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A Watershed Moment in India's Defence Posture

Context

- Operation Sindoor, launched on May 7, 2025, marked a turning point in India's **national security** and military strategy.
- Conducted in response to the **Pahalgam attack**, the operation reflected a decisive shift from India's earlier policy of **reactive restraint** to a doctrine of **zero tolerance** against cross-border terrorism.
- Through coordinated military action, strong political leadership, and advanced defence systems, India projected itself as a more **assertive** and strategically confident power.

Emergence of a New Indian Doctrine

- **From Reactive Restraint to Zero Tolerance**
 - For decades, India followed a cautious approach toward cross-border terrorism, relying on diplomatic pressure and the **dossier approach**.

- Military restraint was often justified due to fears of escalation with a nuclear-armed neighbour.
- However, Operation Sindoor established a new framework in which terrorism would be treated as an act of war.
- Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India demonstrated **strategic resolve** by rejecting external pressure and refusing to submit to **nuclear blackmail**.
- This policy shift introduced **new red lines** in regional security and indicated that future terrorist attacks would provoke direct retaliation.

• Strategic and Political Transformation

- The government provided the armed forces with operational freedom, showing confidence in their capabilities.
- This created a **new normal** in India's defence posture, where military action became an accepted instrument of national policy.
- The strikes on terrorist hubs in Bahawalpur and Muridke symbolized India's willingness to challenge previously untouchable targets.
- These actions reshaped perceptions of India's military limitations and strengthened its image as a rising regional power.

Military Audaciousness and Operational Excellence

• Joint Warfare and Integrated Operations

- The coordinated strikes demonstrated the effectiveness of **joint warfare**, precision planning, and advanced military coordination.
- Despite Pakistan remaining on high alert, India successfully executed attacks on multiple terrorist and military targets.
- The Indian Air Force played a major role in countering Pakistan's retaliatory attempts on May 9 and 10.
- Rapid airstrikes on bases such as Nur Khan, Sargodha, Murid, and Bholari showcased India's ability to respond in near real time with exceptional **precision targeting**.

• Technological Superiority and Escalation Control

- The deployment of advanced systems such as the S-400 missile system strengthened India's **air defence** capabilities and denied Pakistan operational space.
- Simultaneously, Indian Army operations along the **Line of Control** neutralized drone attacks and reinforced border security.
- India's handling of the **escalation ladder** was particularly significant because the conflict unfolded under a nuclear overhang.
- Through careful calibration, India maintained control while achieving military dominance.

Strategic Significance and Political Messaging

- **Message to Terror Groups and Pakistan**

- The operation warned terrorist organizations and their supporters that future attacks would invite immediate retaliation.
- At the same time, it conveyed a message to Pakistan regarding the consequences of supporting cross-border militancy.
- India's response projected confidence, discipline, and military readiness and the operation reinforced the idea that **India would no longer remain passive** in the face of repeated provocations.

- **Nationalism and Public Perception**

- The operation generated strong feelings of **patriotism** and **national pride** across the country.
- Descriptions of high-impact operations and massive destruction strengthened public trust in the armed forces and political leadership.
- At the same time, the sudden ceasefire surprised sections of the population who expected continued military action.
- However, strategic conflicts require rational calculations rather than emotional decisions.
- The timing of the ceasefire reflected India's confidence in having already established military and psychological superiority.

Indigenous Defence Growth and Atmanirbharata

- **Need for Defence Self-Reliance**

- Operation Sindoor emphasised the importance of **Atmanirbharata** in defence production.
- The success of indigenous technologies encouraged greater focus on **innovation, design**, and large-scale manufacturing in defence and aerospace sectors.
- The operation demonstrated that technological independence is essential for maintaining long-term national security and military preparedness.

- **Role of Industry and Technology**

- Government reforms in defence, cyber security, space, and **Artificial Intelligence** gained renewed significance after the operation.
- Institutions such as the Defence Research and Development Organisation and Defence Public Sector Undertakings were expected to collaborate more effectively with private industries, **MSMEs**, and startups.
- A **whole-of-nation** approach became necessary to strengthen India's defence ecosystem and reduce dependence on foreign technologies.
- The changing geopolitical environment further reinforced the need for modernization and self-reliance.

