

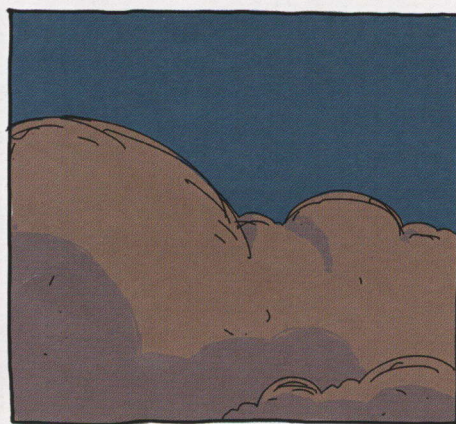
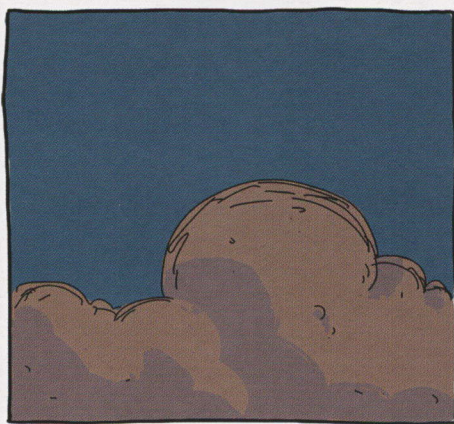
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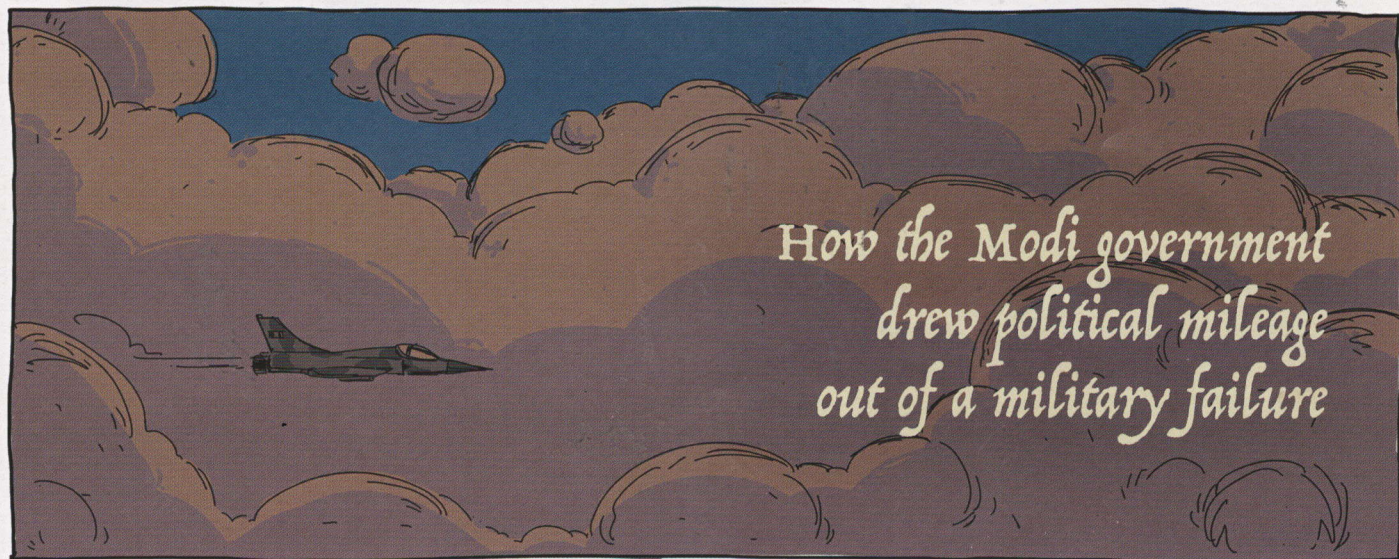
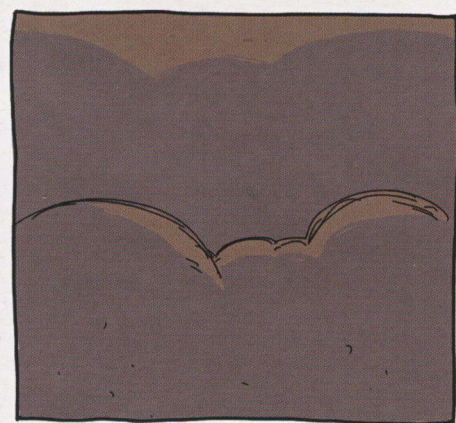
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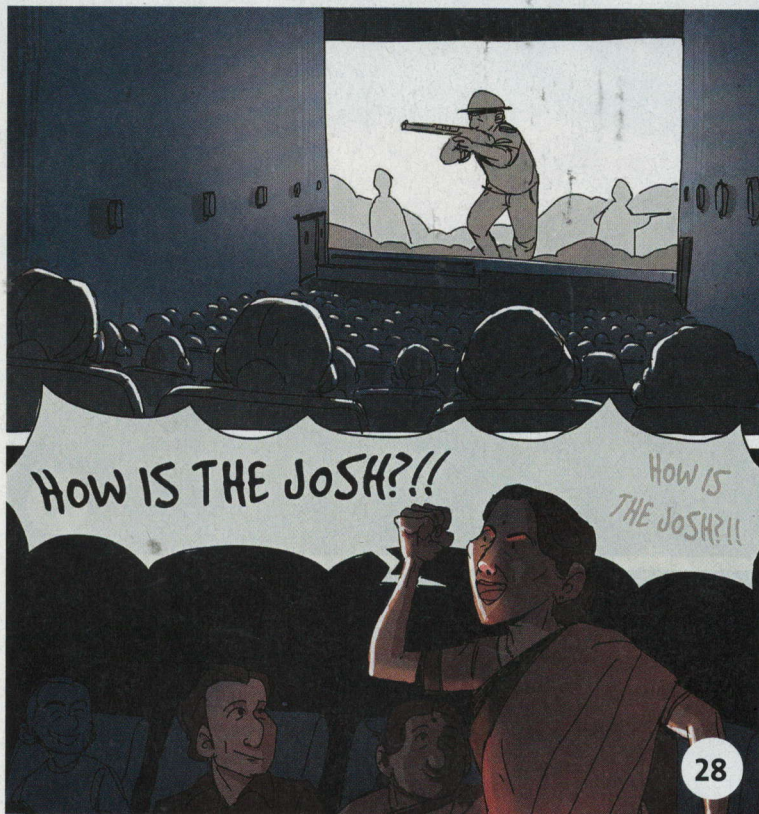
THE CARAVAN



