

THE EFFECTS OF GROWING INDIAN MILITARY POTENTIAL
ON SOUTH ASIAN STABILITY

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General Studies

by

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ABSTRACT

THE EFFECTS OF GROWING INDIAN MILITARY POTENTIAL ON SOUTH ASIAN STABILITY, by Major Hashim I. Bajwa, 116 pages.

India is emerging as an economic powerhouse and its national power is on the rise. India's regional and global ambitions are also growing correspondingly. It is enhancing its military potential constantly to cater for its ambitions. India justifies this enhancement as being necessary to act as a counterweight to China. A detailed examination of the capabilities and strategy formulation points towards a Pakistan focused intent. South Asia is already unstable due to territorial disputes, terrorism, and political shifts. India's growing military potential—linked to its strategic thought—is likely to exacerbate the existing instability in South Asia caused by a multitude of political, ideological, and security factors.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

India has consistently increased its military spending over the past few years. It has now become one of the biggest buyers of Western and Russian military equipment.¹ India's surge in military spending—spurred by its economic growth—is commonly perceived to be an indicator of its global and regional ambitions.² Most analysts argue that India is increasing its military capabilities to enhance its global influence and to act as a counterweight to China. They overlook two important aspects. India's motives in its immediate neighborhood; and how increasing military capabilities may enable a pursuit of these motives.

Given India's internal and external challenges, its potential to fulfill its global ambitions in the immediate future remains questionable. However, India's enhanced military spending is likely to substantially increase its military capabilities and enable it to contemplate ambitious military options in the region.³ Such high levels of spending are also likely to encourage other regional actors to adopt measures to address their growing asymmetry with India. This may exacerbate existing tensions and push the region further towards conflict (See figure 1 for a map of the region).

¹ Aude Fleurant et al., *SIPRI Fact Sheet: Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2015* (Solna, Sweden: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2016), 1.

² Stephen Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming: India's Military Modernization* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2013), 147.

³ Walter Ladwig III, "A Cold Start for Hot Wars? The Indian Army's New Limited War Doctrine," *International Security* 32, no. 3 (Winter 2007/2008): 159.



Figure 1. Map of South Asia

Source: Saylordot.org, “World Regional Geography: People, Places and Globalization,” accessed March 27, 2017, https://saylordotorg.github.io/text_world-regional-geography-people-places-and-globalization/section_12/3f53c3b826f8bd5c8d7f67654c0d3438.jpg.

It is important to understand why India is increasing its military potential. India possesses adequate military potential to meet its defensive needs. The Indian armed

forces are one of the strongest in the world⁴ with an inventory boasting hi-tech equipment like Sukhoi 30 fighter jets, T-90 tanks, aircraft carriers, and submarines.⁵ India enjoys conventional superiority over its smaller neighbors like Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.⁶ Its defense potential is perceived as sufficient to defend against the Chinese too.⁷ Since there are no obvious defensive vulnerabilities, the increase in India's military potential may be linked to its strategic dilemma in South Asia.

India's dilemma may relate to the offensive employment of its forces against an adequately equipped competitor. India has repeatedly shown an intent to use force against Pakistan in the past three decades.⁸ The latter also possesses strong conventional forces. India outweighs Pakistan in terms of numbers but it may not possess adequate capabilities to decisively defeat Pakistan. The nuclear factor adds more complexity to the problem. India's nuclear arsenal does not provide it with a strategic edge in dealing with Pakistan.⁹ The latter also possesses nuclear weapons that by some estimates exceed

⁴ Robert Kaplan, "Center Stage for the 21st Century: Power Plays in the Indian Ocean," *Foreign Affairs* (March 2009): 4-6.

⁵ Jyotsna Bakshi, "India-Russia Defence Cooperation," *Strategic Analysis* 30, no. 2 (April 2006): 450-452.

⁶ Ashley Tellis and Michael Wills, eds., *Military Modernization in an Era of Uncertainty: Executive Summary* (Washington, DC: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2005).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Tariq Ashraf, "Doctrinal Reawakening of the Indian Armed Forces," *Military Review* 84, no. 6 (December 2004): 55.

⁹ Ibid.

Indian capabilities.¹⁰ This creates an impasse that may be the reason for India's increased military spending as opposed to the commonly perceived needs to project power and act as a counter-weight to China.

As India continues to grow economically, its need to exercise its influence on its neighborhood is also growing.¹¹ India could have consolidated its influence over the region in a less complex environment by leveraging its current national power in diplomatic, informational, military, and economic (DIME) domains. India dominates the region in the diplomatic, informational and economic fields. Its only handicap has been its inability to act decisively in the military domain in a conflict with Pakistan.¹² Indian strategists have consistently gone back to the drawing board to configure military options that could allow India to enforce its will on its South Asian neighbor without risking a nuclear conflagration.¹³ The Indian "Cold Start" and "Proactive Operations" strategies are products of this thought process.¹⁴

The Cold Start and Proactive Operations strategies are based on the assumption that Pakistan can be prevented from resorting to the nuclear option by waging war below

¹⁰ Gabriel Dominguez and Karl Dewey, "CBRN Assessment: Asian Countries Continue to Prioritise Nuclear Deterrence," *IHS Janes Defence Weekly*, June 3, 2016.

¹¹ Uma Purushothaman, "Shifting Perceptions of Power: Soft Power and India's Foreign Policy," *Journal of Peace Studies* 17, no. 2-3 (2010): 1-16.

¹² Ashraf, "Doctrinal Reawakening of the Indian Armed Forces," 53-61.

¹³ Cohen and Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming*, 63.

¹⁴ Ladwig, "A Cold Start for Hot Wars," 1.

its “nuclear threshold.”¹⁵ These strategies seek to employ maneuver formations to strike shallow objectives across the Indo-Pak border.¹⁶ These forces would be enabled by a complex array of supporting aerial and ground fires to shape the battlefield and set conditions.¹⁷ The follow-on forces will remain ready to exploit the advantage of the early gains if the need or opportunity arises.¹⁸ The net result: a degraded opposing force at the risk of further destruction and a government willing to accept terms.¹⁹

These strategies have shaped the belief that India’s conventional superiority could still be decisive and would render Pakistan’s nuclear capability irrelevant.²⁰ However, the execution of such strategies requires a set of capabilities that the Indian armed forces lack.²¹ They need cutting-edge technology packages as key enablers for rapid and destructive maneuvers by offensive forces.²² Therefore, India has decided to go shopping.

¹⁵ Ladwig, “A Cold Start for Hot Wars,” 1.

¹⁶ Ali Ahmed, “India’s Limited War Doctrine-The Structural Factor,” IDSA Monograph Series, no. 10, December 2012, 31-40, accessed February 1, 2017, <http://www.idsa.in/system/files/Monograph10.pdf>.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ashraf, “Doctrinal Reawakening of the Indian Armed Forces,” 53-61.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Walter Ladwig III, “Could India’s Military Really Crush Pakistan?” *National Interest*, July 15, 2015, 2, accessed December 14, 2016, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/could-indias-military-really-crush-pakistan-13247>.

²² Ibid.

India's military spending has seen remarkable growth over the past decade. Its current defense budget totals at U.S. \$50 billion and outweighs any other country in its neighborhood.²³ Military imports are at an all-time high (see figure 2). Existing and potential sellers comprise US, France, and Russia besides other smaller producers.²⁴ The most interesting aspect of India's defense spending is the range of capabilities that it is acquiring. Its latest equipment purchases include AH 64 Apache attack helicopters and C 17 transport aircraft from the US, Dassault Rafale fighter jets from France, S 400 missiles and submarines from Russia, and UAVs and ISR equipment from Israel, to name a few.²⁵ The augmented Indian inventory may enable the Indian armed forces to make up for the deficiency in their capabilities to execute combined arms–multi-service operations. Pakistan sees these procurements as capability enhancements oriented towards creating an overmatch.²⁶ The claim may be disputable if seen in isolation. However, if seen in the context of above described strategic evolution, the claim has its merits.

²³ Laxman Behera, "India's Defence Budget 2015-16," Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, March 2, 2015, accessed December 10, 2016, http://www.idsa.in/issuebrief/IndiasDefenceBudget2015-16_lkbehera_020315.

²⁴ Fleurant et al., Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2.

²⁵ Adam Lowther and Rajeswari Rajagopalan, "Building a partnership between the United States and India: exploring airpower's potential," *Air and Space Power Journal* (March-April 2015): 29. Also see Militaryperiscope.com, "India-Armed Forces Structure," last modified June 1, 2015, accessed February 10, 2017, <https://www.militaryperiscope.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com>.

²⁶ Shane Mason, *Military Budgets in India and Pakistan: Trajectories, Priorities, and Risks* (Washington, DC: Stimson Center, 2016), 7.

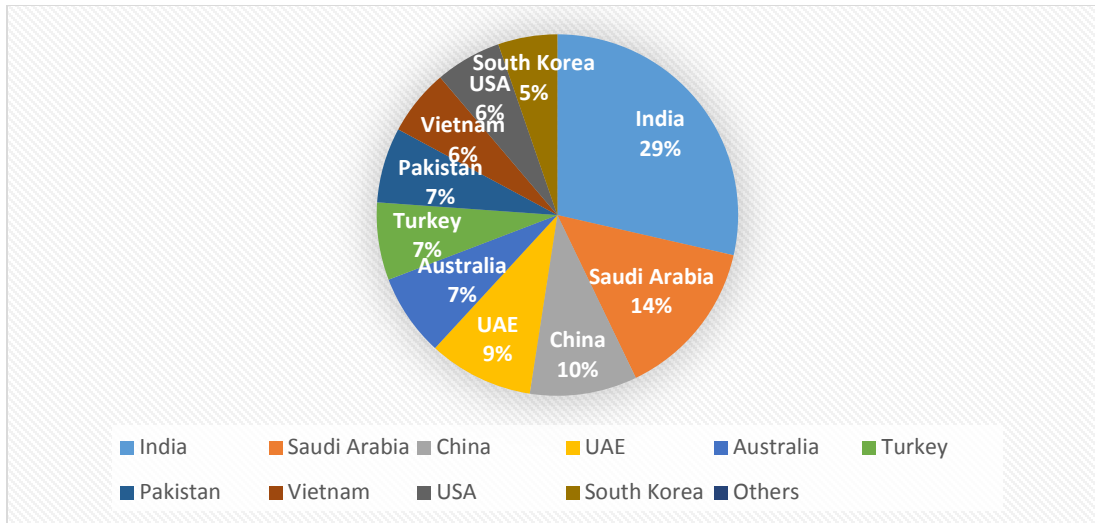


Figure 2. Shares of top ten arms importers out of the 49% of international arms imports to these countries from 2011–2015 (51% arms were imported by 143 other countries)

Source: Aude Fleurant et al., *SIPRI Fact Sheet: Trends in International Arms Transfers, 2015* (Solna, Sweden: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2016), 4.

India continues to project to the world that its military enhancement is China-oriented. However, its military basing, posturing, and acquired equipment present a very different picture. An Indo–China conflict is unlikely due to their economic interdependence.²⁷ Should such a conflict arise, it would likely remain confined to the bounds of Himalayas,²⁸ precluding the employment of acquired technology enabled mechanized forces. Moreover, the bulk of Indian troops are postured along the Pakistan border (see

²⁷ T. N. Srinivasan, “China and India: Economic Performance, Competition and Cooperation: An Update,” *Journal of Asian Economics* 15, no. 4 (2004): 613-636.

²⁸ Andrew Scobell et al., *The People’s Liberation Army and Contingency Planning in China* (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2015), 225-228.

figure 3) and are being re-stationed in order to reduce their mobilization time if India decides to strike.

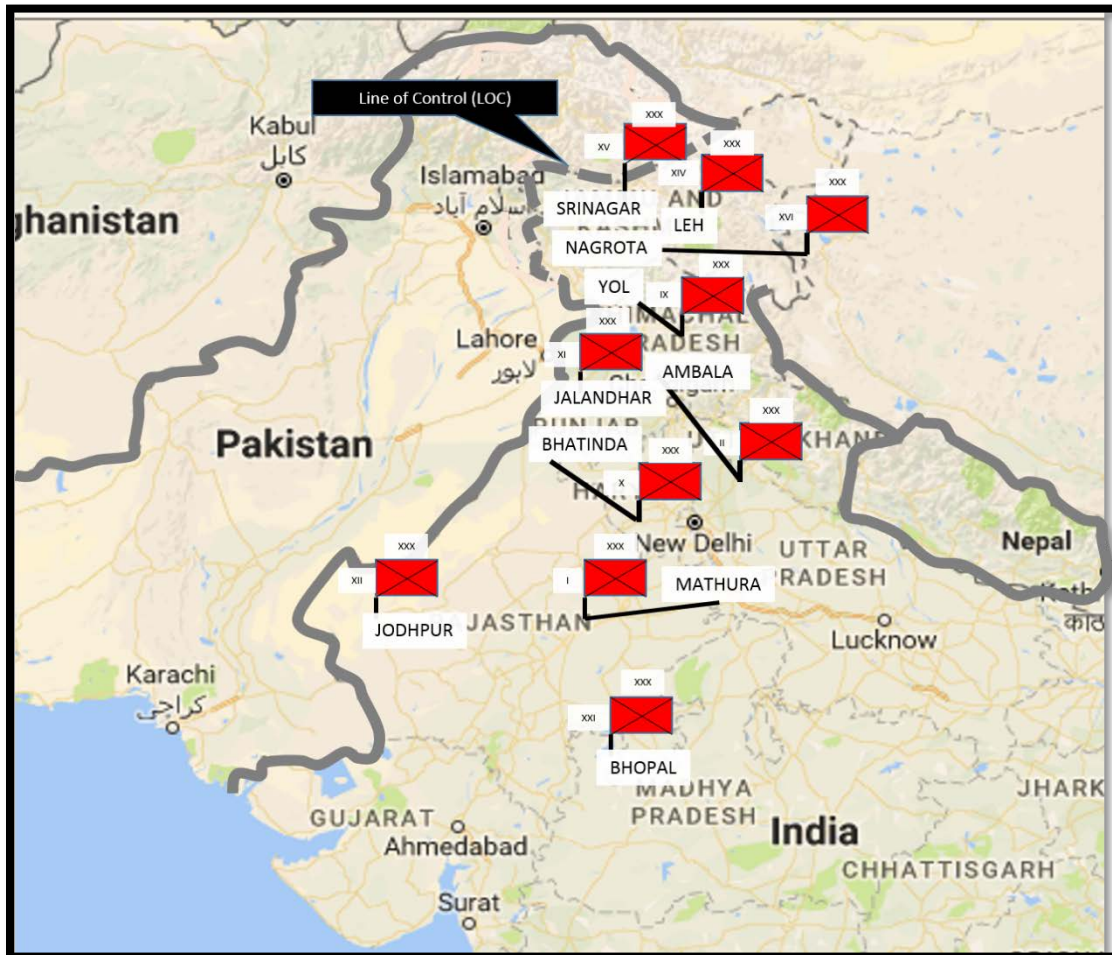


Figure 3. Locations of ten out of thirteen Indian Army Corps

Source: Janes.ihs, "India: Army," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment* (2017), accessed March 1, 2017, <http://janes.ihs.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/MilitarySecurityAssessments/Display/1767362>. Locations indicated in this source have been plotted on a Google map.

The current Indian military spending overdrive may have potential consequences for the region. Primarily, it is likely to aggravate the threat perception of its rival

Pakistan. The latter currently faces multiple challenges. Pakistan's armed forces are involved in a protracted war against terror along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. The war has also multiplied its economic challenges. It is not feasible for Pakistan to competitively spend to restore the conventional balance with India. As a result, Pakistan has to re-strategize and develop tactical nuclear weapons to undo the Indian inclination to employ conventional forces against it.²⁹ This measure has addressed Pakistan's vulnerability in the short term.³⁰ It may not suffice in the long term as strategy in India continues to evolve.³¹

In September 2016, India claimed to have carried out "surgical strikes" across the Line of Control in the disputed Kashmir region.³² Pakistan repudiated the Indian claim and exposed the ground situation to international media.³³ The overall result was a media frenzy and heated passions on both sides of the border.³⁴ The episode shows the continuously evolving Indian strategy that accentuates the response dilemma for

²⁹ Shashank Joshi, "Pakistan's Tactical Nuclear Nightmare: Déjà Vu?" *The Washington Quarterly* 36, no. 3 (2013): 159-172.

³⁰ Mason, *Military Budgets in India and Pakistan*, 35.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ellen Barry and Salman Masood, "India Claims 'Surgical Strikes' Across Line of Control in Kashmir," *New York Times*, September 29, 2016, accessed November 8, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/30/world/asia/kashmir-india-pakistan.html?_r=0.

³³ Karan Singh and Qasim Nauman, "What Indian and Pakistani Newspapers Said About 'Surgical Strikes' Along Line of Control," *Wall Street Journal*, September 30, 2016, accessed March 10, 2017, <http://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2016/09/30/what-indian-and-pakistani-newspapers-said-about-surgical-strikes-along-line-of-control/>.

³⁴ Ibid.

Pakistan. Eventually, Pakistan will have to adopt measures to address its growing asymmetry with India to deter India from any kind of aggressiveness.

Indian assertiveness affects its other neighbors also. It has resorted to flexing its military muscle in Sri Lanka in the past.³⁵ Most recently, India resorted to surgical strikes across its border with Myanmar on the pretext of cross-border terrorism.³⁶ The possibility of India repeating such actions cannot be ruled out. In effect, India continues to exert military influence over its smaller and militarily weak neighbors.

