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Comparative and Qualitative Analysis of the 2025 Pahalgam and 2024 Reasi Attack: Narratives, Targets, And State Responses

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Abstract: ***The present research paper is a comprehensive comparative and qualitative analysis of two major terrorist strikes on tourists and pilgrims in Jammu and Kashmir: the Reasi terrorist attack in June 2024 and the terrorist attack in Pahalgam in April 2025. The study has analyzed the chronology of the incidents, target selection, nature of casualties, characteristics of the attackers, government response, media portrayal, and the security system response in the tow terrorist strikes through the analysis of newspaper reports, internet sources, police reports, social media content, and literature on the subject. This analysis has revealed several patterns in the terrorist strikes, including the selection of soft civilian targets in the peak tourist season and the sectarian nature of the victims. The areas of security need, as identified by the study, include the need to improve the tracking of vehicles, the need to improve the real-time monitoring of tourist routes, and the need to improve the dissemination of intelligence. The narratives of the media in both cases focused on the theme of national unity, as well as the creation of polarizing discourses around the issue of terrorism. The paper ends with recommendations, which are informed by evidence, to improve the use of GPS to track tourist vehicles, to improve the use of drones to monitor the roads, and to improve the dissemination of intelligence. These findings add to the understanding of the patterns of terrorism in conflict areas, which can be used to inform policy on thesecurity of tourists and pilgrims in such areas.***

Keywords: Terrorism, Jammu and Kashmir, Tourist Security, Reasi Attack, Pahalgam Attack, Media Narratives, Counter-terrorism, Pilgrimage Safety.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) region has endured decades of political conflict and insurrection, which have significantly affected its social and profitable structures, particularly in the tourism and passage sectors (Islam, 2014; Swami, 2003). Terrorist attacks on these sectors are frequently strategically intended tobeget profitable dislocation and attract transnational media attention by undermining comprehensions of safety and stability (Singh et al., 2025; Thakur et al., 2020). Between June 2024 and April 2025, two major attacks targeted civilians the Reasi attack on Hindu pilgrims and the Pahalgam attack on excursionists performing in significant loss of life and exposing vulnerabilities in the region's counter-terrorism and security frame(MacRae, 2025; Outlook India, 2025).

A. Context and Research Objectives

Following the invalidation of Composition 370 in 2019, the Government of India promoted a narrative of returning "normality" in Jammu and Kashmir, frequently pressing the increase in sightseer advents reportedly reaching 3.5 million callers in 2024 as an index of indigenous stability (Islam, 2014; Outlook India, 2025). still, the terrorist attacks in 2024 and 2025 demonstrated that significant security vulnerabilities remain, emphasizing the fragile nature of peace in the region (MacRae, 2025; Tantray et al., 2025).

This study adopts a relative qualitative exploration approach to examine the Reasi and Pahalgam attacks with the following objects:

1) To validate the report, target selection, and casualties associated with the Reasi and Pahalgam attacks.
2) To examine the responses of the government, media, and political actors to these incidents.
3) To identify recreating patterns, political parallels, and implicit security failures associated with the attacks.
4) To propose practical recommendations aimed at perfecting the safety and security of excursionists and pilgrims in conflict-affected regions

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II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Terrorism and Radicalization in Kashmir

Terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir is embedded in complex territorial controversies and ethno-religious pressures, frequently sustained by external political and militant support (Swami, 2003). Contemporary exploration highlights a gradational shift from earlier ethno-nationalist revolter movements toward forms of Islamist radicalization, told by socio-political grievances and cross-border digital propaganda networks (Tantray et al., 2025). Within this environment, terrorists constantly perceive excursionists as emblematic extensions of the state; accordingly, attacks on them represent a strategic choice aimed at gaining wide attention and dismembering the region's tourism-dependent frugality (Singh, 2013; Islam, 2014).

B. Security Responses and Media Narratives

The effectiveness of state responses to terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir remains a subject of ongoing scholarly debate. Some experimenters argue that disaggregating different types of security pitfalls enables more precise and operationally effective counter-terrorism strategies (Marks, 2004). Others emphasize that successful counter-insurgency operations depend not only on military strength but also on gaining the trust and support of the original population (Rabasa et al., 2007).

Media narratives also play a significant part in shaping public comprehensions of terrorism. Studies suggest that terrorist incidents are frequently framed as performative media events, designed to provoke strong emotional responses similar as wrathfulness, fear, and nationalist sentiment among cult (Thakur et al., 2020). Transnational media content has constantly stressed the insular targeting of Hindu excursionists in Kashmir, a framing that can consolidate domestic political pressures and influence politic converse (Singh et al., 2025).

