

## ARTICLE: Chanakya Paradox: India's Spiral Within Its own Strategy Chanakya Paradox: India's Spiral Within Its own Strategy

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Dr Waleed Rasool.

Many readers may find themselves startled by the reaction of Indian politicians, strategists, and media in the aftermath of the recent India-Pakistan semi-crisis, following India's covert aggression into Pakistan's mainland during the dark hours of May 5th and 6th. Yet, for scholars attuned to the deeper rhythms of India-Pakistan relations, Indian behavior after 10th May, is neither unusual nor surprising. It is, in fact, a familiar echo—an embodiment of India's enduring political philosophy, anchored in the ancient yet ever-relevant doctrine of Chanakya. Revered by India's ruling elite as the founding father of its strategic thought, Chanakya's teachings remain the cornerstone of New Delhi's approach to power, diplomacy, and conflict. India's strategic mindset is not improvised; it is a deliberate practice of classical realism, seamlessly woven into both perception and policy. What may appear as spontaneous political maneuvers are, to the discerning eye, calculated moves guided by a doctrine that sanctifies deception, dominance, and long-term state interest. This philosophical lineage is symbolically represented by naming India's diplomatic enclave in New Delhi "Chanakypuri." The Arthashastra, a foundational text of this philosophy, translated by L.N. Rangarajan as Kautilya's Arthashastra, outlines a doctrine that values deception, diplomacy, and coercion as central tools of statecraft. In contrast to Chinese political thought—influenced by Confucius and Sun Tzu, which emphasizes harmony, indirect strategy, and moral authority—Chanakya's doctrine is unapologetically aggressive and cunning. While Machiavelli is often seen as the Western counterpart of Chanakya, the Indian philosopher goes a step further: he constructs victory even in defeat which nowadays the hot debate in Indian and Pakistan media. India's recent aggression against Pakistani territory, portrayed as a symbolic act under the name "Sindoor", reflects this enduring strategy: present the aggressor as the victim. This same political theater was played out in 1947 when Prime Minister Nehru internationalized the Kashmir issue at the UN, seeking to portray India as a peace-loving democracy rather than an occupying force. From 1947 to 2025, India's strategic behavior shows a pattern of opportunistic realpolitik. In 1971, India executed a successful military operation resulting in Pakistan's division—an action aligned with Chanakya's advice to weaken adversaries internally. The subsequent occupation of Siachen Glacier in 1984 was another incremental gain under the same doctrine. India's current geopolitical position is arguably more consolidated than during ancient times when Chanakya guided Chandragupta Maurya to overthrow the mighty Nanda dynasty. Ironically, while that was the only historical period of a unified India, the Indian subcontinent has remained politically fragmented for most of its existence. Today's Indian strategists under the Modi regime have significant control, yet they remain far from achieving their ideological dream of "Akhand Bharat." Military might has always been a secondary tool in the Chanakyan arsenal—deception and politics are primary. This explains India's unmatched ability to practice multi-faced diplomacy, appearing humble and soft while concealing its hard power and intent. The abrogation of Article 370 and 35-A was a multidimensional assault on Kashmiri identity. India brought Jammu and Kashmir directly under the control of the Union, dismantling the state's autonomy. Delhi extended police powers to itself under the guise of "compassion toward rebellion"—but in reality, it was the eradication of resistance. Thousands of Kashmiris were detained and

imprisoned in far-flung jails across India, including Tihar Jail in Delhi. The creation of special counterinsurgency forces like the Rashtriya Rifles (RR) led to widespread fear and repression. Dead bodies of youth were not returned to families, homes of suspected freedom fighters were demolished, and their properties confiscated—an unprecedented degree of aggression aimed at breaking Kashmiri will. Since 1990, India's military suppression has yielded no sustainable solution—only kept Kashmir in a pressure cooker. Scholars trained in research methodology know that both deductive and inductive analysis yield the same conclusion: military aggression cannot solve the Kashmir issue. The world currently has 193 independent states, whereas the UN began with only 51 in 1945. Between 1945 and 1970, over 100 nations gained independence, often through conflict and in defiance of stronger colonial powers. No freedom movement in history has been led by a force stronger than its oppressor. Despite its immense military power, India cannot reverse this historical trend. Kashmiris are aggrieved. Their families have been killed, humiliated, and marginalized. Their businesses are restricted. Their children face cultural alienation in Indian institutions. Whether pro-India or pro-resistance, all political voices in Kashmir are under siege. How can anyone assume that India's military might alone can enforce a “negative peace”? Indian analysts treated the Pahalgam incident as an isolated case, devoid of historical context. This intellectual dishonesty only prolongs the conflict. Sane scholars, both national and international, must view Kashmir through the prism of context, not propaganda. Dialogue confined to bilateral frameworks or composite dialogues will not resolve this blood-soaked conflict. As John Mearsheimer, a renowned scholar of international relations, rightly emphasized: “India and Pakistan must resolve the simmering Kashmir conflict to ensure long-term peace in South Asia. The unspoken lesson between the lines is this: one may triumph on the battlefield, but India possesses a distinct advantage in concealing its emotions—even in moments of perceived defeat. This calculated restraint, this mastery of strategic disguise, is not a flaw but a weapon—one that demands discerning interpretation, especially within the complex and often volatile arena of India-Pakistan relations. These affairs transcend mere geopolitics; they are deeply psychological, emotionally charged, and historically entangled. To navigate them wisely, both sides must move beyond surface-level posturing and strive to understand the strategic psyche of the other with sincerity and depth. In this context, the true burden now rests on diplomacy—to forge a path toward something tangible to bring Kashmir in line with the time frame. The April 10 episode stands as a pivotal moment—a reminder that wars are no longer waged by high-tech machines alone. A classical dimension has emerged: battles are equally fought through unshakable faith, collective resolve, and the valor rooted in national spirit.

Dr Waleed Rasool is an Analyst can be reached at [waleed.rasool@gmail.com](mailto:waleed.rasool@gmail.com)