Overall, the environment in South Asia is becoming more complex. India's increase in military capabilities has the potential to destabilize the region and add to this complexity. More importantly, this would directly affect the political and economic environment in the South Asia. The situation is undesirable. South Asia is home to one of the largest populations in the world. It is a region of immense geopolitical significance. Developments in the region, particularly those that could lead to instability, must be examined in detail. Therefore, this research will focus on India's military capability enhancement and its possible effects on stability in South Asia.

³⁵ Walter Ladwig III, "India and Military Power Projection: Will the Land of Gandhi become a Conventional Great Power?" *Asian Survey* 50, no. 6 (2010): 1162-1183.

³⁶ Hindu, "Myanmar operation: 70 commandos finish task in 40 minutes," June 10, 2015, accessed November 6, 2016, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/myanmar-operation-70-commandos-finish-task-in-40-minutes/article7302348.ece>.

Thesis Statement

India's growing military potential—directly linked to its offensive limited war strategy—will exacerbate the existing instability in South Asia caused by a multitude of political, ideological, security, and military factors.

Research Questions

Primary Research Question: What are the effects of India's growing military ambitions and potential on the stability of the South Asian region?

Secondary Research Questions

1. What is India's current military potential?
2. How is India increasing its military potential (capabilities)?
3. What would these capabilities enable?
4. How would this affect stability in South Asia?

Limitations

A primary limitation for the purpose of this research is the access to the published national security and military strategies of any of the South Asian countries. This limits the research by not allowing the researcher to clearly ascertain the national interests, perceived threats, and intentions of the states in the region. Secondly, interests and ambitions of states are likely to shift as per the dictates of the constantly evolving geopolitical environment. Conclusions and inferences drawn during this research would lose their validity should such a shift take place. Thirdly, the environment in South Asia has always been influenced by the interests and actions of global powers such as the 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. When and how these external actors will become active

in the region is difficult to predict. Therefore, for the purpose of this research, the region will be considered comparatively inert to outside influences. Lastly, time constraints are likely to affect the extent of this work. The next chapter will outline key sources of this study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is no dearth of literature covering various aspects of South Asian security. I have attempted to remain selective at this stage, utilizing sources that explain relevant issues related to my area of research. This review covers discussions by various authors regarding India's strategic outlook, military modernization, and evolution of military strategy.

Threat Perception and Strategic Outlook

Most analysts argue that the Indian policy makers do not possess a clear strategic outlook. They believe that this is the reason why India has never published an official national security strategy. This gives way to the debate about India's intent behind the enhancement of its military potential. Some analysts argue that the intent is power projection, while others contend that the intent is to counter the threats and challenges emanating from India's immediate neighborhood and from within India. Indian policy makers accord preeminence to these threats and challenges due to their historical, ideological, and geographic linkages with Indian security. In this way, Indian policy maker's threat perception shapes India's strategic outlook and drives its military potential enhancement.

Stephen P. Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta have carried out a comprehensive analysis of India's strategic outlook in their book *Arming without Aiming: India's Military Modernization*. India's economic potential has grown, and the country has dramatically increased its military spending to enhance its military capabilities. The authors argue that

India is building up its military strength in the absence of a clearly articulated strategic direction.

The political leadership in India has historically emphasized “strategic restraint.”³⁷ The concept is vague and leaves the armed forces rudderless. Resultantly, the three services orient their strategic thinking as per their own interpretations and threat perceptions. The Army focuses on planning for a limited offensive against Pakistan envisioned in its Cold Strat strategy.³⁸ Its modernization is also oriented on the same theme. The Air Force is focused on developing capabilities suited for strategic penetration, air dominance, and air defense. The Navy has shown intent to develop the capabilities to operate throughout the Indian Ocean.³⁹ Overall, the three services are following divergent strategic directions due to the absence of a coherent national security strategy. This can lead to a mismatch between service capabilities besides signaling a provocative intent towards other regional actors.

The authors also argue that India’s military modernization is inconsistent with the most pressing threats faced by India. Unconventional threats currently dominate India’s threat spectrum.⁴⁰ However, India’s modernization reflects preparation for conventional war. Focus areas for modernization include tanks, fighter jets, and aircraft carriers.⁴¹

³⁷ Stephen Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming: India's Military Modernization* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2013), xiii.

³⁸ Ibid., 60.

³⁹ Ibid., 151.

⁴⁰ Ibid., xi.

⁴¹ Ibid.

These weapons have limited utility in counterinsurgency and antiterrorism operations. The deviation from the main threat may result in the lack of necessary capabilities required to defeat unconventional threats. Moreover, development of conventional capabilities is likely to accentuate the threat perception of its neighboring states.⁴²

The New Arthashastra: A Security Strategy for India is a compilation of essays edited by Gurmeet Kanwal. The book is an attempt at outlining a national security strategy for India. From the collection, General V.P. Malik's essay titled "Defense Policy and Management of National Security" evaluates India's security challenges and proposes a national strategic outlook for the future. The main external security challenges for India include Pakistan, China, and Afghanistan due to territorial disputes and security imperatives. Internal security challenges comprise left and right-wing insurgencies going on within India.⁴³ The author argues that the current security trends indicate that the chances of conventional war in South Asia have decreased, while the likelihood of limited conflicts has increased. However, he proposes that the armed forces must remain prepared for the entire spectrum of conflict. The author did not include power projection amongst India's strategic priorities.

Lieutenant General B.S. Pawar's essay titled "Threats, challenges, and vulnerabilities" (same book) elaborates threats faced by India. His main area of emphasis

⁴² Cohen and Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming*, 66.

⁴³ Ved Malik, "Defence Policy and Management of National Security," in *The New Arthashastra: A New Security Strategy for India*, ed. Gurmeet Kanwal (Noida: HarperCollins, 2016), 31-32.

remains threats emanating out of India's neighborhood.⁴⁴ The author identifies China as India's long-term challenge due to its assertive border policies and overall competition with India. He classifies the threat from Pakistan as "receding" due to the difference in military capabilities of both countries. The increasing "Pakistan–China collusion" marked by the increasing cooperation and interoperability between the two countries is the main area of concern for India.⁴⁵ He has also highlighted India's challenges in dealing with Afghanistan, Nepal, and Myanmar due to the political and economic instability in these countries. He advocates an assertive politico-military outlook for India to protect its interests.

Lieutenant General Aditya Singh's essay titled "National Security Objectives" (same book) suggests the broad contours of India's national security strategy. Singh presents a similar threats and challenges assessment as the previous two authors. Basing on the assessment, he identifies the top three defense objectives for India as "building capacity to confront two adversaries," deterring adversaries from initiating conflict, and developing capabilities to "undertake intense operations at short notice across all domains."⁴⁶

Brigadier Gurmeet Kanwal's essay "The New Arthashastra: A Security Strategy for India" (same book) concludes the discussion on threats and challenges faced by India

⁴⁴ B. S. Pawar, "Threats, challenges, and vulnerabilities," in *The New Arthashastra: A New Security Strategy for India*, ed. Gurmeet Kanwal (Noida: HarperCollins, 2016), 72-84.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Aditya Singh, "National Security Objectives," in *The New Arthashastra: A New Security Strategy for India*, ed. Gurmeet Kanwal (Noida: HarperCollins, 2016), 51.

and the need for a national security strategy. This essay is the clearest example of the centrality that Pakistan holds in the Indian thinking on national security. Kanwal identifies Pakistan and a Pakistan-China alliance as two major external threats to Indian security. India faces the prospect of a single or two front war because of its territorial disputes and other frictions with Pakistan and China. Such a conflict is not likely in the next ten years as Pakistan is committed to battling terrorism and the Chinese are preoccupied with the consolidation of national power. This allows India a “ten-year window” to modernize and build military potential for such a contingency.⁴⁷ On the other hand, the insurgencies in Jammu and Kashmir and northeastern India are the principal internal security challenges for India. Interestingly, the author does not identify trade and energy security as priority challenges for India.

Thinkers on Indian national security place considerable emphasis on the threats and challenges that India confronts within South Asia. India’s location and its past may have important linkages to such thinking. Robert D. Kaplan discusses this phenomenon in his book *The Revenge of Geography*.

Kaplan argues that India’s neighboring states present it with security challenges that are likely to remain its preoccupation. These challenges prevent India from focusing its energies towards power projection.⁴⁸ The majority of these challenges arise out of the India-Pakistan rivalry. He contends that India and Pakistan’s mutual fear of each other

⁴⁷ Gurmeet Kanwal, “The New Arthashastra: A New Security Strategy for India,” in *The New Arthashastra: A New Security Strategy for India*, ed. Gurmeet Kanwal (Noida: HarperCollins, 2016), 380.

⁴⁸ Robert Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography* (New York: Random House, 2012), 228-254.

“should not surprise anyone”⁴⁹ as it is rooted in an imperfect geographical divide and a shared history of mistrust. The Indian elite perceives Pakistan as the remnants of the Muslim invaders that conquered India over centuries because it lies on the historic Northwestern invasion routes. They also view Pakistan and Afghanistan as parts of the greater Indian Subcontinent where influence must be maintained to secure India’s national interests.⁵⁰ On the other hand, the Indo-China rivalry is much less volatile due to the geographic separation offered by the Himalayas and the dynamic trading relation between the two countries. Kaplan also highlights how technology is reshaping these regional rivalries. India, Pakistan, and China now sit within overlapping missile ranges of each other.⁵¹ This has added more complexity to an already volatile region.

Bakhtawar M. Jain in his book *India in the New South Asia* provides an important discourse on the strategic environment in South Asia. He outlines how “geo-psychology” continues to influence mindsets and exacerbate tensions in South Asia.⁵² Within the main argument, he has also brought out the Indian triggered arms race in South Asia resulting from the country’s detonation of a nuclear device in 1974. Bakhtawar has also attempted to summarize India’s provocative actions that have shaped the perceptions of its neighbors in the past. He highlights India’s direct involvement in the division of Pakistan in 1971; its nuclear testing in 1974; its annexation of Sikkim in 1975; and its intervention

⁴⁹ Kaplan, *The Revenge of Geography*, 241.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 248-249.

⁵² Bakhtawar Jain, *India in the New South Asia: Strategic, Military and Economic Concerns in the Age of Nuclear Diplomacy* (New Delhi: Viva Publishers, 2011), 6.

in Sri Lanka in 1987, as some of the key historic events that have reinforced perceptions against India amongst its smaller neighbors.⁵³ Jain dispels the notion of an intense Indo-China rivalry by highlighting economic cooperation between both the countries amounting to 53 billion dollars as early as 2008.⁵⁴

Gautam Navlakha in his article “Shrinking Horizon of an Expanding Economy: India's Military Spending” provides important insights into the steep increase in Indian military spending 2002 from onwards and suggests (although less assertively) that excessive defense expenditures and acquired capabilities would encourage other regional states to reciprocate.⁵⁵ As per the data presented by the author, the lion’s share of defense expenditure goes to the land component of the Indian armed forces. India’s immediate neighbors feel threatened by the increase in the capabilities of the land forces. As a response, these countries are likely to ramp up their own capabilities to address their growing asymmetry with India.

Badrul Khan in his article “India and the Making of a Hegemon” discusses the conditions that favor India’s rise as a hegemon in South Asia. India’s geostrategic location is significant because it links all of South Asia. The country has seen immense economic growth over the past three decades with GDP growth figures approaching 8 percent. India has made significant investments in military modernization allowing it to increase its military potential. India is maintaining a cooperative yet competitive

⁵³ Jain, *India in the New South Asia*, 28.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Gautam Navlakha, “Shrinking Horizon of an Expanding Economy: India's Military Spending,” *Economic and Political Weekly* 41, no. 14 (April 2006): 1338-1340.

relationship with China by cooperating in economic fields while remaining sensitive to China's border policies. The country has abandoned its post-independence policy of non-alignment and has entered into a strategic relationship with the US.

These conditions and developments allow India to exert its influence on the smaller countries in South Asia and assume a hegemonic position. The author has an interesting take on India's Hindutva ideology, which is commonly perceived as an ideological offshoot of "Hindu fundamentalism."⁵⁶ He argues that nationalism derived from Hindutva has the potential to increase India's national power by healing the cleavages in the dominant Hindu population.⁵⁷ The author does not discuss the fragmentation that it may cause between the Hindus and other communities whose coexistence has been facilitated by a secular tradition in India.

Aseema Sinha and Jon Dorschner in their article "India: Rising Power or a Mere Revolution of Rising Expectations?"⁵⁸ discuss the dynamics of India's growing global aspirations. They contend that the major source of these aspirations is India's massive economic growth. The article does not explain India's regional strategy. However, the authors suggest that "India's military continues to view its principal threats as a Pakistan-China axis and terrorism."⁵⁹

⁵⁶ Badrul Khan, "India and the Making of a Hegemon," *Australian Quarterly* 80, no. 1 (January 2008): 29-36.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

⁵⁸ Aseema Sinha and Jon Dorschner, "India: Rising Power or a Mere Revolution of Rising Expectations?" *Polity* 42, no. 1 (2010): 74-99.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 91.

Walter C. Ladwig III in his article “India and Military Power Projection: Will the Land of Gandhi Become a Conventional Great Power?” discusses how India has projected hard power in the past and how it may transition to projecting soft and hard power to protect its interests in the wider region in the future. The author classifies India’s use of force in the past in the following categories of hard power projection.⁶⁰ However, it is interesting to note that India usually resorts to use of force within the confines of South Asia; mostly against Pakistan.

1. India carried out an armed intervention by employing three corps to assist rebels in East Pakistan in 1971.
2. India has frequently resorted to punishment by strikes on Pakistani posts across the Line of Control (the de facto boundary between India held Kashmir and Azad Kashmir).
3. India’s use of force in Hyderabad and Goa as part of the post-independence consolidation of its territory can be classified as conquest.
4. India carried out a show the flag operation when it used force to provide relief to ethnic Tamils in Sri Lanka in 1987.

Ladwig argues that India has a growing interest in regions extending from the Suez to Malacca. This is mainly due to India’s reliance on foreign goods and energy, which comprises of 90 percent of its trade by volume.⁶¹ Therefore, India will have to

⁶⁰ Walter Ladwig III, “India and Military Power Projection: Will the Land of Gandhi become a Conventional Great Power?” *Asian Survey* 50, no. 6 (2010): 1162-1183.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 1173.

project power for a variety of roles to include protection of sea lines of communication, peacekeeping missions, and noncombatant evacuation operations. The Indian Navy and the Air Force have identified the same necessity in their service strategies and statements. However, the armed forces may not currently have the capacity to execute all these tasks.

David Scott in his article “India's “Extended Neighborhood” Concept: Power Projection for a Rising Power,” discusses a shift in Indian geo-strategic thinking. India has historically been focussed on South Asia. Recent Indian economic growth has increased its dependence on goods and energy trade with regions beyond South Asia. Therefore, trade and energy security have become India’s major concerns. This has given rise to the thinking that India needs to expand its influence to wider circles that comprise “India’s extended neighborhood.”⁶²

However, the new attention towards an extended neighborhood has not changed India’s primary focus on South Asia. Scott argues that Pakistan and China are still the two main strategic concerns for India.⁶³ India’s troubled relationship with Pakistan affects its undertakings in Western and Central Asia, while its competition with China will have implications when India tries to increase its influence in Southeast Asia. Therefore, the two countries pose challenges with regards to India’s power projection in the region and beyond and will continue to be areas of primary concern for India.

⁶² David Scott, “India's “Extended Neighborhood” Concept: Power Projection for a Rising Power,” *India Review* 8, no. 2 (2009): 107-143. The term extended neighborhood was first used by Indian External Affairs Minister Pranab Mukherjee to refer to a wider area of India’s interest.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 113.

Analysts have competing views on India's strategic outlook. Some argue that India is now geared to expand its influence and protect its interests beyond the South Asian region. Others contend that the Indian leadership is still fixated on its immediate neighborhood. There is a broad consensus that the Indian threat perception is both Pakistan and China-oriented. This threat perception may have a strong influence in shaping the Indian strategic outlook. This is not what India likes to project. Indian leaders have repeatedly asserted that India is now focusing on extending its reach farther than South Asia. They have coined terms like "India's extended neighborhood" to describe their intent on creating a larger area of influence. The actual Indian intent remains unclear. We shall now transition to an examination of views on India's military capability development.

Military Capability Development

Chapter 4 of this study provides a detailed discussion on India's military capability development. However, some relevant ideas have been outlined here to build perspective and shape the argument. The intent is to examine different views to see whether India's military capability development is in line with its earlier discussed strategic outlook.

Christopher Budihas in his 2016 paper "Is India's Military Modernization Evidence of an Aggressive National Security Policy?" analyzes the strategic thinking that has led India to develop its current military capabilities. Budihas contradicts the popular belief that India is enhancing its military capabilities to extend its influence beyond its immediate neighborhood and that the U.S. could leverage growing Indian capabilities to counter Chinese influence in Southeast Asia. He argues that greater part of India's

defense budget is spent on developing the Army’s capabilities. These capabilities would enable the Army to fight land battles in a war with Pakistan or China. Power projection requires the development of air and naval capabilities. Capability development in these areas has been modest.⁶⁴

The author supports his argument by presenting data that (displayed in figure 4) shows relatively little change in the aggregate numbers of Indian Navy equipment between 1991 and 2015. Similar data about the Indian Air Force and the Army shows that there have been no major changes in their power projection capabilities either. Therefore, Indian strategists are more concerned with addressing security challenges in the immediate neighborhood than with developing capabilities for power projection.

