, while key players in the bloc stand out with stubborn retaliatory commitments, the others seem to melt the icing by remaining hesitant towards anti-compliance.

By April 13, the EU had refined this to €21 billion, with 25% tariffs approved on April 9, targeting politically sensitive U.S. goods like Louisiana soybeans and Kansas beef, per the European Commission.

The EU's trade deficit of \$532 billion in exports to the U.S. versus \$365.6 billion in imports in 2024, though not a paragon for an ideal retaliation, maximizes its impact by strategic combination.

Japan, one of the largest foreign investors in the United States, has poured over \$700 billion into U.S. manufacturing and services since 1990 and failed to secure exemptions. In alignment with the recent punishing 24% tariffs, Japan has prompted sharp diplomatic protests from Tokyo. The Japanese Prime Minister Shigeru Ishiba has called the tariffs "a betrayal of economic partnership."

Albeit Japan has so far refrained from immediate retaliation, wary of escalating tensions with its key ally. However, the economic toll is palpable and in sight. Japan's auto exports shed a bright light on this possibility; accounting for 40% of its \$150 billion trade surplus with the U.S., the industry faces a projected \$10 billion hit in 2025 alone.

Turkey, a veteran of tariff skirmishes, subjected to a baseline 10% tariff, lower than the European Union's 20%, has leveraged its 54 free trade agreements (these reduce or remove tariffs and other trade barriers between Turkey and other countries, making it easier and cheaper to trade goods) to pivot exports away from Western markets. In 2018, Turkey slapped duties as high as 95% on \$1.8 billion of U.S. goods, including rice, tobacco, and almonds, in response to earlier U.S. tariffs. The essence of retaliation is steadfast since, and levels at 50% on Turkish steel imports. Turkey continues to impose high tariffs on almonds and walnuts with 15% customs duties and 10% retaliatory tariffs. Turkish steel exports, once heavily reliant on the U.S., have shifted toward Brazil and India, where demand has grown by 20% since 2024. This redirection underscores Turkey's agility in navigating global trade disruptions.



The visible shift in supply chains will perhaps be the most enduring legacy of this tariff war. U.S. steel imports from Canada and Mexico have fallen sharply, while Brazilian exports to the U.S. soared by 18%, leveraging competitive prices and fewer trade barriers imposed by the U.S. Similarly, China, facing 15% U.S. tariffs on electronics, redirected \$50 billion in exports to Canada and India, where demand for semiconductors and consumer electronics has spiked. Turkish steel exports, once heavily reliant on the U.S., have shifted toward Brazil and India, where demand has grown by 20% since 2024. Japanese manufacturers like Toyota and Honda are too, now accelerating investments in Southeast Asia, with Vietnam and Thailand emerging as new hubs for auto production to bypass U.S. markets as the ripple effects of the slapdash decisions of U.S. President Trump deepen.

It is time now that will tell whether this global piñata will burst in gold, favoring Trump's tariff ambitions in ways one has never witnessed before, or crumple within its own spontaneity to dust, favoring and forging towards an already-accelerating new dynamic global equilibrium. This spirals up a trade reconfiguration, with emerging markets stepping into the fresh blues of opportunities.

Now let's head to the showdown. Yes, you guessed it right! The US-China standoff.

Dragons and Eagles

When Donald Trump returned to the White House in January 2025, he quickly brought back tough trade policies. Just weeks into his second term, he placed a 10% tariff on all goods coming from China, saying it was to protect national security and stop the flow of fentanyl. By March, the U.S. raised those tariffs to 34%. China didn't stay quiet and started hitting back. On April 4, China said it would also place a 34% tax on **all U.S. imports**, starting April 10. This move was much broader than its earlier tariffs in February, which had targeted items like coal, natural gas, and farm products such as poultry, wheat, and corn.

The new tax will hurt American exporters—especially farmers in the Midwest—by raising prices and possibly pushing China to buy from other countries like Brazil or Australia.

These high tariffs are likely to increase prices for everyday goods and make inflation worse. China imports fewer American goods than it exports, so its options for retaliation are limited. Still, both sides are now in a tense economic standoff.

Wide speculations exist over the fact that Trump's tariff ideas are inspired by President William McKinley, who used similar trade policies over 100 years ago. But McKinley's harsh tariffs caused prices to rise and hurt his party in elections. Even he later softened his stance, showing that trade wars come with big risks.

Fast forward to the 10th of April, and we now see that the US has decided to exempt most countries from the imposition of "reciprocal tariffs" for a duration of 90 days. The world is surprised and shocked to know that China has not been exempted from this reduction in tariffs. President Trump was clear in his agenda: "If you retaliate against US tariffs, you will have to face consequences." This is exactly what has happened with China after it retaliated equally by imposing equivalent tariffs on American goods. Donald Trump announced a whopping total of 145% tariffs on China, while the rest of the world was granted exemption from reciprocal tariffs, which he announced on what he called "Liberation Day" in America. The trade fight is back, and it's heating up fast.



