



Why not 50 ?

Pair of IAF Mirage 2000s

Ravi Rikhye plumbs for a 50 combat squadron Indian Air Force to really get the odds right !

Explaining irrationality is difficult. The Indian Air Force has yearned for a 42 fighter squadron force. However, after the two Rafale squadrons are operational, probably by 2022, and the long overdue phase-out of the MiG-21 completed, the IAF will have just 29 squadrons: 13 Su-30, 6 Jaguar, 3 Mirage 2000, 3 MiG-29, 2 Tejas, and 2 Rafale. The Air Force is modernising some of its existing aircraft, which is wise, but only if the Government of India understands that we are well below expected strength and modernisation serves only as a stop-gap while waiting for new aircraft.

First, let's look at the magical pixie dust figure of 42 squadrons. That was formulated decades ago, when the Chinese Air Force was limited in its capabilities on our northern frontiers. That figure is meaningless now, as China continues relentless modernisation of its air force and its Tibet-basing capability.



Pair of PAF JF-17 Thunders