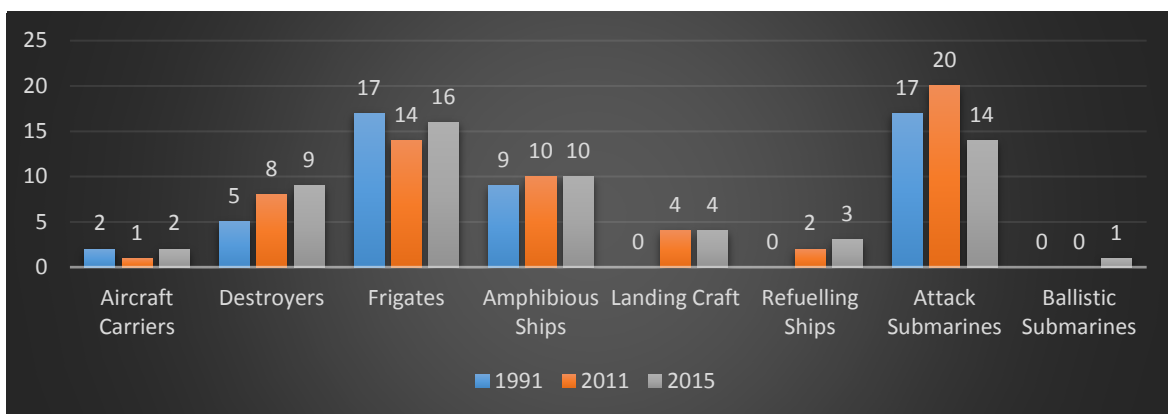


Figure 4. Data presented by Budihas showing a modest change in aggregate numbers of Indian Navy equipment between 1991 and 2015

Source: Christopher Budihas, “Is India’s Military Modernization Evidence of an Aggressive National Security Policy?” *The Land Warfare Papers*, no. 110 (October 2016): 11.

⁶⁴ Christopher Budihas, “Is India’s Military Modernization Evidence of an Aggressive National Security Policy?” *The Land Warfare Papers*, no. 110 (October 2016): 13.

In his conclusion, Budihas opines against the possibility of the U.S. leveraging India's capabilities to counter China:

The proposition that the United States can leverage an allegedly growing Indian maritime fleet as a counter to assertive China is a popular idea in academic literature, but the argument is built largely on wishful thinking.⁶⁵

Ashley Tellis and Michael Wills in their report *Military Modernization in an Era of Uncertainty* study the modernization being carried out by different countries in Asia. The report highlights the likelihood of a shift in India's conventional balance with Pakistan and China:

India's forces today are sufficient to defend against China beyond the near term but do not guarantee a quick, decisive conventional victory over Pakistan due to doctrinal and technological problems. Qualitative changes in technology, doctrine, and military culture could shift the calculus in India's favor in the next ten to fifteen years.⁶⁶

Ashley Tellis in another article "The Evolution of U.S.-Indian Ties: Missile Defense in an Emerging Strategic Relationship" examines India's endorsement of the U.S. Ballistic Missile Defense Initiative. The author argues that the Indian strategic thinking is mainly South Asia oriented. India possessed insufficient military capabilities to militarily coerce Pakistan or take decisive action against it during the 2002 military crisis between the two countries.⁶⁷ Pakistan's nuclear deterrence was the main limiting

⁶⁵ Budihas, "Is India's Military Modernization Evidence of an Aggressive National Security Policy?" 16.

⁶⁶ Ashley Tellis and Michael Wills, eds., *Military Modernization in an Era of Uncertainty: Executive Summary* (Washington, DC: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2005).

⁶⁷ Ashley Tellis, "The Evolution of US-Indian Ties: Missile Defense in an Emerging Strategic Relationship," *International Security* 30, no. 4 (2006): 113-151.

factor in this regard. Therefore, Indian policy makers are now contemplating the development of a ballistic missile defense capability to address the impasse and regain the capability to wage conventional war.

Gurmeet Kanwal's article "India's military modernization: plans and strategic underpinnings" provides an extensive discussion on its strategic outlook and military modernization. The author views India's security thought process to be China and Pakistan centric. India needs to prepare for a "Two-Front War" against these adversaries.⁶⁸ The Indian military does not currently possess the capabilities to act decisively against them. Modernization challenges are preventing India from developing such capabilities.

At the time of the article's publication in 2012, India was spending 2 percent of its GDP on defense. The majority of the expenditure was being incurred on pay, allowances, fuel and routine accounts. Only 20-25 percent was available for modernization. The shortage of funds hampered India's efforts to modernize its military effectively. The author quotes the then defense minister A.K Anthony's remarks that India was at least 15 years behind in military modernization. This is seen in a number of weaknesses in the military's inventory. In the case of the Army, this has resulted in the obsolescence of tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, self-propelled artillery, night fighting equipment and network-centric capabilities.

⁶⁸ Gurmeet Kanwal, "India's Military Modernization: Plans and Strategic Underpinnings," The National Bureau of Asian Research, September 2012, accessed December 20, 2016, <http://www.nbr.org/research/activity.aspx?id=275>.

The Centre for Land Warfare Studies (CLAWS) published an interview with Lt General J. P. Singh, Deputy Chief of the Indian Army in their winter 2010 issue. General Singh outlines the capabilities that the Indian Army is currently enhancing:

The critical capabilities that are being enhanced to meet challenges across the spectrum, include battlefield transparency, battlefield management systems, night-fighting capability, enhanced firepower, including terminally guided munitions, integrated maneuver capability to include self-propelled artillery, quick reaction surface-to-air missiles, the latest assault engineer equipment, tactical control systems, integral combat aviation support and network centricity.⁶⁹

An analysis of these capabilities points towards the intent to enable a quick and decisive land victory over an adversary. Indian Cold Start and Proactive Operations strategies identify the need for such a victory in a war against Pakistan. We shall now examine views on these strategies.

Evolution of Military Strategy

Walter C. Ladwig III's article "A Cold Start for Hot Wars? The Indian Army's New Limited War Doctrine" talks about India's new Cold Start strategy. The strategy is aimed at the rapid initiation of a punitive war against Pakistan. It seeks to employ eight "Integrated Battle Groups" configured for shallow attacks across the India-Pakistan border at a short notice. The attacks will intentionally be kept shallow to prevent Pakistan from resorting to the nuclear option. These rapid yet shallow attacks have been designed to catch Pakistan's armed forces unprepared and inflict substantial damage by utilization of hi-tech weaponry. Indian strategists envision that such maneuvers would embarrass

⁶⁹ Gurmeet Kanwal, "Modernization Thrusts of the Indian Army," *CLAWS Journal* (Winter 2010): 1, accessed January 4, 2017, http://www.claws.in/images/journals_doc/CJ-winter-2010.pdf.

Pakistan and force it to accept terms. Ladwig argues that resorting to such a strategy would be a primary source of instability in South Asia, as it would prevent the international community from pressuring the belligerents into exercising restraint.⁷⁰

Ladwig continues his discussion on “Cold Start” in his July 2015 article “Could India’s Military Really Crush Pakistan?” He analyzes the validity of the strategy in the evolving environment marked by India’s increased defense spending (which stood at U.S. \$ 39.8 billion in 2015). The author argues that the new Indian strategy faces several implementation hurdles.

To begin with, India does not possess the force ratio for a decisive victory on its western border. Since Cold Start envisions offensive thrusts by forces already poised along the international border, India will only be able to achieve a force superiority of 1:1.2, which is less than ideal. India also lacks the technological edge needed for a decisive victory. A major portion of its tank fleet (less the T-90s) is nearing obsolescence and lacks night-fighting capability. There is also a deficiency in self-propelled artillery: a critical enabler for offensive operations. Other problem areas include the unsuitability of terrain for offensive operations along the Indo-Pak border, lack of strategic surprise, and Pakistan’s elaborate conventional response mechanism. The author also highlights Pakistan’s development of tactical nuclear warheads is a response to its growing conventional asymmetry with India. Ladwig concludes that the Indo-Pak problem is

⁷⁰ Walter Ladwig III, “A Cold Start for Hot Wars? The Indian Army's New Limited War Doctrine,” *International Security* 32, no. 3 (Winter 2007/2008): 158-62.

political in nature and India's offensive designs may not succeed in obtaining a settlement through a brisk war.⁷¹

The evolution of the Cold Start strategy raises the question about the space for war in South Asia. Both India and Pakistan possess nuclear weapons. There is no precedence of nuclear-armed states engaging in conventional wars with each other. Is South Asia different? S. Paul Kapoor has answered this question in his 2005 article "India and Pakistan's Unstable Peace: Why Nuclear South Asia Is Not like Cold War Europe." He relates the instability in South Asia to Glen Snyder's "stability/instability paradox." He argues that the "stability/instability paradox" is still relevant in South Asia.⁷² According to him, Nuclear weapons of India and Pakistan reduce the risk of total war, while simultaneously allowing space to the adversaries to engage in limited war.

It is also important to consider the question of how India's growing military power and provocative strategy formulation may add to the instability in South Asia. John C. Garnett in his 1970 book *Theories of Peace and Security* offers a mathematical analysis of the impact of military power on stability. He argues that the increase in military power of one country may lead to instability by enhancing the threat perception of its adversaries. He explains that the threat perception of a nation is the product of its perception of its adversary's military potential and intent. In his words "threat perception

⁷¹ Walter Ladwig III, "Could India's Military Really Crush Pakistan?" *National Interest*, July 15, 2015, 2, accessed December 14, 2016, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/could-indias-military-really-crush-pakistan-13247>.

⁷² Paul Kapur, "India and Pakistan's Unstable Peace: Why Nuclear South Asia Is Not Like Cold War Europe," *International Security* 30, no. 2 (2005): 127-152.

= perceived military capabilities x perceived intentions.”⁷³ He further elaborates how (based on perceptions of intent) the U.S. does not perceive any threat from the UK, while Russia perceives a substantial threat from the UK (a military power). Basing on the same equation, India’s military capability development and offensive strategy formulation may enhance Pakistan’s threat perception. This would lead to increased hostility between India and Pakistan leading to instability in the region.

The next chapter outlines the research methodology for this work. The posed primary and secondary questions guide this research. Different analytical frameworks have been introduced in various parts of the study to answer these questions. However, the paper does not adhere to a single framework constantly.

⁷³ John Garnett, *Theories of Peace and Security* (UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 1970), 152.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND CHAPTER OUTLINE

At this stage, it is pertinent to repeat the primary and secondary research questions. The primary research question is: What are the effects of India's growing military ambitions and potential on the stability of the South Asian region? The secondary research questions are: (1) What is India's current military potential? (2) How is India increasing its military potential (capabilities)? (3) What would these capabilities enable: traditional threat mitigation or power projection? (4) How would this increase instability in South Asia?

An effort has been made to answer the secondary questions in a manner that allows the research to flow towards answering the primary question. Firstly, India's current warfighting capabilities have been evaluated. The country's military strategy formulation has been kept in perspective in the process. Thereafter, the increase in India's warfighting capabilities has been examined. Next, an attempt has been made to infer the strategic guidance enabling the increase in military capabilities by utilizing Richard H. Yarger's ends–ways–means construct.⁷⁴ Lastly, existing sources of instability in South

⁷⁴ Richard Yarger, "Toward a Theory of Strategy: Art Lykke and the U.S. Army War College Strategy Model," in *U.S. Army War College Guide to National Security Issues* Vol.1, ed. J Boone Bartholomees (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 2008), 44-47. The author describes "the ends" as objectives, "the ways" as concepts, and "the means" as resources, within a strategic framework. In case of India, the means are well known i.e. the ongoing force development and military modernization. There is ongoing debate regarding what ends these means will be employed towards and through what ways. This research will attempt to trace the linkages from known means–through reasonably known ways–towards uncertain ends to gain more clarity on all three and ascertain their implications on regional security.

Asia have been discussed and an effort has been made to ascertain how the rise in India's military potential affects them. It is also important to highlight here that the entire research has been based on analyzing the extensively available literature on the subject to draw inferences.

The chapter breakdown of this paper takes its lead from the research questions. Chapter 1, 2 and 3 deal with the introduction, literature review and research methodology respectively. Chapter 4 answers the first, second, and third question i.e. India's current military potential, the ongoing increase in India's military potential, and what this enables. Chapter 5 outlines the existing sources of instability in South Asia and evaluates the regional stability implications of the rise in India's military potential. Lastly, chapter 6 highlights the general conclusions of this study.

It is important to highlight here that the academic debate regarding India's intent behind enhancing its military potential is central to this study. Most analysts link India's defense spending to its growing economic power and influence. They contend that India is spending on its defense in order to strengthen its capability to project power beyond its immediate neighborhood. Others differ, they view India's intentions to be South Asia-centric; focused on addressing traditional threats. Chapter 4 of this study takes this debate further by answering the first three questions posed for this research.

The answers to these questions lead to an assessment of the thought process behind India's force development. These answers have been evaluated using Yarger's "ends-ways-means-risk" construct.⁷⁵ The purpose is to gauge the ends or the objectives

⁷⁵ Yarger, "Toward a Theory of Strategy," 44-47.

India is pursuing as they remain uncertain. By gathering a fair assessment of the ways and means, linkages have been traced to the possible ends.

This can be explained in the context of Germany and France on the eve of World War Two. Let us suppose that the German ends were unknown. Yet an examination of the means they were developing i.e. the Panzer Divisions, and the ways they were evolving i.e. Blitzkrieg, can only be linked to an overland defeat or occupation of a neighboring country i.e. France or Russia, as the possible objectives.

Similarly, an analysis of India's known means and likely ways leads to an assessment of the possible ends it is pursuing (see figure 5), and a determination of ends helps in understanding how India's actions can destabilize the region. If the ends are power projection in India's "extended neighborhood,"⁷⁶ logically they should not lead to instability in South Asia. However, if the ends relate to the domination of India's immediate neighbors—particularly Pakistan—they can potentially lead to instability.



Figure 5. Tracing linkages between ends, ways, and means

Source: Created by the author.

⁷⁶ David Scott, "India's "Extended Neighborhood" Concept: Power Projection for a Rising Power," *India Review* 8, no. 2 (2009): 107-143. The author has used the term extended neighborhood to refer to areas lying beyond South Asia.

CHAPTER 4

AN ANALYSIS OF INDIA'S MILITARY CAPABILITIES AND INTENT

India's Current Military Potential

The Indian armed forces comprise of the Army, the Navy and the Air Force, along with strategic and para-military forces. In terms of numbers, the Indian armed forces are the second largest in the region with 1,325,000 active duty personnel and 1,155,000 reserves.⁷⁷ For a meaningful discussion on the Indian armed forces, a historical perspective on India's threat perception and strategic evolution is necessary.

Threat Perception

The Indian armed forces trace their lineage to the British Indian Army, Air Force, and Navy. After independence from the British, the armed forces continued the process of evolution into capable services, mostly due to the precarious security situation in South Asia. India has fought four major wars since 1947 besides numerous other border skirmishes, smaller conflicts, and insurgencies. Three of these wars were fought against Pakistan in 1948, 1965, and 1971.⁷⁸ The 1999 Kargil conflict and the 2001 Operation Parakaram were other mentionable low-intensity conflicts between the two countries.

⁷⁷ Militaryperiscope, "India-Armed Forces Structure," last modified June 1, 2015, accessed February 10, 2017, <https://www.militaryperiscope.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/nations>.

⁷⁸ Tate Blahnik, "A History of the Conflict between India and Pakistan with Intervention from the United Nations," stanford.edu, accessed March 1, 2017, https://web.stanford.edu/class/e297c/war_peace/confrontation/intervention.html.

India also went to war with China in 1962. That war ended in a swift Chinese victory.⁷⁹ In view of its past, India's major threat perceptions have been associated with Pakistan and China.⁸⁰ For a major part of its history, and arguably even now, this threat perception has been the major driver for India's military build-up and strategies.⁸¹

India shares borders with both Pakistan and China. Past conflicts with both these countries have mainly been air power enabled land battles. Hence, the massive size and importance of the Indian Army as compared to the Air Force and the Navy. Today, as India potentially signals its intentions of projecting power, it is logical to invest in enhancing the capabilities of the Air Force and the Navy. However, the Army is still receiving the bulk of capital acquisition budget.⁸² Resultantly, the Air Force and the Navy are lacking the capabilities necessary to project power abroad.⁸³

Strategic Evolution

The strategic evolution in the Indian armed forces has naturally been threat centered and revolves around the employment of land and air forces. The changing geopolitical environment and the nuclearization of South Asia have also affected the

⁷⁹ Sukhwant Singh, *India's Wars Since Independence* (Atlanta, GA: Lancer Publishers, 1980), preface.

⁸⁰ Christopher Budihas, "Is India's Military Modernization Evidence of an Aggressive National Security Policy?" *The Land Warfare Papers*, no. 110 (October 2016): 9.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 9.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 10-16.

evolution of strategy.⁸⁴ The most relevant period of such evolution has been from the 1980s to present day. It was in this period General Sundarji, the then Army Chief, conceived an offensive strategy known today as the Sundarji Doctrine.⁸⁵

The doctrine envisaged a defense by pivot corps (defensive formations) to thwart enemy offensives, while the strike corps (offensive formations) would execute trans-frontier offensives deep into enemy territory.⁸⁶ These offensives were intended to seize important territory and destroy enemy forces in the process.⁸⁷ The Air Force was to play a supporting role by augmenting fires and executing counter-air operations.⁸⁸ In the end game, the enemy would be forced to seek a settlement on India's terms. The Sundarji Doctrine required the employment of bulky mechanized forces,⁸⁹ and therefore, could only have been executed in open maneuver spaces like India's Western border with Pakistan. Such operations could not have been executed against China because of the intervening Himalayan terrain. Historically, the development of such doctrines has been indicative of India's Pakistan-centric approach.

