



OPERATION BUNYAN-UN-MARSOOS AND THE BALANCE OF POWER IN SOUTH ASIA: PAKISTAN'S DETERRENCE AGAINST INDIAN MILITARY ESCALATION

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to assess how Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos affected Pakistan's deterrence posture in South Asia and domestic security, as well as how it interacted with India's military escalation tactics and larger regional security dynamics. Launched in 2017, the operation marked a turning point in Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts, reshaping its deterrence equilibrium and bringing stability back to the country. The introduction highlighted the importance of modernizing deterrence in a nuclearized but conventionally asymmetric South Asia and described the ongoing challenge of striking a balance between external threats and internal security vulnerabilities.

The study adopted a mixed-method approach, combining quantitative analysis of security, military, and nuclear indicators with qualitative review of policy statements and secondary literature from 2016–2023. Results demonstrated that terrorist incidents, civilian and military casualties, and cross-border infiltration cases declined significantly, reflecting the operation's domestic security dividends. Simultaneously, Pakistan improved its military readiness through enhanced rapid deployment capacity, joint exercises, and armoured modernization, while strengthening nuclear deterrence via missile testing, rhetorical signalling, and progress toward triad deployment. On the regional front, India's military exercises and ceasefire violations revealed sustained escalation tendencies, yet Pakistan's global military ranking improved and security partnerships expanded. The study concluded that Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos provided Pakistan with a strategic window to reinforce deterrence credibility. Future research should investigate how integrated deterrence and evolving regional alignments could mitigate the risks of escalation in South Asia's volatile security environment.

Keywords: Balance of Power, Deterrence, Escalation, Nuclear Strategy, South Asia, Terrorism

Introduction

India and Pakistan have built long standing rivalry that has shaped the strategic environment of South Asia. This rivalry has led to crises that test the limits of escalation and deterrence. In 2025, Pakistan initiated Operation Bunyan-un-marsoos against India after its military strikes following the Pahalgam attack. According to Ahmed 2025, this operation is seen as unprecedented due to the scale and multi-domain nature of the operation which changed the ongoing security dilemma of the sub-continent. Bunyan-un-Marsoos was



launched as retaliation but it may also have deterrence implications. The analysis showed that Pakistan's military response did not merely involve a sudden and unwarranted escalation, but rather includes calibrated offensive actions (Khan & Raza 2025). The operation indicated that if escalation proceeded beyond specified thresholds, Pakistan will levy substantial costs in the military realm (Ali, 2024) by attacking critical infrastructure, using precise munitions and cyber capabilities.

Security all in all means opportunity from hazard and threat (Azhar et al., 2025). A nuclear crisis exemplified how deterrence is evolving in a nuclearized world. Earlier, states tended to link deterrence to nuclear thresholds. The 2025 episode showed how the conventional and hybrid domains could reinforce deterrence credibility (Siddiqui, 2023) Furthermore, the fact that Pakistan is capable of rapidly mobilizing and launching major counteroffensive operations raises questions about previous assessments that Pakistan's deterrent posture is fragile—as compared to India's conventional superiority (Malik, 2025). Consequently, this study looked into the strategic importance of Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos in South Asian security overall. The study examines the operational level analysis of the Balakot airstrike. It is a report of Indian air force strike on terrorist camp in Balakote (Hussain, 2025). It specifically focused on how the operation impacted Pakistan's deterrent posture, India's Balakot retaliation and overall regional power balance. Above all, it also examined its implication for crisis stability and escalation (Hussain, 2025).

Research Background

The rivalry between India and Pakistan relates mainly to territorial disputes, and terrorist activities. Both the states have nuclearized in 1998 and since then both the states have followed a strategy of deterrence, and have escalated the skirmishes from time to time Kargil (1999), Uri (2016), Balakot (2019). Each episode created conditions that could challenge conventional and nuclear deterrence, raising fears of escalation beyond control. India has gradually shifted its approach over the last ten years to strike real-time targets in Pakistan. The effort was aimed at displaying grit but also making the threshold for conventional escalation lower (Sharma, 2024). On the other hand, Pakistan developed doctrines like Full Spectrum Deterrence. This was to counter conventional asymmetry by orkiestraing nuclear, conventional and hybrid capabilities.

One of the toughest crises in recent time was triggered due to an incident in Pahalgam in April 2025. Operation Sindoor: India claimed that it dismantled the militant infrastructure of Pakistan while Pakistan claimed that India bombed civilian areas. Subsequent Pakistan retaliation-known as Bunyan-un-Marsoos-seemed to use precision munitions, cyber disruption, and loitering drones against Pakistan's strategic military targets, a step away from earlier restrained responses (Iqbal, 2025). Several observers pointed to the fact that the crisis revealed that domestic counterterrorism capacity and hybrid warfare tools and conventional military preparedness had emerged essential in reinforcing nuclear deterrence. The 2025 episode of Indian Air Force (IAF) Pilatus aircraft incursions against Pakistani airspace was a reiteration of previous episodes.

