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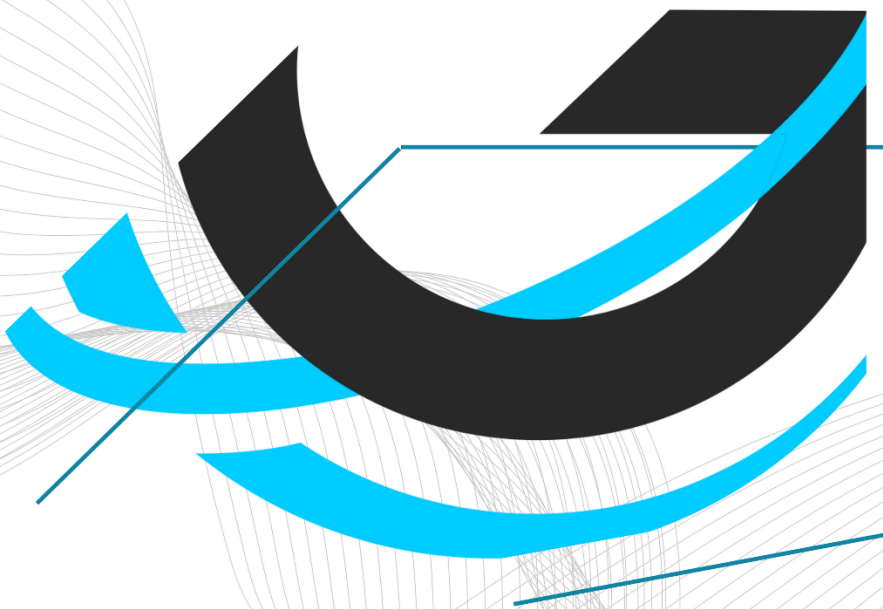
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Abstract

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Keywords: Indian Military Modernization, Strategic Stability, Nuclear Deterrence

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Abstract

A comprehensive military modernization plan is being followed by India; despite many regional impediments it has acquired enough state-of-the-art weapons in various fields. Resultantly this has enhanced the insecurity spectrum in the region and Pakistan in particular. In this regard, strategic stability and balance of power in the South Asia region particularly among Pakistan and India is muddling. In the light of geostrategic compulsions, India has been successful in receiving unflinching assistance, especially from the US-led Western world primarily against China. Furthermore, one of the most regional impediments is a perpetual arms race in the region which is considered to be an eminent challenge for regional development and prosperity. However, the spillover effect of foreign-backed Indian military modernization has posed certain compulsions on Pakistan to enhance its military capability. Such regional developments are exponentially maximizing the existing vacuum triggered by territorial conflicts and ideological differences between Pakistan and India.

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Introduction

The implications of Indian military modernization in South Asian strategic stability have mitigated the precepts of peace and stability. It has opened multiple avenues for extra-regional powers to follow their pursuits of vested interests. Furthermore, the rivalry among major powers in the region has created a vacuum among regional stakeholders. i.e. Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, and China. In this

regard, strategic stability has been endangered by Indian military modernization. Moreover, the Indian military modernization has increased the arms race in the region. The trends in the South Asian strategic environment reveal that Pakistan and Indian strategic competition is on the rise. India's comprehensive Military Modernization program could outpace Pakistan. In the conventional forces realm, the Indians have been



struggling to ensure clear superiority, whereas Pakistan has been synergizing its conventional and nuclear capabilities to sustain strategic equilibrium with its archrival. However, Islamabad encounters economic challenges in advancing its armed forces. Its adversary has a twelve-time larger economy and maybe fifteen times larger in 2030 (McRae, [2018](#)).

Military development in both states will have great implications for the region and the world at large. It is in fact Military Modernization of India on which the Asian Balance of Power will hinge. (A. A. Khan, [2018](#)).

A stable political relationship can bring strategic balance to the region. The defense spending in India and Pakistan is greatly influenced by threat perception which both countries have from each other. The Indians Military Modernization and strategic thinking are traditionally Pakistan-centric (Blumenthal, [2012](#)).

