



Aab Ky Marr! Pulwama to Balakot: India's New Normal

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Abstract

Pulwama/Balakot crisis is important for several reasons. The prime amongst it is that Pakistan changed the rule of the game. It not only thwarted India's design, it effectively demonstrated that it could respond to any Indian aggression through conventional means. The paper argues that although India and Pakistan had a narrow escape during the conflict, there is a need for a cautious approach when it comes to Indo-Pakistan strategic stability. The papers focus on the crisis behavior of both countries and argue that while India intentionally initiated the crisis whereas Pakistan took every step to deescalate. At the end of the crisis, Modi claimed that India was prepared to hit Pakistan with multiple missiles if it had not returned the IAF pilot. While it might be music to his ultra-Hindu fundamentalist supporters, in fact, it was nothing but a desperate attempt to restore his credibility. In the subcontinental culture, aab ky Marr explains such a mindset.

Key Words: Strategic Stability, Indo-Pak Conflict, Pulwama Crisis, Balakot Strike, Operation Swift Retort, Indo-Pakistan Risk-Taking and Crisis Behavior

Introduction

A suicide attack on an Indian convey on 14 February 2019 that took place in the Pulwama district of the Indian Occupied Kashmir resulted in the death of 44 Indian paramilitary soldiers and around 70 wounded, a few critically. It was the deadliest attack on the Indian paramilitary force stationed in the Indian Occupied Kashmir in recent times ([Shaswati Das 2019](#)). The suicide attacker was a young Kashmiri boy. The act in itself was a clear indication that despite the continued terrorization of the Kashmiri people, the resistance against the illegal occupation was very much there, and the Kashmiri youth considered it a cause worth dying for. In an all too predictable response, New Delhi blamed Islamabad for this attack. Once again, ignoring the ground realities. Soon after, the Indian

leadership signaled that they would not let this go unavenged.

Twelve days later, on 26 February 2019, New Delhi claimed that the Indian Air Force has targeted and destroyed what was identified as a training camp of Jasir-e-Muhammad in Balakot in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. It was further claimed that the attack resulted in a huge number of deaths of the recruits and their trainers who were present at the camp at the time of the so-called attack. The next day, Islamabad responded to the Indian strike by locking on a key military installation and then targeting an area to signal its capability to target but choosing not to. In the ensuing air battle, The Pakistani Air Force once again proved its capability of first jamming the communication between the

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Indian air force MiG and then shooting it down. According to the Pakistani account, two IAF aircraft were shot down. The pilot of the MiG 21 was arrested by the Pakistani authorities. 2 days later, Islamabad decided to release the pilot unconditionally as a peace gesture and to show to the world that it wants peace in the region and has taken a step back on the escalation ladder despite being attacked.

The Pulwama/ Balakot crisis is the most recent in a series of Indo-Pak crises under the nuclear umbrella. It was unique in a number of ways: first, New Delhi attempted to establish what the Indian strategic community described as the “new normal.” Second, the ultra-Hindu Nationalist Indian government under the leadership of Narandera Modi believed that there existed a space for a limited war under the nuclear umbrella that could be exploited, and in case if Pakistan escalates, they would be the one to be blamed. Third, the use of air force from both sides. Forth, Pakistan’s demonstration of its resolve and ability to defend itself conventionally busting the myth that due to conventional inferiority, in an Indo-Pak conflict, it would resort to the use of its tactical nuclear weapons. While none of the Indian claims proved correct neither any of the objectives achieved, it still claimed victory at the end of the crisis. On its part, throughout the crisis, Pakistan behaved responsibly and adopted a non-escalator approach yet, strongly and effectively conveying to the Indians and to the world, that it could defend itself. This paper attempts to analyze the crisis and working out its implications and lessons for strategic stability in South Asia. The paper is divided into two major parts: the first part deals with the crisis itself. In this part, the authors have started from the Uri and how it emboldened and compelled the Indian leadership to go for a strike inside Pakistani terrorist. Also addressed is how the actual crisis unfolded. The second part provides a detailed analysis of the crisis and its likely implications.

