

Military over Diplomacy: Motivations, Impacts and Responses for the Aggressive Posture of India

Muhammad Faizan Fakhar and Zeeshan Javed¹

Abstract

Indo-Pak relations have deteriorated significantly after the Indian decision to revoke the special status of Kashmir. Pakistan's leadership is of the view that India could attempt a limited war against Pakistan under the pretense of a false flag mission. However, amidst the rising tensions, it is important to ponder whether war is a possibility between India and Pakistan or not. For this purpose, military escalations of February 2019 between India and Pakistan provide a suitable test case. These events marked the first time since 1971 that air components were utilized by India and Pakistan to cross each other's respective international airspaces. Therefore, these events signify a visible change in the security dynamics of South Asia vis-à-vis India and Pakistan. This article conducts a systematic analysis of motivations and impact of these events along with some preventive measures. Thus, a threefold analysis is carried out in this article. Since the military offence was initiated by India, an analysis is carried out to understand the factors that motivated India to resort to a military option over diplomatic one. The relevant arguments demonstrate that these motivations are mainly shaped by an amalgamation of Boomerang Effect in the military affairs of India and Hindutva driven populist policies of the current

¹Muhammad Faizan Fakhar is Assistant Research Associate at Islamabad Policy Research Institute (IPRI), and a Visiting Lecturer at National Defence University (NDU), Islamabad, and Zeeshan Javed is a Lecturer at the Department of Strategic Studies at National Defence University (NDU), Islamabad.

government. The findings of the study suggest that the pattern of military adventurism by India is unlikely to change in the near future. Therefore, emphasis is laid on the counterstrategies that Pakistan may adopt in order to negate India's future military adventures.

Keywords: Surgical Strikes, Boomerang Effect, Hindutva, Indian Military Doctrines, Risk Escalation, False Flag Operation.

Introduction

Pakistan and India are two border sharing nuclear states of South Asia. Hostilities and mistrust are some of the defining features of Indo-Pak relations. Over the years, Pakistan and India have engaged in multiple armed conflicts, border skirmishes, and diplomatic crises. The development of nuclear weapons by both countries was generally believed to have inculcated the logic of deterrence between them, thereby instilling stability and limiting all-out war. However, post-Pulwama² escalations between India and Pakistan may suggest otherwise. On 26 February 2019, two Indian Air Force jets crossed into Pakistan's airspace and claimed to have targeted alleged hideouts inside the territory of Pakistan.³In retaliation, Pakistan also used its air components against Indian forces, which resulted in the downing of two Indian jets.⁴ Although India and Pakistan have exchanged small arms fire and artillery shelling along the Line of Control (LoC) on numerous occasions in the past, this was the first time since 1971 that

²On 14 February 2019, a convoy of Indian security forces was hit by a terrorist suicide attack in the Pulwama district of Indian administered Jammu and Kashmir. This attack resulted in the deaths of 40 security personnel of India and multiple were injured. India blamed Pakistan for this attack; however, Pakistan rejected these claims and condemned the attack. Nevertheless, the diplomatic relations between both countries deteriorated and the tensions continued to escalate.

³S. Khan and Murali Krishnan, "Pakistan vows retaliation after India's air strikes on alleged militant camps," *DW*, February 26, 2019.

⁴"2 Indian aircrafts violating Pakistani airspace shot down; pilot captured," *DAWN*, February 27, 2019.

air components were utilized by the two to cross each other's respective international airspace. Therefore, this incident signifies a visible change in the security dynamics of South Asia vis-à-vis India and Pakistan. These escalations indicate that airstrikes of similar nature can now be used as a viable policy option by India in the future. India and Pakistan are again on a path to confrontation after the Indian decision to revoke the special constitutional status of Indian administered Kashmir. These efforts are being viewed by Pakistan as attempts to change the demography of Kashmir. The diplomatic relations between India and Pakistan have deteriorated to a significant extent. Moreover, India has also increased its troop levels in the Indian administered Kashmir. Security situation along the LoC has also deteriorated with increased instances of ceasefire violations between India and Pakistan. On August 23, 2019, Prime Minister of Pakistan, Imran Khan, raised concerns about a possible attempt of a false flag operation by India to divert attention from Kashmir.⁵ If such an incident occurs, India could most likely use it to launch a military operation against Pakistan. Therefore, Balakot incident and its aftermath cannot be treated as a standalone affair and must be analyzed systematically. A systematic analysis could entail the study of motivations and impact of these events along with the preventive measures by Pakistan. Thus, this article conducts a threefold analysis of the situation by investigating the following problems:

