



THE LAST WORD

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# Fights, Fakes and Faraway Goals

**T**here has not been an idle day during the month of May, ever since four villains launched a dastardly attack in Pahalgam and killed 26 innocent civilians. We have seen what Shashi Tharoor calls a strong and smart response, striking at terrorist bases in Pakistan's Punjab and PoK and a short set of drone attacks from both sides before better sense prevailed and a cease fire was requested and granted.

The whole nation is justifiably proud of our magnificent armed forces and it is fitting that the many fingers that constitute opposition parties with diverse views have come together as one fist to support Operation Sindoor and explain India's defensive stance and new resolve to well wishers all over the world.

While we are all convinced of the veracity of India's claim of an undisputed victory overall, one enigma that may probably never get resolved is the assertion of Pakistan that it has shot down an Indian jet. It is interesting that J. Michael Dahm of The Mitchell Institute for Aerospace Studies, in a recent interview has called the establishment of a coherent "kill chain" as a defining feature of Pakistan's air warfare doctrine.

This chain involves integration of China-supplied weapon systems and radar networks with ground-based radars, airborne early warning aircraft and fighter jets, clearly an ominous integration for the future. The kill chain that starts with intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance, uses satellite links and high-speed data networks and relies on AI driven autonomous firing systems. Dahm believes the communication between ground systems and the forward-operating J-10C, Pakistan's fighter acquired from China gives the capability to launch a beyond-visual-range missile towards any target.

An interesting aspect of post-war reports is the contradictory thoughts that emerge from even U.S. analysts. The Dahm analysis suggests that the J-10C can down planes from a distance

of 182 kilometers with a PL-15 missile, and could be the precursor of a unified land, air, sea, space unified systems integration of the Pakistan armed forces, which is a generation ahead of previous fragmented engagement approaches in war. However, a detailed analysis in the Small Wars Journal website suggests that India's domestically developed systems including the BrahMos missile, the SkyStriker and the Akashteer AI-integrated air defence system is exemplary and even the U.S. should learn from it. Wherever the reality lies, both countries will be strategising for future wars and India must stay ahead.

In the past week and more, our communications as a country have been truly exemplary, but the same cannot be said of world leader President Trump, whose assertions that his team brokered the cease fire has met with emphatic denials from India, which does not brook any interference with Indo-Pak agreements.

Coming close on the heels of this question mark, there is no question that the ugly spat between one of the world's premier academic institutions Harvard and the Trump

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**The entire nation rightfully takes immense pride in our exceptional armed forces. It is heartening to see that, despite their varied perspectives, the opposition parties have united in a show of solidarity to support Operation Sindoor**

Administration and the previous DOGE slash and burn attempts on research funding budgets can set the U.S. on a backward track from its pole position on top of academia and research in the world. The U.S. would do well to recognise that a resurgent China is snapping at its heels, and new innovations cannot come out of country without a robust and confident academic and research sector. Will better sense prevail soon? We will have to wait and see!

At the recent 10th NITI Aayog Governing Council, the Prime Minister has exhorted the attending State Chiefs to work in concert with the Centre towards the vision of 'Viksit Bharat'. For a country, which has just crossed Japan to become the fourth largest economy in the world, the creation of an investor and tourist friendly destination in every State and elimination of cumbersome procedural delays for Indians, NRIs, OCIs and overseas citizens would go a long way towards being a destination of choice for travel and investment.

A book we have just completed writing as a compendium of 50 essays, limericks and poems about the vision, the possible roadblocks and the immense opportunities that lie on the road ahead to a *Viksit* or developed nation led us to do some detailed research, reading and conversations in each sector and analyse every concern and promise area, much of which has found its way into the book.

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