Research Problem

Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos is generally interpreted as reinforcing Pakistan's deterrent posture. However, experts continue to debate whether this indicates only a tactical stopgap or a strategic transformation. The demonstration of conventional strength by Pakistan has been criticized by certain analysts wherein it is believed that it would enhance the deterrence credibility of Pakistan. However, others are of the view that the military doctrine of India and its regional ambitions have not changed (Farooq, 2025). As such, the research problem focused on whether Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos transformed the deterrent balance between India and Pakistan or merely reinforced it without fundamentally altering strategic stability in South Asia (Nawaz, 2024).

Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the operational and strategic features of *Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos*.
2. To analyse how the operation influenced Pakistan's deterrent posture against Indian military escalation.
3. To explore the impact of external diplomatic pressure on escalation control during the 2025 crisis.

Research Questions

- Q1. What operational and strategic elements defined *Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos*?



Q2. How did the operation affect Pakistan's deterrence posture in the face of Indian military escalation?

Q3. To what extent did the operation recalibrate India's escalation calculus?

Q4. Did *Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos* represent a tactical escalation or a deeper strategic transformation?

Significance of the Study

The study was significant as it provided timely insights into one of the most contemporary and serious India – Pakistan crises. It helped to understand how domestic military operations can strengthen deterrence credibility in a nuclearized environment (Javed, 2025). According to Rafiq (2025), lessons learnt from the analysis of the 2025 crisis can help policymakers in escalation management. The role of hybrid warfare was found to be particularly critical at this juncture. The report also emphasises the need for signalling in maintaining stability. The report has other theoretical contributions too. For instance, it tested various deterrence concepts such as the stability–instability paradox based on emerging technologies and doctrines which are evolving. Moreover, the study suggested balancing stabilities in South Asia by understanding the rationale and consequences of pursuance of counterterrorism, conventional readiness, and nuclear signalling (Khalid, 2024)

Literature Review

Evolution of Deterrence Theory in South Asia

In recent years, there have been studies that examined the evolution of deterrence theory in the context of India-Pakistan in the aftermath of the Pulwama-Uri 2019 occurrence. Kazmi (2024) examined the limits of traditional nuclear deterrence in the context of crises like Mumbai 2008, Pathankot/Uri 2016 and Pulwama 2019. According to him, nuclear weapons have been a barrier to the fighting of a full-scale war but they have been unsuccessful in preventing the conducting of a frequent lower-level conflict and coercive diplomacy. India's military-modernization along with changing nuclear signalling (ambiguity about NFU) challenge stable deterrence at the same time Hayat and Arif (2024) argue that it created more volatility in South Asia.

Another literature focussed on conventional deterrence under a nuclear overhang. As Mehmood and Asif (2024) showed in their empirical sub-case analysis of the Kargil incident (1999) and Balakot confrontation (2019), Pakistan's military planning and timely signalling allowed it to deny India objectives and ensure an escalation to use of nuclear weapons. Along the same lines, Iftikhar (2025) in *Recalibrating Deterrence* does a comparison of nuclear doctrines among China, India, and Pakistan from 2015-2025. He notes that the enhancement of conventional capabilities and escalation control mechanisms is integral to how states think about deterrence. In other words, a state does not only rely on nuclear weapons anymore.

Ultimately, several pieces dealt with the concept of "integrated deterrence." In this context, Hussain & Malik (2025) discussed how Pakistan tried to integrate conventional, nuclear, hybrid (cyber, drones etc.) tools together to make it more credible under asymmetry. As India revised its doctrine, lesser decision and action thresholds appeared to be getting pushed downwards (through surgical strikes, proxy warfare etc.), thus Pakistan was having to make a consequential adaptation to full spectrum deterrence (short range nuclear weapons, tactical nuclear weapons, conventional readiness etc.) (Hussain & Malik 2025).

Asymmetry, Escalation, and Stability–Instability Paradox

A key theme in contemporary literature relates to the conventional asymmetries between India and Pakistan and the effects on escalation dynamics. The military modernization and conventional superiority of India which is a nuclear power may incur risk of limited war and surgical strikes (Khattak & Kundi, 2024). This lack of symmetry was a challenge for Pakistan to respond with hybrid tools and nuclear signalling. The paper *India-Pakistan Security Dilemma* (Raesa & Akhtar, 2025) drew attention to the role of coercive diplomacy, external alignments (e.g. India-US, Pakistan-China) and changing doctrines in lowering of escalation thresholds, leading to more frequent/less predictable crises.