⁸⁴ Tariq Ashraf, "Doctrinal Reawakening of the Indian Armed Forces," *Military Review* 84, no. 6 (December 2004): 54.

⁸⁵ Walter Ladwig III, "A Cold Start for Hot Wars? The Indian Army's New Limited War Doctrine," *International Security* 32, no. 3 (Winter 2007/2008): 159-163.

⁸⁶ Ashraf, "Doctrinal Reawakening of the Indian Armed Forces," 57.

⁸⁷ Ladwig, "A Cold Start for Hot Wars," 159-163.

⁸⁸ Ashraf, "Doctrinal Reawakening of the Indian Armed Forces," 59-60.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 57-58.

The Indian Army's employment concept evolved significantly after the 2001 Operation Parakram that created doubts in the practicality of the Sundarji Doctrine.⁹⁰ During Operation Parakram, India commenced a general mobilization of its forces for a decisive strike against Pakistan.⁹¹ The mobilization of strike corps was slow. These forces took more than three weeks to reach their assembly areas.⁹² The opposing Pakistan Army was quick to mobilize and occupy defensive positions. The chance to gain an easy victory was gone. International pressure and diplomatic overtures had resulted in the erosion of political will in India. Despite an expensive mobilization, the Indian armed forces remained stranded in a border standoff with Pakistan.⁹³

Two major problems were identified in the force employment concept. Firstly, the slow mobilization of forces prevented India from carrying out a decisive strike in an earlier timeframe; secondly, the envisaged deep thrusts and comprehensive destruction of a nuclear-armed adversary could result into a nuclear conflagration.⁹⁴ Therefore, there was a need to revise or drop the employment concept and develop a strategy to execute speedy and effective punitive actions against Pakistan.⁹⁵ Indian thinkers went back to the

⁹⁰ Ladwig, "A Cold Start for Hot Wars," 163.

⁹¹ V. K. Sood and Pravin Sawhney. *Operation Parakram: The War Unfinished* (New Delhi, India: Sage Publications, 2003), 83.

⁹² Ibid.

⁹³ Ibid.

⁹⁴ Ladwig, "A Cold Start for Hot Wars," 160.

⁹⁵ Ashraf, "Doctrinal Reawakening of the Indian Armed Forces," 55.

drawing board and came up with the Cold Start strategy.⁹⁶ This strategy calls for rapid yet shallow offensives against Pakistan to capture territory and degrade its armed forces.

It is based on three major assumptions:⁹⁷

1. Despite the nuclear umbrella, space for conventional war still exists in South Asia.
2. Prepositioned (Indian) troops along Pakistan's border could strike before Pakistan mobilizes and positions its forces for combat.
3. The Indian armed forces would be able to strike Pakistan before diplomatic pressure restrains the political leadership.

The Cold Start strategy promulgates early offensives by integrated battle groups (IBGs) culled out from the pivot corps stationed close to India's international border with Pakistan.⁹⁸ These forces would execute shallow offensives to gain footholds while the Pakistani forces are still mobilizing. The ground actions will be preceded by an air campaign to shape the battlefield.⁹⁹ The strike corps would then follow up by exploiting the initial footholds to capture objectives in the intermediate depth of Pakistan's defenses.¹⁰⁰ If needed, forces diverted from the eastern border would exploit these gains.

⁹⁶ Ladwig, "A Cold Start for Hot Wars," 163.

⁹⁷ Ibid., 163-167.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰⁰ Y. I. Patel, "Dig Vijay to Divya Astra—a Paradigm Shift in the Indian Army's Doctrine," Bharat Rakshak Monitor, October 12, 2006, accessed December 16, 2016, <https://www.bharat-rakshak.com/ARMY/today/324-a-paradigm-shift.html>.

Pakistan could thus be defeated and its armed forces embarrassed without taking the strikes deep enough to risk a nuclear response.¹⁰¹ The Indian Army has undergone extensive training and redeployments to allow for the execution of the strategy.

Earlier, the Indian Army did not admit to formulating the Cold Start strategy. Lately, the Army Chief has officially acknowledged the existence of the strategy.¹⁰² The formulation of Cold Start strategy points towards a persistent Pakistan-centric approach in the Indian Army. Therefore, the need to defeat Pakistan in a conflict has been the main driver for strategy formulation and force development in the Indian Army. With this premise, we shall now examine the Indian Forces.

The Indian Army

The Indian Army is the biggest amongst branches of service. It comprises of thirteen corps grouped in six operational commands. Each corps is comprised of two to three divisions. As discussed, the force is organized, trained, and equipped for the pivot and strike corps concept,¹⁰³ with a modest amphibious capability. The size, composition, and disposition of these forces also suggest a Pakistan-centric approach. In the case of a war with Pakistan, these forces would be expected to execute operations envisaged in the Cold Start strategy.¹⁰⁴ However, significant capability gaps may preclude a quick and

¹⁰¹ Patel, “Dig Vijay to Divya Astra.”

¹⁰² Ankit Panda, “A Slip of the Tongue on India's Once-Hyped 'Cold Start' Doctrine?” *Diplomat*, January 7, 2017, accessed February 1, 2017, http://thediplomat.com/2017/01/a-slip-of-the-tongue-on-indias-once-hyped-cold-start-doctrine_

¹⁰³ Ladwig, “A Cold Start for Hot Wars,” 160-165.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

decisive victory. This has driven India's hefty defense spending to ramp up the capabilities of the Indian Army.

First, let's analyze the defensive or the pivot corps. These corps are primarily defensive forces composed of two to three infantry divisions and brigade sized armored and mechanized units. They are structured for holding terrain along India's international borders.¹⁰⁵ The armored and mechanized component of these forces remains available for limited offensive tasks as well.¹⁰⁶

The pivot corps gained added importance with the evolution of the Cold Start strategy. IBGs, designed to initiate rapid offensives against Pakistan, are to be culled out from these Corps'.¹⁰⁷ Each IBG will comprise of at least an armored brigade and two to three infantry brigades. Analysis of the pivot corps order of battle suggests that the corps reserves of these corps would invariably contribute most of their mechanized elements for the formulation of the IBGs. Seven out of the ten defensive or pivot corps of the Indian Army are currently garrisoned in the proximity of India's border with Pakistan including two deployed along the Line of Control in Indian Occupied Kashmir (see figure 2).¹⁰⁸ Such preponderance of forces disposed along the Pakistani border lends weight to

¹⁰⁵ Ali Ahmed, "India's Limited War Doctrine-The Structural Factor," IDSA Monograph Series, no. 10, December 2012, 31-40.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Janes.ihs, "India: Army," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment* (2017), accessed March 1, 2017, <http://janes.ihs.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/MilitarySecurityAssessments/Display/1767362>.

Pakistan's threat perception who in turn tries to generate and deploy adequate forces to prevent an overmatch in the case of a conflict.

The primary offensive component of the Indian Army is made up of the three strike corps.¹⁰⁹ Each strike corps consists of an armored division and one to two infantry divisions (including one mechanized division).¹¹⁰ Additional artillery, engineers, and air defense units supplement the force.¹¹¹ The strike corps composition enables them to conduct sustained offensive operations against medium to heavy resistance. Depending on the opposition, the strike corps may execute pincer movements into the depth of enemy defenses. Additional infantry divisions from other sectors can enhance the offensive potential of these forces.

All strike corps (three) of the Indian Army are oriented westwards¹¹² and are likely to play a major part in the execution of the Cold Start. These forces are likely to exploit initial footholds established by IBG operations.¹¹³ While the IBGs are likely to commence invasion immediately, these forces may mobilize and assemble for a continuation of the offensive from pockets seized by the IBGs. There has been a constant consideration in the Indian Army for moving components of these forces further towards

¹⁰⁹ Janes.ihs, "India: Army."

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Ahmed, "India's Limited War Doctrine," 40.

the Pakistani border to enable a seamless fusion with the IBGs.¹¹⁴ Some steps have already been taken in this regard.¹¹⁵

The strike corps are capable of executing combined arms warfare and boast substantial combat potential.¹¹⁶ Their armored and mechanized components are equipped with the Russian-made T-90 tanks and infantry fighting vehicles (BMP I, II and III).¹¹⁷ These formations also possess Russian made and indigenously produced artillery, air defense, and combat engineer equipment.¹¹⁸ The strike corps are network enabled, possess modern electronic warfare assets, and are partially capable of day and night operations. Joint fires comprising Air Force assets and ground-based multiple launch rocket systems are key enablers of the strike corps.¹¹⁹

Overall, the composition and disposition of the bulk of the Indian Army display a Pakistan-centric approach. That begs the question of whether or not the Indian Army possess adequate combat potential to defeat Pakistan comprehensively. Various analysts have discussed the problem. The Pakistan Army can bring substantial capabilities to the

¹¹⁴ Ahmed, “India’s Limited War Doctrine,” 40.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Global Security, “II Corps,” accessed January 20, 2017, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/india/corps-ii.htm>.

¹¹⁷ Defencenext, “India Army’s Strike Corps River Crossing Maneuvers on Yamuna banks,” accessed February 4, 2016, <http://defencenext.com/2016/07/14/india-armys-strike-corps-river-crossing-manoeuvres-on-river-yamuna-banks/>.

¹¹⁸ Vinay Shukla, “Indian Republic displays ‘Russian Teeth’,” *Russia and India Report*, January 26, 2017, accessed February 4, 2017, http://in.rbth.com/blogs/the_flying_troika/2017/01/26/indian-republic-displays-russian-teeth_688373.

¹¹⁹ Ladwig, “A Cold Start for Hot Wars,” 165.

fight. While the Indian Army can still outweigh their adversary in numbers, a decisive victory requires an overmatch.¹²⁰

Seen in this perspective, significant capability gaps would limit the Indian Army as and when it decides to unfold its offensive potential.¹²¹ The quality and quantity of Indian mechanized platforms are the most serious concern. The armor regiments (of the perceived IBGs) hold a mix of T 72, T 55 and Vijaynta tanks. The T 72s are nearing obsolescence and need major upgrades.¹²² They also lack adequate night fighting equipment and mostly rely on 1st and 2nd generation night-vision devices that preclude accurate fire beyond a few hundred meters.¹²³ The T 55s and Vijayntas carry a 105 mm gun; inadequate for defeating modern armor.¹²⁴ They also do not possess compatible night vision devices; an important requirement in an environment where the majority of the battles are expected to be fought at night.¹²⁵

Lack of self-propelled artillery and integral attack aviation support are the other capability gaps that are likely to affect offensive employment of India's forces. India's

¹²⁰ Kanwal, "India's military modernization: plans and strategic underpinnings."

¹²¹ Walter Ladwig III, "Could India's Military Really Crush Pakistan?" *National Interest*, July 15, 2015, accessed December 14, 2016, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/could-indias-military-really-crush-pakistan-13247>.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

mechanized formations are deficient of self-propelled artillery.¹²⁶ Towed artillery is an unsatisfactory replacement once these formations traverse cross-country terrain.

Adequate integral fires support may not be available to the mechanized formations for undertaking hard-hitting and speedy offensive tasks.¹²⁷ Similarly, integral attack helicopter support is another area of concern.¹²⁸ The IAF currently operates India's fleet of twenty-four MI 24 / 36 Hinds.¹²⁹ Integration of these platforms in offensive and defensive maneuvers requires cross-service coordination and the Army is not completely satisfied with this arrangement.¹³⁰ Moreover, these helicopters are old and need replacement.¹³¹

Other significant shortfalls exist in the areas of battlefield transparency, network centricity, air defense systems, engineer equipment and small arms.¹³² If India desires a

¹²⁶ Ladwig, "Could India's Military Really Crush Pakistan?" Also see Janes.ihs, "India: Army."

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Manu Pubby, "Here is Why Apache and Chinook Helicopters are Game Changers for India," *Economic Times*, September 23, 2015, accessed November 1, 2016, <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/here-is-why-apache-and-chinook-helicopters-are-game-changers-for-india/articleshow/49067786.cms>.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ladwig, "Could India's Military Really Crush Pakistan?"

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid.

decisive victory over Pakistan, it must address these capability gaps.¹³³ If it wants to project power abroad, requirements of the Navy and the Air Force take priority.

It is also important to analyze the Indian Army's capabilities in two commonly perceived mission sets: employment in a border war with China; and employment in amphibious operations in the ambit of its power projection goals. The Indo-China border lies in the Himalayan terrain. The Indian Army will need to concentrate and employ large infantry formations with specialized equipment and training for undertaking offensive and defensive actions in these high altitude areas.¹³⁴ The bulk of the Indian Army is postured towards Pakistan and is configured for mechanized operations on the India-Pakistan border. Additional forces, configured for high altitude combat, will have to be developed to operate against China.¹³⁵

Similarly, a number of analysts argue that India's force development aims at gaining the ability to project power. If that be the case, the Indian Army will likely contribute the land component of these forces. These forces will invariably be required to execute amphibious operations.¹³⁶ So what are Indian Army's capabilities in this domain? The Indian Army fielded a dedicated brigade for amphibious operations in 2009.¹³⁷ This brigade along with a 1200 strong marine unit of the Indian Navy, could likely form the

¹³³ Ladwig, "Could India's Military Really Crush Pakistan?"

¹³⁴ Global Security, "XVII Corps Mountain Strike Corps," accessed January 20, 2017, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/india/corps-xvii.htm>.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Basing on U.S. experience.

¹³⁷ Budihas, "India's Military Modernization," 16.

land component of India's expeditionary forces.¹³⁸ However, Christopher Budihas argues that this capability is modest and its ability to create major effects is questionable.

Budihas also asserts that no major investments are being made in this regard either.¹³⁹

The Indian Air Force

The Indian Air Force (IAF) is a competitive force that boasts a wide variety of platforms. It is composed of six operational commands. The Air Force holds a fleet of 1255 aircraft of all types on its inventory including fighters, ground attack, attack and utility helicopters, trainers and transport aircraft.¹⁴⁰ The fleet includes 706 combat aircraft.¹⁴¹ The Russian-made Sukhoi 30-Mk I is currently the mainstay of the force for air superiority tasks.¹⁴² Other fixed wing combat and training platforms include Mirage 2000 H, MiG 21, MiG 27, MiG 29, Jaguars, and the indigenously produced Tejas.¹⁴³ The IAF's IL 78s provide air-to-air refueling capability while its fleet of C 17s and C 130 Js can be utilized for transport and logistic tasks.

¹³⁸ Budihas, "India's Military Modernization," 16.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ Janes.ihs, "India: Air Force," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment* (2017), accessed March 1, 2017, <https://janes.ihs.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/>.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

¹⁴² Ashley Tellis, *Troubles, They Come in Battalions: The Manifold Trivials of the Indian Air Force* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2016), 13.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 19.

The IAF is also responsible for the provision of rotary wing combat aviation support to the Army through a fleet of twenty Russian-made MI 24 / 35 attack helicopters.¹⁴⁴ The IAF operates out of air bases located across the breadth and the width of the country. It is responsible for the overall air defense of India. It possesses significant radar, electronic warfare, and ground-based air defense capability.

The IAF has its own predicaments in the areas of fleet strength and quality. Indian policy makers believe that the IAF should have sufficient airframes to handle a situation where India is simultaneously at war with both Pakistan and China.¹⁴⁵ The IAF will be required to dedicate 70 percent aircraft against the main belligerent, and 30 percent against the secondary in such a scenario.¹⁴⁶ The IAF's current strength of 36.5 combat squadrons (450 aircraft) is not sufficient for the above. The IAF believes it should possess up to 60 squadrons to meet the perceived requirements.¹⁴⁷ The current IAF strength is not even sufficient to achieve a decisive victory over Pakistan.¹⁴⁸

An assessment of the IAF's ground attack capability is important when considering India's ability to execute its Cold Start strategy. Since Cold Start envisages rapid thrusts by ground forces, close air support from the Indian Air Force would be

¹⁴⁴ Militaryperiscope, "India Army-Plans and Programs," accessed January 20, 2017, <https://www.militaryperiscope.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/nations/asia/india/army/index.html>.

¹⁴⁵ Tellis, *Troubles, They Come in Battalions*, 10.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., 10-11.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 17.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., 15.

critical.¹⁴⁹ The IAF needs a strong ground attack component to render such support to the Army. The IAF currently uses the MiG 21s and Jaguars in this role.¹⁵⁰ A substantial quantity of these platforms is reaching obsolescence.¹⁵¹

The IAF initiated a program for the indigenous production of Tejas (Light Combat Aircraft) to replace these aging platforms. The program has yielded sub-standard results despite thirty years of effort and enormous development expenditures.¹⁵² This implies that the IAF's ground attack component is likely to remain weak. Ashley Tellis has highlighted the same problem in his analysis of the capabilities of the IAF:

Eleven squadrons of MiG 21 Bisons and MiG 27s are likely to be retired before the end of this decade, and the five assorted squadrons of MiG 21 M/MF/bis[ons] should have been eliminated from the force years ago. The five Jaguar squadrons originally acquired to fulfill the deep-penetration strike role since the late 1970s are ineffective in the face of any meaningful opposition.¹⁵³

Similarly, there are problems with the fighter aircraft as well. The IAF relies on the SU 30 Mk I as the mainstay of its fighter force.¹⁵⁴ The SU 30 MK I has proven to be less than ideal to meet the Air Force's requirement due to cost, serviceability, and maintenance problems.¹⁵⁵ The MK I version being assembled in India has a higher per

¹⁴⁹ Ladwig, "Could India's Military Really Crush Pakistan?"