Resurrections

As of April 2025, global trade shows signs of stabilizing. Trump's 90-day pause on reciprocal tariffs for most countries, keeping them at 10%, has created space for negotiations. While China remains excluded and regarded towards an apparent stale and, a deteriorating yet progressive diplomatic space opens up in a way that is constructive and optimistic in its dialogue with other nations.

Canada and Mexico maintain their USMCA advantages with duty-free access for compliant goods, providing stability in North American trade. India, initially facing a 27% tariff, is now working toward a comprehensive trade deal targeting \$500 billion in bilateral trade by 2030.

Recently, many social media posts accused Donald Trump of stock market manipulations, as he asked his followers on his own social media platform, Truth Social, to buy stocks just three hours before exempting most of the countries from his "reciprocal tariffs", and hitting China with tariffs going up to 145%, due to which there was a huge jump in American stocks.

The tech sector received relief when Trump exempted smartphones, computers, and electronics from the heavy tariffs starting April 5, making it now easier and more accessible for the common man to avail hands on the latest tech. Meanwhile, negotiations with the EU, Japan, and South Korea focus on resolving issues in the automotive and agricultural sectors.

Although Trump's US tariffs remain at about 24% on average, the highest in 100 years, businesses can at least plan better now with exemptions for goods already in transit and delayed tariffs on automobile parts. The WTO has also given cautious approval to these developments, noting that they might prevent further damage to global supply chains.

Conclusion

In this amalgam of fresh sets across newer challenges, all steps tread in the equilibrium afresh suggest we're gradually heading back towards increasingly predictable, rational, and traditional trade relations. This recalibration underscores the growing importance of economic recovery, as nations navigate the complexities of tariffs and seek stability.



Advocacy vs. Objectivity: Where Should Journalists Stand?

By : Anvitha Mayya

“We are the voice of the people.”

A phrase that is so common that we almost instantaneously associate it with various journalists across the world. But what happens when that voice sounds a little too familiar with one side of the debate?

In today's world, where one's opinion trends faster than facts and every headline is picked apart for hidden bias, Journalism stands at a crossroads. Should reporters maintain a neutral stand or take a stand in what they believe is right? The fundamental debate between Advocacy and Objectivity is not new, but it is more relevant than ever.

Evolution of Advocacy Journalism

From the Abolition Press of the 19th century to the civil rights reporting in the 1960s, journalists have proudly aligned with the causes they believe in. Advocacy Journalism seeks to amplify the voices of marginalized individuals and drive social or political change. At its best, it is fearless, unapologetic, and, at the same time, very necessary.

Stories like the Watergate scandal and the Panama Papers were not neutral; they were deliberate efforts to uncover corruption and hold powerful institutions accountable. By taking a stance, journalists are sometimes better able to serve the public good and bring urgency to issues that require immediate attention. In these moments, advocacy does not distort the truth; rather, it reveals it more boldly.

Despite its strengths, advocacy journalism carries significant risks. One major concern is the potential for bias to overshadow balance. In the pursuit of justice, there's a danger that facts may be selectively presented to support a particular narrative, compromising journalistic integrity. This can lead to a loss of credibility. If the audience perceives that a journalist is pushing a personal or political agenda, they may begin to question the reliability of the information, no matter how accurate it is.



The Unspoken pressure to choose sides

Today, the pressure to "take a stand" is stronger than ever. Social media has turned journalists into brands, brands that are expected to stand for something. Silence is often criticized. Neutral reporting is often mistaken for ignorance. But choosing a side often invites backlash from the other, putting journalists in an impossible position that is either to stay silent and be irrelevant, or speak out and be labeled biased.

The Ethical Dilemma

The real question is -When should a journalist stop observing and start intervening?

Is it ethical to be neutral amidst human rights abuses? If there is misinformation, is it the duty of a journalist to "set it right" for the public or merely to alert them? In situations where the "truth" itself is being attacked, advocacy then becomes not only a possibility but perhaps even a responsibility. But too much advocacy threatens to make journalism into propaganda. If all outlets are struggling for a side, who's left to simply report the facts?