1. What motivated India to launch airstrikes inside Pakistan's territory despite the presence of nuclear weapons?
2. How has the Balakot incident and its aftermath impacted the security calculus between Pakistan and India?
3. What measures may be taken by Pakistan to deny such incursions by India in the future and to achieve peace and stability in the region?

⁵"India will attempt 'false flag operation' to divert attention from occupied Kashmir, PM Imran warns," *Dawn News*, August 23, 2019.

Indian Military Doctrine

The article proposes that one of the primary causes of the aggressive Indian military posture is Boomerang Effect for which the literature available on the phenomenon has been reviewed. The phenomenon of Boomerang Effect was highlighted by Mikkel Vedby Rasmussen. Mikkel explains that as militaries acquire modernized technologies, wars are perceived to be less risky, in terms of human casualties and financial losses, due to the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA).⁶ This perceived sense of risk reduction results in an increased confidence in one's military capabilities. However, it also increases the risks of war and chances of it becoming a more often used option. The perceived reduction in risk stems out of the belief that advanced military technologies have comparatively reduced the casualties and financial losses of military operations. As a result, the leadership is more inclined to exercising the military option in a conflict. Rasmussen has termed this phenomenon as *risk compensation*.⁷ In other words, as a country modernizes its military and advances towards RMA, the leadership gains confidence in their military capabilities and becomes inclined towards using them to achieve their political goals.

On the other hand, this article also asserts that Indian military posture has undergone a significant shift and has become more aggressive over the years. In order to test this assertion, it is important to study the evolution of Indian Military Doctrines. In April of 2017, the Indian military released an official document titled "Joint Doctrine Indian Armed Forces."⁸ The document elaborately highlights Indian

⁶Mikkel Rasmussen, "The Revolution in Military Affairs and the Boomerang Effect," DIIS Report No. 2004:6 (Copenhagen: Danish Institute for International Studies, 2004), 9.

⁷Ibid.

⁸Ministry of Defence, *Joint Doctrine Indian Armed Forces* (New Delhi: Directorate of Doctrine, 2017), Available at: https://www.ids.nic.in/IDSAdmin/upload_images/doctrine/JointDoctrineIndianArmedForces2017.pdf (accessed on 14 July 2021).

military's future doctrine and planning and the various objectives that it aims to achieve. In essence, the doctrine emphasizes on carrying out coordinated operations to achieve the collective goals. However, there are some excerpts of the document that are worth mentioning.

Regarding the LoC and the Line of Actual Control (LAC), the document states that,

“Strategic interests in regions along our Northern, Western and Eastern borders and sensitivities along the Line of Control (LoC) and Line of Actual Control (LAC) are to be protected with effective deterrent capabilities.”⁹

Similarly, while referring to the Kashmiri uprising and freedom movement, the document goes on to state that:

“Terrorism supported from outside is resulting in the loss of innocent lives. The fragile security environment in the Af-Pak region and neighbouring support to proxy war in Jammu & Kashmir, lends a possibility of it being a conduit for eastward spread of fundamentalist and radical ideologies. Manifestations of these include an engineered radicalised tilt towards such ideology amongst India's youth. Mitigating it requires a multi-faceted approach facilitated by a robust intelligence network.”¹⁰

These two aspects of the document hold significant importance. First, it shifts the focus of Indian military operations along the LoC and

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Ibid.

the LAC.¹¹ Second, it argues that India's neighbors are responsible for supporting a "proxy war" in Jammu and Kashmir. What this signifies is India's belief that the indigenous Kashmiri freedom struggle is a proxy war which is supported by Pakistan. The above stated excerpts can be used to understand India's rationale for justifying the future use of military power along the LoC and the LAC. The following excerpt can be used to understand what form of warfare future Indian military operations will undertake:

