

# **The Pulwama-Balakot Crisis: A Strategic Assessment**

Dr. Mansoor Ahmed and Maimuna Ashraf\*

## **Abstract**

The Pulwama crisis has again brought to light the peculiar nature of crisis instability, and revalidated the stability-instability paradox in South Asia. While it reinforced the efficacy of Pakistan's overall deterrence posture vis-à-vis India, this crisis also exposed India as a "trigger-happy" nuclear-armed state, while Pakistan's crisis behavior demonstrated resolve, restraint and responsibility. The U.S. monopoly as an effective third-party broker and crisis manager was replaced by multilateral efforts to prevent escalation. However, given the growing power differential between India and Pakistan, India is likely to continue to explore ways and means to conduct kinetic action against Pakistan, while the latter will have to maintain an effective defence against the full-spectrum of evolving threats.

## **Keywords**

Pulwama crisis, escalation dominance, strategic stability, South Asia, deterrence posture, new-normals, offence-defence, stability-instability paradox, crisis management.

## **Introduction**

After India-Pakistan overtly demonstrated their nuclear capabilities in 1998, it was believed that nuclear deterrence will serve as a stabilizing factor by making all-out conventional conflict too costly between two countries. Nuclear deterrence has succeeded in maintaining peace in South Asia, which rests on the notion of mutually assured destruction and rationality. It is assumed that two competing

---

\* Dr. Mansoor Ahmed is a Senior Research Fellow and Ms. Maimuna Ashraf is a Research Officer at the Center for International Strategic Studies (CISS), Islamabad.

nuclear weapons states with the ability to inflict unacceptable damage on each other will not engage in conventional war due to the inherent risk of unpredictable escalation. While all out conflict is considered far-fetched and highly unlikely, two adversarial nuclear armed states might engage in direct or indirect competition and limited military action at lower levels of the conflict spectrum. However, the 1999 Kargil conflict, the 2001-2002 standoff, 2008 Mumbai crisis, and the latest Pulwama crisis are reflections of the stability- instability paradox between India and Pakistan. This paradox has reduced the possibility of full-scale conflict but has retained the possibility of limited war despite overt nuclearization in South Asia.

The latest India-Pakistan crisis unfolded after a suicide attack on Indian paramilitary personnel in Pulwama, Indian occupied Kashmir on February 14, 2019, that killed 40 soldiers and Indian Prime Minister threatened retribution.<sup>1</sup> Although Pakistan categorically rejected any involvement in this incident and condemned it while offering full cooperation based on actionable evidence and intelligence, the Indian side maintained that the separatist group that apparently accepted responsibility had backing from Pakistan-based elements.<sup>2</sup> The manner in which this crisis developed, unfolded and subsided has put to test longstanding narratives on South Asia's crisis stability, conflict management and escalation control. However, the recent Pulwama crisis has again brought the stability-instability paradox to the fore in South Asia. This paradox coupled with the growing power differential and asymmetries between India and Pakistan are incentivizing irrational and belligerent behavior on the part of an India which is now being propped up by the West as a strategic counter-weight to China. India itself is engrossed in a self-image of a global power, thanks to its economic growth and huge domestic market and its global political and diplomatic clout which is feeding into its military buildup resulting in an Offense-Defense Imbalance, with implications for crisis behavior and strategic stability. This paper examines the Indian and Pakistani crisis behavior during

the Pulwama crisis and how evolving strategic dynamics impacted its events and the outcome, with a brief assessment of the future shape of deterrence stability in the region.

### **Theorizing India-Pakistan Crises**

Writing in 1961, Glenn Snyder argued that, “The greater the stability of the strategic balance of terror, the lower the stability of the overall balance at its lower levels of violence. The reasoning is that if neither side has a ‘full first-strike capability,’ and both know it, they will be less inhibited about initiating conventional war, and about the limited use of nuclear weapons, than if the strategic balance were unstable.”<sup>3</sup> Similarly, Robert Jervis defined this dilemma in *The Illogic of Nuclear Strategy* that, “To the extent that the military balance is stable at the level of all-out nuclear war, it will become less stable at lower levels of violence. That is, if an uncontrolled war would lead to mutual destruction, then neither side should ever start one. But this very stability allows either side to use limited violence because the other’s threat to respond by all-out retaliation cannot be very credible.”<sup>4</sup> Beginning with the Kargil conflict of 1999, and the subsequent 2001-2002 and 2008 India-Pakistan crises, the stability-instability paradox has been at play, but not more than in the 2019 Pulwama crisis. The Indians have attempted to find space for limited war through its Cold Start Doctrine and appear to be exploring options for pursuing kinetic military action against Pakistan in response to the latter’s alleged support of the home-grown insurgency in Indian Occupied Kashmir (IOK). However, India’s proactive strategy for “punishing” Pakistan is increasingly driven by its growing power differential with Pakistan, particularly in conventional military capabilities and India’s own rapid expansion of offensive strategic platforms. During the past two decades, stability-instability paradox, therefore, is increasingly being buttressed with an Offence-Defense Imbalance which is fueling Indian belligerency.

The Offense Defense Theory is central to the study of international conflict and the security dilemma of states. It states that, “shifts in

the O[ffence] D[efence] B[alance]-a measure of the relative ease of offensive and defensive military operations-have a considerable effect on the likelihood of war and crisis in the international system.”<sup>5</sup> Offensive military capabilities of a state, compared to defensive capabilities, have the potential of increasing chances of international crises and conflict. The Offense Defense Theory argues that, “shifts toward offense dominance are said to generate incentives for preemptive strikes and preventive wars and are also believed to be associated with other war-causing phenomena, such as reduced incentives for negotiated conflict resolution, war-inducing arms races, and defensive and opportunistic expansionism.”<sup>6</sup> This appears to be particularly applicable to South Asia where the power differential between India and Pakistan and the resultant asymmetries in soft and hard capabilities, has produced conditions where India does not wish to remain deterred by Pakistan’s deterrence capabilities, thereby undermining deterrence stability in the region.