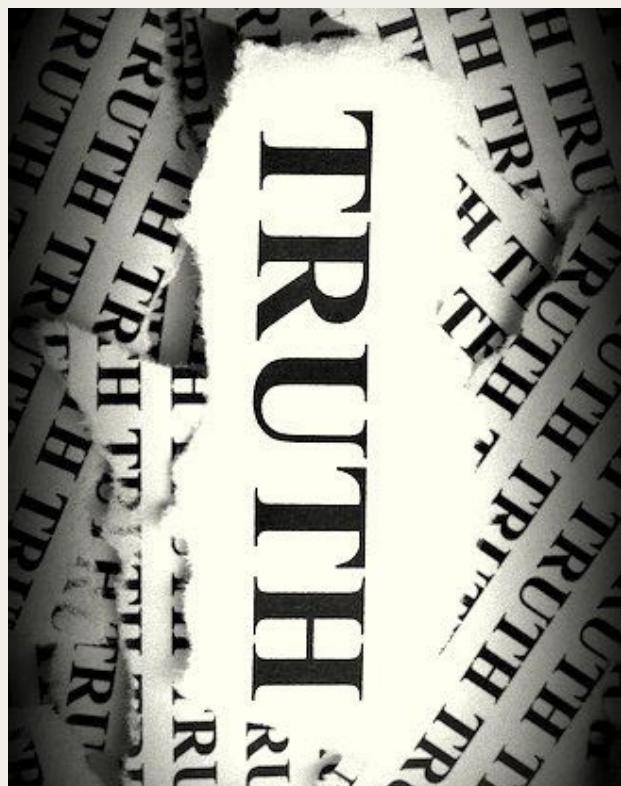
Finding a Middle Ground

The answer may lie in transparency. Journalists don't need to pretend they're emotionless observers. But they can be honest about their perspectives, make the distinction between reporting and commentary clear, and commit to rigorous fact-checking and fairness in coverage. A middle path is possible where journalists champion truth, stand against injustice, but avoid sensationalism, half-truths, or echo chambers.

Conclusion

Advocacy and objectivity are not enemies; in fact, they are tension points that keep journalism ethical, relevant, and dynamic. The goal isn't to silence passionate reporting but to ensure it doesn't stray from its core duty, that is, informing the public with integrity. In a world overloaded with opinions, we need journalists who are brave enough to challenge power, but also humble enough to check their own biases.

Whether they choose advocacy or objectivity, the best journalists remain loyal to one thing above all - the truth.



Ink, Intellect, and Iron: The Pulse of Indian Statecraft

By : Apurwa Kanitkar

शमव्यायामयोर्योनिः षाङ्गुण्यम् ॥
śamavyāyāmayoryonih ṣāḍguṇyam ॥

Thus wrote Kauṭilya (Chanakya), the father of Indian diplomacy, unveiling a sixfold path. A path that would shape empires and echo through the ages. His aphorisms have stood the test of time like pillars carved with wisdom and foresight, exhibiting strength in the ancient and modern world alike. Chanakya expands this idea into six possible actions:

Sandhi (peace or treaty),
 Vigraha (war),
 Āsana (remaining passive or neutral),
 Yāna (preparation for war),
 Samsraya (seeking shelter or alliance), and
 Dvaidhibhava (dual policy - combining two strategies)

Arthashastra authored by Chanakya stands as a cornerstone of ancient Indian statecraft maintaining its relevance even in today's era of modern realpolitik. As the world navigates the battlefields that span from cyber sabotage to nuclear uncertainty, ancient Indian doctrines continue to manifest in diverse and strategic ways.

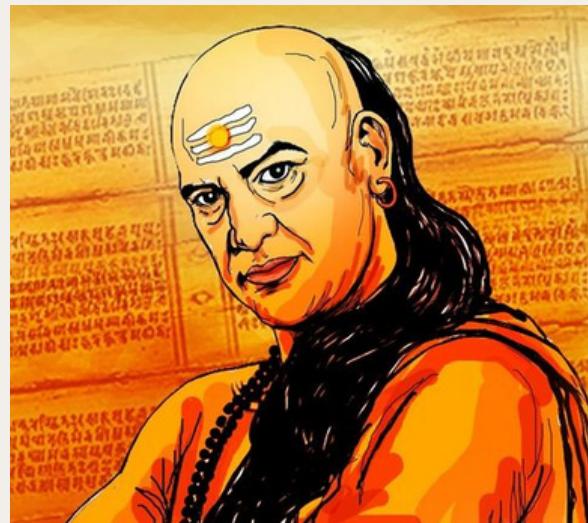
Diplomacy is the subtle art that plays in the backstage for a future truce as well as storms of open conflict. It exists right from *modus vivendi* to *bellum aperti*. In the multipolar world order, India has displayed fluid partnerships and issue based cooperation with various countries ranging from Russia and the United States to the UK and France. Foreign policies like "Act East" and "Neighbourhood First", and active participation in alliances like BIMSTEC, BRICS, SAARC, and QUAD, have positioned India as a leader of the Global South.

These endeavours, in essence, reflect a modern embodiment of the ancient principle of **Samsraya** - forging alliances with calculated hindsight and strategic foresight.