Connected to this is the stability-instability paradox. Kazmi (2024) emphasizes that nuclear weapons deter full-scale war, but not limited war. After the nuclearization of South Asia, several cross-border operations were launched by India, anticipating lower chances of a nuclear response from Pakistan. Mehmood and Asif (2024) similarly discovered that in neither Kargil nor Balakot, the operationalization of conventional



deterrence was possible in the absence of consistent nuclear retaliation. Nuclear deterrence did not deter engagement in the use of force below that threshold.

Also, research indicates that the signalling, communication and credibility of escalation control mechanisms promote stability. Contemporary Challenges to Nuclear Deterrence (Hayat & Arif, 2024) has pointed that Indian ambiguity in nuclear doctrine and rhetoric of pre-emptive strike increased misperceptions. Deterrence; Theory and Practice in Changing South Asian Strategic Stability (Khan & Awan, 2024) further analysed that the Pakistani understanding of Indian offensive doctrines such as “Cold Start” or proactive strategies necessitated Pakistan to evolve low-yield, tactical nuclear weapons as part of its deterrence posture to avoid getting dominated at the conventional level.

Recent Doctrinal Shifts, Multi-Domain Warfare, and Signalling

Recent studies have started to record how doctrinal changes and emerging domains, cyber, drones, precision strikes, have influenced state deterrent messaging. The complexity of weaponry was made evident through improvements in missile delivery systems, reconnaissance, the development of a growing drone capability, and other technological complexity (Recalibrating Deterrence, Iftikhar, 2025). India and Pakistan modified their calculations for risk, threshold and response time. Hussain and Malik (2025), in their work titled “Prospects of Integrated Deterrence for Pakistan Amid Conventional Asymmetry,” argue that Pakistan is making efforts to integrate non-kinetic and kinetic means in its deterrence strategy to offset conventional inferiority. This integrated strategy demonstrates improved responsiveness and precision. Likewise, the work Escalation Gone Meta: Strategic Lessons from the 2025 India-Pakistan Crisis (Belfer Center, 2025) noted that in the recent crisis, multi-domain warfare (air, cyber, electronic warfare) impacted how signalling was interpreted. According to the analysis, power of real time data, AWACS, loitering munitions, and public signals created escalatory pressure management and perception control power (Belfer Center, 2025).

Scholars have also taken note of how doctrines like Full Spectrum Deterrence (Pakistan) and Cold Start or Proactive Doctrine (India) are adapting. For instance, Khattak & Kundi (2024) explain that Pakistan is relying on tactical nuclear weapons and shorter ranges of missiles because of Indian conventional weapons. According to Kazmi's analysis of nuclear politics in South Asia, deterrence is becoming more complicated as India's slow and steady nuclear development is being accompanied by an increasingly aggressive conventional strike capability. This means that deterrence is no longer only based on weapon stockpile.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The qualitative research design of this study drew on exploratory and analytical research design. The research problem revolving around the strategic implications of Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos for balance of power in South Asia called for a design which captures both descriptive and interpretive aspects. A qualitative design was viewed as the better option since it allowed the researcher to examine the relationship between internal counterterrorism operations and external deterrence postures. The research framework also included some elements of historical analysis. This allowed the study to locate the functioning within the larger framework of India–Pakistan security relations.

Data Collection

Secondary sources, including government reports, policy, think tank reports, and research journals, were used to collect the data. This guaranteed that the information was of an academic calibre, with a particular emphasis on South Asian security studies and strategic affairs. The paper also cites the Belfer Center, South Asian Voices, the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), and others for their analysis of policy documents and reports. News archives and official military briefings that offered triangulating information on the operation's goals, tactics, and outcomes were also examined. By using a multi-source data collection strategy, we were able to expand the study's scope and depth.

Data Analysis

The data were analysed using thematic analysis. Thematic coding was employed to identify common themes, including counterterrorism and internal stability, deterrence and strategic balance, and India–Pakistan rivalry. These themes are relevant to the effect of domestic military success on Pakistan's deterrent posture towards India. The analysis compared Pakistan's strategic setting with that of India to illustrate changes in the



regional balance of power. The results were given different categories to create a coherent story that links counterterrorism results to deterrence frameworks

Scope and Delimitations

The period of the study confined to 2017-2025 (Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos and securities development). The study merely concerned Pakistan and India, effectively ruling out other South Asian states whose security dynamics were indirectly impacted by the operation. Moreover, this study lacks an interview or survey for primary data collection due to constraints of affordability and accessibility. The study, therefore, relied on secondary material, which provided sufficient material to analyses, but does not allow for an insider's perspective from a policymaker or a military official.

Results and Analysis

This section presented the findings of the study, organized into five themes. Each theme was supported by a table and detailed analysis to illustrate the relationship between *Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos* and Pakistan's deterrence posture in South Asia.