From Uri to Balakot

In 2016, the Indian army base Uri, a town in the Indian occupied Kashmir, was attacked. While the damage was extensive both in men and material. What becomes more important was the symbolic view of this attack. It was termed

as the deadliest attack on India since the 2008 Mumbai attacks. At the time, the man at the helm of affairs in New Delhi was Narindera Modi, an ultra-Nationalist and fundamentalist Hindu who never hid his hatred for Pakistan and the secular leadership of India. He was quick to blame Islamabad for the attack and stated: “blood and water cannot flow together.” ([Indian Express 2016](#)) A clear reference to the river waters that reach the lower riparian Pakistan from India, the upper riparian. Late Manohar Parrikar, the then Indian defense minister, made his point when he opined that New Delhi should reconsider removing a thorn with a thorn. ([Daily Pioneer 2015](#))

Thumping his 56-inch chest, the Indian prime minister gave the go-ahead to what New Delhi claimed was a surgical strike inside Pakistani Kashmir on 26 September 2016. (Ankit Panda 2017) The Indian sources claimed that the Indian special forces crossed the LoC and targeted multiple targets on the Pakistani side of Kashmir. The views are still divided on the veracity of this claim. Islamabad strongly denied that any such strike took place. A visit of ambassadors and high commissioners of several countries was arranged to the alleged location of the strike. A dominant opinion was that the attack, if it ever, was nothing extraordinary or different from attacks that Indian and Pakistan armies conducted against each other across the line of control. What was different this time was that the Indian prime minister and his government, in an attempt to prove that they are stronger than their political rivals and would deal with the problem of terrorism, claimed that what they have done is different and has never been done before. However, New Delhi soon toned it down and assured Washington that it was just the one time and will not be done again. However, this created a commitment dilemma for Modi’s New Delhi. He claimed that the so-called surgical strike was to eliminate the terror problem, however, as the latter events proved, this was not the case. This is where the real challenge for Modi emerged. If another terrorist act takes place, how would he respond?

Under this dilemma and the fast-approaching Indian elections, Modi did what is now widely known as the Balakot strike. On 14

February 2019, a young Kashmiri boy belonging to the Pulwama in the Indian controlled Kashmir rammed an explosive-laden car into an Indian paramilitary convey. This resulted in the death of 44 Indian paramilitary personnel and well above 70 wounded, some critically. ([Shaswati Das 2019](#)) New Delhi, on flimsy ground, accused Pakistan of this attack. This left PM Modi in a hard and rock place. The option of another so-called surgical strike was not enough as it failed to provide a counter to the terror problem. In the next few days, more chest-thumping took place and Indian repeatedly accused Pakistan of this and claimed that it would soon settle the score. In the wake of the Pulwama attack, fiercer artillery exchanges took place across the LoC. New Delhi obscured several travel and trade-related activities between the two countries.

In retrospect, one could averse to the thought of what could be done to appear more credible to the Indian public, especially when the Indian elections were just around the corner. As a Tom Clancy's account of how the Balakot strike was planned and executed, the answer that Modi and his national security team soon reached was a limited but definitive strike so that the Pakistani nuclear threshold is not met but at the same time should give a stern warning to Pakistan. The target that New Delhi selected based on its intelligence organizations reports was an alleged terror camp in Balakot. New Delhi claimed that the reason this location was selected as a target was due to the heavy presence of senior Jasih commanders and operators. On 26 February 2019, the Indian Air Force launched an airstrike on what New Delhi claimed was Jasih-e-Muhammad's training camp in Balakot, a small city in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Initially, New Delhi claimed that the strike was successful and destroyed the camp as well as killing a large number of militants there. It became a moment of triumph for Modi and his national security team, who claimed that they had established a new normal in Indo-Pak relations and strategic stability equation. However, it soon became clear that not only Indian claim of targeting and killing were not correct. In fact, the only target IAF managed to hit and destroy were new trees.

Soon after the Pulwama attack, major powers came in support of New Delhi's position on the incident. Washington especially came in full support of India. American National Security Advisor John Bolton reacting to this incident, stated that Washington supports "India's right to self-defense against cross-border terrorism" whereas Mike Pompeo, the American secretary of state, pledged to stand with "India as it confronts terrorism." Pompeo also advised his Pakistani counterpart Shah Mehmood Qureshi to deescalate the tension by avoiding military action. A White House statement demanded from Pakistan to "end immediately the support and safe haven provided to all terrorist groups operating from its soil." (February 26, 2019) Further stating that this incident has provided a further boost to Indo-US counter-terrorism partnership. State Department, on its part, urged Pakistan to fully cooperate with the investigation and ensure that those responsible are punished for this act. This trend continued even after the Indian Air Force strike inside Pakistani territory as no global player blamed India for this attack.