While some nations display extremism by picking sides even in conflicts that don't directly concern them, India has not faltered in exercising restraint when needed. One such instance is India's refusal to condemn or condone Russia's invasion of Ukraine, choosing a neutral stance and practicing **Āsana**. More so, India has time and again offered to mediate between Russia and Ukraine in an attempt to end the war. Communicating with both the parties alike, the Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Kyiv right after his visit to Moscow, promoting **Sandhi**. In doing so, India strategically managed catering to national interest and fulfilling global responsibility.

In a recent occurrence, of the Pahalgam terror attack, India did not resort to immediate aggression or diplomatic outreach. Embodying the principle of **Yāna**, it prepared silently. A silence marked by intelligence gathering and chalking out of plans with awareness, comprehension, and understanding of the perpetrator. India remained poised until it was time for **Vigraha**. Once conditions were ripe, a swift military retaliation - “Operation Sindoor” was executed. Thus adopting two strategies simultaneously in a calculated sequence, India showcased a modern manifestation of **Dvaidhibhava**.

From the verses of *Chanakya Neeti* echoing in *Takshashila* to the shudders of perpetrators after military operations, statecraft is deeply ingrained in the Indian ethos. In Indian veins, diplomacy flows alongside blood, for it is the land that produced not only *Arthashastra*, but strategically rich texts like - *Vidura Neeti*, *Nīti Śataka*, *Shukranitisara* and *Kamandakiya Nitisara* among others. With contemporary diplomats and statesmen like Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, Atal Bihari Vajpayee, K.M. Panikkar, V.K. Krishna Menon, Nirupama Rao, Shivshankar Menon, S. Jaishankar, Shashi Tharoor, and an endless list of emerging voices, India's legacy lives on. Rooted deeply in ancient soil and soaring boldly into the modern sky, India no longer reacts to the world; it helps shape it!



Kaos in Kremlin

By : Ansh Vora, Tanish Chaudhari

The turbulent waves of revolution are sweeping across the Soviet Union, as Mikhail Gorbachev's policies reshape the nation's vigour and social landscape. Glasnost and Perestroika - promising a new era of openness, transparency, and renewal - have an impact far beyond what the Politburo fathoms. Gorbachev's apparent attempts to warm up to the West by serenading them with tales of reform have fallen flat amongst Soviet citizens. Once seen as beacons of hope, Glasnost and Perestroika now echo through the hallowed halls of the Kremlin, as jarring, unpleasant reminders of the imminent downfall the country is going to face.

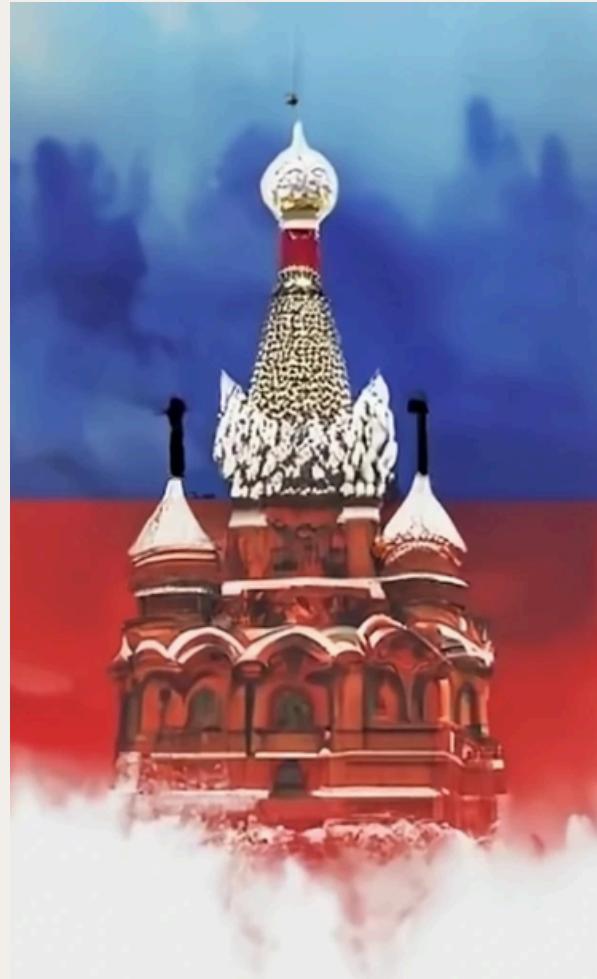
For decades, Soviet citizens lived under the iron fist of the Kremlin, with their thoughts and freedom totally eclipsed under a veil of state-imposed censorship. The Glavlit controlled every form of print medium - books, magazines, and even newspapers - suppressing dissent and distorting historical events to align with the Soviet narrative. Truths about the Stalinist era, like the Great Purge, were suppressed. Glasnost, or transparency, allowed for more freedom for the press and the relaxation of censorship. With greater access to information, Soviet citizens gained a greater understanding of the world beyond the Iron Curtain, uncovered the atrocities of the previous regimes, and were greatly disillusioned by the nation. This reassessment led to a growing atmosphere of openness, emboldening dissent and activism. For the first time, open criticism of the Communist Party was allowed in the media. The Soviet public was always privately critical of the inefficient economy, horrors of Stalinism, and the corruption within the party system, but these discussions, once shrouded in secrecy, now came to the forefront.