### **New Normals on the Horizon: India’s Quest for Escalation Dominance and Pakistan’s “Swift Retort”**

The India-Pakistan border skirmishes were accepted to be routine however this time India upped the ante and chose to vertically escalate its response to the Pulwama attack by employing air power across the Line of Control and into Pakistan’s KPK province bordering Azad Kashmir (Jabba Top). It was the first practical manifestation of employing stand-off weapons (SOWs) for attacking ground targets across the Line of Control in Kashmir and reflects additions to India’s military response options through the IAF, ostensibly for counter-terror operations, but in effect was primarily aimed “at establishing a ‘new normal’ which, once successful, could be replicated at other places against Pakistan at will.”<sup>7</sup> More than anything else, IAF’s ingress into Pakistan was also a symbolic act with the aim of feeding domestic

political constituencies ahead of India's elections. In doing so, it seriously under-appreciated Pakistan's conventional capability and resolve to retaliate in kind. Eventually, Pakistan was able to restore the status-quo-ante using conventional means only, as per the operational requirement.

The Indian strike on Balakot prompted calls from within Pakistan to provide a matching response, without which the credibility of Pakistan's Full Spectrum Deterrence Posture would be seriously put in jeopardy. This could potentially have disastrous consequences for peace and stability in South Asia. This sentiment in Pakistan's strategic community is epitomized through statements of Lt. Gen (retd) Tariq Khan, who commanded Pakistan's elite (Offensive Strike) I-Corps in Mangla. He noted that: "Each Indian cross-border strike erode our position of deterring war through our nuclear capability". This implies that "we become more and more vulnerable to an asymmetric conventional threat". He added that "Our response should be to escalate and push the envelope of hostilities so that nuclear war is a likely outcome." In his view, such an action, was "not likely to escalate beyond reasonable boundaries because the rungs in the escalation ladder are so many that signatures leading to total war will reveal themselves well before [such a] war actually breaks out".<sup>8</sup> India, he argued, "simply will not go down this road" as it had much more to lose in an all-out conflict. Thus "Deterrence," in his view was "a mindset and never a tangible posture. It is an outcome of a *possibility*."<sup>9</sup>

The Pulwama crisis has brought to light the various misrepresentations regarding Pakistan's Full-Spectrum Deterrent Posture (FSD) that was being viewed only through the lens of the short-range Nasr battlefield ballistic missile. The anticipation and myth that any conventional attack by India will be instantly responded with the Nasr led to misperceptions not only about Pakistan's nuclear threshold but also undermined the country's conventional forces' capability and deterrence.<sup>10</sup> Therefore, FSD was

misconstrued to represent a nuclear war-fighting strategy employing tactical nuclear weapons against India's conventional threat and was misrepresented as such by many Pakistanis, Indians and Western scholars and officials. Pakistani observers, however, viewed the FSD and the newly acquired Nasr as a means of buttressing its existing force posture, in order to re-iterate Pakistan's resolve and capability to deter limited conventional war and plug the perceived gap in the country's credible minimum posture.<sup>11</sup> Yet in doing so, perhaps the Pakistani narrative also inadvertently went for the overkill and overemphasized Nasr as the only response to India's limited war strategy. In the perception of India's strategic elite, Pakistan's repeated emphasis on short-range nuclear capable systems made its use incredible in a real conflict situation and some of their leading scholars and experts like Raji Rajagopalan and Manpreet Sethi among others, openly argued for calling Pakistan's bluff. Moreover, in their view, Pakistan's conventional deterrence was either ineffective or weak to the extent that they began advocating multiple surgical strikes that were necessary for establishing the New Normal, emphasizing that one strike was insufficient.<sup>12</sup>

### **IAF-PAF engagement: Test of India's Doctrinal Evolution**

India has been preparing its air force for counter-force roles during the past decade through regular exercises with ground forces.<sup>13</sup> It has added a Joint Doctrine in 2017 with the addition of the Land Warfare Doctrine in 2018 as a result of these exercises. These doctrinal changes also reflect India's renewed rhetoric of building the capability for a two-front war against Pakistan and China and conducting "Full Spectrum Conflict".<sup>14</sup> India's doctrinal evolution, therefore, was put to test when the IAF attacked on the night of February 26, 2019. The PAF was scrambled and managed to force the IAF Mirage-2000 strike aircraft to drop their payloads from stand-off ranges, which missed the target. The IAF attacking force then had to race back across the LoC in the face of Pakistani interceptors being scrambled.<sup>15</sup> The PAF interceptor aircraft, however, were not allowed to target the Mirage-

2000 formation. The Mirage-2000 are among the best strike and air superiority aircraft in the IAF that have been upgraded. They have the capability to conduct precision targeting through laser-guided munitions in all weather conditions and also from stand-off ranges, which the IAF strike formation appears to have attempted to do. The PAF retaliated the next morning by launching “Operation Swift Retort.”<sup>16</sup> Unlike the IAF operation at night, the PAF employed JF-17 Thunders in broad daylight and Retrofit-Of-Strike-Element (ROSE) Mirage-III and V aircraft and managed to fly close to the Indian Army’s 15 Corps Northern Command Headquarters, (where senior Indian army officers were present and narrowly escaped the PAF strike force)<sup>17</sup>, while F-16s, Erieye AWACS and Electronic Warfare aircraft were airborne and provided necessary support and cover from within Pakistani airspace. The PAF struck six “non-military” targets using stand-off weapons (SOWs)—such as the H-4—and the Pakistani strike force was able to return unscathed using aircraft that were routinely mocked by detractors and critics—and the PAF fighters, providing cover to “Operation Swift Retort” were able to destroy two IAF aircraft including an SU-30 MKI and a Mig-21 Bison, which fell within the Pakistani side of the LOC.<sup>18</sup> The PAF formation had reportedly been intercepted by two SU-30 MKIs, two Mirage-2000s, and Mig-21 Bis. The SU-30 MKI is a formidable strike and air superiority aircraft of which the IAF has over 250.<sup>19</sup>