¹⁵⁰ Tellis, *Troubles, They Come in Battalions*, 19.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² Ibid., 8.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 19.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 45-47.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

unit price than its Russian counterpart.¹⁵⁶ The aircraft also has several serviceability issues. At any given time only 55–60 percent of these fighters are available, hence making the IAF weary of the platform.¹⁵⁷

Similar serviceability and operational readiness issues affect the entire aircraft fleet of the IAF. The aircraft operational readiness of the IAF between 2011 and 2014 remained between 55–65 percent.¹⁵⁸ To address the issue, India has long been trying to introduce contemporary western systems in its fighter force.¹⁵⁹ However, their procurement faces hurdles due to inadequate capital funding and bureaucratic issues.¹⁶⁰

Another area of concern is the IAF's limited ability to support Indian power projection ambitions. The foremost requirement of such missions is strategic lift capability. India has acquired eight U.S. made C 17 Globemasters for performing these tasks.¹⁶¹ These aircraft have increased India's capability to project power abroad, yet only modestly.¹⁶² Budihas argues that nineteen C 17s would be required to deploy one battalion over a twenty-four hour period while fifty-five C 17s would be needed for a

¹⁵⁶ Tellis, *Troubles, They Come in Battalions*, 45-47.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

¹⁵⁸ Budihas, "India's Military Modernization," 13.

¹⁵⁹ Tellis, *Troubles, They Come in Battalions*, 39.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

¹⁶¹ Budihas, "India's Military Modernization," 16.

¹⁶² Ibid.

brigade over the same period.¹⁶³ Considering these figures, India will have to significantly enhance its strategic lift capabilities to be able to project power abroad.¹⁶⁴

The Indian Navy

The Indian Navy is smaller than the Army and the Air Force. The force is organized in four operational commands.¹⁶⁵ The Navy possesses a wide array of surface ships, submarines, and aviation assets.

The Indian Navy possesses two aircraft carriers INS Vikramaditya and INS Viraat. Vikramaditya joined the fleet in 2013 after significant upgrading in Russia.¹⁶⁶ However, the carrier is still not operational and may take several years to become combat effective. Other surface platforms include eleven destroyers of Delhi, Rajput, and Kolkata classes commissioned between 1980 and 2001; sixteen frigates commissioned between 1985 and 2013; and twenty-four corvettes commissioned between 1989 and 2004. The fleet also has a number of offshore patrol vessels and minesweepers.¹⁶⁷

The subsurface fleet of the Indian Navy possesses eighteen submarines.¹⁶⁸ INS Chakra, India's first Akula class nuclear-powered submarine is the most potent weapon

¹⁶³ Budihas, "India's Military Modernization," 16.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

¹⁶⁵ Indiannavy.nic, "Combat Platforms," accessed February 7, 2016, <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in>.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

in this fleet. The submarine has a displacement of 8140 tons and was commissioned in 2012.¹⁶⁹ The remainder of the fleet comprises of nine kilo class diesel-electric submarines (displacement–3000 tons) commissioned between 1986 and 2000, and four type 1500 diesel-electric submarines (displacement–1500 tons) commissioned between 1986 and 1994.¹⁷⁰ The air component of the Indian Navy includes a MiG 29 squadron besides anti-submarine and other platforms.¹⁷¹ The Indian Navy also possesses limited amphibious capability including five landing ship platforms, one landing ship dock, four landing craft units, and three landing ship tanks.¹⁷²

The platforms possessed and being developed by the Indian Navy indicate its strategic priorities. Walter Ladwig, while discussing Indian Navy’s pattern of development, argues that the type and quantity of these platforms do not support the idea that India’s ongoing naval expansion is designed to project power or that the Indian Navy is overly concerned with extra-regional forces.¹⁷³ Ladwig also opposes the notion that the Indian Navy’s modernization is aimed at countering China’s growing influence in the

¹⁶⁹ Indiannavy.nic, “Combat Platforms.”

¹⁷⁰ Ibid.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Walter Ladwig III, “Drivers of Indian Naval Expansion,” in *The Rise of Indian Navy: Internal Vulnerabilities, External Challenges*, ed. Harsh Pant (Burlington VA: Ashgate, 2012), 19-40.

Indian Ocean region.¹⁷⁴ He suggests that so far China does not pose a major naval threat to India because of its preoccupation with the South China Sea and Taiwan.¹⁷⁵

If India had focused on “sea denial”, it would have invested heavily in the “weapon of choice” for such operations: the submarine.¹⁷⁶ An analysis of India’s submarine fleet shows that sufficient capability has not been created in this field. Ladwig asserts that the pattern of development followed by the Indian Navy shows that its primary concern is the protection of its energy-related Sea lines of communication (SLOCs) originating from the Persian Gulf.¹⁷⁷

There is no reason to suggest that India does not intend developing a true blue-water power projection fleet. All great powers develop such fleets. However, all land powers like India find it difficult to allocate resources to the Navy until they mitigate land-based threats.¹⁷⁸ We shall see in the ensuing discussion that so far the Indian Army gets lion’s share of the country’s capital acquisitions budget. This restricts the Navy’s development as envisioned in the larger construct of India’s dominance over the Indian Ocean region and limits its capability to the protection of SLOCs; a more local mission.

¹⁷⁴ Ladwig, “Drivers of Indian Naval Expansion,” 19-40.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid,

¹⁷⁸ Jakub Grigyl, *Great Powers and Geopolitical Change* (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 2016).

Defense Budgets, Important Procurements, and Capability Enhancement

India's defense spending has increased rapidly since 1995. Indian defense budget grew over 5.5 percent per year between 1995 and 2015.¹⁷⁹ The country's 2015 defense budget exceeds U.S. \$51 billion and is the biggest in history.¹⁸⁰ Shane Mason's 2016 report for the Stimson Center states that the phenomenal growth in India's defense spending "accounted for three percent of international defense spending in 2015." In contrast, India's share was just over one percent in 1995."¹⁸¹ India's arms imports have correspondingly increased. Stockholm International Peace Research Institute's (SIPRI) 2015 report highlights the surge:

India was the largest importer of major arms in 2011–15, accounting for 14 percent of the global total. Between 2006–10 and 2011–15 imports increased by 90 percent. In 2011–15 India's imports were three times greater than those of either of its regional rivals: China and Pakistan.¹⁸²

India has faced modernization and procurement challenges despite hefty spending in the past.¹⁸³ These challenges were due to excessive spending on personnel and maintenance costs that prevented allocation for capital acquisitions¹⁸⁴. The current government has streamlined some of these issues and has made substantial investments in

¹⁷⁹ Mason, *Military Budgets in India and Pakistan*, 13.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Fleurant et al., *Trends in International Arms Transfers*, 1.

¹⁸³ Mason, *Military Budgets in India and Pakistan*, 7.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

equipment procurement. India is currently pursuing an ambitious program to enhance its conventional military potential through a surge in defense expenditures. A major portion of this enhancement comprises of military hardware procurement from sellers around the world.¹⁸⁵ India has been one of the biggest buyers of Russian military equipment ever since the Cold War era.¹⁸⁶ It has started acquiring military technology from the U.S. and Israel as well.¹⁸⁷

The pattern and scope of this expenditure are particularly interesting. Christopher Budihas observes that in 2015 the Indian Army was the only service that received a capital acquisitions budget increment of U.S. \$ 1.1 Billion, while budgets for the Air Force and the Navy were substantially less. Budihas links it with India's historical threat perception i.e. "land-based threats from China and Pakistan."¹⁸⁸ It makes sense with the Cold Start strategy in perspective. Beefing up the Army's capabilities would allow it to execute short notice–high tempo operations envisaged in the strategy. Therefore, accentuating the threat perception of India's neighbors, particularly Pakistan, of the possibility of being invaded by an increasingly aggressive foe.

¹⁸⁵ Mason, *Military Budgets in India and Pakistan*, 31.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ Fleurant et al., *Trends in International Arms Transfers*, 6.

¹⁸⁸ Budihas, "India's Military Modernization," 9.

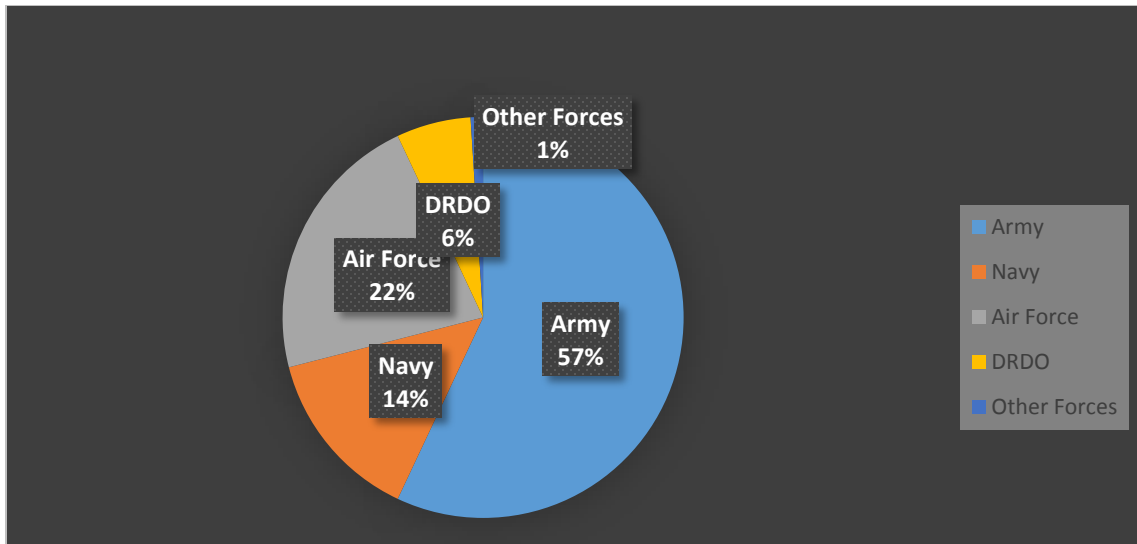


Figure 6. The share of the Services in the Indian Defense Budget 2017

Source: Laxman Bhera, “India’s Defence Budget 2017-18: An Analysis,” Institute of Defense Studies and Analysis, February 3, 2017, accessed March 1, 2017, http://idsa.in/issuebrief/india-defence-budget-2017-18_lkbehera_030217.

The Indian Army is focused on acquiring tanks, infantry fighting vehicles, and artillery systems. The Russian-made T 90 S Bhishma is fast becoming the mainstay of the Indian Armored Corps.¹⁸⁹ Sixteen hundred and fifty of these tanks are expected to be purchased and developed.¹⁹⁰ In addition, the existing fleet of BMP 2s is also being upgraded.¹⁹¹ The Indian Army is also upgrading the artillery systems currently in service.

¹⁸⁹ Militaryperiscope, “India Army–Plans and Programs,” accessed February 7, 2017, <https://www.militaryperiscope.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/nations/asia/india/army/index.html>.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

Five regiments of M 777 ultra-light howitzers are likely to be purchased by 2025.¹⁹² The need for intimate attack aviation support is being addressed through procurement of AH 64 Apache helicopters from the U.S. with deliveries expected to commence in 2019.¹⁹³ The Army's leadership has also expressed its desire to invest in command and control systems, and precision targeting. Table 1 shows major items being procured by Indian Army:

Table 1. Major Items of Equipment being Purchased by Indian Army			
Project	Total number to be acquired or upgraded	Cost	Completion
Import of T 90 S tanks from Russia	1650	U.S. \$ 1.2 billion for the first batch of 347 tanks	2020
Domestically produce T 90 tanks	100 tanks per year (planned in addition to 700 tanks purchased in 2001)	U.S. \$ 3 million per tank	Unknown
Upgrade 600 Russian-built T 90 tanks	Unknown	U.S. \$ 250 million	Unknown
Develop Future infantry combat vehicles (FICV)	3000	U.S. \$ 10 billion	Unknown
Upgrade BMP 2 infantry combat vehicles	1500	Unknown	2018

¹⁹² Militaryperiscope, "India Army-Plans and Programs."

¹⁹³ Ibid.

Purchase Spike anti-tank guided missiles from Israel	8000 missiles, 300 launchers	U.S. \$ 525 million	Unknown
Purchase Invar anti-tank missiles from Russia	10000	U.S. \$ 1.5 billion (includes 200 BrahMos supersonic missiles as well)	Unknown
Purchase M 777 light weight howitzers from U.S.	145	U.S. \$ 855 million	2025
Purchase AH 64 Apache Longbow ¹⁹⁴	22 (a new deal for additional 39 under way)	U.S. \$ 1.4 billion	Deliveries to begin in 2019
Domestically produce Rudra attack helicopter	76	Unknown	Deliveries underway

Source: Militaryperiscope.com, “India Army–Plans and Programs,” accessed February 7, 2017, <https://www.militaryperiscope.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/nations/asia/india/army/index.html>. Also see Janes.ihs, “India: Army,” *Jane’s Sentinel Security Assessment* (2017), accessed March 1, 2017, <http://janes.ihs.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/MilitarySecurityAssessments/Display/1767362>. Data obtained from sources.

It is notable that these systems are primarily offensive land warfare related.¹⁹⁵

Major capital allocation for these shows India’s priority: strengthening overland offensive potential. One might argue that the same systems may be utilized for power projection

¹⁹⁴ Pubby, “Apache and Chinook Helicopters.” The first twenty-two Apaches are likely to be commissioned in the Indian Air Force. Included here as the aircraft would be instrumental in supporting the Indian Army’s operations. Moreover, the Army is likely to get the same aircraft as well.

¹⁹⁵ Gurmeet Kanwal, “Modernization Thrusts of the Indian Army,” *CLAWS Journal* (Winter 2010): 39-52, accessed January 4, 2017, http://www.claws.in/images/journals_doc/CJ-winter-2010.pdf.

missions in the future; however, without requisite capability in other services to support such missions, this remains doubtful.

To address needs for fighting against China—the other neighbor adversary—India is currently raising a mountain strike corps for operations in the Himalayan terrain. “It will help India to upgrade its military strategy against China from dissuasion to meaningful deterrence as the strike corps, in conjunction with the Indian Air Force (IAF), will provide the capability to launch offensive operations across the Himalayas.”¹⁹⁶ The 90,000 strong [mountain] strike corps raising process began in 2013 with completion intended in 2018–19 at a cost of U.S. \$ 10.7 billion.¹⁹⁷

However, the raising process remained slow due to budgetary constraints. The Army is now continuing the process from within existing materials and personnel. The doctrinal efficacy of employing the strike corps in Himalayan terrain is questionable. A meaningful offensive in these areas requires mammoth forces and sustenance arrangements. India’s communication infrastructure in these regions is not well developed.¹⁹⁸ The Chinese, on the other hand, have developed superior infrastructure,

¹⁹⁶ Global Security, “XVII Corps Mountain Strike Corps,” accessed January 20, 2017, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/india/corps-xvii.htm>. Also See Militaryperiscope, “India Army—Plans and Programs,” accessed February 7, 2017, <https://www.militaryperiscope.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/nations/asia/india/army/index.html>.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ Militaryperiscope, “India Army—Plans and Programs.”

allowing them to rapidly concentrate combat power in the event of a conflict with India.¹⁹⁹

Similarly, the Air Force plans to undergo a significant capability increase to bolster its strength from the current 36.5 squadrons to 60 squadrons: a strength deemed necessary for a perceived two-front war.²⁰⁰ The IAF has recently concluded a U.S. \$ 8.8 billion undertaking for inducting thirty-six Dassault Rafale fighter jets from France.²⁰¹ These aircraft combined with the domestically manufacture Tejas light combat platforms will enhance the fighter component of the force.

The IAF is heavily investing in the modernization of its Jaguars (dedicated for ground attack role).²⁰² These aircraft are being upgraded with new avionics, mission computers, head-up displays, navigation systems, hands-on throttle and stick controls, air-to-air and air-to-ground weaponry, and engines.²⁰³ These upgraded ground attack platforms are likely to enhance the IAF's capability to provide mission-critical close support to the Army's IBGs in the execution of maneuvers envisaged in the Cold Start strategy. If power projection is intended, strategic airlift and refueling capabilities should also have been prioritized.²⁰⁴

¹⁹⁹ Militaryperiscope, "India Army—Plans and Programs."

²⁰⁰ Tellis, *Troubles, They Come in Battalions*, 11.

²⁰¹ Ibid., 19.

²⁰² Ibid., 56.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Budihas, "India's Military Modernization," 13.

India is also investing in ground-based air defense systems. The most notable acquisition in this regard is the Russian made S 400 air defense system that will provide air defense against both hostile aircraft and missile systems. The *Diplomat* reports the dynamics of this procurement as:

The Indian Ministry of Defense's Defense Acquisition Council (DAC) cleared the S-400 purchase in December 2015. The new weapon system, capable of engaging stand-off jammer aircraft, Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS) aircraft, and both ballistic and cruise missiles in an electronic countermeasures environment—will be a significant boost to India's so-called anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities.²⁰⁵

An analysis of procurements and expenditures on the Navy is important to gauge India's thought process behind defense expenditure. As already brought out, the Army dwarfs the Navy's share of the budget. This places power projection at a lower priority versus mitigation of traditional threats.

Power projection requires an increase in maritime capabilities. India is spending on the Army. However, the discussion cannot be concluded here as the scholarly debate is intense. Shishir Upadhyaya in his article "Projecting Power...and Politics?" concludes that aircraft carriers are the most important capability for power projection operations in the Indian Ocean Region.²⁰⁶ In this context, India recently commissioned a second aircraft carrier. India's third aircraft carrier INS Vikrant is being indigenously

²⁰⁵ Franz Gady, "India and Russia Ink S-400 Missile Air Defense System Deal," *Diplomat*, October 20, 2016, accessed March 1, 2017, <http://thediplomat.com/2016/10/india-and-russia-ink-s-400-missile-air-defense-system-deal/>.