The next day, Pakistan responded by locking on a military target and then intentionally not targeting it and opting for another non-military target instead. In an ensuing dog fight, Pakistan Air Force first successfully jammed the communication between the ground and the IAF's MiG 21 and shot them down. The pilot of a shot down MIG 21 was arrested. ([Fayaz Bukhari](#)) ([Abhinandan 2019](#)) It was this successful demonstration of resolve and Pakistan's conventional capability that compelled Washington to change its tone, and it started cautioning the two states not to escalate the conflict any further.

Another development that went mostly unknown beyond the strategic circles is that during the Pulwama crisis, New Delhi mobilized its Navy. According to reports, an Indian Navy task force including INS Vikramaditya, a dozen coastguard ships and 60 ships and a considerable number of air crafts was deployed in the north Arabian sea. Just prior to the crisis, this task force was participating in the Theatre Level Operational Readiness Exercise (TROPEX-19) and was given this new mission. Indian Navy claimed that it was due to its efforts, the Pakistan Navy was

restricted to the Makran coast and could not go into the open ocean. Months after the end of hostilities, in May 2019, the Indian Naval chief claimed that during the crisis Indian Navy was alert and prepared “Combat Ready and Mission Deployed” and, if need be, would have destroyed the Pakistani Navy. Ironic, though, that during the crisis, the combat-ready and deployed Indian Navy capable of totally decimating the Pakistan Navy could not locate an Agosta-90 B submarine of the Pakistan Navy throughout the crisis. Whereas Pakistan Navy’s P-3C Orion ASW aircraft compelled the Indian Navy’s most advanced Scorpene-class SSK to surface.

Although nuclear weapons did not figure during the crisis for Indian wanted to exploit what it believed was the space for a limited conventional war under the nuclear overhang, and Islamabad, as a responsible nuclear state intentionally decided not to escalate and also because it was fully ready and capable of defending itself conventionally and on India’s turf, a meeting of Pakistan’s National Command Authority (NCA) was held on 27 February 2019 as a follow up to the meeting of the National Security Committee (NSC) that was held one day prior on 26 February 2019. In the meeting, the prime minister of Pakistan expressed the resolve to ward off any aggression and that the armed forces of Pakistan and the people of Pakistan are fully ready to defend the motherland.’ ([Moeed Yusuf 2019](#)) No press release was issued post NCA meeting; however the DG ISPR was quoted as saying: “I hope you know what the National Command Authority means ...” According to several media reports, it was perhaps a signal to the global power centers to restrain New Delhi. (Dawn, 28 Feb 2019)

Two days after his plane was shot down and he was arrested, Indian Air Force Wing Commander Abhinandan was released by Islamabad as a peace gesture and a move to further deescalate. However, the Indian camp was full of euphoria and claimed it would have attacked Pakistan with missiles if Abhinandan was not released and that it was due to this threat that Islamabad was compelled to release and hand over Abhinandan to India. Modi was quoted as saying that had it not happened, a qataal ke raat would have occurred. According

to Indian media reports, India deployed its missiles and had identified six targets in Pakistan. In response to this, Islamabad also reportedly identified several targets inside India in case New Delhi goes on to the missile strike against Pakistan. There are several versions of this. According to one, John Bolton cautioned Islamabad that if Abhinandan is not released within a specified time, India might go for a multiple missile strikes against Pakistan. According to another version, it was Pakistan that, based on the intelligence reports, reached out to P-5 countries with this information that India is planning to target Pakistan with missiles. ([Amir Ghauri 2019](#)) Initially, India denied these reports (Anirban Bhaumik 2019) however, during his campaign trail, Modi made several hints on this, providing credibility to these reports ([Mahesh Langa 2019](#)). It was finally confirmed when Modi stated that India had planned to target several sites in Pakistan with 12 missiles claiming that if the IAF pilot Abhinandan was not released, there would have been a night of massacre (qataal ke Raat). In the month of April during a speech he went one step further and boosted India would not be deterred by Pakistani nukes as it had a big one (thermonuclear weapon) and that this is a new India that is not afraid of Pakistan and would not be blackmailed by Pakistan’s nuclear threat. If this was not enough, Modi went a step further and stated that “every day they used to say, we have a nuclear button. What do we have then? Have we kept it for Diwali? ([Toby Dalton 2019](#))

How credible was the threat of missile strike by India is still not clear and remains a topic of debate. The fact remains that the crisis practically ended with Pakistan voluntarily returning Abhinandan to India. It is also now a matter of record that it was an attack on Pakistan by India. One only needs to listen to or read through the responses that Abhinandan gave to Pakistani officers to prove this point. Whether there was ever a missile threat or not or Modi’s claims that it would have been a night of massacre had Abhinandan not returned to India is posturing to the Indian electorate.