C. Information Warfare and Hybrid pitfalls

The weaponization of social media has surfaced as a significant challenge in contemporary conflict surroundings. Recent terrorist incidents have been accompanied by coordinated online juggernauts in which pro-Pakistan social media accounts have tried to shape narratives and discredit the state through hashtags similar as#IndianFalseFlag(Awasthi, 2025). These juggernauts illustrate how digital platforms can be used as tools of information warfare to impact public perception and spread misinformation.

likewise, the adding use of AI-generated content and deepfake technologies represents a new dimension of mongrel warfare. similar technologies enable the rapid-fire creation anddispersion of manipulated media, complicating verification processes and undermining public trust in sanctioned information. Accordingly, security agencies must develop strongercounter-propaganda mechanisms and digital monitoring capabilities to effectively respond to these evolving pitfalls(Awasthi, 2025).

III. METHODOLOGY

This exploration employs a qualitative relative analysis of the Reasi and Pahalgam incidents. The frame analyzes both cases across several confines report, target selection, perpetrators, security response, and linked vulnerabilities.

Data sources include:

- Primary: National and transnational news reports, sanctioned police and NIA dispatches, and social media content (including deepfake analysis (6)).
- Secondary: Scholarly papers on counter-terrorism (13), media architecture (15), and the profitable impact of conflict on tourism (20). The study triangulates these sources to identify systemic patterns while admitting the limitations of using intimately available data.

IV. CASE ANALYSIS REASI ATTACK(JUNE 2024)

A. Chronology and Target Selection

On June 9, 2024, at roughly 6:10 PM, terrorists opened fire on a 53-seat bus carrying Hindu pilgrims from the Shiv Khori Temple in Reasi district. The timing was calculated to coincide with PrimeMinister Narendra Modi's third swearing-in form, ensuring maximum visibility during a moment ofpublic transition.

The attack was overtly insular, targeting unarmed civilians grounded on their religious identity. Bushwhackers fired over 20 rounds, killing the motorist and causing the vehicle to dip into a deepcouloir(3). This redounded in at least nine deaths and 41 injuries. The strategic intent was to incite collaborative abomination and damage the religious tourism assiduity, a crucial pillar of the indigenous frugality.

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B. Immediate Response

The remote position and delicate terrain complicated deliverance sweats. The Ministry of Home Affairs appertained the case to the National Investigation Agency (NIA), reflecting the graveness of the incident. While no group incontinently claimed responsibility, the tactics imaged the operations of Pakistan-grounded groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).

V. CASE ANALYSIS: PAHALGAM ATTACK (APRIL 2025)

A. Chronology and Tactical Lethality

On April 22, 2025, a significantly further murderous attack passed in the premier sightseer destination of Pahalgam. Terrorists targeted families at a fun and games spot, performing in 26 mercenary deaths and 13 injuries (4). The victims hailed from 15 different Indian countries, amplifying the public sense of outrage. In a nipping modus operandi, bushwhackers reportedly forced victims to recite the Kalma (Islamic creed); those who failed were shot at point-blank range.

B. Perpetrators and the" Virtual War"

The Resistance Front (TRF), a stop offshoot, originally claimed the attack but latterly repudiated the statementa tactic frequently used to manage transnational fallout. The attack was followed by an unknown information warfare crusade. Pro-Pakistan social media accounts used AI- generated deepfakes of Indian leaders to portray the attack as a "false flag" (6).

C. State and Politic Response

The government's response was nippy and aggressive. Prime Minister Modi pledged to "pursue the bushwhackers to the ends of the Earth." Politic pushes included suspending the 1960 Indus Waters Treaty, closing the Attari-Wagah border, and expelling Pakistani diplomats. Domestically, troop presence was corroborated along the Line of Control, and several Pakistani social media accounts were blocked.

VI. COMPARATIVE AND QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

A. Attack Patterns and Tactical parallels

A methodical comparison reveals several striking similarities between the Reasi and Pahalgam attacks:

- Target Selection: Both attacks targeted unarmed, "soft" mercenary targetsspecifically pilgrims and excursionists to maximize cerebral trauma with minimum threat to the perpetrators.
- insular Nature: Both incidents involved the purposeful targeting of non-Muslims. In Reasi, it was Hindu pilgrims; in Pahalgam, the use of the Kalma test explicitly underlined the religious targeting.
- Strategic Timing: Attacks were accompanied with either major political events (Modi's induction) or the peak of the sightseer season to fight the state's narrative of stability and normality.
- Lethality and Complexity: The jump from 9 casualties in Reasi to 26 in Pahalgam suggests an escalation in terrorist capabilities or the exploitation of more significant security setbacks in high- business zones.

B. Government and Media Narratives

Government rhetoric boosted significantly between the two incidents. The response to Reasi was primarily investigative (NIA referral), whereas the response to Pahalgam involved major politic and profitable warrants (Indus Waters Treaty suspense). Media content in both cases concentrated on public confinity and "terrorism as a mediatized event," intended to elicit public feelings like guilt and wrathfulness (15).