²⁰⁶ Shishir Upadhyaya, "Projecting Power...and Politics?" *Jane's Navy International* (February 2015): 10, accessed March 7, 2017, http://www.janes360.com/images/assets/019/49019/Projecting_power_...pdf.

manufactured. When commissioned, INS Vikrant will replace the aging Viraat.²⁰⁷ Total strength is expected to remain at two unless future investments are made. Analysts suggest that India needs a fleet of four to six carriers to be able to project power in the Indian Ocean Region and that the Indian government seems to lack the political will to make such heavy investments.²⁰⁸ Therefore, power projection does not seem high on the Indian government's agenda.

Ends–Ways–Means–Risk Analysis of Findings

An analysis of India's capability development priorities indicates that India is currently focusing on its land forces (means). We have also analyzed the strategic evolution in India and concluded that the capabilities to enable the Army and the Air Force to execute Cold Start strategy (ways) appear to be the priority for Indian policy makers, while the capabilities being acquired to project power seem lower on the priority list. Table 2 organizes above conclusions in an ends-ways-means-risk construct to draw a general conclusion regarding possible Indian intentions:

²⁰⁷ Upadhyaya, "Projecting Power...and Politics?" 7.

²⁰⁸ Budihas, "India's Military Modernization," 12.

Table 2. Ends-Ways-Means-Risk Analysis				
Likely ends	Related ways	Necessary means		Risk
Power projection	Pursue maritime dominance of the Indian Ocean Region.	• Prioritize investments in Navy • Sustained expansion of strategic lift capabilities • Sustained expansion of amphibious capabilities	X X X	Minimal
Defeat Pakistan comprehensively in a conflict	Sundarji Doctrine–Massive maneuvers to seize vital territory; defeat Pakistani forces.	• Political Will • Preponderance of mechanized forces • Decisive–multi-service superiority • Joint Fires	X Y B Y	High–Nuclear Conflagration
Defeat Pakistan in a short notice, limited war without provoking nuclear retaliation	Cold Start–Shallow decisive thrusts by prepositioned forces enabled by joint fires.	• Political Will • Overmatch in ground and air capabilities • Overmatch in Fires	Y B B	Low–based on assumptions
X–Not available / limited availability / Not being developed on priority Y–Available B–Being developed on priority / Increasing				
Conclusion: India is developing capabilities to enable Cold Start strategy on priority.				

Source: Created by the author.

India's Strategic Objectives?

An analysis of India's ways and means indicates that India is pursuing a military defeat of Pakistan as an end. However, the analysis is only helpful in ascertaining the military end state. It does not determine the strategic objectives that India may achieve by waging war. So what is India's incentive in waging the war it is preparing for?

India's strategic objectives have to be evaluated with the risk of a nuclear exchange between India and Pakistan in perspective. The destruction foreseen in a nuclear exchange is likely to eclipse any major strategic advantages accrued from the war.²⁰⁹ The Indian leadership is adequately cognizant of the risk. This realization has caused the Indian leadership to return from the brink of war in Operation Parakram, eventually leading to the development of the Cold Start strategy.²¹⁰ However, war waged as per the Cold Start strategy would be limited, and can only assure limited gains. Such a war cannot "disarm the enemy."²¹¹ Therefore, the strategic objectives of this war are likely to be limited in nature.²¹² Ascertaining these objectives is beyond the scope of this study as it would require a different set of questions.

This does not preclude the possibility of war in South Asia. The existing sources of instability in South Asia may result in a war. In this case, this war will be more cause-driven, and less objective-oriented. The causes of this war would be the same as what Thucydides' described as "fear, interest, and honor." They manifest themselves as the existing sources of instability in South Asia. These sources will be discussed in the next chapter. We shall also evaluate how these sources might result in a war, and how India's defense potential enhancement is further increasing this probability.

²⁰⁹ Ahmed, "India's Limited War Doctrine," 1.

²¹⁰ Ibid., 25.

²¹¹ Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, eds. Peter Paret and Micheal Howard (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), 77. Clausewitz says that the aim of war is to disarm the enemy.

²¹² Ahmed, "India's Limited War Doctrine," 33.

Conclusion

Indian defense spending has considerably grown in the recent past. The common perception is that India is increasing its military capabilities to be able to project power beyond South Asia. Some analysts support this view; others differ. This research shows that India continues to be Pakistan-centric. This approach is driving its doctrinal evolution and force development.

The Indian Army is structured to conduct high-tempo mechanized operations against Pakistan. The Air Force is structured to enable these operations. Both services lack the overmatch required to defeat Pakistan decisively. India has prioritized land and air domains and spent on their development. If India's focus has now shifted to power projection, it should be spending on relevant capabilities. However, India is spending on its Army and the enabling component of the Air Force to generate an overmatch against Pakistan. Such overmatch would allow these services to execute operations envisaged under the Cold Start strategy designed to defeat Pakistan in a conflict without provoking a nuclear conflagration.

India may not be able to achieve major objectives by waging a limited war against Pakistan. However, the existing sources of instability in South Asia often result in an escalation of the conflict between India and Pakistan. Emboldened by the overmatch, the Indian leadership might find it favorable to use force during periods of such escalation. Ladwig best describes this phenomenon as he writes:

As the Indian Army enhances its ability to achieve a quick decision against Pakistan, political leaders in New Delhi may be more inclined to employ force in a future conflict—with potentially catastrophic results.²¹³

²¹³ Ladwig, “A Cold Start for Hot Wars,” 159.

CHAPTER 5

REGIONAL STABILITY IMPLICATIONS OF INCREASE IN INDIA'S MILITARY POTENTIAL

Introduction

South Asia is home to two nuclear-armed neighbors with a history of mutual distrust and hostility: India and Pakistan. Instability in the region is most likely to be a product of the continued unfriendly interactions between these two countries. This chapter will focus on the existing causes of instability in the region, and how India's military capability enhancement adds to the already explosive mix.

The situation in South Asia is becoming more volatile. The renewed freedom struggle in Kashmir and repeated incidents of violence between Indian and Pakistani troops along the Line of Control indicate the likelihood of a new wave of belligerence in the region. Problems such as terrorism, political shifts, and conflicting interests further complicate the situation. In this backdrop, as India continues to build its military, and Pakistan continues to address the resultant threat that it perceives, instability in South Asia is likely to rise, making the region a dangerous place and increasing the possibility of war.

Situation Overview

If India had increased its defense potential in a relatively stable situation in South Asia, its effects on the regional stability would have been moderate. However, the situation in South Asia is not stable. Factors like the Kashmir dispute, terrorism, Indian

offensive mindedness, political shifts, and conflicting interests, keep the potential for an Indo-Pak conflict high.

The Kashmir Dispute Keeps Indo-Pak Hostility Alive

The Kashmir dispute is a major cause of instability in South Asia as it results in periods of high tensions between India and Pakistan and creates the recurring possibility of an all-out war. Kashmir has historically been the cause of disagreement between India and Pakistan. The problem finds its roots in the partition of the Sub-continent when princely states were allowed to opt for accession to India or Pakistan as per their ruler's choice.²¹⁴ The ruler of Kashmir decided to accede to India against the desires of its Muslim majority population.²¹⁵

Diplomatic efforts to resolve the issue have always hit a roadblock due to uncompromising positions. Both countries have fought two major wars over the issue in 1948 and 1965.²¹⁶ The risk of a major war due to Kashmir subsided after both India and Pakistan developed nuclear weapons. Low-intensity confrontations continue to this day, often leading to major crises such as Siachen (1984), and Kargil (1999), but the overall status-quo continues.²¹⁷

²¹⁴ Insightonconflict.org, "Kashmir: Conflict profile," accessed March 15, 2017, <https://www.insightonconflict.org/conflicts/kashmir/conflict-profile/>.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Ibid.

²¹⁷ Ibid.

The Kashmiri populace has remained dissatisfied with the status quo.²¹⁸ This resulted in the eruption of a major insurgency in Kashmir in 1989.²¹⁹ Pakistan supported the Kashmiri freedom struggle as its populace considered the Kashmiri demand for self-determination as legitimate.²²⁰ India relied on heavy-handedness to suppress the Kashmiri freedom movement while simultaneously blaming the Pakistani establishment for covertly supporting the Kashmiri freedom fighters.²²¹

Post 9/11, as the global perceptions changed, the lines between supporting terrorism and supporting a freedom struggle blurred. Pakistan also changed its modus operandi and banned organizations involved in supporting the Kashmiris.²²² The changing scenario did not settle the dissent in the Kashmiri populace, which remains volatile and becomes enraged when the Indian security forces resort to excessive

²¹⁸ Jayshree Bajoria, "Crisis in Kashmir," *Council on Foreign Relations*, September 11, 2008, accessed March 16, 2017, <http://www.cfr.org/india/crisis-kashmir/p17155>.

²¹⁹ Ibid.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Insightonconflict.org, "Kashmir: Conflict profile,"

²²² Carin Zissis, "Musharraf's Kashmir Offer," *Council on Foreign Relations*, December 12, 2006, accessed March 16, 2017, <http://www.cfr.org/pakistan/musharrafs-kashmir-offer/p12217>.

suppression. This results in frequent outbursts of violence.²²³ At least fifty thousand Kashmiris have been killed in such violence since 1989.²²⁴

India has been cashing in on the changing global perceptions to project Pakistan as a sponsor of terrorism in its homeland. Every time the freedom struggle in Kashmir heats up and violent incidents occur, India blames Pakistan for the unrest while the latter denies. This puts both countries on a collision course. Currently, the risk of a nuclear exchange restrains the belligerents from escalating further, and a full-scale war has been averted. However, it is not a fail-safe mechanism. The same cycle of events reoccurs every few years. The recurring nature of these events and the probability of war prompted President William J. Clinton to call Kashmir “the most dangerous place on earth.”²²⁵

²²³ Pankaj Mishra, “A Jihad Grows in Kashmir,” *New York Times*, August 26, 2008, accessed December 1, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/27/opinion/27>.

²²⁴ Jamal Afridi, “Kashmir Militant Extremists,” *Council on Foreign Relations*, July 9, 2009, accessed March 16, 2017, <http://www.cfr.org/kashmir/kashmir-militant-extremists/p9135#p0>.

²²⁵ Mishra, “A Jihad Grows in Kashmir.”



Figure 7. The Disputed Region of Kashmir

Source: Saylorddorg, "World Regional Geography: People, Places and Globalization," accessed March 27, 2017, https://saylorddorg.github.io/text_world-regional-geography-people-places-and-globalization/s12-south-asia.html.

The Kashmir dispute often leads to periods of high tensions between India and Pakistan with an imminent risk of escalation. The 2016 Indo-Pak tensions offer a good example of this phenomenon. After a relative calm during the past decade, tensions between India and Pakistan heightened during the summer of 2016. The freedom struggle in Kashmir seethed once more. The Indian establishment ascertained the cause of the uprising in a linear manner. It blamed Pakistan for supporting the freedom fighters from across the border. Pakistan denied Indian allegations. Diplomatic relations took a

downturn and there was a sustained increase in violence between Indian and Pakistani troops deployed along the Line of Control (LOC) in Kashmir with casualties on both sides (see figure 7).²²⁶

Pakistan highlighted a different angle to this fresh wave of violence. It had started with the Burhan Wani episode. Wani belonged to a “highly-educated upper-class Kashmiri family”, the kind who do not become insurgents.²²⁷ He had become a freedom fighter due to social pressures resulting from the heavy handedness of the Indian security forces.²²⁸ He waged his struggle on social media mainly and had become a symbol of the Kashmiri discontent over the years.²²⁹ In the summer of 2016, he was killed in an encounter with the security forces. Mass demonstrations followed his killing.²³⁰ The Indian security forces were again heavy handed in quelling the unrest. They used violent means including shotguns to blind and maim hundreds of protestors. A *New York Times* article described gross human rights violations in Kashmir:

Since mid-July, when the current wave of protests against the Indian military presence started, more than 570 patients have reported to Srinagar’s main government hospital with eyes ruptured by lead pellets, sometimes known as

²²⁶ The LOC is the defacto border between Indian and Pakistan administered Kashmir.

²²⁷ Shujaat Bukhari, “Why the Death of Militant Burhan Wani has Kashmiris Up in Arms,” *BBC News*, July 11, 2016, accessed March 10, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-36762043>.

²²⁸ Ibid.

²²⁹ Ibid.

²³⁰ Ibid.

birdshot, fired by security forces armed with pump-action shotguns to disperse crowds.²³¹

Desperation grew in the Kashmiri populace, resulting in more violence. The highest point came when an Indian Army brigade headquarters came under attack in Uri, Kashmir. India responded by intensifying its blame game against Pakistan and threatened that it would use force. On September 29, 2016, Indian Director General of Military Operations (DGMO) claimed in a press conference that India had carried out “surgical strikes” to destroy “terrorist camps” on the Pakistani side.²³² Pakistan responded by denying the claim and exposing the claimed target areas to national and international media (see figure 8).

Before the claim, the Indians forced vacated several villages close to the Indo–Pak border.²³³ This shows that the Indians expected a prompt Pakistani quid-pro-quo. Pakistan did not feel compelled to respond. The Pakistani public was satisfied with nullifying Indian claims and took to the social media to engage in a nation-wide India

²³¹ Ellen Barry, “An Epidemic of ‘Dead Eyes’ in Kashmir as India Uses Pellet Guns on Protesters,” *New York Times*, August 28, 2016, accessed March 10, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/08/29/world/asia/pellet-guns-used-in-kashmir-protests-cause-dead-eyes-epidemic.html?_r=0.

²³² Ellen Barry and Salman Masood, “India Claims ‘Surgical Strikes’ Across Line of Control in Kashmir,” *New York Times*, September 29, 2016, accessed November 8, 2016, http://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/30/world/asia/kashmir-india-pakistan.html?_r=0.

²³³ Aseem Basi and Toufiq Rashid, “Punjab border villages evacuated after army’s surgical strikes across LoC,” *Hindustan Times*, September 29, 2016, accessed November 8, 2016, <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/punjab-border-villages-evacuated-no-loc-trade-after-army-surgical-strike>.

bashing leading to heated exchanges with their Indian counterparts.²³⁴ An analysis of these heated exchanges highlights an important aspect of this episode: the public sentiment on both sides. On the Indian side, print, electronic and social media reflects an overwhelming rhetoric that celebrates rising India's commitment to vengeance.²³⁵ On the Pakistani side, the same mediums reflect a public reaffirmation of their resolve to respond to an increasingly aggressive India.²³⁶

It appears that Pakistan regards internal security as its top priority for now, and does not desire a heightened confrontation with India. The question, however, remains what if the "surgical strikes" are actually executed in the future? The new Indian Army Chief has already pointed in that direction.²³⁷ Pakistan in all likelihood will be compelled to respond with the same magnitude due to public pressure. This would force the Indians to counter-act. Most likely, it would lead to an escalation of the conflict spreading southwards from Kashmir as it grows.

As the conflict heats up, India may be tempted to employ its conventional forces to undertake actions in line with the Cold Start strategy. The escalation process will not end here. Both the states possess nuclear weapons. The outcome of the conventional

²³⁴ Karan Singh and Qasim Nauman, "What Indian and Pakistani Newspapers Said About 'Surgical Strikes' Along Line of Control," *Wall Street Journal*, September 30, 2016.

²³⁵ Ibid.

²³⁶ Ibid.

²³⁷ Ankit Panda, "A Slip of the Tongue on India's Once-Hyped 'Cold Start' Doctrine?" *Diplomat*, January 7, 2017, accessed February 1, 2017, <http://thediplomat.com/2017/01/a-slip-of-the-tongue-on-indias-once-hyped-cold-start-doctrine>.

engagements will decide which side is tempted to go nuclear. The overall consequences can be disastrous.

Therefore, the Kashmir problem is a major source of instability in the region as it can result in an all-out war between India and Pakistan. Indian military capability enhancement in an environment where the continuous danger of war lurks on the horizon can only exacerbate regional instability by increasing Pakistan's threat perception.



Figure 8. Front Pages of Pakistani and Indian Newspapers post Indian claim of “Surgical Strikes” showing opposite perceptions on both sides

Source: Karan Singh and Qasim Nauman, “What Indian and Pakistani Newspapers Said About ‘Surgical Strikes’ Along Line of Control,” *Wall Street Journal*, September 30, 2016, <http://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2016/09/30/what-indian-and-pakistani-news-papers-said-about-surgical-strikes-along-line-of-control/>.

India blames all Terrorism in its Homeland on Pakistan

Terrorism is the other major source of instability in South Asia. India has a significant terrorism problem. The Indian establishment blames all major terrorist incidents on Pakistan. The Indian public believes their government. The Indian

establishment contextualizes these claims because of Pakistan's history of support to the freedom struggle in Kashmir. They shroud three important aspects while doing so.

Firstly, post 9/11 global perceptions have shifted. Support to groups waging an armed struggle is widely viewed as support for terrorism. In such an environment, Pakistan does not consider it feasible to actively support (by material) Kashmiri freedom fighters even when it regards their struggle as legitimate.²³⁸ Policy shifts by Pakistan from 2003 onwards are indicative of this.²³⁹ However, India continues to blame Pakistan mainly due to the public acknowledgment that these claims receive.