An Analysis of India's Military Capabilities and Intent

Indian main aim is to promote economic growth while increasing/modernizing its military strength. India is increasing its defense industrial capacity resultantly this will help India's economy by earning millions of dollars through arms sales in the international arena. At the same time, this will ensure a continued supply of necessary equipment to its armed forces. so making in India is a prime focus in this modernization. On nuclear arms race in South Asia India blames China. India is currently investing in purchasing state of art weapons for \$ 150 billion till 202 (Frye, [2008](#)).

India is pursuing a comprehensive Military Modernization program for protecting and promoting its own national interest. Recently "Make in India initiative has been introduced to speed up ongoing Military Modernization. The main salient of this plan is liberalizing the Indian defense industry in the shape of increasing foreign direct investment (FDI) from 26 % to 49%. Govt notifies increase in defense FDI cap to 49 percent ([n.d.](#)).

The Indian Ministry of Defense is playing a vital role as a regulatory body in this Military Modernization. The modernization agenda includes transformation in defense infrastructure, increased defense budget, reforms in procurement policy of weapons, and troops reorganizational and doctrinal

changes. It seems as Indian political elite is united in pursuing a comprehensive Military Modernization plan to achieve regional superpower status but at the same time, the realist rationale thinkers see few impediments to its fulfillment.

It's important to know India's threat perception and strategic evolution for a better understanding of the reasons behind the Indian comprehensive Military Modernization plan. India has fought four major wars besides many border skirmishes, smaller conflicts, and insurgencies. Her threat perception is associated with Pakistan and China. This threat perception is the major reason behind India's strategies and buildup. Presently India's strong economy and its ambitious program for projecting its power and gaining a hegemonic status in the region are the logic behind massive investment in enhancing its armed forces capabilities. The strategic evolution is based on threats, the nuclearization of the region along with the geopolitical environment, and at the same time it revolves around the employment of the army and Air Force

An Overview of Strategic Stability in South Asia

Keeping in view India's latest trends in air defense missile systems along with other Military Modernization plans and with enhanced long-range target acquiring and engaging capabilities, this will lead to pre-emption and result in lowering of the nuclear threshold which will further destabilize the strategic stability of the area. In order to counter emerging threats from the BMD shield and to ensure survivability Pakistan must focus on the development of MIRVs and MARVs in the strategic sphere, besides stressing India's air defense missile system and BMD shield there is a requirement to modernize selected areas of armed forces as well. The current balance of conventional weaponry tilts heavily in India's favor. Considering the long range of the S-400 missile defense system it is not only a threat to regional countries but at the same time, it is a threat to extra-regional forces in the Indian Ocean. Considering India's hegemonic designs and its extensive Military Modernization process it is important for the world community at large to take concrete steps to check India's growing military

strength as it is a threat to regional and global security.

India's military ambitions and growing strength are a concern for all regional countries and it is alarming for South Asian strategic environment and stability. The share of Indian arms imports was 10 % out of all global imports from the year 2000 to 2020. The upward trajectory in the defense budget and Military Modernization is un precedent and at the same, it is shaping the strategic behavior of its neighbor. The reality about India's bulk of weaponry on inventory is that it is oriented and aimed towards Pakistan although there is deterrence stability between these two hostile neighbors this present gradation and Military Modernization is a serious threat to the existing strategic stability of the region. Besides addressing the two-and-a-half threat matrix Indian political elite is busy countering and containing China's increasing influence in the region. They have formulated indo- Indo--Pacific strategy in this context to contain China in the Indo-Pacific region and for this purpose they enthusiastically participated in Malabar maritime exercises since 1994. It is strengthening its maritime forces with the induction of state-of-the-art weapons, frigates, corvettes, and submarines beside this DRDO is developing state of art missiles, and torpedoes for the Indian Navy. China is a much bigger maritime force than India and this modernization and gradation in naval arsenal is a threat to other regional states.

India's massive Military Modernization and increase in defense budget is perilous for regional security. Its huge investment in the ballistic Missile Defense System could dent Pakistan's deterrence arrangement. It necessitates, therefore, Pakistan to advance its missile program to sustain the credibility of its credible minimum nuclear deterrent posture.