Yet, the IAF was not able to target even one of the 24 PAF aircraft, despite the SU-30 MKIs superior capabilities. The IAF was also unable to successfully employ its much-touted Integrated Air Defence Network comprising an assortment of surface to air missiles (SAMs), radars and Israeli AWACS. In fact, it is believed that an Israeli Spyder SAM system committed an act of fratricide on February 27 by shooting down its own Mi-17 transport helicopter, killing several officers and soldiers.<sup>20</sup> The IAF belatedly admitted that the much vaunted Su-30 MKI fleet and its air to air missiles were not as effective in actual combat conditions as advertised. It is therefore planning to

replace existing Russian-original BVR AAMs with Israeli I-Derby ER BVR missiles.<sup>21</sup> This incident reflects poorly on the IAF training and operational effectiveness. It is well known that the IAF has been suffering acute pilot shortages for its fighter aircraft while the PAF enjoys better pilot-to-aircraft ratio (2.5) against the IAF's 1.5.<sup>22</sup> The IAF is also suffering from a reduced sanctioned strength with only about 30 operational squadrons against a sanctioned strength of 42, which adds to serviceability, logistics and training issues, plus interoperability of an assortment of weapon systems and platforms of Russian, American, Israeli, French, British and Indian origin.<sup>23</sup> The confusion that apparently gripped the IAF higher command on the day of the PAF counter-strike was likely due to the surprise with which the PAF managed to conduct its air strikes in broad day-light.<sup>24</sup> The IAF also lost two aircraft, an SU-30 MKI and a Mig-21 Bison whose debris fell inside Azad Kashmir and its downed pilot was taken prisoner. The IAF, however, continued to insist that PAF had lost a F-16, a claim which was refuted by experts and officials in the United States.<sup>25</sup>

What is certain is that the IAF-PAF engagement is believed to have been the first incident that involved net-centric, electronic warfare which was backed by Airborne Warning and Control Systems and ground sensors. The PAF reportedly deployed its EW assets which helped to limit the effectiveness of the IAF interceptors on the morning of the February 27, 2019.<sup>26</sup> This engagement is also a reflection of the superiority of the PAF pilots and training and its ability to conduct SEAD missions and stand-off precision strikes in the face of a much larger, better equipped air force, backed by a seemingly formidable multi-layered air defense network. The Indian Prime Minister Modi was forced to lament the absence of the French Rafale aircraft which he hoped might have produced better results for the IAF.<sup>27</sup> India also removed the IAF Western Command Air Officer Commanding after the IAF was unable to foil the PAF counter-strike.<sup>28</sup> The IAF chief also echoed Prime Minister Modi's views on the



acquisition of the French Rafale aircraft and claimed that these would have been able to effectively counter the PAF in the post Balalot engagement. He also hoped that with the anticipated induction of the French Rafale aircraft, India will have the most advanced combat aircraft in South Asia which would keep the PAF at bay.<sup>29</sup> However, by the time 36 Rafale are inducted, the PAF will also have over 250 JF-17s, upgraded to Block-3 configuration, and equipped with AESA radars and high-performance, PL-15 BVRs.<sup>30</sup>

### **Whose Nuclear Bluff was called?**

The question of calling Pakistan's nuclear bluff simply did not arise as widely projected because the IAF intimated its ineptitude for massive retaliation and further escalation by not responding to the PAF counter-strikes resulting in the loss of an SU-30 MKI and a Mig-21 Bison on February 27, 2019. Likewise, Pakistan's nuclear threshold was no-where seen to have been breached because Pakistan was able to demonstrate its deterrence solely through conventional means at each platform, i.e. air and sea. On the contrary, India brought nuclear connotations in crisis after Pakistan's kinetic air-strike, by swiftly operationalizing its naval combat units that also comprised nuclear powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBN), INS Arihant, along with other destroyers and frigates.<sup>31</sup> Earlier in Doklam episode, India transited from conventional deterrence to nuclear signaling – specifically with a desire to deploy the INS Arihant, which was found to be damaged once the Indian Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) inquired of its operational status.<sup>32</sup> This tendency for a knee-jerk over-reaction reflects a lack of confidence or panic among India's strategic decision-makers during crises. More importantly, however, it shows that India's emerging pre-emptive counterforce posture is essentially turning out to be an extension to its massive retaliation doctrine, which suggests a palpable contemplation for options that would allow nuclear first use – if and when a crucial threat is anticipated in future. Nevertheless, Pakistani officials responsible for nuclear policy believe that the country's deterrence posture proved

effective and prevented further Indian aggression due to the threat of escalation.<sup>33</sup>

### **Crisis Management and Role of the United States**

Various statements, after India attacked and Pakistan retaliated, showed how the narrative was building up. The Indian attack on Balakot was partly the result of the enormous bi-partisan political and diplomatic support enjoyed by India in Washington D.C. This not only encouraged Indian belligerency after the Pulwama incident, but also provided confidence to take offensive military action against Pakistan across the international border. For example, in the immediate wake of the Pulwama attack, the United States National Security Advisor John Bolton stated that India had a “right to self-defence.” The US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo also termed that Indian air force’s attack on Balakot seminary inside Pakistan as part of India’s “counter-terror” campaign, while urging Pakistan to exercise restraint in the face of Indian military action as he termed it as only a counter-terror operation. Moreover, on February 19, a US State Department official noted that, “We urge Pakistan to fully cooperate with the investigation into the attack and to punish anyone responsible” and added that, “we have a close, cooperative relationship with India, a security relationship, and that includes counterterrorism operations.”<sup>34</sup>

However, the United States shifted its tone after Pakistan’s successful counter-strike on February 27, and henceforth called for exercising restraint and escalation control. Only after Pakistan showed its resolve and re-established its conventional deterrence through effective retaliation and the release of the downed Indian Mig-21 pilot Abhinandan; United States mediation surfaced in trying to diffuse India’s missile threat.<sup>35</sup> John Bolton had reportedly conveyed to Pakistan that India was planning missile strikes against Pakistan if the downed Indian Mig-21 pilot Abhinandan was not released. Later Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi confirmed that India had planned to launch 12 missiles for strikes against different military targets inside Pakistan and claimed that it would have been “qatal ki

raat or a night of massacre.”<sup>36</sup> He claimed that this threat forced Pakistan to release the pilot thereafter, otherwise India was prepared to escalate.<sup>37</sup> In another speech in April 2019, Modi asserted that India had the big (thermonuclear) bomb and would not be deterred by Pakistan’s nuclear weapons: “India has stopped the policy of getting scared of Pakistan's threats. Every day they used to say, ‘we have nuclear button, we have nuclear button.’ What do we have then? Have we kept it for Diwali?”<sup>38</sup> Such saber-rattling and offensive rhetoric was only seen in the immediate wake of India’s May 1998 nuclear tests while other Indian political leaders from the Congress party have not resorted to such aggressive rhetoric in previous India-Pakistan crises.

