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THE AIRSTRIKES IN KASHMIR BETWEEN INDIA AND PAKISTAN AND THE IMPACT ON THE INDIAN ELECTIONS

India received unprecedented political attention following an “Indian Air Force” strike peddled against a Pakistani camp believed to be carrying out terrorist activities that happened this year. The crisis was the engine that propelled Prime Minister Narendra Modi into winning the general elections. He was compellingly agitated to push the Gandhis away from political power. The announcement on the airstrike was refuted by Pakistan. It said that Indian jets were redirected back by its forces after the claim that they flew across the “de facto” border. The information came out a fortnight after a huge death toll happened and rendering forty Indian paramilitaries lifeless. Tensions from these incidences became contained but Pakistan’s leadership continued to deny the story from India’s side. Narendra Modi led the Indian side with a firm specification that was aimed to augment the pressure to construct a fortified nationalist base domestically. The two sides reached a consensus in the heat of misunderstandings for political reasons. In the wake of these happenings, Modi managed to pursue his way to winning the elections because showing sternness against Pakistan was the surest way of gaining a political mileage at such an important time.

Keywords: Kashmir airstrikes, country conflicts, sense of ownership, national identity, political advantage.

The Narendra Modi Reputation before the Indian General Elections. In 2014, Modi acquired the prime minister seat and promised many developments. His predominant mission as evidenced in his speeches was to strengthen the declining Indian economy. He also wanted to demonstrate political strength that his predecessors lacked and fortify the defense of the country¹. However, his term depicted an almost non-promising economic growth that reduced the Indian citizenry’s faith in him. Even though, defense greatly improved during his prime minister time and the engagement with Pakistan was one of the major highlights of his career. He utilized the incidence to redeem himself from the lack of stimulating great economic growth in India. The most affected sector was agriculture as many Indian farmers registered a reducing-income level. Similarly, a job crisis point was almost reached because of poor economic policies that he allowed to govern most national docket. Surprisingly, Modi’s image changed with the realization that defense was strong on the Indian side². His leadership managed to enhance the country’s defense, which is the reason that helped in shifting the public opinion about the poor economic times into voting for him³. The times of his economic turbulence were evidenced by the declining labor opportunities that threatened to degenerate into a job crisis.

When the airstrike happened, Indian stocks had a massive downturn that was prolonged for virtually two months. Subsequently, the situation was contained but the statistics indicated a continued period of dire financial meltdowns. The EPI (Wisdom Tree India) exchange-traded fund suffered in these occurrences and

¹ Banyan, B. (2019). Air Strikes On Pakistan May Win Narendra Modi India’S Election. *The Economist* <<https://www.economist.com/asia/2019/03/14/air-strikes-on-pakistan-may-win-narendra-modi-indias-election>> (2020, April, 10).

² Shams, S. (2019). From "What Does Indian PM Narendra Modi’s Reelection Mean For Regional Rivals? |DW.COM <<https://www.dw.com/en/what-does-indian-pm-narendra-modis-reelection-mean-for-regional-rivals/a-48863300>> (2020, April, 10).

³ Raleigh, C. (2014). Political Hierarchies And Landscapes Of Conflict Across Africa. *Political Geography*, 42 (2014), 92-103. DOI:10.1016/j.polgeo.2014.07.002.

registered hefty losses. The ETF went down its profitability by 3.3% while the MSCI Emerging Markets managed to rise up by 11%. These are the indications of a struggling financial system that is impacted by leadership mistakes. However, his popularity remained extensive with different political leaders endorsing him for the general elections that he was waiting on at the time. "Times of India" that stands out as a genuine and reputable magazine carried out a poll that saw 83% of at least 2,000 respondents supporting Modi's keeping of the lower house of Congress in the NDA (National Democratic Alliance). A majority coalition of the Congress' lower house usually chooses the prime minister¹. The poll also confirmed that Modi had a high approval rating and a large proportionate of the respondents preferring Modi to become the prime minister. It was a calculation against GUPA (Gandhi's United Progressive Alliance) that would have 68 seats against the NDA's 545 seats. The statistical evidence of the possibility that Modi would win the elections was sufficient enough even before the airstrikes.

The Redemption of Modi into winning the General Elections. Modi redeemed his defense promises when he managed to execute surgical strikes against Pakistan militia training grounds using his Air Force. India is believed to have targeted the sites associated with the "Jaish-e-Muhammad" known to be a Muslim jihadi sect. It happened after an attack in Pulwama against a convoy of Central Reserve Police Force a fortnight before. Pulwama is a place located in the Kashmir district that borders the two nations, which is ill-famed for disputes². India had stayed for at least 50 years before executing such an attack and its occurrence was hailed as a prudent move by the government in enhancing defense. Modi earned a tremendous political mileage because the Indian people felt protected even in the turbulent economic times that they were undergoing.