Town halls, radio interviews, and television talk shows became arenas for debate, with criticism of the Kremlin no longer seen as unthinkable. Articles like those detailing the true extent of Chernobyl (which had been suppressed before) became widely popular, and several banned books and publications (like the Gulag Archipelago) forced the populace to confront the past. Abstraction of the past had provided a false sense of stability to the Soviet population, but as more information and awareness spread among the populace, they became more critical of those in power. The newfound freedom of speech has led to a cacophony of criticism.



For a long time, the Soviet economy was centrally controlled, and huge amounts were being spent on strengthening the military and winning the Arms Race. No points for guessing that it was lagging behind the West. Gorbachev brought in Perestroika, to experiment with 'market socialism' (an oxymoron if ever there was one). The aim was to reduce the control of bureaucracy, encourage thriving independent small businesses, give industries more autonomy, and promote the manufacturing of consumer goods. However, their reforms were introduced without fully dismantling the existing system, and the mixture of a broken old system and a not fully functional new system created chaos. The loosening of grip by central control stoked anti-establishment and ethnic tensions, damaging the Soviet Union. The shortage of consumer goods persisted, and inflation remained high. Gorbachev had thought that introducing some free markets would revitalize the dented economy, but it instead brought the Soviet Union to its knees, due to its unintended consequences on nationalism.

The republics, which were once docile, seem to be like the mighty Russian bears in captivity, beckoning to be released and dangerous to deal with - demanding autonomy and independence. The Politburo is engaged in a game of political theatre, while the lines for bread and vodka seem to be getting longer day by day. The Union enters uncharted territory - used to a sense of unwavering obedience, it today faces a humdrum of dissent. It's still unclear as to which side of the spectrum the final loaf of Soviet bread will fall, but one thing is certain - the world watches with bated breath as the union is on the brink of ... something.



Breaking the Bias

By : Mrugaja Joshi, Yashada Mathad

"The best thermometer to the progress of a nation is its treatment of its women." is a sentiment by Swami Vivekananda that has echoed through history. It highlights how a nation's progress is shaped by the importance given to gender equality. In ancient India, women played pivotal roles in governance and scholarly pursuits. During the Mauryan period, women were involved in administration, some holding administrative designations similar to those of their husbands. In the post-Gupta period, women like Queen Didda of Kashmir and Queen Tribhuvanamahadevi of Orissa ruled independently, showcasing their political acumen. This signifies that women in ancient India were not confined to domestic roles but were active participants in day-to-day politics. Throughout history, women's participation in governance, education, and the corporate sector has ebbed and flowed with changing social structures. Ancient civilizations showed a striking amount of inclusivity, which gradually diminished with colonial patriarchal influence. A divide was hence caused, with men being pushed into the workforce while women were confined to 'traditional' duties. The advancement of gender equality in modern times is not just a necessity, but a recognition of the fact that different perspectives strengthen all of the decision-making processes. As we examine the evolution of gender quotas, we should consider their impact on representation as well as their long-term implications for society. Patriarchal standards became more ingrained as India's social structures changed, severely limiting women's ability to participate in political and decision-making roles.

Women were excluded from leadership roles for centuries as a result of this change, which was particularly noticeable throughout the medieval era and during colonial control, which further curtailed their rights. Nonetheless, women's rights groups witnessed a resurgence in the 20th century, which led to legislative amendments intended to improve gender representation. "For our men and women, for our children, for our future, we must strive to create a better India," as Sarojini Naidu famously stated, emphasizing the significance of gender equality and inclusive government in determining the course of the country.

The Evolution of Women's Voice in Indian Politics

India has long used gender quotas as a tool to boost women's participation in governance. One of the earliest efforts came in 1992 with the *Panchayati Raj Act*, which reserved 33% of seats for women in local governance. Another effort for this cause, the Women's Reservation Bill, was introduced on December 23, 1998 – despite protests from the members of various associations but lapsed due to lack of consensus. Some believed that reservations might end up excluding women from consideration for general seats. Many others were on the same side of the debate, but for different reasons. They asked - "*Were women not led more by heart, and was not politics a matter more of the mind?*". A controversial remark said that '*women with short hair*' would dominate the legislature if the Bill were passed, implying that more privileged women would occupy the seats intended for those from marginalized communities.