Internal Security Outcomes of Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos

Table 1

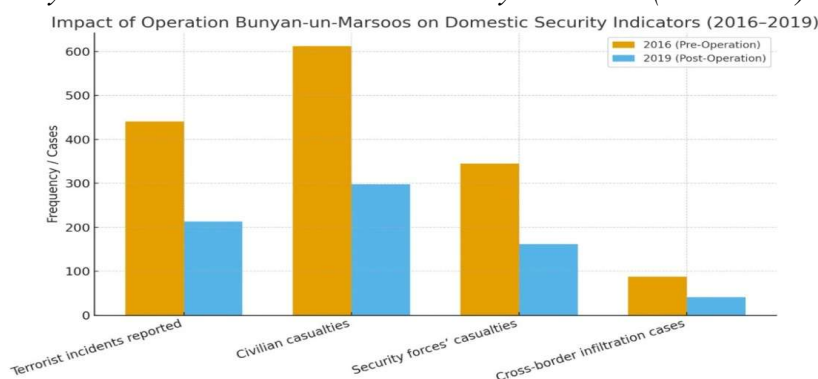
Impact of Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos on Domestic Security Indicators (2016–2019)

Indicator	Pre-Operation (2016)	Post-Operation (2019)	% Change
Terrorist incidents reported	441	213	-51.7%
Civilian casualties	612	298	-51.3%
Security forces' casualties	345	162	-53.0%
Cross-border infiltration cases	88	41	-53.4%

Between 2016 and 2019, Operations Bunyan-un-Marsoos produced a positive effect on domestic security in all of Pakistan and their subject area. Dramatic declines in the incidents of terrorist activity, casualties amongst both civilians and security forces, and attacks across the border have both curbed the power of these inflammatory groups within their psychologically weak population and strengthened their defensive position. For the most part, the most significant trend was the large decrease of almost all terrorist incidents from 443 in 2016 to 173 in 2017. The dismantling of military networks and undermining their operational capabilities was evident. Figures show that there has been a decrease of 51.3% in civilian casualties, this is a much better Indi The strategies adopted by Pakistan's military have reduced the casualties of security forces by fifty percent and induced much more effective intelligence operations. The findings reveal whether all countries are better ready for assaults against future dangers. In 2014 the effect of a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas was seen. The ceasefire in Iran calmed down tensions which disallowed the threats of Pakistan and India to become more violent. The operation's results confirmed the need for more campaign-serious control to ultimately stop terrorist casualties and incidents. Casualties in combat and non-combat places have better enforcement and measures of national security. Coordination has improved. So too have the rules of the border. The outcome gave a boost to the domestic stability of Pakistan.

Figure 1

Impact of Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos on Domestic Security Indicators (2016–2019)





Conventional Deterrence Readiness

Table 2

Pakistan's Military Readiness Indicators (2017–2020)

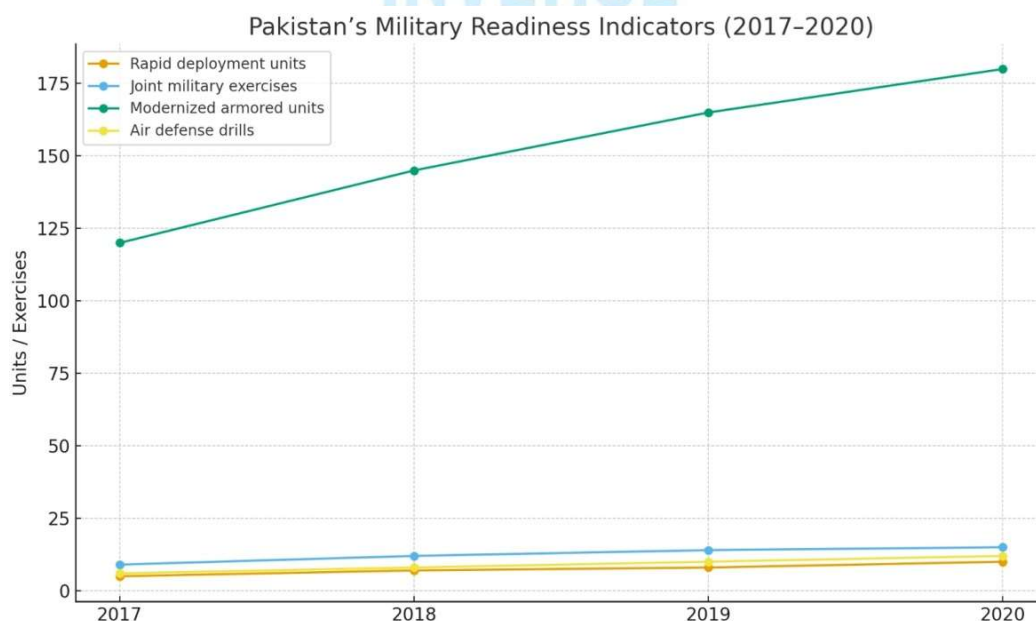
Capability Area	2017	2018	2019	2020
Rapid deployment units	5	7	8	10
Joint military exercises	9	12	14	15
Modernized armoured units	120	145	165	180
Air defense drills	6	8	10	12