Before the general elections happened, legions of youngsters had deep faith that Modi would bring changes in the economy and stimulate the growth of job opportunities. His maiden message when he was campaigning to become the Indian prime minister was encouraging people to work together and achieve development for everyone³. Modi's record became patchy after he started serving people as demonstrated by the increasing unemployment. However, Modi rose to power because he managed to secure his position by causing deeper awareness of national security with the underlying promise that he will deliver⁴. The security plans were meant to continue with the invasions against Pakistan. Multitudes of adherents and enthusiasts believed that Modi's re-election would largely facilitate the elusive peaceful co-existence between Pakistan and India. He immensely benefited from the Kashmir incidence. Different reports speculate that Modi's policies that governed the Kashmir valley could have contributed to the attack. These policies constituted the blinding of people, the usage of pellet guns and homicide. Modi was strategic though and turned these events to his best advantage so as to win the incoming general elections.

How Politicians Create Conflict to earn them Political Mileage such as Modi's airstrikes. Modi sold the airstrike as a successful military action that could glorify him to the world and mainly, his country for political gains. There were rumors that the fighters could have missed their target but the world knew that the leader had accomplished his mission perfectly. In understanding politics, the citizenry should always know that politicians are craftsmen that manufacture and decorate their merchandise to attract customers of all sorts. In this regard, Modi's policy was to declare to the Indian nation that his defense was improving to win the citizenry's faith for possible re-election.

Another factor that catapulted Modi into more political fame among the Indian citizenry was the opposition failings. The opposition attacked Modi unfairly on allegations that he was involved in graft, which was a wrong move for the opposition to pull at that time. The opposition would have used the economic failures that Modi's administration showed at the time and refrain from accusing the leader of corruption⁵. On the other hand, the high-handedness approach that the Congress used in forming its political

¹ Banyan, B. (2019). Air Strikes On Pakistan May Win Narendra Modi India'S Election. *The Economist* <<https://www.economist.com/asia/2019/03/14/air-strikes-on-pakistan-may-win-narendra-modi-indias-election>> (2020, April, 10).

² Bremmer, I. (2019). Modi Is India's Best Hope For Economic Reform. *TIME USA* <<https://time.com/5586417/hope-for-economic-reform-in-india/>> (2020, April, 10).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Gelpi, C. (2017). Democracies In Conflict. *Journal Of Conflict Resolution*, 61, 9 (2017), 1925-1949. DOI:10.1177/0022002717721386.

⁵ Vahabi, M. (2009). From "A Critical Review Of Strategic Conflict Theory And Socio-Political Instability Models. *Revue D'économie Politique*, 119, 6 (2009), 817. DOI:10.3917/redp.196.0817.

alliances was the second failure. The BJP (Bharatiya Janata Party) showed an accommodating spirit to its alliance partners in different parts. The Congress failed to reach consensus on forming an alliance with its potential partners, a factor that automatically favored Modi's political mission¹. There was also another factor that facilitated Modi's propulsion to winning the general elections and it was the campaign's presidential nature. He stood out as a great campaigner that branded himself as the "watchman" that would protect India from any form of exploitation². The campaign was hugely successful because the Indian people developed deep faith in him as the savior that would rescue the country from socioeconomic and political woes.

Why Politicians Create Conflict to Shift Public Attention. In historic times, the creation of grave conflicts between nations was governing many nations. As a result, various infamous wars are known to have cost many lives in the world. Politicians from the past and modern times continue to utilize this pattern of operation to win the public's attention. Some politicians start wars with other nations against a course that is secondary to community needs³. Their aim is usually using the platform to communicate to the world about their bid for some political seat and shifting the public's attention to following him up.

National identity is an essentiality that every person needs to be recognized in their lives. Politicians have the capability of undermining a person to strip them of their national identity. They can also project great traits and fulfill the citizenry's needs when they are genuine. Historically, there are many leaders that started and led grave wars to attain their objectives. For instance, Fidel Castro led the "Cuban revolution" against the military dictatorship that was governing Cuba at the time⁴. It was Oresident's Fulgencio Batista's era. The revolution resulted in the ousting of the dictatorial government and replacing it with a revolutionary socialist country.

These revolutions are some of the conflicts that leaders have to cause to achieve genuine goals or feign to shift the public opinion from specified things. In the modern world, there are many emerging gadgets that people use to access information easily unlike the past (Raleigh, 2014). Politicians can easily use these channels to spread propaganda so that a certain infamous rumor about them dies without questions from the public.

Conclusion. Narendra Modi served as a professional prime minister without political dramatizations. However, the Indian political scene had his fair share of challenges and fame that was spread in a bad way. The origin of these problems was the deteriorating employment crisis in the country with no hope that the situation would end. He had a turbulent time to convince the population that he would bring the effective economic measures to salvage the situation. He was bound to receive his redemption when the Kashmir incident happened. He sent his authority of Air Force soldiers to strike on the military training camp of a group believed to be terrorists. The incidence was a huge milestone for the leader because he assured the nation that its defense was reinforced and enhanced. In general, Modi is proving to be a great leader because of his many political policies and processes that are changing the Indian governance structure.

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