Some scholars also argued that legislative reservation can have the unintended, adverse consequence of weakening local democracy. They believe that women elected from reserved constituencies often act as proxies for their male relatives, exercising only nominal power while the men wield the actual authority. The government attempted to pass the Bill three more times - in 2000, 2002, and 2003, but failed primarily due to concerns that it did not adequately represent or address women from marginalised communities.

After 25 long years of heated exchanges, debates, and struggling for women's representation, finally in the new parliament building, the Women's Reservation Bill was introduced on 19th September 2023 as the 128th Amendment Bill. Notably, the Women's Reservation Bill is valid for only 15 years, with the possibility of extension if deemed necessary by Parliament.

This reform has transformed Indian politics, leading to the rise in the number of elected women representatives today. It has paved the way for a new perspective and has presented a fresh chance for gender equality in the arena of politics. However, time and again as society progresses, it is crucial to revisit such policies and amend them as per the needs of the hour

Influence on the Education & Workforce

Beyond politics, gender quotas have influenced various sectors. Special quotas, scholarships, and fellowships in STEM fields encourage female enrolment, while India's civil services exams offer concessions for women to boost their participation in bureaucracy. The India's Companies Act (2013) mandates at least one female director on the board of certain listed firms. Comparatively, Norway, France, and Spain enforce a 40% female representation quota in boardrooms. Many multinational corporations in India have diversity hiring programmes to increase female representation in leadership roles. Continued policy reforms and corporate initiatives are necessary for translating these quotas into lasting empowerment for women.

Now, to confront the elephant in the room: do gender reservations threaten meritocracy and quality of work? The reality is complex. Women who get into esteemed educational institutions or corporations through quota systems are frequently faced with all sorts of varying opinions. Their achievements are viewed with suspicion, their presence is seen as charity rather than earned. People believe they are only in their position because of the quota, or how a more qualified man lost his deserved place due to these reservations.

What the critics ignore is the invisible meritocracy that existed long before quotas, one where women's potential was systematically smothered by lack of access to resources, social expectations, and outright discrimination. The true threat to merit isn't affirmative action, but the assumption that women beneficiaries are inherently less capable.



To this day, women remain significantly underrepresented in administrative and executive roles. This situation stems from many interconnected factors. Certain systemic barriers actively hinder the advancement of women into these positions. Some women are expected to prioritise traditional caregiving roles and those who wish to enter the workforce face immense societal pressure to 'do it all', balancing their work life as well as home-making duties. These unrealistically high expectations drive women to abandon their professional goals and aspirations, further increasing the disparity in gender equality in the corporate sector.

The gender quotas help in closing the gender gap by fast-tracking the inclusion of women in different diverse roles, therefore ensuring balanced decision-making. McKinsey & Company Published a report in 2020 that stated that companies in the top quartile for gender diversity were more likely to outperform their peers in profitability. A similar study by Harvard Business Review 2019 concluded that teams with diverse leadership exhibited greater innovation revenue. Therefore, it can be said that gender quotas not only create roles for future generations and young girls to aim higher but also improve policy making and organisation transparency in an economy.

With the increasing efforts for women upliftment, new opportunities are being generated for women which could historically be availed only by their male counterparts. For instance, in 2021, the Supreme Court of India directed the National Defence Academy (NDA) to admit women, with the first batch joining in 2022. Since then, the number of vacancies for women have seen a rise, giving wings to the dreams of countless young girls who see themselves serving as part of the tri-services.

Critiques, Resistance, and Alternative Pathways to Gender Equality

Even though it offers significant benefits, women's quotas also face strong criticism. The main argument being that it challenges meritocracy and favours representation over qualification, potentially affecting work efficiency. Many people would agree that evaluating and rewarding employees based on merit is of utmost fairness. One may also argue that by adopting a purely meritocratic environment where gender and social disadvantages are not acknowledged, biases and stereotypes may actually be accentuated. In many cases, women in quota seats lack real authority, serving as mere figureheads while male counterparts continue holding power. This may lead to the unintended and adverse consequence of undermining women rather than empowering them. In rare occurrences, deserving men might miss out on genuine opportunities owing to quotas. The long-term sustainability of quotas is also frequently questioned due to the fear that they might create inequity rather than encouraging inclusivity.



Women's Quotas and their Path Forward

Instead of rigid inclusivity quotas, alternative approaches may offer a much better path for achieving gender equality. Developing inclusive mindsets through early childhood education itself and through professional backgrounds could naturally foster environments where capability and talents are properly recognized. Programs focusing on unconscious bias training, mentorship initiatives connecting experienced women leaders with emerging talent, and flexible work arrangements addressing work-life balance concerns have shown great results in organizations committed to gender balance without explicit quotas.