"The response to terror provocations could be in the form of 'surgical strikes' and these would be subsumed in the sub-conventional portion of the spectrum of armed conflict. The possibility of sub-conventional escalating to a conventional level would be dependent on multiple influences, principally: politically-determined conflict aims; strategic conjuncture; operational circumstance; international pressures and military readiness. Conflict will be determined or prevented through a process of credible deterrence, coercive diplomacy and conclusively by punitive destruction, disruption and constraint in a nuclear environment across the Spectrum of Conflict."¹²

Through this understanding, it can be concluded that India envisions the undertaking of "surgical strikes" in the sub conventional

¹¹ The LAC is used by India as a reference to the disputed region of Kashmir that is present between the India-China border.

¹² Ministry of Defence, *Joint Doctrine Indian Armed Forces* (New Delhi: Directorate of Doctrine, 2017), Available at: https://www.ids.nic.in/IDSAdmin/upload_images/doctrine/JointDoctrineIndianArmedForces2017.pdf (accessed on 14th July 2021).

domain of warfare and will ensure that the conflict does not escalate into a nuclear war. The ideology of the Joint Doctrine Indian Armed Forces resonates with the Cold Start Doctrine (CSD).

The available literature on the subject is helpful in understanding the hegemonic aspirations of India. Moreover, it also gives a clear indication of the aggressive shift in the Indian military postures. However, the existing literature fails to identify the motivations and impacts of such shift on the regional security, especially with reference to the Boomerang Effect. This research article aims to fill this gap in the existing body of knowledge.

Methodology

This article is deductive in nature. Moreover, it employs a mixed method technique for the analysis of the collected data. The article mainly relies on the secondary data due to time and resource constraints. Although, primary data was also collected through personal interviews with some Pakistani officials, their identities are kept anonymous upon their request and are therefore not directly quoted in the article.

Discussion

The study of Indian political and military policies of the last two decades shows a visible shift of rationale. Although India has used the narrative of 'punishing' Pakistan through 'military action' for 'cross border terrorism' on multiple occasions in the past, international boundaries were never violated deliberately in the first decade of the 21st century. For example, India blamed Pakistan for the Parliament attacks (2001)¹³ and Mumbai attacks (2008)¹⁴ that ultimately led to a military standoff

¹³J.T. Vishnu, "ISI supervised Parliament attack," *Tribune News Service*, December 16, 2001.

¹⁴"Chidambaram asserts 26/11 originated from Pak soil," *The Hindu*, February 9, 2009.

between both countries. Although these events brought Pakistan and India to the brink of war, tensions were eventually diffused through diplomatic efforts without any violation of international boundaries. Therefore, it can be observed that in the first decade of the 21st century, diplomatic solutions prevailed over military ones in resolving the conflicts between India and Pakistan. However, policies adopted by India in the second decade of the 21st century demonstrate that military actions now enjoy a priority over political solutions in the Indian policies. Such a rational was first manifested in the aftermath of Uri attacks in 2016. India followed the pattern of blaming Pakistan for this attack and tensions escalated between both countries.¹⁵ However, this time India claimed to have conducted surgical strikes¹⁶ along the LoC. Pakistan rejected the Indian claims of a surgical strike and questioned the authenticity of the claim by citing the lack of evidence.¹⁷ Nevertheless, even if these claims were unauthentic, this was the first manifestation of the Indian dependence on military options rather than political ones.

Later in 2019, the Pulwama attack¹⁸ once again led to deterioration of diplomatic and political relations between India and Pakistan. The security forces of both countries were put on high alert and India refused to respond to any diplomatic efforts for the mitigation of crisis.¹⁹ The situation further escalated when India violated Pakistan's airspace and carried out an air offensive in

¹⁵"India pulls out of SAARC summit in Islamabad," *The Express Tribune*, September 27, 2016.

¹⁶"4 hours, choppers and 38 kills: How India avenged the Uri attack," *The Economic Times*, July 12, 2018.