In response to India’s offensive posturing, Pakistan immediately communicated its resolve to retaliate disproportionately to any Indian missile strikes while the Indian pilot was released as a good-will gesture.<sup>39</sup> The US mediation pattern might have been different had India dominated the escalation ladder or if Pakistan would not have been able to promptly restore the status-quo-ante. The crisis also doubts on the US’ status as the sole third-party mediator in South Asia that has been tapered in wake of Pentagon’s preferential treatment to India over Pakistan and growing influence of China in the region. Thus, multiple crisis managers besides the United States, including China, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, were active in defusing the February 2019 crisis.<sup>40</sup> Nevertheless, between the IAF strike and the PAF counter-strike, there was a plethora of viewpoints on how India had established a new normal and that Pakistan’s nuclear bluff had been called. However, Pakistan was able to re-establish/re-assert the efficacy of its conventional deterrence (which taken together with strategic forces offers a range of response capabilities and options against the full-spectrum of threats posed by India’s offensive posture) and nipped such a norm which, if not checked in time, would have led to deterrence failure in South Asia.

## **US Expectations and India-Pakistan Crisis Behavior**

The Pulwama crisis has exposed a credibility gap between what India has been projecting to its allies and people in term of capability and resolve to be a leading partner with the United States in the latter's Indo-Pacific strategy and Quadrilateral Alliance between India, Japan, Australia and the US, for the containment of China. India was therefore accorded the status of a major strategic and defence partner by the US which has allowed it huge arms acquisitions over the past 15 years. India has also been dubbed as a net security provider and anchor of stability in the Indo-Pacific region. India on the other hand has added another coinage for South Asia to Southern Asia, that is ostensibly designed to include Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean Region.<sup>41</sup> The US Secretary of State, Mike Pompeo told the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee in 2018 that, "For scores of reasons, India needs to be central to what we do. They ought to be one of our closest partners and we ought to do everything we can to make sure that we achieve that."<sup>42</sup> Admiral Harry Harris, the commander of the US Pacific Command stated that India "presents the biggest strategic opportunity for the US."<sup>43</sup>

The Indo-Pacific Strategy puts a question mark on India's ability to meet US expectations and burden sharing as a primary combatant command, as designated by Defense Secretary Jim Mattis.<sup>44</sup> In pursuit of these shared geo-strategic objectives, Japan, Australia, and the United States and other allied navies from France and the Philippines, have been routinely conducting naval and maritime exercises with the Indian Navy, primarily in the area of Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW). These maneuvers are designed to improve "inter-operability" of forces among allied navies to counter Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy's (PLA-Navy) presence in the Indian Ocean Region, particularly Chinese conventional submarines.<sup>45</sup> Pakistan Navy has embarked on a major, although belated and much needed, modernization effort and is in the process of acquiring eight Chinese Type-039 conventional attack submarines (SSKs) and four Type-

54A/P frigates from China along with four ADA-Class multipurpose corvettes from Turkey. The Indian Navy already enjoys a huge qualitative and more significantly, a numerical advantage over the Pakistan Navy. Therefore, India's growing naval capabilities, designed to dominate the Indian Ocean will have a direct bearing on Pakistan's naval deterrence and the effectiveness of the nascent naval leg of its nuclear triad.

During the Pulwama crisis, the Indian Navy had immediately deployed a large task force comprising 60 ships, 12 coast guard ships, and 60 aircraft including the aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya, in the north Arabian Sea in the wake of the Balakot strikes, in addition to nuclear submarines. This strike force was engaged in the Theatre Level Operational Readiness Exercise (TROPEX 19) war games in the Bay of Bengal and was swiftly redeployed against Pakistan. In the midst of the crisis, the Indian Navy spokesperson stated that "the overwhelming superiority of the Indian Navy in all dimensions forced the Pakistan Navy to remain deployed close to the Makran coast and not venture out in the open ocean."<sup>46</sup> Yet, a Scorpene-class SSK, equipped with Air Independent Propulsion—the most advanced conventional SSK platform in the Indian Navy, was successfully forced to surface by the Pakistan Navy's P-3C Orion ASW aircraft.<sup>47</sup> However, as late as May 2019, the Indian Navy chief claimed that the Indian Navy was "Combat Ready and Mission Deployed" and could have "decimated" the Pakistan Navy in the post-Balakot deployment.<sup>48</sup> Interestingly, it was later reported that all Indian naval assets, including the state-of-the-art P-8I Anti-Submarine Warfare aircraft were unable to detect one Pakistani AIP-equipped Agosta-90 B submarine for twenty-one days during the Pulwama crisis.<sup>49</sup>

Pakistan's National Command Authority (NCA), the highest decision-making body responsible for all aspects of development, deployment and employment of nuclear and missile forces, held a special meeting on February 27, 2019. Headed by the Prime Minister of Pakistan and attended by ministers of foreign affairs, defence and finance,

Chairman Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee, Chief of the Army Staff, Chief of the Naval Staff, and Chief of the Air Staff and other civil and military officials. Thereafter, the foreign and defence Ministers briefed the media after the National Security Committee (NSC) meeting on February 26 wherein the Prime Minister, reportedly, “directed that elements of national power including the armed forces and the people of Pakistan to remain prepared for all ‘eventualities.’ The NSC stated that India’s strike at Balakot was carried out for “domestic consumption being in election environment, putting regional peace and stability at grave risk,” and added that, “The forum concluded that India has committed uncalled-for aggression to which Pakistan shall respond at the time and place of its choosing.”<sup>50</sup> The day Pakistan held its NCA meeting, the US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joseph Dunford made telephonic contact with his Pakistani counterpart, General Zubair Mahmood Hayat.<sup>51</sup> On February 26, Gen. Hayat issued a statement asserting that the Pakistani armed forces were “fully prepared” to respond to India’s act of aggression and added that, “Pakistan will not allow India to alter the strategic equation in South Asia; neither Pakistan will allow India to establish any ‘new normal.’”<sup>52</sup>