Secondly, violence in Kashmir (for which the Indian Government blames Pakistan) is only a portion of the armed violence that the Indian state suffers from. There are several other insurgencies simmering in India.²⁴⁰ The Maoist insurgency in the North East is the most notable amongst them.²⁴¹ All these insurgencies contribute to the overall violence in India and exceed Kashmir in their contributions.²⁴² The Global Terrorism Index (GTI) of 2016 describes terrorist trends in India:

Terrorism in India is characterized by communist, Islamists, and separatist groups. Communist terrorist groups are by far the most frequent perpetrators and the main cause of terrorism deaths in India. Two Maoist communist groups claimed responsibility for 176 deaths in 2015, which constitutes 61 percent of all deaths. Police are overwhelmingly the largest target group of Maoists, accounting for a third of deaths, followed by private citizens who are targeted in around 20

²³⁸ Zissis, "Musharraf's Kashmir Offer."

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ Institute for Economics and Peace, *Global Terrorism Index: Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism* (New York, NY: IEP, November 2016), 25.

²⁴¹ Ibid.

²⁴² Ibid.

percent of deaths with other categories including the government and businesses. The majority of Maoist attacks occurred in the provinces of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Odisha.²⁴³

In the same report, the GTI attributes significantly lesser violence to Kashmir associated groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Hizb-ul-Mujahideen.²⁴⁴ This shows that the security troubles in India are rooted in socio-economic and ethnopolitical problems. Blaming Pakistan allows the Indian establishment to avert responsibility, but does not solve the problem.

Predictably, violence in India will not subside. This may lead to a vicious cycle of terrorist incidents, blame game, and the Indian Government feeding on anti-Pakistan rhetoric to consolidate more power. There is a possibility of the Indian government using force from time to time to substantiate its claims. When that happens, the situation will become dangerous and the possibility of escalation will loom large on the horizon. A substantial military capability will add to the confidence of Indian decision makers enabling them to play offensive options.

Indian Offensive Mindset–The “Paradoxical Trinity”

The Cold Start strategy,²⁴⁵ and its morphed versions are provocative in nature and further destabilize the South Asian region. The strategy is Pakistan specific. It envisions a short rapid application of force against the frontier to punish Pakistan for supporting terrorism in the Indian homeland while simultaneously destroying the combat

²⁴³ Institute for Economics and Peace, *Global Terrorism Index*, 25.

²⁴⁴ Ibid.

²⁴⁵ See previous chapter for details of the Cold Start strategy.

potential of the Pakistan armed forces to embarrass Pakistan in the international community. The purpose is to achieve all of this without crossing the perceived nuclear threshold.

The strategy represents an Indian offensive mindset. When viewed in the light of Clausewitz's paradoxical trinity, the above assertion makes sense. As India is becoming more powerful, the Indian public is passionate to see their country enforcing its will like other great powers.²⁴⁶ This "passion"²⁴⁷ incentivizes politicians besides reinforcing the Indian "policy"²⁴⁸ of blaming Pakistan for all terrorism on its homeland and behaving aggressively to oppose Pakistan's actions. In this enabling environment, Indian generals and strategists exercise their "creativity"²⁴⁹ to formulate options such as the Cold Start strategy. Therefore, the strategy is rooted in balanced "dominant tendencies" of the paradoxical trinity on the Indian side. Stephen Cohen has noted similarly:

Many Indians do not see their country as being bound by strategic restraint. They want India to behave like a great power in the mold of the United States, Britain, and China— assertive powers willing and able to defend their interests with military forces when necessary. This is the reason why great powers have accounted for the majority of wars in history.²⁵⁰

²⁴⁶ Stephen Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming: India's Military Modernization* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2013), x.

²⁴⁷ Clausewitz, *On War*, 87. Clausewitz describes passion, chance and reason as dominant tendencies of the paradoxical trinity broadly representing the people, the military, and the government respectively.

²⁴⁸ Ibid.

²⁴⁹ Ibid.

²⁵⁰ Cohen and Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming*, x.

The Cold Start strategy seems to have morphed again. The 2016 “Surgical Strikes” (highlighted previously) is another form of warfare that Indian strategists may be contemplating. It appears that these strategists are increasingly realizing that even limited conventional force applications visualized in Cold Strat strategy would still risk a nuclear exchange. In this backdrop, they may be evaluating the possibility of low intensity–high tech strikes against Pakistan. The new Indian Army Chief has highlighted the possibility of such strikes in the future.²⁵¹

The concept appears to be predicated on keeping the damage low to limit the Pakistani desire to respond while being lethal enough to clearly establish Indian dominance and coerce the adversary. This thought process may be based on the assumption that as long as Pakistan is committed to the fight against terror, it will be less inclined to respond to a low-intensity action due to a tilted cost-benefit equation. Moreover, if the environment is right, and Pakistan is under adequate diplomatic pressure, it may find it difficult to gather the requisite political will to respond. This may be a win-win situation for India.

However, the 2016 episode should serve as a warning. After the 2016 surgical strikes claim, the Pakistani public displayed extraordinarily heated passions.²⁵² In the case of a redo, public pressure will enforce a rapid and equal response. Both sides will then be engaged in a series of actions and counteractions leading to a potential ascent up the escalation ladder. If cooler heads do not prevail at some stage, provocative Indian

²⁵¹ Panda, “A Slip of the Tongue on India’s Once-Hyped ‘Cold Start’ Doctrine?”

²⁵² Singh and Nauman, “What Indian and Pakistani Newspapers Said About ‘Surgical Strikes’.”

actions can easily result in a full-scale war between India and Pakistan. Such offensive thinking lends its own weight to the existing instability of South Asia and has the potential to lead both countries on the road to a nuclear war. Indian military capability enhancement further adds to the equation by giving their politicians and public more confidence in their countries offensive capabilities, thus creating more instability in South Asia. Stephen Cohen cautions against such offensive mindedness:

In our view, the Army should not pursue provocative strategies such as Cold Start; the strategy, which cannot be operationalized without generating a serious crisis, may be easy to defeat, and thus hard to initiate.²⁵³

The Political Shift in India is Alienating Minorities;
Indirectly Contributing towards South Asian Instability

The rise of the right in India started with PM Narendra Modi-led Bharatiya Janta Party (BJP) coming to power in 2014.²⁵⁴ The party has a strong association with the Rashtriya Swayamsaywek Sangh (RSS): a Hindu nationalist organization. Due to this association, the RSS now enjoys substantial influence in the running of India.²⁵⁵ The BJP's win in the 2017 state elections has further increased this influence. This is tantamount to a political shift in India that is giving rise to dissent that can lead to violence and further destabilize the entire South Asian region.²⁵⁶

²⁵³ Cohen and Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming*, 70.

²⁵⁴ U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, *Constitutional and Legal Challenges Faced by Religious Minorities in India* (Washington, DC: USCIRF, February 2017), 1.

²⁵⁵ Ibid.

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

The RSS and BJP associated politicians harness the Hindu majority's support by buttressing right-wing organizations and their Hindutva ideology.²⁵⁷ It allows them to consolidate their political gains; however, it damages the secular tradition that presumably provided a degree of acceptability for India's minorities. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) February 2017 report confirms that "threats, hate crimes, social boycotts, desecrations of places of worship, assaults, and forced conversions led by radical Hindu nationalist movements have escalated dramatically under the [Modi] led government."²⁵⁸ This is likely to alienate India's ethnic and religious minorities and result in widespread dissent.

A prime example lies in the massive slaughter of Muslims in the state of Gujarat that is associated with the then Chief Minister Narendra Modi (now prime minister).²⁵⁹ Modi was denied a U.S. Visa up to 2005 on the same pretext.²⁶⁰ Modi has now appointed Yogi Adityanath, a Hindu hardliner,²⁶¹ as the Chief Minister of the Uttar Pradesh (UP) State of India after the 2017 state elections. Yogi Adityanath is famous for using anti-

²⁵⁷ U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, *Religious Minorities in India*, 1.

²⁵⁸ Ibid.

²⁵⁹ Kadira Pethiyagoda, *Dealing with Delhi: How Culture Shapes India's Middle East Policy* (Doha, Qatar: Brookings Doha Center, 2015), 6.

²⁶⁰ Annie Gowen, "Once Banned from the U.S., India's Modi Set for Historic Address to Congress," *Washington Post*, June 6, 2016, accessed March 1, 2017, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2016/06/06/from-pariah-to-capitol-hill-narendra-modis-extraordinary-rise/?utm_term=.f68b217595cf.

²⁶¹ BBC News, "Who's the Hindu Hardliner Running India's Most Populous State?" March 29, 2017, accessed March 29, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-39403778>.

Muslim rhetoric and radical tongue lashing for political support. *The New York Times* referred to his appointment as “a shocking rebuke to religious minorities.” His appointment has raised a lot of speculation because Uttar Pradesh (the largest state in India with a population of 220 million) is home to 40 million Muslims who are likely to be alienated by his radical stances. Their dissent could possibly result in violence if the state uses its heavy-handedness like in Kashmir. The Indian state is likely to blame all Muslim origin violence on outside involvement from Pakistan. Such a scenario would increase the tensions between India and Pakistan leading to further instability in South Asia.

The Indian Government extensively uses Anti-Pakistan Rhetoric

The Indian Government’s use of anti-Pakistan rhetoric²⁶² is also a source of instability in Indo-Pak scenario. As discussed, the BJP is currently in power in India. The party is famous for its anti-Pakistan stances. Its current leader, Prime Minister Narendra Modi uses anti-Pakistan rhetoric both at home and abroad to gain political mileage. He degraded Pakistan while campaigning for the central government in 2014, and again during the state elections in 2017.²⁶³ The BJP’s success shows that both times the rhetoric worked.

²⁶² Manish Tewari, “PM Modi’s Pakistan Policy, A Victim of His High-Pitched Rhetoric,” *Quint*, September 22, 2016, accessed March 10, 2017, <https://www.thequint.com/india/2016/09/23/pm-modis-pakistan-policy-a-victim-of-his-high-pitched-rhetoric-uri-terror-attack-nawaz-sharif-unga-kashmir-burhan>. The writer is the former Union Minister of India.

²⁶³ Ibid.

The BJP has a good chance for a win in the center in the 2019 elections.²⁶⁴ The Indian Government's recent claim of "surgical strikes" appears to be an effort to substantiate Mr. Modi's rhetoric ahead of the next elections. This is also evident from assertions made by other BJP leaders in the aftermath of the "surgical strikes" claim. Mr. Ram Madhav, the general secretary of the party, wrote in an opinion piece in *The Indian Express* that Pakistan "did not realize it was dealing with a different leader and a different government."²⁶⁵ The rhetoric in Mr. Madhav's statement is likely to have earned him and his party substantial political mileage and credibility. Therefore, the trend is likely to continue due to its advantages.

The current practice of using anti-Pakistan rhetoric is not likely to go away due to its obvious benefits even when other parties come to power in India. This is a dangerous trend. By using anti-Pakistan rhetoric, Indian leaders mount pressure on themselves. The Indian public then expects these leaders to convert their words into actions by using force against Pakistan. This aggravates tensions between India and Pakistan leading to increased instability in the region.

India is not happy with China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

CPEC has added diplomatic and security angles to the problem. The U.S. \$ 46 billion corridor is designed to link Western China to the Pakistani port of Gwadar on the

²⁶⁴ Tewari, "PM Modi's Pakistan Policy."

²⁶⁵ Singh and Nauman, "What Indian and Pakistani Newspapers Said About 'Surgical Strikes'."

Arabian Sea.²⁶⁶ Both China and Pakistan are likely to benefit from the projects embedded in CPEC. China will gain speedier access to its international markets as the CPEC will reduce its trade distance by several thousand miles and allow it to avoid the hostile waters of the South China Sea and the Strait of Malacca. For Pakistan, this provides an opportunity to salvage its war-ravaged economy, build new infrastructure, and undo power shortages. Already the effects are becoming visible. The World Bank has forecast an economic growth rate of 5.2 percent for Pakistan in 2017; the largest since 2005.²⁶⁷ The middle class is expanding, and the security situation is improving.

However, India does not view the CPEC favorably. It has formally objected to the corridor passing through Gilgit-Baltistan, which it views as disputed territory.²⁶⁸ Possibly, its fears are rooted in being surrounded by Chinese influence in the West. Pakistan feels that India is using proxies in Baluchistan to sabotage CPEC.²⁶⁹ In 2015, Pakistan arrested Kulbhashan Yadav, an Indian Spy who admitted to sabotage activity in Baluchistan.²⁷⁰ His confession was played on national television. His statement

²⁶⁶ Arif Rafiq, "India's Modi Is Playing the Wrong Game against China and Pakistan," *National Interest*, August 21, 2016, accessed March 2017, <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/indias-modi-playing-the-wrong-game-against-china-pakistan-17411>.

²⁶⁷ Wali Zahid, "Pakistan GDP to continue to grow at 5.2% in 2017: World Bank," *Walizahid.com*, November 10, 2016, accessed March 1, 2017, <https://walizahid.com/2016/11/pakistan-gdp-to-continue-to-grow-at-5-2-in-2017-world-bank/>.

²⁶⁸ Rafiq, "India's Modi Is Playing the Wrong Game."

²⁶⁹ Salman Masood and Hari Kumar, "Pakistan Sentences Indian Spy to Death for Operating Terrorism Ring," *New York Times*, April 10, 2017, accessed April 15, 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/10/world/asia/pakistan-india-death-sentence-spy-kulbhushan-yadav.html>.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

substantiated Pakistan's concerns of Indian involvement in Baluchistan.²⁷¹ Overall, India's views on CPEC are increasing the hostility between both countries.

Afghanistan—An Area of Concern

Afghanistan is another area of concern for the two states. The U.S. has significantly reduced its presence in Afghanistan. India is increasing its engagement with Afghanistan in diplomatic and economic fields. Pakistan views India's involvement in Afghanistan with suspicion. It has frequently objected to the establishment of Indian Consulates close to the Pak-Afghan border, which it believes sponsor and facilitate insurgents fighting the Pakistani state.²⁷² However, at no stage has Pakistan remained oblivious to the threat that resides within and has constantly battled it at home leading to overall improved security. Pakistan launched a number of initiatives to facilitate reconciliation in Afghanistan by leveraging its ties with the Pashtun population; however, the process stalled every time.²⁷³

The National Unity Government (NUG) in Afghanistan and the Indian establishment have since ramped up their anti-Pakistan rhetoric on the pretext of Pakistan

²⁷¹ Masood and Kumar, "Pakistan Sentences Indian Spy to Death."

²⁷² Anwar Iqbal, "India Wants To Deny Pakistan Strategic Depth In Afghanistan: US Report," *Dawn*, November 4, 2015, accessed March 10, 2017, www.dawn.com/news/1217416.

²⁷³ BBC News, "Pakistan Hosts Four-way Afghanistan Peace Talks," January 11, 2016, accessed March 29, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-35279283>.

providing safe haven to the Taliban.²⁷⁴ The U.S. supports the narrative as it provides a logical explanation of the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan. However, important questions remain unanswered with respect to this joint Afghanistan–India narrative.

The U.S. Commander in Afghanistan, General John Nicholson, classified the Afghanistan situation as a Narco-Insurgency.²⁷⁵ If narcotics are the main financial incentive for the Taliban, the bulk of them (80 percent of global production) are produced in Afghanistan and not in Pakistan. The Taliban effectively tax opium farmers in areas under their control.²⁷⁶ They do not need Pakistan’s assistance to run their insurgency.

Secondly, why do the Taliban need safe havens in Pakistan when the U.S. and the Afghan government forces have ceded more space to the Taliban.²⁷⁷ The Taliban now enjoy considerable influence and freedom of movement in Kunduz and Helmand; hiding in Pakistan may not be tactically and operationally feasible for them. This notion could be viewed as logical before Pakistan had launched Operation Zarb-e-Azab in 2014. The

²⁷⁴ Catherine Putz, “Afghan President Blames Pakistan for Sheltering Taliban,” *Diplomat*, April 26, 2016, accessed March 29, 2017, <http://thediplomat.com/2016/04/afghan-president-blames-pakistan-for-sheltering-taliban/>.

²⁷⁵ U.S. Senate Committee on Armed Services, Statement for the Record by General John W. Nicholson, Commander U.S. Forces–Afghanistan before the Senate Armed Services Committee on the Situation in Afghanistan, February 9, 2017, accessed March 7, 2017, https://www.armed-services.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/Nicholson_02-09-17.pdf. The exact word “narco-insurgency” was used in the recorded video statement.

²⁷⁶ BBC News, “Afghanistan Opium Production Up 43%-UN Drugs Watchdog,” October 23, 2016, accessed March 29, 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-37743433>.

²⁷⁷ Senate Committee on Armed Services, Statement for the Record by General John W. Nicholson.

operation destroyed the main terrorist stronghold in North Waziristan.²⁷⁸ The international community including the U.S. has recognized it. Why would the Taliban still base themselves in Pakistan?

It appears that India incentivizes the Afghan government economically, who in turn ramps up the anti-Pakistan rhetoric. The U.S. support of the narrative adds credibility to what the Afghans and the Indians say. The constant stream of rhetoric pushes Pakistan to the sidelines diplomatically. It also underpins its perception of being threatened by an Indo-Afghan Nexus from the West. In the India-Pakistan context, this creates more hostility and adds to the instability.

Potential for an Indo-Pak Conflict Remains High

In this backdrop, the potential for an India-Pakistan conflict remains high. Now India is ramping up its conventional military capabilities. We have already concluded that India's defense preparations are mainly Pakistan centric. Given the environment, this rings alarm bells within Pakistan who must evaluate its options to avoid a dangerous end state. Its choices are limited due to its extended commitment towards internal security and its budget asymmetry with India. However, even if Pakistan believes it needs to avert war with India; it can only do so by preparing for one.