Pulwama/ Balakot crisis and beyond: A critical appraisal

Pulwama/ Balakot crisis was important for several reasons and would have implications for future Indo-Pak crises. It was also important for the fact that during this crisis, a number of new trends were introduced and myths busted. For the first time in the Indo-Pak crisis equation, the Air forces of both countries played the most significant role in the crisis. Although Indian Air Force failed in its mission, IAF and Pakistan Air Force, in their Operation Swift Retort against India, used the Beyond Visual Range (BVR) missile and AWACS ([Shahid Alvi 2019](#)). Had PAF not unlocked after locking on its targets, more Indian targets would have been hit. Any such action would have resulted not only in further embarrassment for New Delhi but also escalated the crisis. This is one of the many times Pakistan had an option to escalate the crisis, and it intentionally ensured to restrain its responses so that the crisis does not escalate. In fact, if one looks at the crisis behavior of India and Pakistan, one finds contrasting trends: India chose to attack in Pakistan proper, use of Air Force that in itself is considered to be an offensive force hence an escalatory action, it claimed to have targeted a terror training camp and not the state or the military of Pakistan, wanted to establish a new normal where New Delhi could exercise its right to attack in what it claimed to be self-defence and intentionally created a situation in which one slight deviation could have resulted in an escalation of the crisis. Pakistan, on its part throughout the conflict, took every step possible to ensure that the crisis does not escalate. Unlike India, Pakistan restricted its response to the disputed territory; after locking on to a key target, it unlocked and targeted an empty area to ensure that the Indians get the message at the same time the conflict is not escalated. Islamabad shot down an IAF MiG and unconditionally returned the pilot. The Pakistani Prime minister repeatedly called for dialogue and peace.

Despite being the initiator and the one that chooses to target Pakistan using its air force, after the air duel in which one of the Indian veer was shot down and arrested, India started questioning the technological proviso of its military equipment. Indian prime minister

lamented that Pakistan would have been taught a lesson had IAF had French Rafale. IAF chief Air Chief Marshal RKS Bhandauria called Rafale a game changer and that it would tilt the balance in favor of IAF. New Delhi also sacked the Commander Western Command of the Indian Air Force (IAF) for his failure to thwart PAF counter-strike. One thing that off course, went as par Modi's desire was that it provided Modi and the BJP a huge boost up in their election campaign. Although one would not like to believe that this was the whole reason Modi waged this little war yet it is an inescapable fact that it helped election victory ([Tamanna Inamdar 2019](#)).

However, arguably the most alarming development during this crisis was an Indian attempt to frame the Indian strike in a peculiar language and establish a new normal in the Indo-Pak equation. India claimed that its airstrike deep inside the Pakistani province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa was a non-military pre-emptive strike against a terrorist training camp and not against the state of Pakistan or its military. It was assuming as if it was the USA of South Asia and did as it willed. However, neither India was anything like the USA nor Pakistan allowed India to establish this new normal. Above all, this non-military pre-emptive strike failed miserably to achieve any of its stated objectives as reported and confirmed by the international media as well as the Indian media. On its part, within a short span of time, Pakistan gave India a befitting response, left India bloody noised and clearly unsuccessful in changing the status quo.

An interesting fact is that post-Pulwama/ Balakot crisis, both India and Pakistan claimed victory. It is an interesting point to ponder, especially for the students of international relations, how a single event can be viewed and projected differently by two different actors. Pakistan claimed victory because one, India's so-called non-military pre-emptive strike failed completely; second, PAF duly embarrassed the IAF first by locking on to the Indian military targets and then shooting down and IAF MiG and arresting its pilot, which was later released unconditionally as a peace gesture. In the fog of war, IAF panicked and destroyed its own Mi17 helicopter killing seven people on board. India, despite failing in achieving any of its

objectives, failed airstrike in Balakot and ending bloody nosed, also claimed victory. New Delhi claimed victory because it believes that it has shot down a Pakistani F-16, although no verifiable proof of this exists, and even several Indian strategic analysts have disputed this claim. By attacking a target deep inside Pakistan, it is claimed that India has finally shed away its restraint not to attack Pakistan against the terrorist threat. More importantly, India has tested and called Pakistan's nuclear bluff by waging a conventional attack against Pakistan that did not cross its nuclear threshold because Pakistan did not resort to using its nuclear weapons against India and kept its response completely conventionally. ([Happymon Jacob 2020](#)) This for New Delhi proved that Pakistan's nuclear threshold is not as low as it has been projected all along and that there exists a space for an Indo-Pak conventional confrontation under the nuclear umbrella. Rajeswari Rajagopalan argued:

Pakistan's response stayed at the conventional level. Even at the conventional level, Pakistan's response was arguably neither escalators nor proportionate because no Indian facility was hit. Moreover, the Indian pilot whose plane was shot down by Pakistan in an aerial dogfight was returned without any concessions even being demanded from New Delhi. ([Rajeswari Rajagopalan 2020](#))

She further claimed:

Pakistan's limited, conventional response suggests a few conclusions about the current state of deterrence between India and Pakistan. One, Pakistan's strategy of using the fear of escalation, including the threat of use of nuclear weapons, has lost its value. India has disproven Pakistan's claims and called the nuclear bluff twice now. Second, there are clear implications in terms of international involvement. Pakistan's "catalytic" strategy, as Vipin Narang calls it, to get foreign powers involved in an India- Pakistan conflict may have run its course.

Lt. General (Retd) Khalid Ahmed Kidwai, the founding director general of Strategic Plans Division (SPD), addressing the same issue was reported to have stated:

Pakistan's nuclear weapons, Kidwai asserted, "deterred India from expanding

operations beyond a single unsuccessful airstrike" at Balakot, through the "cold calculation that nuclear weapons come into play sooner rather than later." He warned that "while it may be easy (for India) to climb the first rung on the escalatory ladder, the second round would always belong to Pakistan, and that India's choice to move to the third round would invariably be dangerously problematic in anticipation of the fourth rung response by Pakistan." Finally, he cautioned that the Indian airstrike "was playing with fire at the lower end of the nuclear spectrum and Armageddon at the upper end." ([Khalid Kidwai 2020](#))

Regardless of what New Delhi claimed during and after the Pulwama/ Balakot crisis, it reflected very poorly on India that is projected as the next superpower and a policeman in the Indo-Pacific region and a balancer and a strategic partner in the coming Sino-US confrontation against global dominance. Not only that India lost its two air crafts, but its submarine was also forced to surface by Pakistan Navy. This was embarrassing for a country projected as china's principal rival in the region. If it was not enough, Indian PM Modi's statement about Raffaele showed that New Delhi launched this operation without adequate preparation and swat analysis. This is not the first time IAF's lack of adequate and up-to-date equipment was brought to the fore. IAF chief is on record highlighting this problem prior to the Pulwama/ breakout crisis.

Since 2004, India has been working on its cold start doctrine. Despite several and consistent denial about the existence of the cold start doctrine, it not only exists as acknowledged by the Indian Army chief itself, but India has also invested extensive resources in building the infrastructure required to meet the requirements of and launching of operation against Pakistan according to the Indian cold start doctrine (CSD), however, India did not operationalize CSD during the Pulwama/ balakot crisis. If Pakistan's nuclear bluff was called as New Delhi it has claimed, then why India did not probe further and operational its cold start doctrine? One could argue that despite all hullabaloo about calling Pakistan's nuclear bluff, it was, in fact, Pakistan's full spectrum deterrence (FSD) that stopped India from moving further and

expanding and escalating the conflict. ([Adil Sultan 2019](#))

Pakistan's crisis behavior during the Pulwama/ balakot crisis highlighted Pakistan's confidence and capability to address and counter a conventional attack using its conventional capability. This is in contrast to what was generally believe that due to its conventional inferiority, Islamabad would quite early in the conflict resort to the use of nuclear weapons. Islamabad, as its FSD, not only held its position but managed to deter the Indian attack conventionally. Pakistani strategic community is of the view that the question of India effectively calling Pakistan's nuclear bluff does not even arise because once PF shot down an IAF MiG and SU-30 MKI, there was no further action from IAF, and Pakistan successfully managed to not only deter the enemy but also maintain deterrence using conventional means at its disposal. However, the same could not be said about India who operationalized its Naval assets included nuclear-capable ones. According to media reports, the Indian Navy readied Arihant, its nuclear-capable submarine, for deployment in the Indian ocean without proper authorization from the Indian Nuclear Command Authority. This should have rung bells, but unfortunately, it mostly went unnoticed.

Four points are important in this regard: the crisis and risk-taking behavior of the Indian and Pakistani leadership, global response, India's planning and preparation for a two frontal war and the future of airpower in South Asia.