Nevertheless, Pakistan did not resort to nuclear signaling as a tool for saber-rattling or displayed aggressive behavior, while communicating its resolve to defend itself. The crisis did not escalate any further due to the intervention of not only the United States, but China and Russia along with Saudi Arabia and the European Union all played a key role in de-fusing the crisis. However, the credit goes to Pakistan and its civil-military leadership at first place for the deft and statesmen like handling of the situation. Pakistan could have escalated, first on the night of the IAF strike, by destroying the Mirage-2000 strike force, then by directly hitting military targets such as the Northern Command (15 Corps headquarters), which at the time of the PAF strike, had senior Indian army commanders present, including the commanders of the 15 Corps and the Northern Army Command.<sup>53</sup>

Pakistan also exercised restraint by not resorting to disproportionate retaliation to heavy artillery fire along the Line of Control. There were calls for escalation from both sides—mainly to dominate the escalation ladder and re-establish the power equilibrium—at least in the short term. It was clear that in the wake of the IAF strike, without credible retaliation, Pakistan's FSD would have run the risk of being neutralized and nullified and Indian cross-border attacks, coercion and compulsion would thereafter have become a new norm.

### **Outlook for the Future**

Over the past fifteen years, India has been steadily investing in the large-scale modernization and expansion of its conventional and strategic forces. The Indian Army seeks to dominate the Full Spectrum of Future Conflict, including a Chemical, Biological, Radiological and Nuclear (CBRN) Environment through the effective synergy of a technology-driven fighting force. The Indian Army's Land Warfare Doctrine 2018 states: “[IA] will continue to modernise to fight in a techno-centric combat environment which is likely to emerge in futuristic conflict scenarios due to revolution in key technologies like Artificial Intelligence, Quantum Computing, Nano Technology, High-Energy Lasers, Directed Energy Weapons, Hypersonic Weapons etc so as to cater for high technology threat of Swarm Attacks including Drones, Laser and Pulsed Microwave Weapon Systems and Injection of False Information.” It is also working on acquiring superior Information, Cyber, Electronic, Psychological and Space Warfare capabilities coupled with an emphasis on Force Projection, Heavy Lift and Rapid Mobilization, for a two-front war scenario.<sup>54</sup> To this end, it has been the largest net importer of conventional military equipment during the past decade and is moving towards capabilities that will provide it with offensive dual use counter-force capabilities, through a network of space-based ISR assets. Add to this India's development of canisterized ballistic and cruise missiles, with an increasing focus on short-range (Pakistan specific) systems. India's recent Anti-satellite test, and its acquisition of technologies for ballistic missile defence

such as the S-400 SAM system from Russia and the possible future purchase of the Theatre High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) system from the United States, in addition to state-of-the-art Israeli air defence, surveillance and other systems, will allow it to attain an effective counter-force capability against Pakistan.<sup>55</sup> India is also equipping its Agni-V and VI ballistic missiles with Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicles (MIRVs). India is equipping 42 SU-30 MKI aircraft under the Strategic Forces Command with nuclear capable Brahmos.<sup>56</sup> and a lightweight version (Brahmos-NG) is under development to be integrated with other IAF aircraft also. Each SU-30MKI will be able to carry up to five Brahmos-NG missiles while India's 1000 km-range Nirbhay air launched cruise missile is also being tested. It is dubbed as the backbone of India's Cold Start Doctrine.<sup>57</sup> Multiple versions of supersonic and hypersonic Brahmos cruise missiles<sup>58</sup> will be able to strike targets in Pakistan in the early phases of a limited or all-out conventional war. India's emerging BMD network is expected to protect its leadership and critical military, civilian and industrial targets from Pakistani missiles. Therefore, India is clearly embracing the counter-force revolution which has triggered debate over the future shape and relevance of India's official No First Use nuclear doctrine, with pre-emptive options being advocated by senior Indian officials, such as Shivshankar Menon, former Indian defence minister Manohar Parrikar and former commander of India's SFC, Lt. Gen. (ret'd) B.S. Nagal.<sup>59</sup> While India is likely to retain its official position on NFU, influential Indian officials have called for revisiting the contours of India's force posture, citing Pakistan's development of the Nasr battlefield-range nuclear missile. However, this doctrinal change has been in the offing since long and is primarily driven by India's path to military modernization and is the product of India's Revolution in Military Affairs.<sup>60</sup> India is believed to have completed its strategic nuclear triad and is consolidating and adding to its nuclear forces, particularly through a fleet of ballistic missile nuclear submarines (SSBN) which will give it an assured second strike capability against China and Pakistan. This nuclear



buildup is being fueled by increased stockpiling and production of weapon-usable fissile materials, of which India holds the largest unsafeguarded stockpiles in the world which is being augmented by an unprecedented expansion in fissile material production capabilities outside any safeguards of the International Atomic Energy Agency.<sup>61</sup> This military-technical revolution will allow India to maintain the necessary operational flexibility for a variety of military Operations in a Full Spectrum Conflict. In the post-Pulwama/Balakot crisis, Western arms supplies, particularly the United States, Israel, France, Russia and others are likely to induce India to buy new weapons.<sup>62</sup> India itself is likely to embark on a major effort to increase the pace of its conventional arms modernization with a greater increase in its defence budget and overcoming the bureaucratic inefficiencies of India's military procurement system. The Post-Pulwama series of events were a manifestation that there was space for limited war if one or both sides believed it could get away with risk taking without appreciating the potential for vertical escalation and the costs of such an action—even if it is entirely employing conventional options such as air power, or SOWs or missiles. The possibility of this happening is now greater than ever before, especially in the wake of the re-election of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's right-wing Hindu fundamentalist government in the May 2019 elections with a renewed focus on national security and power projection. Therefore, arms race instability will be new normal which will exacerbate the Offence-Defence Imbalance in India's favor and crisis stability will remain elusive in South Asia. India's attack on Balakot was a symptom of a larger malaise in the South Asian strategic conundrum, i.e. an Indian political, military and scientific elite that thinks it can achieve escalation dominance against Pakistan - thanks to unprecedented military modernization and buildup backed up with enormous economic, political and diplomatic clout around the world - and can resort to the use of force at will without any major international repercussions. What is certain, however, is that such belligerency might lead to deterrence failure in South Asia, should the Offence-

Defence Imbalance continue to shift in India's favor. Growing technological and power asymmetries are likely to produce incentives for risk taking by Indian planners by exploiting future opportunities—thereby validating the Stability-Instability paradox yet again. Whether another Balakot happens or not depends on a host of variables, but what is certain is that Pakistan will maintain a credible and effective conventional and strategic deterrent to maintain peace and close the space for limited or all-out conventional war in the South Asian region.