¹⁷Ellen Barry and Salman Masood, "India Claims 'Surgical Strikes' Across Line of Control in Kashmir," *The New York Times*, September 29, 2016.

¹⁸"IED blast kills 44 Indian soldiers in occupied Kashmir: police," *DAWN*, February 14, 2019.

¹⁹"Pulwama Attack: India will completely 'isolate' Pakistan," *BBC News*, February 15, 2019.

Pakistan's territory.²⁰ Pakistan responded by carrying out similar operation against the Indian forces.²¹ These incidents marked a deliberate violation of Pakistan's airspace by Indian forces. Therefore, it is important to understand the motivating factors behind this shift in the Indian rationale. This can be better explained by understanding the Boomerang Effect in the military affairs.

The phenomenon of Boomerang Effect can be evidently observed in the existing political and military policies of India. As India acquired advanced weapons' platforms over the years, its confidence to carry out cross border attacks increased correspondingly. At the same time, it also developed a belief that the Pakistani military will be unable to respond in the conventional domain due to its relative inferiority. Consequently, the Indian political and military establishment is now inclined towards carrying out unilateral attacks that may not have manifested in the previous decades. The Indian power elite may be convinced that war is less risky for India due to its technological superiority. However, such risk compensation is more likely to increase the risk of escalation, especially against a nuclear rival. Such risk of escalation is discussed in the upcoming section on the policy analysis. Nevertheless, the Balakot airstrikes launched by India provide a fitting example to understand India's risk compensation and revising the calculus of war. However, it may be argued that India has been on a path of technological advancement long before the second half of 21st century. Similarly, conventional asymmetry between India and Pakistan is also not a new phenomenon. Therefore, why has there been a shift in the Indian policies now? The answer may lie in the study of socio-political environment of India, especially after the election of Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) in 2014.

The Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP) is a right-wing nationalist party of India that advocates the ideology of 'Hindutva.' Hindutva ideology

²⁰ "2 Indian aircraft violating Pakistani airspace shot down; pilot captured," *DAWN*, February 27, 2019.

²¹ "No casualties in Balakot strike, concedes India," *The Express Tribune*, March 4, 2019.

believes in a cultural superiority of Hindu values and norms.²² Constructivism plays an important role in understanding the Hindutva ideology as the belief in the superiority of any one set of values may essentially be regarded as a social construct. Nevertheless, the rise of such social constructs in India has far reaching political and security implications on the domestic as well as regional level. On domestic front, the ideals of Hindu nationalism are used as a political tool to generate mobilization of right wing nationalist masses. This can be verified by the reports of rise in the cow related²³ mob violence across India after the elections in 2014 that brought BJP to power. According to *IndiaSpend*, there have been 113 incidents of cow related mob violence since 2012, whereas only 1 incident occurred in 2012 and 43 incidents occurred in 2017.²⁴ Moreover, since 2012, there have been 340 victims of such incidents, 57% of which were Muslims.²⁵ The report further establishes that “in a series of cow-related hate crimes ... police have acted more decisively against victims than against the mob.”²⁶ These statistics indicate that the ideals of Hindu Nationalism are on a rise in India ever since the BJP came into power. These ideals also have serious political and security implications for the region as well.

One of the major features of Hindutva ideology is the revival of ‘Undivided India.’ The notion of Undivided India is based on regaining the pre-partition lands of India which include the territories of present

²²Derek R. Peterson and Darren R. Walhof, *The Invention of Religion: Rethinking Belief in Politics and History* (Chicago: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 26.

²³ Cow is regarded as a sacred animal in the Hinduism. Therefore, slaughter and beef trade is considered as a crime in the Hindu society. The cow related incidents of mob violence occur under the pretext of punishing the culprits of cow slaughter or beef trade.

²⁴Indiaspend, “Every Third Indian Cop Thinks Mob Violence Over Cow Slaughter Is ‘Natural’: New Survey,” *Indiaspend*, August 25, 2019, Available at: <https://www.indiaspend.com/every-third-indian-cop-thinks-mob-violence-over-cow-slaughter-is-natural-new-survey/> (accessed on 10 June 2021).