Role of Nuclear Deterrence in the Region

In the wake of nuclear-equipped Pakistan and India, existing territorial hostilities added by ideological differences have reached a stalemate. In this regard, the nuclear factor is playing a crucial role in putting a full stop to full-scale future conflicts. Furthermore, strategic stability is considered to be achieved due to the inception of nuclear weapons. However, arms control and disarmament regimes have a greater scope to supervise and balance the existing nuclear equation between Pakistan and India. Its scope has

been compromised by major powers' unflinching assistance to India in its military modernization in general and nuclear development in particular. The military modernization and nuclear development includes Indo-US civil nuclear deal, nuclear reactors development, indigenous integrated guided missiles, Missile Defence System, etc.

The arms race in the South Asian region is considered to be an imminent threat to the strategic stability of South Asia. In this regard security dilemma among Pakistan and India is creating fury all across the region. Security dilemma refers to a condition among two or more states that have a credible fear of each other. It is considered that in the comity of nations security dilemmas cannot be absolutely resolved but can be dealt with accordingly (Lo, 2003).

In order to mitigate the security dilemma in the South Asian region Pakistan has responded with Smiling Buddha and Pokharan Tests—Indian tests to adapt nuclear avenue. Since the 1970s Indian nuclear development has distressed strategic stability in the South Asian region. Furthermore, instability at the strategic front and the arms race in the South Asian Region have challenged the survival of both India and Pakistan. Indian Military build-up particularly in the nuclear realm is further added by the addition of long-range missiles of various dimensions and nuclear-based submarines. It gave an impetus to existing differences among India and Pakistan (Hagerty, 2019).

Countermeasures to tackle Indian designs

Pakistan is passing through one of the most dangerous periods of insecurity in its history. A net assessment of the patterns of violence and stability indicates that Pakistan is approaching a storm of threats, including rising extremism, a failing economy, chronic underdevelopment, and an intensifying war, resulting in unprecedented political, economic, and social turmoil. Threat spectrum is there and there is a requirement to deal with it in detail for survival. Threat to Pakistan's National Interest is there due to the growing Indo-US strategic partnership at the regional level, it triggered the debate about its implications on China and the emergence of India as an Asian power; A counter-weight to China. Since independence India has adopted a hostile attitude towards all neighbors, never accepted their independence, and is involved

in many state-sponsored terrorism activities. With the inspiration of becoming a world power and achieving dominance in the region she is following a comprehensive Military Modernization plan and increasing its military might by modernizing the army, Navy, and Air Force simultaneously her main emphasis is on mechanization, effective network-centric operational capability, ambitious missile development program, make in India initiative for Indigenous modernization drive, increase in defense budgets, buying state of art weapons from all over the world, growing ties with USA and cooperation in the nuclear field, especially where they are using American enriched uranium for peaceful activities and using own enriched uranium for development of 25% nuclear weapons yearly. All these preparations are being made to contain China in this region. We have to follow an Indigenous modernization plan with more focus on active and passive air defense measures and more lethal and state of art anti-tank weapon systems. There should be more effectiveness in the employment of our reserves at all levels. At the same time, we should maintain minimum credible deterrence in the form of missiles and nuclear capabilities (Lo, 2003).

Implications Specific to Pakistan

The military modernization of India is a great concern for the policymakers of Pakistan. A few challenges, which Pakistan encounters due to India's military modernization are spelled out in the following discussion.

Indian ambitions of dominating the South Asian region diplomatically and militarily will have significant negative implications on weaker states of the region and Pakistan shall be the worst sufferer of this partnership (Desk, [n.d.](#)).

The growing US-India ties in the region are to contain China's influence in the Indo-Pacific region. The us is working on an effective strategy in this region against the Chinese and working with close allies here in this regard US has approved the sale of 24 x MH-60R ASW anti-submarine helicopters to India for \$2.6 billion dollars (AFP, [2019](#)).

These will be manufactured by Lockheed Martin. These helicopters will be equipped with MK-54 torpedoes, hellfire missiles, advanced precision killed weapon systems, more enhanced night fighting systems, and state-of-the-art radars and this

all will be similar to what US maritime forces are using. This has further strengthened the US-India strategic relationship and for the US this deal is concluded to help the defensive posture of its closest ally in the region which is considered vital to serve its national interest in the region as India is considered an important state for political stability in the South Asian and Indo Pacific region.