Conclusion

- Operation Sindoor represented a decisive shift in India's military and political strategy and it established a doctrine based on **deterrence**, rapid retaliation, and uncompromising action against terrorism.
- Through coordinated military power, technological superiority, and strong political leadership, India projected itself as a **confident and capable regional power**.
- The operation also accelerated discussions on defence modernization and indigenous capability development.

A Watershed Moment in India's Defence Posture FAQs

Q1. What was Operation Sindoor launched in response to?

Ans. Operation Sindoor was launched in response to the Pahalgam attack of April 2025.

Q2. What major change did Operation Sindoor bring to India's security policy?

Ans. Operation Sindoor marked a shift from reactive restraint to a policy of zero tolerance against terrorism.

Q3. Which branches of the Indian armed forces participated in the operation?

Ans. The Indian Army, Indian Air Force, and Indian Navy jointly participated in the operation.

Q4. How did India strengthen its air defence during the operation?

Ans. India strengthened its air defence through advanced systems such as the S-400 missile system.

Q5. Why is Atmanirbharata important after Operation Sindoor?

Ans. Atmanirbharata is important because it promotes indigenous defence production and strengthens national security.

Source: **The Hindu**

The Elephant in India's Data Room

Context

- As another session of Parliament concluded, Members of Parliament continued raising questions regarding the number of schools with toilets, pensions distributed, and beneficiaries under welfare schemes.
- Although these issues are significant, such information should already exist in a **transparent, accessible, and standardised** public database.
- The repeated demand for basic statistics exposes a deeper weakness in India's **data governance**
- Despite generating vast amounts of information, India struggles with fragmented and non-interoperable datasets that weaken **policy-making**, accountability, and administrative efficiency.

Anatomy of the Problem

- **Fragmented Data Ecosystem**

- India's data ecosystem remains highly **fragmented**, with Ministries and government departments using different definitions for indicators such as regions, time periods, and beneficiary categories.
- The absence of common standards creates major barriers to **interoperability**, making it difficult to integrate datasets across institutions.
- As a result, large volumes of data exist, but much of it lacks practical usability.

- **Fiscal Leakages and Administrative Inefficiency**

- The consequences of weak data systems are particularly visible in welfare programmes. Multiple databases often record the same beneficiary repeatedly, resulting in serious **fiscal leakages**.
- The removal of 17.1 million ineligible names from the PM-KISAN scheme was expected to save nearly ₹90 billion in FY2024.
- Similarly, deleting 35 million bogus LPG connections and 16 million fake ration cards could save hundreds of billions annually.
- These examples demonstrate how poor **data management** directly affects public expenditure and governance efficiency.

- **Impact on Public Health Policy**

- Childhood tuberculosis cases are frequently recorded separately in the **Health Management Information System**, disease surveillance networks, and immunisation registries.
- Such duplication creates conflicting estimates and reduces confidence in official statistics.
- When policymakers cannot rely on accurate data, decision-making often shifts toward anecdotal evidence or political convenience instead of scientific analysis.

Global and Economic Consequences

- In the **Global Innovation Index 2024**, India suffered from missing and outdated indicators because agencies failed to provide updated statistics.
- This exposes weaknesses in inter-agency coordination and reduces the credibility of national performance assessments.
- Economically, the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development** estimates that improved public-sector data sharing could increase GDP by up to 1.5%, with even greater gains if private-sector data is included.
- Thus, weak **data governance** not only distorts policymaking but also limits economic growth and innovation.

Common Standard for Data

- **Strengthening the India Data Management Office**

- A major solution lies in the National Data Governance Framework Policy and the proposed India Data Management Office (IDMO).

- The IDMO could become the central institution responsible for enforcing common rules, definitions, and standards across Ministries and States.
- However, such reforms require genuine authority. The institution must have the power to audit compliance, resolve disputes, and ensure uniform methodologies nationwide.
- Without binding enforcement, inefficiencies and inconsistencies will persist.

• **Alignment with Global Standards**

- India also needs alignment with global statistical frameworks such as the United Nations System of National Accounts.
- A unified National Statistical Standards Manual could harmonise definitions and practices across sectors, improving consistency, reliability, and comparability of national data.

• **Expanding Open Data Infrastructure**

- The expansion of **gov.in** into a comprehensive and schema-consistent repository is equally important.
- Ministries should regularly upload datasets in standardised formats so that parliamentarians, researchers, and citizens can access accurate real-time and district-level information.
- Such reforms would improve **transparency**, strengthen accountability, and reduce duplication across government databases.