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

day sovereign nation-states such as Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh.²⁷ The notion of Undivided India plays a key role in shaping hostile foreign policy of the BJP government. For example, one of the prominent campaigning themes of BJP during the elections of 2014 and 2019 was to punish Pakistan through military actions for threatening the Indian security. It may be observed that these claims were later materialized in the form of purported surgical strike of 2016²⁸ and the airstrikes of 2019.²⁹ Thus, the BJP's government now views military action as a viable tool to earn political points during the election cycle. BJP even used polling posters that contained military imagery in an attempt to use the Balakot strikes to achieve political gains in the 2019 elections.³⁰ Therefore, it may be concluded that on one hand advanced military technologies have shaped a perception of a risk reduction in military action among the power elites of India; on the other hand, the Hindutva driven policies of BJP have established an environment that is conducive for aggressive military policies in India. The constant influx of modern arms to India and the highly nationalized Indian government are likely to make limited use of force a prominent aspect of the South Asian future. However, it is important to analyze the extent to which a military option is viable against Pakistan. Such an analysis lies in the realm of security policies of India and Pakistan.

Impacts on Indo-Pak Security Equation

Pakistan is a nuclear capable state with a credible nuclear arsenal and a First Use policy. On the other hand, there is an asymmetry of conventional forces between India and Pakistan. Analysis of successive Indian military doctrines indicates that India has been attempting to

²⁷Derek R. Peterson and Darren R. Walhof, *The Invention of Religion: Rethinking Belief in Politics and History* (Chicago: Rutgers University Press, 2002), 30.

²⁸ Ellen Barry and Salman Masood, "India Claims 'Surgical Strikes' Across Line of Control in Kashmir," *The New York Times*, September 29, 2016.

²⁹ "Balakot Attack," *DAWN*, February 27, 2019.

³⁰Zeba Siddiqui, "India political parties asked to stop using armed forces images for campaigns," *Reuters*, March 10, 2019.

exploit its conventional superiority against Pakistan without tipping off the nuclear threshold. India aspires for limited use of force against Pakistan that will not escalate into a nuclear affair but will grant enough leverage to India against Pakistan. Such aspirations can be observed by studying the evolution of India military doctrine over the years.

Study of the Indian military doctrines evidently shows the offensive shift in the military policies of India. 'Punitive Strikes' and 'Surgical Strikes' now serve as the operating terms for the Indian forces. The manifestation of these terms was visible in the claimed Surgical Strikes (2016) and the Balakot Strikes (2019). Since Pakistan plugged the gap for a limited conventional war through the introduction of Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNWs), India is now aspiring to normalize limited airstrikes in the security calculus of South Asia. However, in doing so, India may skip a significant number of steps in the escalation ladder. The nuclear doctrine of Pakistan remains ambiguous and the right to response is reserved by Pakistan. In other words, the risk of a nuclear affair becomes more imminent in pursuit of an aggressive military posture by India.

From the above discussion, it may be concluded that the Indian aggression towards Pakistan was not an isolated incident. There is a case to argue that such incidents can become a common occurrence in the near future. Therefore, Pakistan may implement certain measures to address perceived notion of the Indian political and military establishment for conducting a limited war without crossing the nuclear threshold.

As already discussed, such an idea in the minds of Indian policymakers stems from the overestimation of their capabilities for carrying out swift attacks into Pakistani territory without the risk of retaliation. Similarly, India also believes that these attacks will remain in the sub-conventional domain. Such assertions have been made by

the Indian policymakers in the Joint Doctrine Indian Armed Forces³¹ document. Therefore, future Indian aggression can be categorized as having the following features:

- a) Will be in the sub-conventional domain
- b) Will rely on carrying out strikes along the LoC
- c) Will resort to a more offensive mode of operation as compared to the traditional exchanges of small arms fire along the LoC

Due to the terrain of the LoC and the geographical limitations of the region, it may be difficult for India to design and execute military operations with the above based features, utilizing only land-based assets. Therefore, it is logical to assume that future limited use of force initiated by India will rely on the utilization of air-based assets to either carry out cross border bombings or may rely on the insertion of helicopter-borne troops to achieve certain objectives in a limited time frame and then exfiltrate without alerting the Pakistani military. An inspiration for the Indian military leadership may also be the 2011 US raid in Abbottabad.