The 2025 attack introduced a new dimension Hybrid Information Warfare. The use of AI-generated deepfakes and coordinated social media juggernauts (#IndianFalseFlag) forced the state into a reactive protective posture. Again, the Pahalgam attack also touched off rare night demurrers within Kashmir, indicating that similar magpie violence may be alienating the original crowd from the zealots (4), (14).

C. Security System Performance

The rush of major attacks within a time exposes deep-seated systemic failures:

- Intelligence Gaps: There was a clear failure to descry the planning and movement of terrorists in both remote (Reasi) and largely-secured (Pahalgam) areas (13).

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- Physical Security: Transit routes demanded acceptable checkpoints, and sightseer capitals demanded the "security marquee" anticipated in high-profile destinations.
- Response and Adaption: The increased lethality of the 2025 attack suggests that security agencies failed to effectively learn from the 2024 Reasi incident. The lack of real-time monitoring technology (GPS, AI-CCTV) left security forces eyeless to the unfolding tragedies until it was too late(3),(4).

VII. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. *Recurring Patterns in Target Selection*

Terrorist groups constantly target excursionists and pilgrims to gain maximum visibility and deliver emblematic attacks against the state (Singh, 2013). Similar attacks align with a broader global pattern in which tourism-related targets are used to induce transnational attention, produce fear among implicit callers, and ply pressure on governments (Otte, 2023; Chowdhury et al., 2017). The insular dimension observed in several incidents reflects the ideological exposure of militant groups operating in the region and is frequently intended to consolidate collaborative pressures and challenge the temporal identity of the Indian state (Swami, 2003; Chowdhury et al., 2017).

B. *Effectiveness of Security Responses*

Current state responses to terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir are frequently reactive and corrective rather than preventative. While political and military measures similar as border restrictions or politic escalation demonstrate governmental resoluteness, they don't inescapably address the immediate security vulnerabilities that enable attacks on mercenary targets (MacRae, 2025). Pertaining examinations to agencies similar as the National Investigation Agency (NIA) may insure long-term responsibility; still, similar measures give limited protection for soft targets during the critical period in which attacks do (Marks, 2004).
likewise, the emphasis on high-value counter-insurgency operations may divert attention and coffers down from essential but less visible security tasks, similar as securing transportation routes, covering sightseer areas, and guarding public recreational spaces.

C. *Economic and Social impact*

The profitable impact of terrorist attacks on tourism in Jammu and Kashmir is substantial. Exploration indicates a strong relationship between boosted conflict and a decline in sightseer advents in the region (Islam, 2014). Following the Pahalgam attack, several sectors of the tourism frugality endured significant losses.

1) Hostel bookings: Dropped by roughly 60 in Pahalgam and Anantnag.
2) Religious tourism: Enrolments for the Amarnath Yatra declined by about 35%.
3) Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs): Original handcraft businesses and transportation services reported losses ranging from 40-50, performing in notable employment dislocations.

This miracle reflects what scholars describe as the “negotiation effect,” where excursionists shift to indispensable destinations perceived as safer. similar patterns can weaken the long- term competitiveness and sustainability of Kashmir’s tourism sector (Otte, 2023).

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCED SECURITY

A. *Technological Interventions*

- obligatory GPS Tracking: Real-time GPS monitoring for all vehicles carrying excursionists and pilgrims, connected to a central command mecca (3).
- Drone-Grounded Road Monitoring: Deployment of drones to give nonstop outflow surveillance of conveyance routes and major sightseer meadows (4).
- AI- Enabled CCTV Networks: Establishing facial recognition and gets analysis systems at passage holy spots and sightseer capitals (6).
- Mobile fear Systems: Apps that allow excursionists to transmit position data and two- way communication to security forces in extremities (11).

B. *Intelligence and Collaboration*

- •Inter-Agency Coordination Centres: Establishing 24/7 capitals that integrate police, service, and mercenary intelligence to insure real-time information sharing (13).

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- Tourist-Specific trouble Assessments: Visionary monitoring of dispatches related to soft targets during religious and peak sightseer seasons (11), (18).
- Rapid Response brigades: Strategically posted units trained for active shooter and hostage scripts along high-threat conveyance corridors (14).

C. Community and Policy fabrics

- Community Alert Systems: Price-grounded programs for locals to report suspicious movements via mobile operations (14).
- Original Security Levies: Exercising trained original resides as "eyes and cognizance" in sightseer zones to give a redundant subcaste of surveillance.
- Comprehensive Tourist Security Policy: A formal policy frame detailing agency places, extremity operation plans, and insurance/compensation for victims (13), (18).
- •Counter-Propaganda Capabilities: Developing devoted units to fact-check and counter deepfakes and misinformation on social media in real-time.