## Endnotes

---

<sup>1</sup> Joanna Slater and Nihan Masih, “Modi vows action after dozens die in deadliest attack in Indian-held Kashmir in 3 decades,” *The Washington Post*, February 15, 2019. [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/indias-modi-promises-retaliation-after-worst-attack-in-kashmir-in-three-decades-kills-dozens/2019/02/15/f5dd55d6-309e-11e9-8781-763619f12cb4\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.553dd1f16897](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/indias-modi-promises-retaliation-after-worst-attack-in-kashmir-in-three-decades-kills-dozens/2019/02/15/f5dd55d6-309e-11e9-8781-763619f12cb4_story.html?utm_term=.553dd1f16897).

<sup>2</sup> “Pakistan too condemns Pulwama terror attack, denies role in blast that killed 44 CRPF men,” *India Today*, February 15, 2019. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/pakistan-too-condemns-pulwama-terror-attack-denies-any-link-in-blast-that-killed-44-crpf-men-1456551-2019-02-15>.; “PM Imran on Pulwama attack: Pakistan to retaliate immediately if India goes for any misadventure,” *The News* (Islamabad), February 19, 2019. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/434064-pm-imran-to-give-pakistan-policy-statement-on-pulwama-attack>.

<sup>3</sup> Glenn Snyder, “The Balance of Power and the Balance of Terror,” in Paul Seabury, (ed.), *Balance of Power* (San Francisco, CA., Chandler, 1965), pp. 198-99.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Krepon, “Stability-Instability Paradox,” *Arms Control Wonk*, November 2, 2010. <https://www.armscontrolwonk.com/archive/402911/the-stability-instability-paradox/>; Robert Jervis, *The Illogic of American Nuclear Strategy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1984), p. 31.

<sup>5</sup> Yoav Gortzak, Yoram Z. Haftel and Kevin Sweeney, “Offense-Defense Theory: An Empirical Assessment,” *Conflict Resolution* Vol. 49, No. 1 (February 2005), pp. 67-89.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Mansoor Ahmed and Maimuna Ashraf, “India and Pakistan’s Crisis Means a New Arms Race,” *The National Interest*, April 2, 2019. <https://nationalinterest.org/feature/india-and-pakistans-crisis-means-new-arms-race-50467?page=0%2C1>.

- 
- <sup>8</sup> Praween Swami, “Pakistan Likely to be in Two Minds to Retaliate after IAF Strikes: India can ill-afford to lower its guard,” *First Post*, February 27, 2019. <https://www.firstpost.com/india/pakistan-likely-to-be-in-two-minds-to-retaliate-after-iaf-airstrikes-india-can-ill-afford-to-lower-its-guard-6156621.html/amp>.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>10</sup> Maimuna Ashraf, Pakistan’s Consolidating Conventional Deterrence: An Assessment,” *South Asian Voices*, December 7, 2018. <https://southasianvoices.org/pakistan-conventional-deterrence-assessment/>.
- <sup>11</sup> “COAS says Nasr has put cold water on India's Cold Start doctrine,” *The News* (Islamabad), July 6, 2017. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/214775-COAS-says-Nasr-has-put-cold-water-on-Cold-Start>; Raj Chengappa, “Pakistan's new nuke threat: Why India has to worry,” *India Today*, June 9, 2016. <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/cover-story/story/20160620-nuclear-missiles-pakistan-india-829029-2016-06-09>; Ben Barry, “Pakistan’s Tactical Nuclear Weapons: Practical Drawbacks and Opportunity Costs,” *Survival*, Vol. 60, Issue 1 (January 29, 2018), pp. 75-81. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00396338.2018.1427365>; Ahmed and Ashraf, “India and Pakistan’s Crisis Means a New Arms Race.”
- <sup>12</sup> Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan and Rajesh Rajagopalan, “India-Pakistan Crisis Exposes Modi’s Dilemma,” *The Diplomat*, February 28, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/02/india-pakistan-crisis-exposes-modis-dilemma/>.
- <sup>13</sup> “Gagan Shakti 2018: All you need to know about India's biggest military exercise,” *The Times of India*, April 18, 2018. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/gagan-shakti-2018-all-you-need-to-know-about-indias-biggest-military-exercise/articleshow/63814321.cms>.
- <sup>14</sup> Government of India, “Indian Army’s Land Warfare Doctrine 2018,” November 27, 2018. <http://www.ssri-j.com/MediaReport/Document/IndianArmyLandWarfareDoctrine2018.pdf>.
- <sup>15</sup> See Marcus Hellyer, Nathan Ruser and Aakriti Bachhawat, “India’s strike on Balakot: a very precise miss?” *The Strategist*, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, March 27, 2019. <https://www.aspistrategist.org.au/indias-strike-on-balakot-a-very-precise-miss/>; Zeeshan Ahmad, “How Indian jets got away with Jabba incursion,” *The Express Tribune*, March 1, 2019. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1920442/1-indian-jets-got-away-jabba-incursion/>.
- <sup>16</sup> “PAF to celebrate Feb 27 as ‘Operation Swift Retort,’” *The News* (Islamabad), May 2, 2019. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/465746-paf-to-celebrate-feb-27-as-operation-swift-retort>.

<sup>17</sup> “Indian Army commanders left Brigade HQ ‘minutes before’ PAF bomb fell in compound 27 Feb,” *The Print*, May 27, 2019. <https://theprint.in/defence/indian-army-commanders-left-brigade-hq-minutes-before-paf-bomb-fell-in-compound-27-feb/241324/>

<sup>18</sup> “During dogfight with Indian planes: All our fighter jets were airborne, says ISPR,” *The News* (Islamabad), March 25, 2019. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/448264-during-dogfight-with-indian-planes-all-our-fighter-jets-were-airborne-says-ispr>.