It is worth mentioning again, that the Indian leadership's perception of carrying out such raids against Pakistan stems from their perceived reduced risk. This prompts India to take more risks through an increased aggressive military stance against Pakistan. However, Rasmussen has also suggested a negative aspect of the Boomerang effect. As a country opts for a more frequent utilization of force, it makes itself susceptible to more risks. In fact, due to the reduced cost of war,³² the casualties and losses are highlighted even more. Modern militaries have experienced lesser human losses due to the Revolution

³¹ Ministry of Defence, *Joint Doctrine Indian Armed Forces* (New Delhi: Directorate of Doctrine, 2017), Available at: https://www.ids.nic.in/IDSAdmin/upload_images/doctrine/JointDoctrineIndianArmedForces2017.pdf (accessed on 14th July 2021).

³² In terms of financial and human losses.

in Military Affairs (RMA). However, this has also entailed that even a single casualty of war is given extreme media attention.

Recommendations

The above discussion illustrates that Pakistan has to adopt countermeasures in order to increase the risks for the Indian leadership. This can be achieved by posing a credible and significant threat to their attempts of carrying out limited use of force against Pakistan. As argued before, India may mostly opt for an air-based violation of the LoC; it stands to reason that Pakistan has to rely on a robust, credible and capable air-defence infrastructure to counter the threats posed by Indian incursions.

To achieve such a method of counterattack, Pakistani military has to realize that the nature of future warfare may be more focused along the LoC. This is also evident by the exponentially increasing LoC violations by India in the recent years. Therefore, the priority of Pakistani military should be to increase the risks for an Indian incursion into its airspace. This could revise the Calculus of War and may help to blunt any such plans by the Indian leadership. The following recommendations are designed to achieve the objective of increasing risks for the Indian military.

Anti-Air Capabilities along the LoC

As this research has argued that a future Indian limited use of force will revolve around the utilization of air-based assets, therefore it is logical for Pakistan's response to be in the spectrum of Air Defence. In order to achieve this, the following areas may be explored.

- MAN-Portable Air Defence System (MANPADS) units/regiments could be introduced along the LoC. Such regiments/units can be maintained by the Army and could be tasked with the conduction of Anti-Air duties along the LoC. In this regard, the organization of these regiments can

be in such a way as to include several anti-air attachments along strategic posts of the LoC. Although Pakistani Army does maintain some Air-Defence installations, they rely on Anti-Air Guns for the performance of those roles. MANPADS can provide a reliable, quick and effective air-defence response.

- Anti-Air regiments can be envisioned in a similar way as compared to the Anti-Tank Guided Missile (ATGM) regiments that are stationed along the LoC. For such regiments to be effective, it is important to invest in the right technology of MANPADS. Pakistan is already operating the infrared guided FIM-92 Stingers. New Anti-Air Regiments can be raised by Pakistani Army equipped with these Stingers and stationed in an Anti-Air role along the LoC.
- Investments in Russian 9K333 Verba (NATO code: SA-25) can also be considered. By utilizing Verba and Stinger based MANPADS, the Pakistani Army can enhance its Anti-Air capabilities along the LoC.
- Even though Infrared based MANPADS have enjoyed a good reputation in various battlefields, it also needs to be mentioned that they are prone to electronic jamming and decoys (such as chaff). Future investment and development trajectory for Pakistani military establishment could be towards Laser Guided MANPADS. The Starstreak system is an opportune example to understand the benefits of the Laser guided MANPADS. It is not prone to be electronically jammed from the ground nor are there any countermeasures for it. The reason for this is that it is based on a phasing array system and essentially requires 'beam riding' for it to strike its target. Therefore, Pakistan can look towards infrared MANPADS as a stopgap measure, but future emphasis should be laid on laser operated MANPADS.