IX. CONCLUSION

The relative qualitative analysis of the Reasi and Pahalgam attacks highlights the evolving and patient trouble to mercenary safety in Jammu and Kashmir. These incidents demonstrate a clear modus operandi targeting soft, insular-linked mercenary groups at strategically significant times to maximize cerebral and profitable damage. The failure to descry these attacks, combined with the emergence of AI-driven information warfare, necessitates a abecedarian shift in the security paradigm.

While the government has demonstrated significant political resoluteness through politic and military measures, the politic protection of excursionists remains shy. The shift from reactive to visionary security—using GPS technology, drone surveillance, and community-grounded intelligence—is imperative. likewise, the public grief expressed by Kashmiris following the Pahalgam attack offers a unique occasion for the state to alienate zealots from the original crowd by prioritizing the safety and profitable well-being of all citizens. Only through a sustained, technology-driven, and community-inclusive security policy can the region hope to cover its most vulnerable callers and save its vital tourism assiduity.

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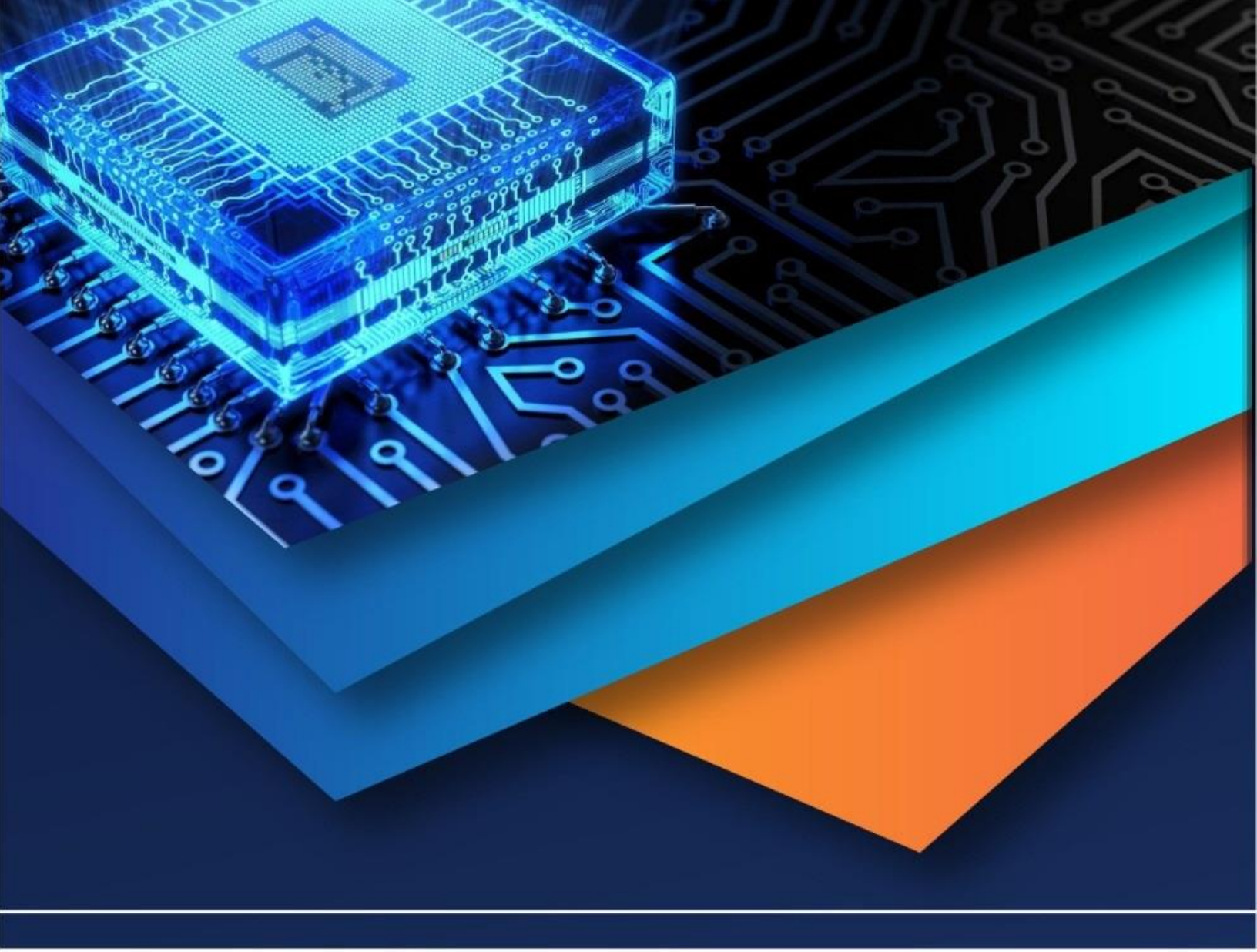

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