For an excellent narration of the Balakot and Pulwama counter-strike by the PAF, see Air Commodore (retd) Kaiser Tufail, “Pulwama - From Bluster to a Whimper,” *Kaiser Tufail Blogspot*, June 1, 2019. [https://kaiser-aeronaut.blogspot.com/2019/06/pulwama-from-bluster-to-whimper.html?fbclid=IwAR0d0Ak1ekgGW\\_6Ljb21PrxMPvpxTkDmKavLVsh\\_ynL\\_fvPptkhDBtEO\\_qY](https://kaiser-aeronaut.blogspot.com/2019/06/pulwama-from-bluster-to-whimper.html?fbclid=IwAR0d0Ak1ekgGW_6Ljb21PrxMPvpxTkDmKavLVsh_ynL_fvPptkhDBtEO_qY)

<sup>19</sup> Ankit Panda, “The Sukhoi-30 MKI: India's Two-Front War Ace?” *The Diplomat*, January 10, 2014. <https://thediplomat.com/2014/01/the-sukhoi-30-mki-indias-two-front-war-ace/>.

<sup>20</sup> Dinakar Peri, “How did an Indian Air Force Mi-17 helicopter get shot down by the IAF?” *The Hindu*, June 2, 2019. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/how-did-an-indian-air-force-mi-17-helicopter-get-shot-down-by-the-iaf/article27400844.ece>.

<sup>21</sup> Rahul Bedi, “IAF plans to arm its Su-30MKI fleet with I-Derby ER BVRAAMs,” *Janes Defence Weekly*, May 30, 2019. <https://www.janes.com/article/88867/iaf-plans-to-arm-its-su-30mki-fleet-with-i-derby-er-bvraams>.

<sup>22</sup> Snehesh Alex Philip, “Never mind Balakot, IAF is worse off than Pakistan Air Force on pilot strength,” *The Print* May 7, 2019. <https://theprint.in/defence/never-mind-balakot-iaf-is-worse-off-than-pakistan-air-force-on-pilot-strength/231826/amp/>.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Tufail, “Pulwama - From Bluster to a Whimper.”

<sup>25</sup> Ibid; “In a first, PAF Chief reveals shooting down of IAF Russian made Su 30 MKI, inside details of Indian Combat Helicopter downing,” *Times of Islamabad*, April 17, 2019. <https://timesofislamabad.com/17-Apr-2019/in-a-first-paf-chief-reveals-shooting-down-of-iaf-russian-made-su-30-mki-inside-details-of-indian-combat-helicopter-downing>; Lara Seligman, “Did India Shoot Down a Pakistani Jet? U.S. Count Says No.” *Foreign Policy*, April 4, 2019. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/04/04/did-india-shoot-down-a-pakistani-jet-u-s-count-says-no/>.

<sup>26</sup> Tufail, “Pulwama - From Bluster to a Whimper.”

<sup>27</sup> “If India had Rafale jets, recent outcomes would have been different: PM Narendra Modi,” *India Today*, March 2, 2019. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/if-india-had->

---

[rafale-jets-recent-outcomes-would-have-been-different-pm-narendra-modi-1469100-2019-03-02.](#)

<sup>28</sup> “India removes senior IAF officer after Pakistan shoots down jets,” *The News* (Islamabad), March 1, 2019. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/latest/438399-india-removes-senior-iaf-officer-after-pakistan-shoots-down-jets>.

<sup>29</sup> “Rafale would have been better in Balakot, says IAF chief Dhanoa,” *The Business Standard*, April 16, 2019. [https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/rafale-would-have-been-better-in-balakot-says-iaf-chief-dhanoa-119041600070\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/rafale-would-have-been-better-in-balakot-says-iaf-chief-dhanoa-119041600070_1.html).

<sup>30</sup> Franz Stefan-Gady, “Report: JF-17 ‘Thunder’ Block III Fighter Jet Production Is Underway,” *The Diplomat*, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/03/report-jf-17-thunder-block-iii-fighter-jet-production-is-underway/>.

<sup>31</sup> Manjeet Singh Negi, “Navy was ready to tackle any situation in wake of Pulwama attack,” *India Today*, March 18, 2019. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/navy-was-ready-to-tackle-any-situation-in-wake-of-pulwama-attack-1480538-2019-03-18>.

<sup>32</sup> “Deep diving into the facts about INS Arihant 'accident,’” *The Economic Times*, January 12, 2018. [http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/62468708.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/62468708.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)

<sup>33</sup> “Deterrence Didn’t Fail during Standoff with India,” *Dawn* (Islamabad), June 1, 2019. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1485843>.

<sup>34</sup> Dr. Rifaat Hussain, “Pulwama: The External Factor,” *The News* (Islamabad), March 10, 2019. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/441843-pulwama-the-external-factor>.

<sup>35</sup> Ahmed and Ashraf, “India and Pakistan’s Crisis Means a New Arms Race.”

<sup>36</sup> “PM: Pakistan returned Abhi or it would've seen 'qatal ki raat,’” *Times of India*, April 22, 2019. [http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/68982927.cms?utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](http://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/articleshow/68982927.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> “Our nuclear weapons are not for Diwali: PM Modi on Pak's nuclear button threat,” *India Today*, April 21, 2019. <https://www.indiatoday.in/elections/lok-sabha-2019/story/our-nuclear-weapons-are-not-for-diwali-pm-modi-on-pak-nuclear-button-threat-1506893-2019-04-21>.

<sup>39</sup> Aamir Ghauri, “US pulled back India after Pak threat to hit back,” *The News* (Islamabad), March 5, 2019. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/439844-us-pulled-backindia-after-pak-threat-to-hit-back>.

<sup>40</sup> “Indian Army admits presence of senior commanders at HQ bombed by PAF,” *The Express Tribune*, May 28, 2019. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1981998/1-indian-army-admits-presence-senior-commanders-hq-bombed-paf/>.

<sup>41</sup> “India well-positioned to become net security provider in our region and beyond: PM,” *The Hindu Business Line*, March 23, 2013. <https://www.thehindubusinessline.com/news/india-well-positioned-to-become-net-security-provider-in-our-region-and-beyond-pm/article20616998.ece1>.

<sup>42</sup> “India ought to be one of America's closest partners: US Secretary of State,” *The Economic Times*, May 25, 2018. [//economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/64313707.cms?from=mdr&utm\\_source=contentofinterest&utm\\_medium=text&utm\\_campaign=cppst](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/articleshow/64313707.cms?from=mdr&utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst)

<sup>43</sup> “India is ‘biggest strategic opportunity’: senior US Commander,” *Pakistan Today*, March 16, 2018. <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2018/03/16/india-is-biggest-strategic-opportunity-senior-us-commander/>.