JF-17 Upgrades and Reorganization of Air Combat Squadrons:

The aerial encounter of February 2019 between the Pakistani and Indian Air Forces served as a good litmus test for the JF-17. Upon its inception and development, there were several apprehensions of the weapon platforms such as its maneuverability, offensive/defensive operations capability, and the overall success rate in a dogfight. The shooting down of the Indian Mig-21Bis by the JF-17 was an important achievement in the future development of the aircraft.

Even though the Mig-21 is a 63-year-old fighter aircraft, it still has one of the most maneuverable airframes in modern aviation. This fact has also been reiterated by the United States Air Force (USAF) Pilots who had undergone joint training with Indian Mig-21s during Exercise "Cope India" in 2004.³³ Also, the Mig-21 that was shot down was the Mig-21 Bison, an upgraded version of the standard Mig-21.

The Mig-21 Bison is the most advanced variant of the Mig-21 and was designed to compete with Fourth Generation aircrafts. Some of the modernizations of the Mig-21 Bison included multimode radar, introduction of Beyond Visual Range Air-Air Missiles (BVRAAM) and Helmet Mounted System.³⁴ Therefore, it can be argued that the JF-17 and the Mig-21 Bison were on a par with each other compared to their characteristics. Therefore, this makes the success of the JF-17 worth even more to the policymakers in Pakistan. The reputation of the JF-17 will be positively impacted by its victory against the Mig-21 Bison. As a result of this, many different Air Forces around the world may also be interested in purchasing the JF-17.

To further enhance the effectiveness and lethality of the JF-17, it is important for Pakistan to invest in the modernization of these airframes. The development of the Block 3 JF-17 is an important

³³ Joseph Trevithick, "F-15s Arrive for Rebooted 'Cope India' Air Combat Drill as US-Indian Relations Tighten," *The Drive*, December 3, 2018.

³⁴Ibid.

construct of this modernization. JF-17 Block 3 is believed to be equipped with an Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) radar system and a Helmet Mounted Display as well.³⁵ Overall, the Block 3 will allow the JF-17 to vastly improve its informatized warfare capabilities and to enhance its ability to coordinate intelligence among other sensors on ground and in the air.

Another important development has been of the indigenous range extended missile for the JF-17 by Pakistan.³⁶ This further provides the JF-17 with a robust weapons response to diverse conditions. On the other hand, it is another step towards achieving self-sufficiency regarding the JF-17 platform. As the JF-17 is significantly cheaper than the F-16, it would be more appropriate for the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) to concentrate more of the JF-17 Squadrons along the LoC. Presently, the PAF maintains JF-17 squadrons in air bases located at Kamra, Peshawar, Sargodha, Karachi, and Quetta. Out of these airbases, the bases closest to proximity along the LoC are Kamra, Peshawar, and Sargodha. However, the nautical distance of these airbases to the LoC are as under:³⁷

1. Kamra = 104 Nautical Miles
2. Peshawar=160 Nautical Miles
3. Sargodha= 189 Nautical Miles

The minimum time required for a JF-17 to respond along the LoC would be 5.89 minutes.³⁸ This response time can be reduced by reorganizing the JF-17 Squadrons. To achieve this objective, there can be a case of setting up two new airbases for the JF-17 Squadrons. Proposed locations for these airbases can be Muzaffarabad and Mirpur. These two locations have the added advantage of close proximity to

³⁵Franz-Stefan Gady, "Report: JF-17 'Thunder' Block III Fighter Jet Production Is Underway," *The Diplomat*, March 13, 2019.

³⁶ "Pakistan successfully test fires extended range missile from JF-17 Thunder," *The News*, March 12, 2019.

³⁷ Distance calculated to Rawalakot, Azad Kashmir.

³⁸ Calculated for the Max Speed of the JF-17 which is Mach 1.6 (1,960.1 km/h), flying from Kamra Air Base to Rawalakot, Azad Kashmir.

the LoC. For instance, an Air Base in Muzaffarabad will be approximately 57 nautical miles from the LoC, which translates into a response time of 3.23 minutes.³⁹ Setting up an additional airbase in Mirpur will allow for a more comprehensive coverage of the LoC and reduce the load on the Muzaffarabad airbase.