Both India and Pakistan exhibited dramatically opposed and poles apart crisis and risk-taking behavior. As detailed throughout this paper, Islamabad's crisis behavior throughout the crisis was non-escalators and responsible. Despite demonstrating more than once its ability to inflict serious damage to India, Islamabad chose not to only ensure that the crisis is defused instead of escalating on to the next level. in contrast, India's risk-taking propensity was exponentially high, and crisis behavior reckless and escalators. The biggest puzzle to start with is that New Delhi was fully aware that for their stated objective, a single airstrike would not be enough, yet they went for it. If

the assumption was to replay their assumed and imaginary success in conducting a surgical strike then they would have been cognizant of the fact that even if any such thing had happened in the past, Islamabad would not let that happen again. What changes were there that Islamabad would not retaliate to such an attack? And what was New Delhi's plan for it? Why Modi was treading on this path and why he was so keen to initiate a war, and why at this particular time? It seems there are too many questions for which there are no plausible answers. Unless, of course, one believes that Modi did all this for winning the elections. Another puzzle is the behavior of the global power centers, especially the United States. Washington's initial response to the Pulwama incident and even after the Indian Air Force strike inside Pakistani territory was that was an act of war was pro-India, giving India the right of self-defence and that Pakistan must take measures against terrorists. It was only after Pakistan's shooting down of an IAF MiG that Washington started talking about de-escalation. The same is true for the other power centers. All of them chose to side with New Delhi at the cost of peace and stability in the region. This is in contrast to what how they have acted all along since the nuclearization of India and Pakistan. Does one wonder what would have Washington's response if this crisis would be initiated by Islamabad? One should not be surprised to witness this dichotomy in Washington's behavior and must always remember that there is no morality in politics, and interests are the only permanent fixture in politics.

Of late, India has to project the Sino-Pakistan is a singular threat and that it needs to counter this threat. Indian armed forces have repeatedly stated that it is equipped and trained to fight a two frontal war simultaneously against China and Pakistan. Indian Air Force Chief and Indian Army chief has repeatedly issued statements to the effect that they are not only are capable of fighting such a war but also of winning it. Going one step further, it was boosted that Indian Armed forces are ready to fight a two and a half or 2 plus 1 war (China, Pakistan and the Kashmiri militants). Unfortunately for them, the Pulwama/ Balakot crisis and the recent thrashing India has received from the Chinese

in the Galwan valley reflects very poorly on the professional training and expertise of the Indian armed forces. More so for those who are banking on New Delhi for a strategic partner in the Indo-Pacific region, the policeman in South Asia and a balancer against the Chinese.

This is the first Indo-Pak crisis in which Air forces of the two countries were involved and played the dominant and decisive role. While PAF proved its effective excellence, superior skills and training, its ability to successfully conduct SEAD missions and stand-off precision strikes, it needs to continue to further improve and augment its skills and professional expertise. In the coming decade or so, PAF would be in need to replace its Mirages and F-7s. Out of the choices for alternatives, JF-17 Block III and the Chinese HQ-9 air defence system stand out. However, more thorough and timely homework is required so that PAF continues to be effective and armed with state-of-the-art equipment.

Conclusion

Pulwama/ Balakot crisis was Modi's little war that backfired. It has been stated by many strategic commentators that the Modi-Doval duo assuming that they can play to be South Asian, Israel and the USA, went ahead with an ill-thought, poorly planned and executed strike inside Pakistan. It extremely concerns that the

global powerhouses, due to their concerns about China, have chosen to completely ignore this reckless behavior and the fact that a religious fanatic, Hindu supremacist and racist is in control of a nuclear arsenal.

The fact that the crisis was defused quite early and did not escalate was only because Islamabad chose not to escalate the crisis. However, if it would have gone the traditional tit-for-tat, then the outcome of this crisis would have been very different. One could argue that while Modi-Doval dups intentionally pushed South Asia into a fighting ring with a nuclear overhang, Islamabad's cautious response provided it with a narrow escape.

Despite all this, Modi's rhetoric about a qataal ki Raat in case Pakistan did not return the Indian pilot might have gotten him cheers from his Hindu followers but, in fact, was aab ki maar. Those who are familiar with Indo-Pak culture and society would know that in Delhi's lucha (Hooligan) tradition, when a hooligan meets a befitting response and faces a threat of losing its credibility keeps on proclaiming to his rival "Aab ke maar" (Hit me now or again implying if you hit me again, I will teach you a lesson). This in essence was Modi's new normal: instead of accepting his mistake and learning from it proclaiming that if this would not have happened, he would have started a Qataal ki raat. This is the Modi's new normal.

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