Gender quotas have undeniably contributed to increasing women's representation in politics, education, and the corporate sector, promoting inclusivity in governance and decision-making. Globally, quotas have also played a role in addressing major societal issues such as the gender pay gap, although their long term impact remains debated. Some argue that in order for a nation to progress, adequate representation of all marginalized communities is of utmost importance while others caution that one should ensure that reservations do not become a source of inequality but rather empower these communities and create meaningful opportunities. Ultimately, the success of such policies will depend on carrying out continuous evaluation and adaptation to create a fair and balanced environment. Empowerment should be planned with a vision of meritocracy for the longer run!

When Patience Ends: India's Counter Terror Doctrine & The Arsenal Behind it

SPECIAL SECTION

By : Aryan Phanse, Varad Khatkale

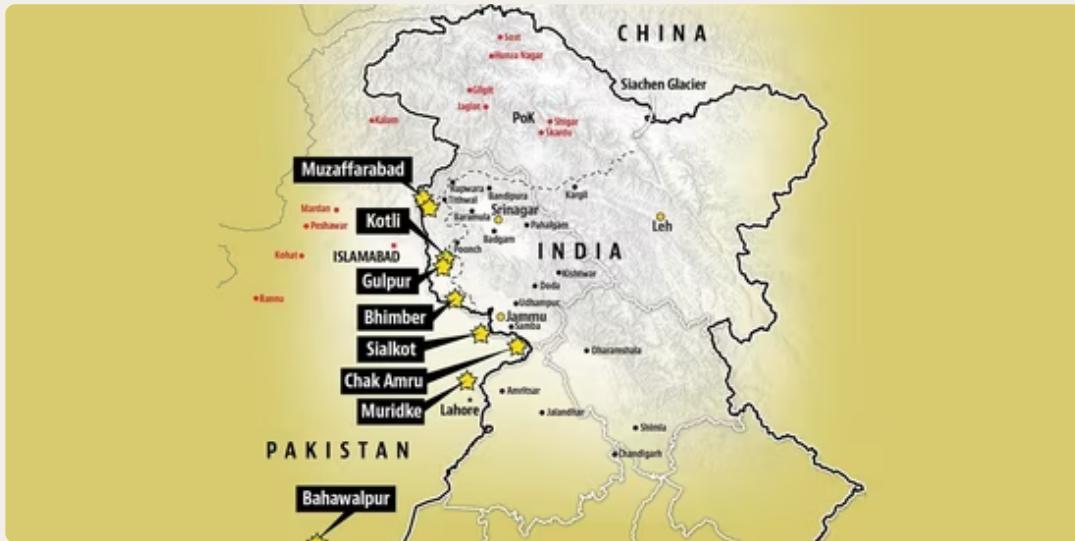
On April 22, 2025, India faced its deadliest terror attack since 26/11, a horrifying reminder of the Mumbai train blasts of 2006 and the 2008 Mumbai attacks. Terrorism has continually tested India's spirit, security, and sovereignty. But this attack reignited something deeper: a national resolve to revisit and redefine India's counter-terrorism approach.

Over the years, India has enacted key anti-terror laws, including the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), the National Investigation Agency Act, and the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA). These have empowered agencies to tackle terror financing, investigate transnational networks, and grant operational freedom to forces in disturbed areas.

However, laws like the Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act (TADA) and the Prevention of Terrorism Act (POTA) were repealed due to widespread allegations of misuse by authorities, leading to arbitrary arrests, prolonged detentions, and human rights violations.

They were seen as draconian laws that often targeted political opponents and marginalized communities, rather than solely combating terrorism effectively, thus undermining democratic principles.

Clearly, a legal framework alone isn't enough. India's response to terrorism is shaped far more by leadership and political will than by statutes on paper. While laws provide the tools, it is the ruling government that decides whether to act with restraint or with force. The intensity, timing, and nature of India's counter-terror responses are deeply influenced by the clear resolve of the Indian armed Forces, combined with the government's imperative support.



The Era of Restraint and Diplomacy

Before the surgical strikes in Uri, India largely relied on dialogue, even in the face of undeniable evidence linking Pakistan to attacks like the 2001 Parliament strike, 2005 Delhi bombings, 2006 Mumbai train blasts, and the 26/11 attacks, all traced back to terror outfits like Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Mohammed.

Despite Pakistani authorities admitting that Ajmal Kasab, the lone surviving 26/11 attacker, was a citizen of Pakistan, they refused the request of our NIA to conduct investigations in their country. Yet India avoided military retaliation, hoping diplomacy and global pressure would bring justice. This approach, though peaceful, often emboldened future attacks.

A Strategic Shift Post Surgical Strikes in Uri

After India lost 19 brave soldiers to Pakistani attacks in Uri, India's stance shifted from restraint to retaliation. Terrorism on Indian soil would now be treated as an act of war, marking a bold, assertive transformation in doctrine.