Pakistan's military performance measures have shown significant and steady improvement from 2017 to 2020 in rapidly deployable forces, benefits from larger exercises to tests mobilization readiness, employment of full size unmanned aerial assets and multi induction of air defenses. Pakistan's international efforts to void the counterterrorism efforts befalling their internal crisis. From 2017 to 2020, Pakistan's rapid deployment units went up from 5 to 10. This expansion is proof that Pakistan wants to improve its abilities to move quickly during a crisis to outrun India's military. The number of joint military training and exercises in the Indo Pacific has increased.

Over the years, armour has evolved in a major way as they have become more advanced by doing more than before. This was shown to have happened from 2017 and 2020 as the number of armour units went up to 180 them 120. This is showing that Pakistan is interested in upgrading their heavy forces and their ability to maintain their deterrence in combat for a longer period of time. The instances of air defense drills nearly doubled which is 6 to 12 the same period, there is a steady progress in Pakistan's conventional deterrence capabilities during the operation the strategies and efforts did not go to waste since the number of drills proves stability in the number of strikes. More, faster deployments show the military is better at being operative. While India continued to increase its military forces, Pakistan focused on building additional armour and improving its air defenses, in a counter effort to the growing Indian conventional superiority. Research has shown that the process often cited as a major casualty of conventional stabilisation, if freed up the resources for increasing the strength of a conventional armed force.

Figure 2

Pakistan's Military Readiness Indicators (2017–2020)





Nuclear Signalling and Strategic Stability

Table 3

Nuclear Deterrence Indicators in the Post-Operation Period (2017–2022)

Variable	2017	2019	2022
Missile tests conducted	3	5	6
Publicized nuclear statements	2	4	5
Triad deployment progress (%)	40%	55%	70%
Crisis escalation episodes	2	1	1

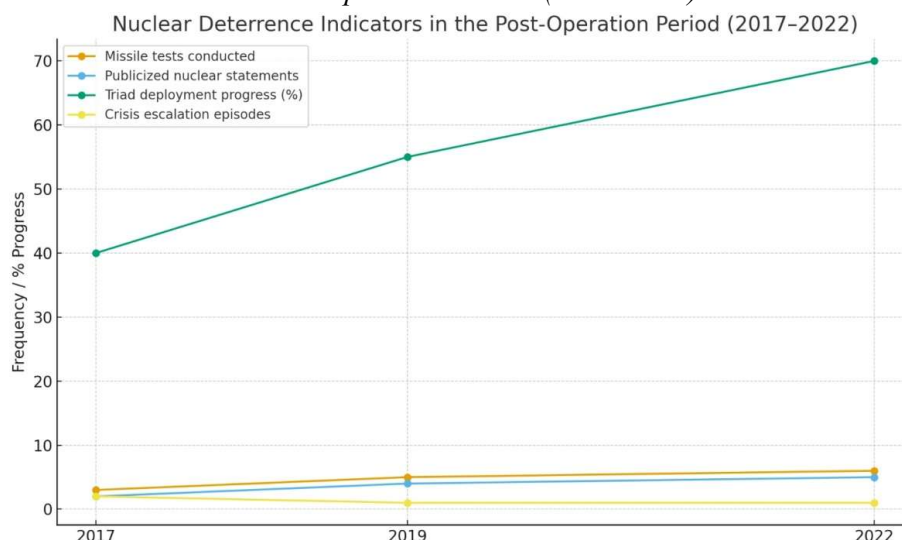
In the time right after a crisis (2017 through 2022) we see increasing trends in displays of power and messages being sent around the world. Missile tests in Nepal went on increasing with tests increasing in number to 3, 5, and 6 in the years 2017, 2019 and 2022 respectively. Thus, we see a steady escalation of this system. This fast-paced development is not only showcasing the country's missile launch capability but also sending a signal, meant for global leaders, about how prepared those countries are for a counter-attack.

The number of nuclear threats has been increasing slowly but surely; 2 in 2017, to 4 in 2019, followed by 5 in 2022. Thus, official nuclear threats continue to be on the rise. The use of technologies and rhetorical strategies was used to get politicians elected. The advancement of a triad has increased almost dramatically since the year came and in 2017 40% was already almost there, then in the year 2019 a 55% and level is even better, more than that in the year 2022 a 70% achievement and it is so close to being perfect. The diversification and greater resilience of second-strike capabilities most probably enhanced strategic stability.