Accountability as a Benchmark

• **Role of the Data Governance Quality Index**

- The Data Governance Quality Index developed by NITI Aayog should become an annual benchmark tied to performance reviews and incentives for Ministries and States.
- Healthy competition in maintaining high-quality data standards can encourage long-term improvements in governance practices.

• **Data as the Grammar of Governance**

- Data standardisation is not merely a technical exercise; it is the **foundation of modern governance**.
- A country aspiring to become a \$5 trillion economy cannot rely on inconsistent and unreliable datasets.
- Effective governance depends upon accuracy, coordination, efficiency, and responsible stewardship of information systems.

Conclusion

- Data serves as the **grammar of governance** and without coherent standards and reliable systems, policymaking becomes uncertain, public resources are wasted, and national development slows.

- Strengthening **institutional reforms**, improving **digital infrastructure**, and ensuring accountable data practices are essential for building an efficient and evidence-based governance framework.
- By committing to robust **standardisation**, **interoperability**, and transparent information systems, India can create a governance model that is future-ready, economically sustainable, and globally competitive.

The Elephant in India's Data Room FAQs

Q1. Why is data standardisation important for governance?

Ans. Data standardisation ensures accuracy, transparency, and efficient policymaking across government institutions.

Q2. What problem arises from fragmented government databases?

Ans. Fragmented databases create duplication, inconsistencies, and fiscal leakages in welfare programmes.

Q3. How can the India Data Management Office improve governance?

Ans. The India Data Management Office can enforce common standards and improve coordination among Ministries and States.

Q4. What impact does poor data governance have on the economy?

Ans. Poor data governance reduces efficiency, weakens decision-making, and limits economic growth potential.

Q5. Why should data.gov.in be expanded and strengthened?

Ans. Data.gov.in should be strengthened to provide accessible, real-time, and standardised public information.

Source: **The Hindu**

Governor's Discretion and Constitutional Morality - Tamil Nadu Crisis in Focus

Context

- The role of the Governor has once again come under scrutiny following Tamil Nadu Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar's prolonged **delay in inviting** the leader of the single largest party — Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam's (TVK) C Joseph Vijay — to form a government after the state assembly election results.
- The issue raises critical questions regarding constitutional conventions, gubernatorial discretion, federalism, democratic morality, and judicial precedents governing government formation.

Constitutional Position of the Governor

- **B. R. Ambedkar** had described the Governor as a "representative not of a party, but of the people as a whole of the state."
- This statement was later quoted by the Supreme Court in the landmark **Nabam Rebia** Judgment case (2016).

- The constitutional expectation is that the Governor should function as a **neutral** constitutional head rather than a political actor.

Constitutional Provisions on Government Formation

- **Article 164(1):** It merely states that the Chief Minister shall be appointed by the Governor.
- **Article 164(2):** The Council of Ministers is collectively responsible to the Legislative Assembly, not to the Governor.
- **Interpretation:** Thus, the Governor's role is limited to identifying who is most likely to command majority support in the Assembly.

Importance of Constitutional Conventions

• Why Conventions matter

- Constitutional conventions are unwritten, non-legal rules, practices, and traditions that guide the functioning of government institutions, **bridging gaps** in the written constitution.
- The Constitution does not explicitly provide a detailed mechanism for every political contingency, especially fractured mandates. Hence, constitutional conventions **evolve** over time.

• Thinkers on Constitutional conventions

- **John Stuart Mill** described conventions as “unwritten maxims of the Constitution”.
- **William Anson** called them “constitutional customs”.
- **Ivor Jennings** argued that conventions provide “flesh which clothes the dry bones of the law”.
- These conventions become essential for maintaining democratic continuity and constitutional morality, which refers to adherence to democratic values, conventions, and constitutional spirit beyond legal text, ensuring legitimacy and fairness in governance.

Tamil Nadu Political Situation

- **Electoral verdict:** In the 234-member Tamil Nadu Assembly,
 - C Joseph Vijay-led TVK emerged as the single largest party with 108 seats.
 - No pre-poll alliance secured a majority.
 - Indian National Congress later extended support to TVK.
 - Left parties and smaller parties also indicated support.
- Under established convention, the Governor should ordinarily have invited the single largest party leader claiming majority support to form the government and prove majority on the floor of the House.