<sup>44</sup> “Pompeo, Mattis talk bolstering Indian ties despite tensions,” *Dawn* (Islamabad), September 6, 2018. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1431289>.

<sup>45</sup> Ryan Pickrell, “The US and India practiced hunting subs for the first time since signing a deal making it easier to keep track of China,” *The Business Insider*, April 22, 2019. <https://www.businessinsider.com/the-us-and-india-practiced-hunting-subs-in-the-indian-ocean-2019-4>.; Franz Stefan-Gady, “Japan Sub-Hunting Planes Conduct Anti-Submarine Warfare Exercise in India,” *The Diplomat*, April 25, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/04/japan-sub-hunting-planes-conduct-anti-submarine-warfare-exercise-in-india/>.

<sup>46</sup> Abhishek Bhalla, “Navy was war-ready, deployed nuclear submarines during IAF's airstrikes in Pakistan,” *India Today*, March 17, 2019. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/navy-was-war-ready-deployed-nuclear-submarines-during-iaf-s-airstrikes-in-pakistan-1480257-2019-03-17>.

<sup>47</sup> Ali Osman, “Navy thwarts attempt by Indian submarine to enter Pakistani waters,” *The Express Tribune*, March 5, 2019. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1923388/1-navy-thwarts-attempt-indian-submarine-enter-pakistani-waters/>.

<sup>48</sup> “Exclusive: Indian Navy is Combat Ready and Mission Deployed, Says Outgoing Navy Chief,” *Bharat Shakti*, May 30, 2019. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m0Q5ZyITmvE>.

<sup>49</sup> “Post Balakot strike, Indian Navy hunted for Pakistani submarine for 21 days,” *India Today*, June 23, 2019. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/story/post-balakot-indian-navy-hunted-pakistani-submarine-for-21-days-1554601-2019-06-23>.

---

<sup>50</sup> Ali Hussain, “Pakistan to Respond at the Time and Place of its Choosing,” *The Business Recorder*, February 27, 2019.

<https://fp.brecorder.com/2019/02/20190227450241/>.

<sup>51</sup> Office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Public Affairs, “Readout of Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Gen. Dunford's Phone Call with Pakistan Chief of Defense Gen. Zubair Mahmood Hayat,” February 26, 2019.

<https://www.jcs.mil/Media/News/News-Display/Article/1768494/readout-of-chairman-of-the-joint-chiefs-of-staff-gen-dunfords-phone-call-with-p/>.

<sup>52</sup> Joint Staff Headquarters Rawalpindi, Press Release, February 26, 2019.

<https://jsheadquarters.gov.pk/chairman-joint-chiefs-of-staff-committee-general-zubair-mahmood-hayat-has-stated-that-armed-forces-of-pakistan-are-fully-prepared-to-respond-to-the-act-of-aggression-that-india-has-committed/>.

<sup>53</sup> “Indian Army commanders left Brigade HQ ‘minutes before’ PAF bomb fell in compound 27 Feb.”

<sup>54</sup> Government of India, “Indian Army Land Warfare Doctrine.”

<sup>55</sup> See Masood-ur-Rehman Khattak, “Indian Military Modernisation: Implications for Pakistan,” *Strategic Studies*, Vol. 39, No. 1 (Spring 2019). <http://issi.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/2-SS-Masood-Ur-Rehman-Khattak-No-1-2019.pdf>.

<sup>56</sup> Rakesh Krishnan Simha, “Why the BrahMos armed Sukhoi is bad news for India’s enemies,” *Russia Beyond*, June 28, 2016.

[https://www.rbth.com/blogs/2015/04/20/why\\_the\\_brahmos\\_armed\\_sukhoi\\_is\\_bad\\_news\\_for\\_indias\\_enemies\\_42687](https://www.rbth.com/blogs/2015/04/20/why_the_brahmos_armed_sukhoi_is_bad_news_for_indias_enemies_42687).

<sup>57</sup> Dinakar Peri, “Nirbhay will be backbone of ‘cold-start,’ say experts,” *The Hindu*, October 24, 2014. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/nirbhay-will-be-backbone-of-coldstart-say-experts/article6529087.ece>.

<sup>58</sup> Smriti Jain, “More firepower for IAF against China, Pakistan! Sukhoi-30 MKIs to get 5 next generation BrahMos NG missiles,” *Financial Express*, March 11, 2019.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/more-firepower-for-iaf-against-china-pakistan-sukhoi-30-mkis-to-get-5-next-generation-brahmos-ng-missiles/1512331/>.

<sup>59</sup> Rajesh Rajagopalan, “India’s nuclear strategy: A shift to Counterforce?” *Observer Research Foundation*, March 30, 2017. <https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/india-nuclear-strategy-shift-counterforce/>.

<sup>60</sup> See Christopher Clary and Vipin Narang, “India’s Counterforce Temptations: Strategic Dilemmas, Doctrine, and Capabilities,” *International Security*, Vol. 43, No. 3 (Winter 2018/19), pp. 7–52. [https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC\\_a\\_00340](https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00340); V. K. Kapoor, “RMA and India's Military Transformation,” *Journal of Defence Studies*, Vol. 2, Issue 2 (Winter 2008). [https://idsa.in/jds/2\\_2\\_2008\\_RMAandIndiaMilitaryTransformation\\_VKKapoor](https://idsa.in/jds/2_2_2008_RMAandIndiaMilitaryTransformation_VKKapoor).

<sup>61</sup> “India’s Nuclear Expansion Source of Concern for Neighbours,” *Dawn* (Islamabad), May 6, 2017. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1331405>.

<sup>62</sup> See for example: “India may buy Rs. 6,000 cr-worth of air missiles from US to shield Delhi,” *Business Standard*, June 10, 2019. [https://www.business-standard.com/article/defence/india-to-buy-rs-6-000-crore-worth-nasams-ii-from-us-to-shield-delhi-119061000160\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/defence/india-to-buy-rs-6-000-crore-worth-nasams-ii-from-us-to-shield-delhi-119061000160_1.html).