India's resolve became evident:

- 1. Surgical Strikes (2016):** A decisive cross-border strike targeting terror launchpads in PoK, sending a clear message that India will no longer tolerate terrorism on its soil.
- 2. Balakot Air Strike (2019):** India bombed Jaish-e-Mohammed's major training camp, eliminating over 200 militants.
- 3. Operation Sindoos (2025):** India became the first to strike airbases of a nuclear-armed state in response to the terrorist attack in Pahalgam, destroying nine terror hubs. Here's a quick brief on the defense mechanisms that India deployed in this operation.

The Arsenal Behind Operation Sindoos: Weapons That Spoke for India

1) SCALP Cruise Missile (Storm Shadow) - Deep Strike Stealth Weapon

SCALP (Système de Croisière Autonome à Longue Portée) is a French-origin missile. Also known as Storm Shadow, it's an Air-Launched long-range cruise missile with a range of nearly 450 km. Its key features include terrain-hugging stealth flight and GPS combined with terrain mapping, which has proven effective against bunkers and hard targets. It was used for deep-penetration strikes on terror command centres and key infrastructures in PoK and Pakistan.



2. Strategic Strike Asset: BRAHMOS Supersonic Cruise Missile

Everyone is curious about this well-known and fascinating missile. Together, DRDO (India) and NPOM (Russia) are developing it. Its speed of 2.8 to 3.0 Mach is impressive. This indicates that its speed is three times that of sound. It has a 200–300 kilogram warhead and a range of 450–500 km. It is capable of operating on land, sea, and in the air. Its terminal height is as low as 10 meters, and employs a fire and forget capability which doesn't require the operator to monitor guidance or target tracking post its launch. The approximate cost of this warhead is \$4.75 million USD. Its role in Operation Sindoar included targeted terrorist caches and strongholds. Its high-speed operation made it difficult for adversaries to react.

3. The Integrated Air Defense Network's Akashtee Control and Reporting System

This air defence and control system is a creation of Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL). It is used for air threat response and real-time low-level airspace monitoring. Radars, sensors, weaponry, and decision-making tools are all integrated. Its main characteristics include being entirely network-centric, linking several weapon systems, and having automated threat prioritization. The total cost of this project, called "Project Akashsteer," is approximately ₹1982 crores. This system provided situational awareness, real-time command, and coordination to efficiently plan air defense operations during Operation Sindoar.

4. HAMMER Missile - Tactical Precision Airstrike Weapon

The French smart air-to-ground bomb known as HAMMER (Highly Agile Modular Munition Extended Range) was made in the 2000s and debuted in 2011. It is GPS/INS guided, modular, and very effective against moving targets and bunkers. In 2020, as tensions with China increased, India hastily purchased HAMMER bombs for its Rafale aircraft. The cost of each unit ranges from \$150,000 to \$200,000. In Operation Sindoar, the Indian Air Force and Ukraine's Mirage-2000s recently deployed HAMMERs to launch precision strikes against fortified terrorist targets.

5. Loitering Weapons (Kamikaze Drones): A Combination of Surveillance and Attack

These suicide drones are capable of both strike and surveillance missions. They belong to the class of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) that have built-in strike capabilities. It can give real-time surveillance and hover over targets. Autonomous or semi-autonomous targeting and explosive payload delivery are two of its primary features. Each drone costs about Rs 140,000.

During Operation Sindoar, these drones eliminated moving, valuable targets, such as commanders and vehicles. Additionally, it has provided live intelligence and precision strikes.



India also wielded diplomacy as a weapon, temporarily suspending the Indus Waters Treaty, signaling that "**water and blood cannot flow together.**" That any future dialogue would now focus only on terrorism and Pakistan-occupied Kashmir was made clear to the adversary. To the global community, India made its position clear: **irresponsible nuclear threats won't deter its resolve.** Pakistan must choose between peace and paying a heavier price for sponsoring terror.

For those who believe justice fades with time, India answered with action. After years of legal pursuit, Tahawwur Rana, a key conspirator of the 26/11 attacks, was extradited from the U.S. and brought to face trial in India. It was a powerful reminder: **India remembers. India perseveres.** Justice will be served, no matter how long it takes. This is exactly the kind of policy our neighbor needs: one that makes not only its leaders but also its citizens understand the cost of shielding terrorists. India will respond with strength, and every act of hostility will be met with **firm retaliation.**

Conclusion

The Pahalgam terrorist attack wasn't just a strike on Indian soil; it was an assault on India's peace, pride, and sovereignty, but it also conveyed to the world that today's India is not the India of the past. To the world, and especially to terror-supporting states, the message is unmistakable:

"ये नया हिंदुस्तान है, ये घर में घुसेगा भी और मारेगा भी।"

Jai Hind. Jai Bharat.



THINK. DISCUSS. PROSPER.