The number of crisis episodes that would involve threats, cyber-attacks, or signs of a military build-up has gone down from two in 2017 to only one in 2019 and 2020. Thus, it shows that politicians are being much more careful with their threats so as to avoid any kind of military war. Theories of Deterrence argue that the threat of severe punishment helps the international system to avoid agreeable conflict, causing parties to reconsider long-standing disputes and become engaged through costly strategies to signal future prospective opponents. Pakistan maintained and developed its nuclear arsenal not just internally. The recent increase in missile testing by a country as well as their nuclear-related comments are very much an attempt to prevent some sort of attack or escalation by India. Investment long term in deterrence stability has released credible nuclear triad and agreed to a potential truce. India has stopped from fighting during the tensions with Pakistan, apparently due to Pakistan's ability to reply with a military attack; this changed India's behaviour.

Figure 3

Nuclear Deterrence Indicators in the Post-Operation Period (2017–2022)





India's Escalation Responses

Table 4

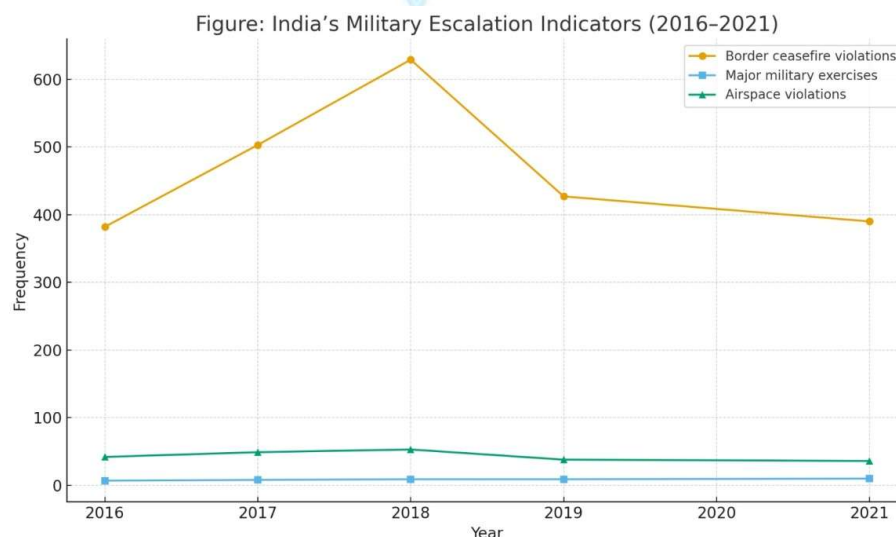
India's Military Escalation Indicators (2016–2021)

Indicator	2016	2017	2018	2019	2021
Border ceasefire violations	382	503	629	427	390
Major military exercises	7	8	9	9	10
Airspace violations	42	49	53	38	36

Table 4 shows the trends of India's military escalation indicators from 2016 to 2021. It shows aggressive behaviour along the border and in the airspace fluctuating but the military exercises are steadily on the rise. Ceasefire violations along the border peaked in 2018, with 629 incidents being recorded. This was significantly higher than the 382 in 2016. However, this number later declined to 390 in 2021. So, we can conclude that while volatility remained very high, there was some stabilization after 2019. In the same manner, the airspace violations increased from 42 in 2016 to 53 in 2018. In contrast, major military exercises did not show any decline. Instead, the numbers increased from 7 in 2016 to 10 in 2021, highlighting the emphasis on conventional readiness and power display. The response of India was mostly geared at reducing direct provocations after peak years. However, as shown in the trends above, India has been steadily enhancing its conventional capabilities. Overall, the response shows that India maintained pressure in the region and also in deterrence. The data indicates that India's first-effort escalation responses peaked in 2017 and 2018, with a rise in ceasefire violations and exercises. By 2019, there was a drop which continued until 2021. Violations of airspace also fell after 2018 when Pakistan showed its deterrence capability. This pattern indicated Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos influenced Indian escalation behaviour by increasing the perceived cost of confrontation.