Supreme Court Judgments on Governor's Role

- **Nabam Rebia case (2016):** The judgment emphasised constitutional neutrality of Governors and restricted arbitrary discretionary powers.
- **R. Bommai case (1994):**

- The judgment established that the majority must be tested on the floor of the House. Constitutional machinery cannot be assessed subjectively by the Governor.
- The judgment also discussed the **hierarchy** (in case no political party enjoys a clear majority/ hung assembly) of pre-poll alliances, post-poll alliances, and the single largest party.
- In the present case, TVK qualifies both as the single largest party and as the nucleus of a post-poll alliance.
- **Rameshwar Prasad case (2006):** The judgment warned Governors against partisan misuse of office.
- **Raghukul Tilak case (1979):** The judgment held that gubernatorial discretion must be reasonable, in good faith, non-arbitrary, and constitutionally restrained.

Historical Precedents Supporting the Convention

- **Vajpayee government (1996):** Atal Bihari Vajpayee was invited to form the government despite the BJP lacking a majority because it was the single largest party in the Lok Sabha. The government later resigned after failing to prove its majority.
- **Karnataka example (2018):**
 - S. Yediyurappa was invited (and was given 15 days to prove the majority) by the then Governor Vajubhai Vala to form the government despite a post-poll alliance between Congress and JD(S).
 - The SC ordered an expedited floor test (within 36 hours), and the government eventually collapsed.

Core Constitutional Issues Raised

- **Politicisation of the Governor's office:** The Governors increasingly behave as **partisan** actors rather than neutral constitutional authorities.
- **Erosion of constitutional morality:**
 - Delaying invitation to the largest claimant despite evident support is viewed as undermining democratic ethics and constitutional conventions.
 - Any possible alliance between rival parties like DMK and AIADMK merely to prevent TVK from forming government despite the electorate rejecting both, will be portrayed as **political opportunism**, that is,
 - Ethically questionable
 - Contrary to democratic spirit
 - Violative of constitutional morality
 - **Threat to federalism:** Frequent gubernatorial interventions deepen Centre-State tensions and weaken cooperative federalism.
 - **Misunderstanding of majority principle:**
 - The Governor reportedly demanded “absolute majority”.
 - However, confidence motions require a simple majority of members present and voting.
 - A government survives through a simple majority of members present and voting, not necessarily 50% plus one of total House strength.
 - This means, abstentions reduce the effective majority mark.

Recommendations

- **Codification of conventions:** India should evolve clearer statutory or constitutional guidelines regarding government formation in hung assemblies.
- **Implement Sarkaria and Punchhi commission recommendations:**
 - For example, the Punchhi Commission recommended **limiting** gubernatorial discretion under Article 164.
 - A transparent order of preference for inviting parties should be **institutionalised**.
- **Ensure political neutrality of Governors:** Governors should function as constitutional umpires rather than agents of ruling parties at the Centre.
- **Mandatory time-bound floor tests:** The SC's evolving jurisprudence on immediate floor tests should become standard constitutional practice.
- **Strengthening constitutional morality:** Public offices must operate not merely within constitutional text but also within democratic ethics, conventions, and spirit.

Conclusion

- The Tamil Nadu episode highlights the **recurring** constitutional **tensions** surrounding the office of Governor in India.
- These controversies underline the urgent need to depoliticise the gubernatorial office and reinforce constitutional morality, federal balance, and democratic conventions.
- As constitutional scholar **Ivor Jennings** observed, conventions give life to constitutional text; without adherence to them, democratic institutions risk losing legitimacy and public trust.

Governor's Discretion and Constitutional Morality FAQs

Q1. What is the constitutional role of the Governor in the appointment of the CM in a hung Assembly?

Ans. The Governor must invite the leader most likely to command majority support on the floor of the House.

Q2. How has the SC interpreted gubernatorial discretion in cases of government formation?

Ans. It has consistently held that the majority should be tested through a floor test and not through the subjective satisfaction of the Governor.

Q3. What is the significance of constitutional conventions in India's parliamentary democracy?

Ans. They fill gaps in the constitutional text and ensure democratic continuity, accountability, and constitutional morality.

Q4. Why is the politicisation of the Governor's office considered a challenge to cooperative federalism?

Ans. Partisan actions by Governors can undermine elected State governments and strain Centre-State relations.

Q5. What is meant by constitutional morality?

Ans. It refers to adherence to democratic values, conventions, and constitutional spirit beyond legal text, ensuring legitimacy and fairness in governance.

Source: **IE**