THE BALAKOT MISDIRECTION



How the Modi government
drew political mileage
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The Balakot Misdirection

How the Modi government drew political mileage out of a military failure

SUSHANT SINGH

The Balakot operation and its aftermath marked the first time since the 1971 India-Pakistan War that both countries conducted airstrikes on each other's territory. As with all their other wars, they have stuck to radically different narratives of what happened. But never before has warfare been conducted in an environment of so much wilful lying, and with so much brazen disregard for evidence. India's media insisted, among many things, that the Indian Air Force had killed Pakistani militants and hit its intended targets, that India was in possession of superior technology that could cause damage in a way that would not be visible to the naked eye or through satellite imagery, and that it had shot down a Pakistani F-16 fighter jet. No credible proof was provided for these claims. Instead, it can now be clearly said, six years after the fact, that the IAF missed its designated targets, lost a fighter jet in an aerial skirmish, shot down its own helicopter and was put on the back foot because of the capture of its fighter pilot. The Balakot episode was a military failure, but it gave Prime Minister Narendra Modi the fillip he needed to comfortably secure a second term.

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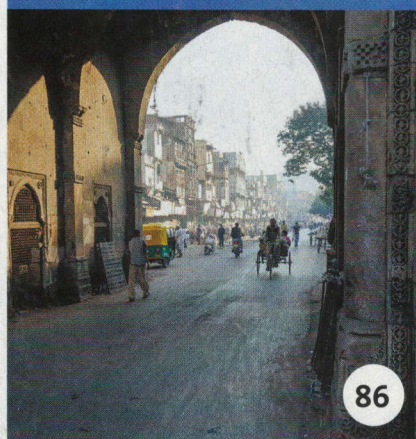


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