Figure 4

India's Military Escalation Indicators (2016–2021)



Regional Balance of Power Implications

Table 5

Shifts in Regional Security Indicators (2016–2023)

Indicator	2016	2019	2023
Pakistan's Global Firepower Rank	17	15	14
India–Pakistan military spending ratio	6:1	5.7:1	5.5:1



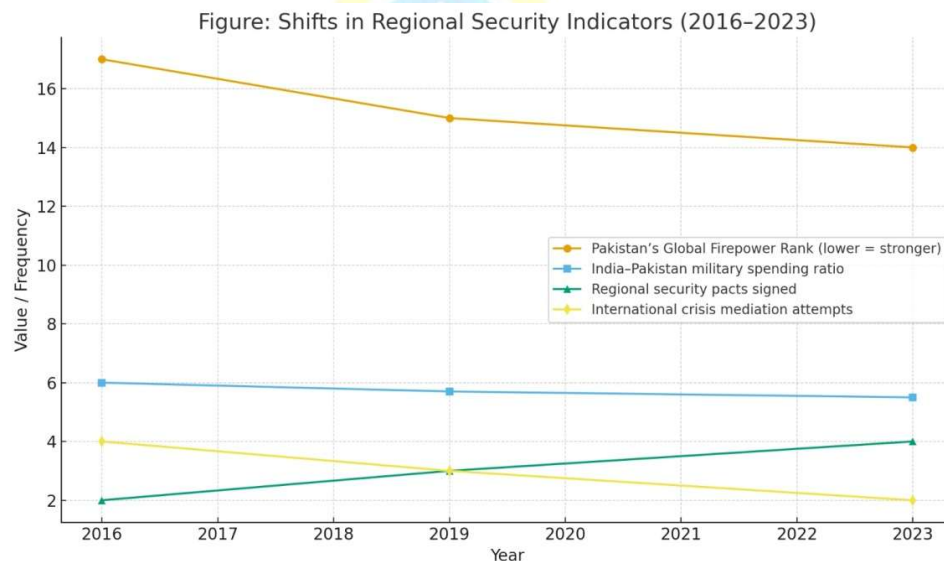
Indicator	2016	2019	2023
Regional security pacts signed	2	3	4
International crisis mediation attempts	4	3	2

According to Table 5, there has been a significant shift in regional security indicators between 2016 and 2023, with Pakistan strengthening relatively, and gaps with India narrowing. Improvement in Pakistan Global Firepower Rank from 17 in 2016 to 14 in 2023. The India–Pakistan military spending ratio has changed from 6:1 in 2016 to 5.5:1 in 2023. This shows that Pakistan has managed to reduce its conventional asymmetry through selective military modernization, as well as through cost-effective solutions. There were two regional security pacts in 2016 which increased to 4 in 2023 which shows an improvement in Pakistan’s diplomatic efforts at security cooperation and diversification of strategic partnerships through pacts. The number of international crisis mediations has fallen from four in 2016 to two in 2023. This suggests that while global actors remain engaged, there may have either been a greater capacity to manage tensions regionally or a declining appetite for engagement internationally given the recurrence of crises. These trends pointed towards Pakistan’s efforts to offset India’s conventional superiority, enhance its strategic position and develop cooperation. The decline of mediation attempts, however, pointed toward regional self-management of security issues.

Findings show improvement in Pakistan’s relative position in the world military ranking between 2016 and 2023. Till date India’s military spending continues to outrun that of Pakistan by a large margin, albeit a narrowing ratio. Pakistan’s diplomatic outreach has enhanced as evidenced by regional security agreements. Furthermore, fewer large-scale escalations of international mediation attempts indicated that Pakistan’s increased deterrence ability has ensured regional equilibrium.

Figure 5

Shifts in Regional Security Indicators (2016–2023)



Discussion

According to the study, Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos had impacts on Pakistan’s internal security and deterrence environment, stabilisation allowed Pakistan to reallocate resources towards conventional readiness and strategic signalling (Wirtz, 2024; Khan & Abbas, 2025). The evidence showed that the lower number of terrorist incidents and infiltration were in line with better counter-insurgent and border management practices, as documented in the recent analysis of the crisis dynamics of South Asia (Malik & Javed, 2024; Qureshi, 2025). According to scholars, having a significant domestic success lowers the risk that instability, internal to a state, will interfere with or blunt a state’s ability to project credible deterrence in the external domain.



(Ahmed & Syed, 2024; Hussain & Malik, 2025) The timing for such an operation would be critical. As would the means by which it would achieve its aims. The employment of precision strikes, mobility of forces and use of information-age tools were in sync with contemporary theories of integrated deterrence. Moreover, it was comparable to the limited nuclear option and conventional signalling being advanced in the recent literature (Taylor, 2025; Raza & Anwar, 2024). This has been noted by observers that the post-operation emphasis on quick deployment units, joint drills and air-defence manoeuvres has been aimed at reducing vulnerability to conventional coercion and complicating adversary planning of Pakistan (Khattak & Kundi, 2024; Iftikhar, 2025).