²⁷⁸ Nation, "US Delegation Led by Senator John McCain visits North Waziristan," October 30, 2016, accessed March 29, 2017, <http://nation.com.pk/national/03-Jul-2016/us-delegation-led-by-senator-john-mccain-visits-north-waziristan>.

Pakistan's Military is in the Advanced Stages of Battling Terrorism

The fight against terrorism has been Pakistan's main effort for the past fifteen years. The bulk of its Army is committed to this fight in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) along the Pakistan–Afghanistan border. The Air Force provides close air support (CAS) and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) support to the Army besides ensuring the security of its own fleet and infrastructure which has been a target of terrorist attacks in the past. The Navy has also been targeted and diverts substantial effort towards its security.

The war against terror entered its decisive stage with the launching of Operation Zarb-e-Azab in 2014; aimed at battling the terrorists in their last stronghold in the North Waziristan Agency.²⁷⁹ The operation has been successful and its effects are now measurable within the whole country. The security situation has remarkably improved and terrorist incidents are down to a fraction of their 2013 levels.²⁸⁰ Operation Zarb-e-Azab has concluded and is being followed up with Operation *Raad-ul-Fasad*: actions in the whole country to dismantle the residual terrorist threat.²⁸¹

The people of Pakistan are generally optimistic about the security situation and the future. There have been some high-profile attacks in 2016-2017; however, prompt

²⁷⁹ Umbreen Javaid, "Operation Zarb-e-Azab: A Successful Initiative to Curtail Terrorism," *South Asian Studies* 30, no. 2 (July–December 2015): 43-58.

²⁸⁰ Ibid.

²⁸¹ Pamela Constable, "Pakistan army launches first nationwide anti-terrorism operation," *Washington Post*, February 12, 2017, accessed March 31, 2017, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/europe/pakistan-army-launches-first-nationwide-anti-terrorism-operation>.

responses have again stabilized the situation.²⁸² The increase in cross-border violence along the LOC with India and the probability of war results in a double stretch on Pakistan's security apparatus. If India's ends-ways-means-risk construct resembles what we have ascertained in the previous chapter, this double stretch is likely to continue to create insecurity in Pakistan leading to instability in the region.

Budget Asymmetry

India is an economic powerhouse. This allows them to leverage economic power for developing their means for war. The U.S. \$ 51 billion Indian defense budget reflects this²⁸³. Pakistan spends approximately U.S. \$ 8 billion annually on its defense.²⁸⁴ The asymmetry is evident. Pakistan does not intend spending any more than the current allocation, which is already high in terms of percentage of GDP.²⁸⁵ Moreover, a large part of this expenditure goes towards battling terrorism. This budget asymmetry may turn into a conventional asymmetry between India and Pakistan simply because India is able to buy and manufacture more hardware.²⁸⁶ Moreover, this budget asymmetry is likely to become a constant factor in the Indo-Pak equation because of India's size and the rate of

²⁸² Constable, "Pakistan army launches anti-terrorism operation."

²⁸³ Shane Mason, *Military Budgets in India and Pakistan: Trajectories, Priorities, and Risks* (Washington, DC: Stimson Center, 2016), 13.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 22.

²⁸⁵ Ibid., 23.

²⁸⁶ Ibid., 10.

its economic growth.²⁸⁷ Therefore, Pakistan must develop ways and means to tackle the Indian threat in a cost effective manner.

The New Concept of War Fighting (NCWF)

The Pakistan armed forces formulated the NCWF as a doctrinal response to the Indian Cold Start strategy.²⁸⁸ NCWF has two focus areas. It envisions faster mobilization to deny India the advantage of launching a surprise attack against unprepared defenses, and early offensives to exploit the weaknesses in enemy defenses.²⁸⁹

The NCWF emphasizes faster mobilization practices to keep pace with the rapidly deployable Indian IBGs.²⁹⁰ The Army has overhauled its mobilization apparatus and procedures to make them faster and more efficient. Formations now rely on a variety of transport resources and the infrastructure to mobilize and concentrate in their employment areas. Contracted transport has been integrated to carry tanks, armored personnel carriers, artillery pieces, stores and personnel to allow faster movement.²⁹¹ Essential logistics have been forward placed in areas where they may be needed to save time and prevent attrition during movement.²⁹² Formations regularly practice their

²⁸⁷ Mason, *Military Budgets in India and Pakistan*, 10.

²⁸⁸ Meenakshi Sood, "Pakistan's (Non-Nuclear) Plan to Counter 'Cold Start'," *Diplomat*, March 25, 2017, accessed March 29, 2017, <http://thediplomat.com/2017/03/pakistans-non-nuclear-plan-to-counter-cold-start/>.

²⁸⁹ Ibid.

²⁹⁰ Ibid.

²⁹¹ Ibid.

²⁹² Ibid.

modified procedures to ensure their correct execution.²⁹³ The Army is now confident about this well-oiled system and has the capability to mobilize fast enough to prevent the Indians from attacking into a vacuum.²⁹⁴

Moreover, the Pakistan Army is likely to respond by launching early offensives to exploit weaknesses in the enemy defenses with a view to obtain equitable gains.²⁹⁵ The Indian doctrine relies on culling out IBGs from defensive formations. This is likely to weaken their defenses. These weaknesses may be exploited by launching early offensives utilizing mechanized forces. Gains from these offensives may be capitalized in line with the overall design. The intent is to have a favorable position at the end of the conflict.

The NCWF fills the doctrinal requirement for dealing with the offensives visualized under the Cold Start strategy.²⁹⁶ However, it is only a way to articulate the Pakistani response. Increasing Indian defense potential necessitates that Pakistani forces employed in such warfare must possess compatible capabilities.

The Pakistani Military focuses on Preventing an Overmatch

Pakistan may not be able to match India in defense procurements and development. The only wise choice is to prevent an overmatch by maintaining adequate capabilities versus the Indians. The three services concentrate on acquiring capabilities in

²⁹³ Sood, “Pakistan’s (Non-Nuclear) Plan.”

²⁹⁴ Ibid.

²⁹⁵ Ibid.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

their respective domains to achieve this. The land forces are most affected by the asymmetry since the majority of India's acquisitions are in this domain. Their areas of focus appear to be tanks, air defense weapons, and attack aviation to reduce India's lead.

The Pakistan Army seeks to upgrade and expand its tank fleet. It has been pursuing the Main Battle Tank Al-Khalid program since the 1990s to indigenously develop modern tanks. The program has yielded good results and more than 400 tanks have been produced and handed over to armor units.²⁹⁷ The Army also initiated the Al-Zarrar program to upgrade the old T-69's with a 125 mm Gun, added armor protection, thermal night sight, improved fire control system, and a more powerful engine.²⁹⁸ This program has also upgraded up to 350 tanks in line with modern battlefield requirements.²⁹⁹ The Army may also buy new tanks and some Chinese and Ukrainian equipment has been tried, yet the procurement is pending until the right solutions can be found.³⁰⁰ These programs are likely to boost Pakistan's mechanized warfare potential and prevent the Indian's from gaining an overmatch.

India's growing air power necessitates an increase in air defense capabilities for the ground forces. Pakistan has recently acquired the LY-80 Low and Medium Air

²⁹⁷ Janes.ihs, "Pakistan: Army," *Jane's Sentinel Security Assessment* (2017), accessed March 1, 2017, <https://janes.ihs.com.lumen.cgsccarl.com/MilitarySecurityAssessments/Display/1766411>.

²⁹⁸ Ibid

²⁹⁹ Ibid.

³⁰⁰ Ibid.

Defense System (LOMADS) from China to bolster its air defense.³⁰¹ This development has closely followed the Indian acquisition of S-400 missiles from Russia and their deal for Dassault Rafale fighter jets with France.

Similarly, the Army is procuring attack helicopters for two reasons. To augment its existing fleet of AH 1F Cobras (which has proved instrumental in fighting terrorism besides adding conventional capabilities) and to counter Indian overmatch in tanks and BMPs. This is a multi-source acquisition. Procurement of AH 1 Z Vipers from the U.S. is under process.³⁰² Simultaneously, four MI 24 HINDs are being acquired from Russia and Z-10 aircraft are being acquired from China.³⁰³ These acquisitions will benefit the fight against terror and add capabilities against the Indian threat.

Air Force aims at maintaining a status quo by fighter acquisition and development. The most notable in this regard is the JF 17, jointly developed by Pakistan and China. Seventy of these aircraft have already joined the PAF fleet.³⁰⁴ Up to two hundred and fifty are likely to be added in the future.³⁰⁵ However, the JF-17 is not a heavy fighter. That role is undertaken by the F-16s, most notably the eighteen Block

³⁰¹ Dawn, "Army Inducts Chinese-built Air Defence System to its Arsenal," March 12, 2017, accessed March 31, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1320053>.

³⁰² Franz Gady, "Pakistan to Receive Four Attack Helicopters from Russia," *Diplomat*, December 21, 2016, accessed March 31, 2017, <http://thediplomat.com/2016/12/pakistan-to-receive-4-attack-helicopters-from-russia/>.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Ashley Tellis, *Troubles, They Come in Battalions: The Manifold Trivials of the Indian Air Force* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2016), 10.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

52s.³⁰⁶ To reduce India's advantage, acquisitions will be required in this area. Earlier, Pakistan was interested in a steady increase in its F 16 Block 52 fleet.³⁰⁷ That option has been denied by the U.S.³⁰⁸ Now Pakistan may be exploring the option of buying a fourth or fifth generation fighter from the Chinese.³⁰⁹

The Need to Develop Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNWs)

Equipment procurements and developments are aimed at lessening the Indian advantage and preventing Indians from achieving a decisive superiority in the conventional realm. They do not parallel the pace of Indian procurement. If India obtains a substantial lead, which after a few years it might, it will add to the confidence level of its decision makers.

The Indian policy makers already assume that space for conventional conflict exists. They will be more inclined towards initiating a conflict because the conventional overmatch will increase their chances of winning it. This phenomenon increases the feeling of insecurity in Pakistan by augmenting its threat perception. Pakistan needs to counter the assumption that there is any space for war by displaying capabilities that can be employed decisively in the earlier stages of war. This requirement formed the basis of

³⁰⁶ Ibid.

³⁰⁷ Tellis, *Troubles, They Come in Battalions*, 9.

³⁰⁸ Mason, *Military Budgets in India and Pakistan*, 31.

³⁰⁹ Dawn, "Pakistan Wants to Buy Chinese Stealth Fighter: Minister," November 22, 2014, accessed March 27, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1146104>.

Pakistan's decision to diversify its nuclear options by developing TNWs, reliable delivery means, and second-strike capability.³¹⁰

The logic of developing TNWs can also be explained by Charles Glaser's argument that "by shifting the offense-defense balance heavily toward defense, nuclear weapons enable states that are much less powerful than their adversaries to satisfy their defense requirements and increase their security."³¹¹ Pakistan has acquired substantial capabilities now as some analysts estimate its nuclear arsenal to be bigger than India.³¹² It has also developed short-range and cruise missiles in addition to the already existing delivery means. The short-range missiles are more suited for TNW delivery.³¹³ Lately, Pakistan has also successfully tested ballistic missile launching from a submarine.³¹⁴ This provides options for a second strike. Overall, Pakistan has achieved substantial diversification of its nuclear options to deter the understanding that there is any space for war between India and Pakistan.

The Pakistani developments are being countered by India through the development of multiple ballistic missile defense options. These systems are limited in

³¹⁰ Mason, *Military Budgets in India and Pakistan*, 35.

³¹¹ Charles Glaser, *Rational Theory of International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), 44.

³¹² Mason, *Military Budgets in India and Pakistan*, 35.

³¹³ *Ibid.*

³¹⁴ Joshua Berlinger, "South Asia's Nuclear One-upmanship Ramps Up with Pakistan Missile Test," *CNN*, January 10, 2017, accessed March 20, 2017, <http://www.cnn.com/2017/01/10/asia/pakistan-submarine-missile/>.

scope and there is extensive discussion on their efficacy. However, it does provide hope for the future, and more importantly, emboldens decision makers.

Conclusion

There is an existing unstable situation in South Asia characterized by heated public passions, political rhetoric, and the regional problem of terrorism. India's defense buildup aggravates Pakistan's threat perception which instigates a response from the latter. This leads to further instability and the opportunity for escalation.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSIONS

India is emerging as an economic powerhouse and its national power is on the rise. India's regional and global ambitions are also growing correspondingly. It is enhancing its military potential constantly to cater to its ambitions. India justifies this enhancement as being necessary to act as a counterweight to China. However, a detailed examination of India's capability enhancement and strategy formulation points towards a Pakistan focused intent. This intent is changing the dynamics of South Asian stability. The region is already unstable due to territorial disputes, terrorism, and political shifts. India's growing military potential linked to its strategic thought is likely to exacerbate this instability.

India's military capability enhancement is linked to its strategic thought. Analysts have argued the absence or the incoherence of national strategic thought in India. If that is true, the military strategic thought process assumes added importance. The military's strategic outlook has focused on the need to defeat Pakistan in a military confrontation. The Sundarji Doctrine of the 1980s and Cold Start strategy formulated in the 2000s are the two most well-known strategy formulations by the Indian military with the Indian Army in the lead. Both these strategies seek a common end in the military defeat of Pakistan; more comprehensively in the earlier and more embarrassingly in the later.

India's offensive strategy formulation creates a sense of insecurity in Pakistan and institutes a need for the latter to respond. The Indian strategists assume that there is space for war between India and Pakistan despite the nuclear factor. Pakistan views such offensive strategy formulation as an expression of Indian intent. It establishes the need to

formulate a Pakistani response, particularly in the sphere of countering the assumption about the space for war. Therefore, the Indian threat and the Pakistani response keep the hostility in South Asia alive and increase the instability in the region.

India's military capability enhancement aims at mitigating capability gaps necessary to enable actions envisioned in the Cold Start strategy. India justifies its capability enhancement by expressing a need for greater influence in the extended neighborhood. If that is India's top priority, naval and strategic air capabilities should be the top areas of focus for India. However, the bulk of its capital acquisitions budget is being expended by the Army to enhance its capabilities. A closer examination shows that Cold Start enablers such as tanks, attack helicopters, and artillery are the focus areas for procurement and development. This brings added clarity regarding India's prime intent. In an environment of existing hostility, the intent and the corresponding capability development stokes the instability in South Asia.

India's hostile intent towards Pakistan and corresponding military capability enhancement can lead to dangerous consequences due to the existing sources of instability in South Asia. The Kashmir dispute is the primary source of instability in the region. Dissent in the Kashmiri populace is growing due to the heavy handedness of the Indian security forces. This leads to recurring violence and rekindles the freedom struggle in Kashmir. India blames Pakistan for this violence. Relations between both countries remain tense and there is always the possibility of an escalation.

India also blames Pakistan for terrorism in its homeland. It ignores the socio-political grievances of its diverse population and the resulting insurgencies brewing all over India. All of these contribute towards the violence in India. Moreover, the current

Indian government's association with Hindutva sponsoring organizations; and the overall ideological shift in India that reduces the inclusiveness of the state are also important factors. All of them have direct linkages to the violence in the Indian homeland and to the increasing instability in South Asia.

The use of anti-Pakistan rhetoric by Indian political leaders is another important aspect. They use such rhetoric to gain political mileage. However, the Indian leaders mount pressure on themselves by raising public expectations in the process. This creates a requirement for these leaders to use force against Pakistan to fulfill their promises. Resultantly, this rhetoric increases the hostility between India and Pakistan leading to more instability in the region.

India has shown willingness to use force against Pakistan since 1947. The Indian claim of "surgical strikes" in 2016 points towards the growing Indian desire to be able to carry out punitive actions against Pakistan. High tensions erupted in the aftermath. Public passions on both sides were unprecedented. An actual strike would have forced Pakistan to respond. The situation could have spiraled leading to an all-out war. The Indian leadership, either due to the overwhelming desire to strike Pakistan, or possibly a different set of assumptions, brushed the inherent danger of the situation aside.

The second case appears more logical and has direct implications for what lies in the future. The Indian Army Chief has hinted towards the possibility of repeated strikes. It appears that India has assumed that it can claim or actually carry out strikes without fearing a response if a certain set of conditions exists. These conditions would include an internationally hyped up environment after a terrorist incident in India for which Pakistan is blamed leading to its relative isolation, and stretch on Pakistan's armed forces due to

its security commitments in fighting terrorism and securing trade routes. This is a dangerous assumption. It is linked to what lies in the future.

If India strikes, Pakistan will have to respond to the violation of its sovereignty. This will initiate a series of actions and counteractions by both sides beginning in Kashmir (due to the nature of border there), followed by a mobilization of forces. Even if cooler heads prevail and all-out war is prevented, both countries would have come dangerously close to war. Intense fighting would already have happened in Kashmir. This would look similar to a limited conflict with the possibility of expanding into a general one. It appears likely from the indicators presented above. Its most outstanding characteristic would be the possibility of expanding into a general war. Indian leadership is gaining confidence to execute such actions due to India's increasing national power and military potential. The dangerous outcome associated with these actions is the primary cause of instability in South Asia. In this context, it is fair to conclude that India's military capability enhancement is increasing the instability in South Asia.

This research has attempted to answer questions about the effects of growing Indian defense potential on South Asian stability. In the process, it has raised additional questions regarding South Asian security that merit follow-on researchers for answering them. It is recommended that scholars research these three questions as a continuation of this study:

1. What are the strategic objectives that India desires to achieve by waging a limited war against Pakistan?
2. What are the best response options for Pakistan to deter – and if need be – defeat Indian aggression?

3. What are the dynamics of nuclear deterrence in the Indo-Pak scenario? Does the space for limited war really exist?

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