This increasing strategic partnership provides India with an opportunity to use its increased leverage with the United States, being a core state ally in the region and India can force or manipulate US influence on Pakistan in its favor regarding multiple outstanding disputes between India and Pakistan. Which includes issues like Sir Creek, Kashmir, Sachin? (Jaspal, [2024](#)).

Indians are not following the IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) safeguards and it is generally assumed that Safeguards by the International Atomic Energy Agency cannot stop the pilferage of enriched uranium and some amount is not used for peaceful purposes rather used for the development of nuclear weapons (Bathke, [2012](#)).

It is assumed that a significant proportion of India's nuclear complex would remain outside IAEA safeguards and continue to have a strategic function and this enriched uranium is sufficient enough to build 25 nuclear weapons.

Tactical Nuclear Weapons hold an important role in Pakistan's strategy to counter the Indian military cold start doctrine and with induction and deployment of Tactical Nuclear Weapons Indian cold start doctrine is checkmated and they have to think a hundred times before any misadventure (Naz, [2019](#)).

Some of the major conclusions affecting the security environments of South Asia in general and Pakistan in particular are:-

Increased globalization and the ambition of gaining exclusive control of the world's energy resources have profoundly influenced the strategic formulation of the US and its allies. India being an attractive market for the emerging world order will get added recognition from the West and this is because of the geo-economics factor.

India has a strong economy and they are gaining maximum advantage from all elements of national power it is generally perceived that a strong

economy and strong military will elevate it to regional power. India is pursuing a comprehensive Military Modernization plan and is continuously upgrading its armed forces to achieve its hegemonic designs. By achieving economic and military strength Indians will deal with Pakistan from a stronger position and will apply all sorts of pressure on Pakistan main aim will be to drain Pakistan's economy by long standoffs and prolonged escalations can also resort to proxy wars and hybrid warfare to destabilize Pakistan internally and marginalizing her internationally.

Hindutva is on the rise and this is a major concern for other religious minorities. This is a great threat to their secular Status (Arab News PK, n.d.).

India's Improvement of relations with the USA, Iran, and Israel have great concern for Pakistan. To meet the growing challenges posed by India requires a comprehensive response from Pakistani armed forces. A potent response is only possible when there will be synergized efforts by all services. Failing to do so will not bring the desired effects and their strength will dissipate by operating in isolation. There is more emphasis than ever before on network-centric operations and joint operations. The best way to serve the cause of peace is to make ourselves strong so that no country should think of taking aggressiveness against us. A few suggested measures are:-

Economy

Pakistan needs to improve its economy which would result in improvement in the overall living standard and existence of the country. Major improvement in the industrial, information technology and agriculture sectors is required. Huge population growth which is one of the tangible elements of national power is a major factor because the rate of unemployment is on the rise due to a lack of industrial and agricultural sector capacity.

Diplomatic / Foreign front

Diplomacy is one of the intangible elements of national power. For any state national interest is vital and every policy revolves around it. Power is required to attain these vital national interests and this power can be defined as the ability to influence the minds of others and force the opponent to act as per own will and desires. This factor is also linked to the economy. India is trying at every forum to isolate

Pakistan internationally. Pakistan has to adopt aggressive diplomatic policies and with the help of friendly countries has to counter Indian propaganda. Maximum economic and security benefits from regional cooperation organizations like SAARC, ECO, and SCO should be sorted out. These organizations are the platform that can help regional countries in discussing any agenda, eco, and security should be the top agenda during the course of discussion and enhanced economic activity and increased interdependency can bring more stability in the region.