Synergistic Political and Diplomatic Responses

One of the main pivots of the Boomerang Effect is that wars have now become a relatively 'safe' form of policymaking. Therefore, chances of it being employed in statecraft have increased. The Indian policymakers view that through the utilization of armed response that will help implement their version of policymaking for the region. Another corollary of the Boomerang Effect is that every casualty and loss in conflicts is given extra attention and focus. The military measures that Pakistan can adopt to enhance the risks in the military domains have already been discussed. However, it is important for Pakistan to utilize this mode of thinking in the political and military domains as well. By challenging the Indian aggression in international legal and political institutions Pakistan can increase the metaphorical risk for Indian aggression in the region. An example of this can be seen in the aftermath of the Balakot airstrikes. The political and military narrative demonstrated coherence and synergy. Also, Pakistan was able to provide grounded and factual evidence to counter the Indian narrative. The evidence provided by Pakistan of shooting down a Mig 21 was irrefutable and not prone to being altered by the Indian narrative. In contrast, the Indian narrative of it shooting down a Pakistani F-16 was unsustainable due to the lack of physical evidence.

Similarly, Pakistan provided access to Lockheed Martin, the developers of the F-16, to make an inventory count of their F-16s.⁴⁰

³⁹ Calculated for the Max Speed of the JF-17 which is Mach 1.6 (1,960.1 km/h), flying from Kamra Air Base to Rawalakot, Azad Kashmir.

⁴⁰ "U.S. count shows no Pakistan F-16s shot down in Indian battle: report," *Reuters*, April 5, 2019.

The count proved to be successful in validating Pakistan's claims of it not losing any aircrafts in the dogfight. Subsequently, Pakistan's treatment of the downed Indian pilot and his subsequent release also established Pakistan's credentials as a responsible nation which adheres to international conventions. In essence, these measures were adopted by Pakistan to present an increased risk to India, not only in the military domain but in the legal, diplomatic, and political domains as well. By providing irrefutable evidences against India's military adventurism, Pakistan has the option of enhancing India's risks of being declared as a reckless state. In order to achieve this, it is imperative for Pakistan to resort to a synergistic development of policy in the political and military realms to tackle specific issues. The aftermath of the Pulwama attack is a case study for Pakistan in this aspect. By relying on a unified front against Indian aggression, Pakistan can force India to understand the risks attached to its military aggression. Pakistan is now facing another challenge due to the recent Indian decision to abolish the status quo with regards to Kashmir. The revocation of Article 370 and India's increasing militarization in Kashmir, demand the formulation of a more synergistic approach to dealing with the inevitable instability for the region. Pakistan should continue to maintain a united front in its approach to dealing with India's aggression that could have severe repercussions for the region.

Conclusion

The above discussion illustrates that the threat of military adventurism in South Asia has become more imminent than before. The current leadership of India views war as a feasible policy option against Pakistan. However, since both India and Pakistan are nuclear powers, escalation of any crisis could easily generate catastrophic events of global level. Tensions have increased between India and Pakistan over the Indian decision to revoke special status of Kashmir. Moreover, since India is inclined towards normalizing limited use of force against Pakistan, peace and security of the entire world may suffer negative

impacts. It is also important to understand that pattern of the Indian policies suggests that military aggression may become a long-lasting feature of South Asian security calculus. Events of severe diplomatic, political and military crises may culminate in the near future. Therefore, Pakistan may need to demonstrate a cohesive political and diplomatic front in order to pose a significant opposition to the Indian designs of unilateral expansion. Pakistan's response to the Balakot airstrikes could be considered proportioned and reciprocal. Through this response, Pakistan demonstrated its capability to respond in to the limited use of force by India. Nevertheless, the pattern of such military adventurism by India is unlikely to change in the near future. Therefore, lasting deterrence against Indian misadventures may be achieved through the escalation of risks by Pakistan. The risk may be escalated by bringing above-mentioned upgrades in the defence systems. Finally, since Hindutva ideology has gained populism in the Indian society, the future polices of Indian government are likely to remain majoritarian on domestic level and hostile on the regional level.