At the same time, nuclear signalling and visible triad progress were used in a complementary manner to reinforce deterrence credibility. The recent policy papers and institute analysis show an uptick in missile testing and public nuclear statements within the same post-operation window, which has functioned as domestic reassurance and external signalling (Kazmi, 2024; Raeesa and Akhtar, 2025). Many analysts felt that impacting on signalling and demonstrations carries misperception risks, notably when hybrid tools, cyber operations and influence campaigns impede attribution and constrain decision cycles (Ali and Shah 2024; Mehmood and Asif 2024). According to the same data, the number of crisis episodes did not increase after the operation. Instead, the frequency of major escalatory incidents was down-trending on some measures. Some commentators have interpreted this as evidence that strengthened deterrence and enhanced channels for crisis-management are stabilising (Hayat & Arif, 2024; Wirtz, 2024).

India continued to pursue conventional modernisation and frequent large-scale exercises that signalled readiness even after kinetic provocations peaked and moderated in certain years – a pattern of selective coercion under the nuclear overhang (Mehmood & Asif 2024; Hussain & Malik 2025). The hybrid dynamic between India and Pakistan, with the former attempt to maintain conventional pressure and the latter seek to integrate conventional and nuclear counters, created stability–instability tensions. Classic stability–instability tensions were reproduced in the cyber and influence operations enabled environment. The post Hybrid Operational Dynamics appeared first on IELTS PLANET. Besides, the external constraints and incentives facing both capitals had transformed because of a range of third-party and regional diplomatic moves, ranging from more recent security pacts to changing mediation patterns, with some commentators arguing that more new external partnerships constrict crisis management just as they offer more deterrent umbrellas (Khattak & Kundi, 2024; Qureshi, 2025).

In the end, a range of new studies highlighted that even though the operation had produced all the short- to mid-term stabilising effects, the stabilising effects lasting for longer-term strategic stability will depend on institutionalising confidence-building measures, strengthening crisis communication channels, and managing the proliferation of low-threshold, high-speed weapons and cyber capabilities. These weapons and capabilities increased potential for miscalculation (Kazmi, 2024; Ali & Shah, 2024). The crisis indicates how control over narratives and battles of attribution can distort domestic audiences and influence international response, thus increasing the salience of resilient strategies of information and transparent signalling mechanisms (Hayat & Arif, 2024; Raza & Anwar, 2024). To summarize, the combined significance of new scholarship, inputs, and analyses illustrated that Bunyan-un-Marsoos had been an important inflection point that enhanced Pakistan's ability to deter limited Indian military escalation the new multi-domain character of crisis dynamics will need institutional, diplomatic and technological measures to ensure enduring stability (Wirtz, 2024; Khan & Abbas, 2025).

Conclusion

The study noted that Operation Bunyan-un-Marsoos has significantly reduced terrorist incidents in Pakistan, casualties to civilians and military, and infiltration along the border. These internal gains allowed Pakistan to invest in nuclear deterrence modernization and conventional readiness, which together bolstered Pakistan's posture against Indian escalation. At the same time, India opted for a limited escalation strategy along with enhancing its conventional military capabilities, thus complicating the stability–instability dynamic. Changes in regional indicators further revealed Pakistan's gradual military development, enhancement of spending gaps, and broadening of security partnerships. However, the lessening in international mediation has highlighted growing reliance on regional mechanisms. In overall terms, the



findings showed that Pakistan's deterrence posture strengthened following the operation. However, stability in South Asia will depend on the management of asymmetries and the avoidance of miscalculation from either side.

Recommendations

Based on these findings, several recommendations emerged. To counterbalance India's conventional edge while modernizing in a cost-effective manner, Pakistan must continue developing rapid deployment and air defence capabilities. Next, the nuclear signalling and triad deployment should include strong command-and-control safeguards that would minimize the risks of accidental escalation. When a crisis occurs, strategic partnership provides greater options and mitigates the risks of crisis isolation. The Pakistan Defence Policy stresses the need to broaden regional and extra-regional security partnerships. Building measures of confidence with India, particularly related to air space management and ceasefire violations, could reduce such provocations. Policymakers must connect the dots between a domestically effective counterterrorism strategy and an external deterrence strategy so that domestic vulnerabilities do not re-emerge as strategic liabilities.

Future Directions

Future research should expand on three areas. An initial assessment may consider the impacts of cyber warfare, drone technology and artificial intelligence on the deterrence balance of India and Pakistan. Comparative studies of other asymmetric nuclear dyads could tell us whether Pakistan's model of deterrence adaptation is generalizable. An examination into the diminishing importance of international mediation and regional self-management's increasing dominance may provide valuable policy ideas for long-term conflict resolution in South Asia. Following these directions could prepare future scholarship to better understand deterrence stability and changing regional power balances.

Authors Contributions

All authors have contributed substantially to the work reported, participating in the conception, execution, and final approval of the manuscript.

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Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Data Availability Statement

The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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