Combating Terrorism

Pakistan should continue condemning terrorism in any form as we are one of the worst victims of this menace. Pakistan should execute effective exterior maneuvers to effectively counter Indian efforts to link this terrorism with Islamic fundamentalism. Pakistan was a non-NATO ally in the global war against terrorism. Through effective diplomacy, Pakistan should convince the world population and world media at large on the efforts of Pakistan against the war on terrorism. Pakistan must invest in gaining support from Non-Governmental Organizations, world media, and, core country lobbies to exploit Indian atrocities in Illegally occupied Indian-held Kashmir, and how brutally they are dealing with the population there. Pakistan must exploit the human rights violations of India, its discriminatory handling of minorities, crimes against minorities, and its hostile relations with all neighboring states.

Tactical Nuclear Weapons

In the long term, Pakistan cannot compete with India conventionally as the difference between economies is huge. Any attempt to bring the difference in conventional power will be disastrous for Pakistan as the current economic conditions are worse than ever before. This will indeed increase Pakistan's reliance on the use of Tactical Nuclear Weapons this is a cost-effective approach but the only available option in current economic conditions to diminish national security challenges. Until and unless Pakistan's economy stabilizes we have to substitute nuclear for conventional capabilities but by increasing reliance on nuclear weapons in order to cover defense budget shortfalls,

the result will be in the form of a heightened security dilemma.

In the absence of any confidence-building measures and reconciliation process with India in the defensive posture of Pakistan, there will be increased roles of nuclear weapons resultantly the security dilemma will prevail in the region and an arms race will start between both rival states. India enjoys superiority in conventional weapons and this will be effectively countered by using Tactical Nuclear Weapons.

Realigning

Realigning policies keeping in view national interest and establishing closer ties with Muslim countries and Russia in the region. Efforts should be made to block friendly countries against Indian policies which are a serious threat to the strategic security of the region. Develop a consensus amongst China, Russia, and Iran to give a united front against Indian designs.

Conventional Capability Advancement

Pakistan should make tough choices about defense priorities, state of art anti-tank weapon systems to be inducted, modern and long-range air defense systems to be procured, and counter strategies should be harnessed with lethal equipment. Pakistan ought to pursue a comprehensive indigenization program and phased modernization plan in order to maintain credible deterrence for an effective response to the growing Indian threat. Pakistan retains the option of quid pro quo against ever-increasing Indian threat and against Indian hegemonic designs. In this strategy, any aggressive action from the Indian side will be effectively countered by the same sort of action by the Pakistan side.

Conclusion

"India has moved to a proactive and pragmatic philosophy to counter various conflict situations. The response to terror provocations could be in the form of 'Surgical Strike' and these would be

subsumed in the sub-conventional portion of the spectrum of armed conflict" (India Ministry of Defense Directorate of Doctrines, April 2017).

According to the joint doctrine of Indian Armed Forces-2017 (JDIAF-2017), the conflict will be determined or prevented through a process of credible deterrence, coercive diplomacy, and conclusively by punitive destruction, disruption, and constantan a nuclear environment across the spectrum of conflict'. A surgical Strike is a perceptive war concept which is introduced in JDIAF-2017; it is about the possibility of a limited war under a nuclear threshold. The basic aim and objective of current comprehensive military modernization is to a quite enough capability to conduct quick and surprising multiple attacks inside Pakistan to gain vital objectives under a nuclear threshold. India's economic growth is the basic reason behind the comprehensive military modernization. India is an attractive market for core countries. Their existing vintage military hardware is about to complete its lifetime. This Comprehensive Military Modernization has also shifted this defensive posture from a Defensive to an Offensive-Defensive doctrine. India's new Military Doctrine which includes Joint Doctrine Indian Armed Forces -2017, Land Warfare Doctrine -2018, Cold Start Doctrine, and Pro-Active Operations all are poised to achieve the vital objectives below the nuclear threshold. India's comprehensive military modernization has started an arms race in the region. The absence of arms control suggests that sooner or later strategic equilibrium in South Asia might be replaced with the strategic imbalance in the region. "Theoretically the limited conventional war between the nuclear-armed adversaries is possible with a strong probability of escalation to all act war including nuclear strike enhancing." India's surgical strike stratagem endangers strategic stability in South Asia. Since independence, India has adopted a hostile attitude towards her neighbors particularly against India. With the aspiration to become a regional hegemon, she is continuously increasing her military potential and following a comprehensive Military Modernization plan.

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