

APPRAISAL OF INDIAN MILITARY MODERNIZATION: IMPLICATIONS FOR REGIONAL STRATEGIC STABILITY

Furqan Khan*

Asma Bilal**

***Abstract**The Indian Armed Forces have been witnessing a major strategic shift in the recent years. The codified version of Indian doctrinal mapping has been manoeuvred to entertain offensive military posture with less emphasis on strategic restraint. The strategic shift, however, is visible not only in the Indian Defence Policy but also pragmatically enforced with the acquisition of advanced weapons and its practical demonstration. Its aggression from Balakot strikes against Pakistan to more recent incursions in Eastern Ladakh against China aims to integrate its offensive military posture with wider geostrategic ambitions in the region. India is utilizing its bilateral strategic partnerships with powers including Russia, the United States, and Israel to augment its military capacity and credibility. The enhanced synergy is consistent with the revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) philosophy which reflects India's will to adopt proactive and offensive strategy in order to emerge as the leading power in Asia. The methodology used in the paper is qualitative in nature, based on exploratory research method and used both primary and secondary resources. It unveils India's growing military modernization in the theoretical context of 'Offensive-cum-Defensive' Strategy. The paper argues that India's doctrinal shift in favour of offensive military postures combines with its regional assertiveness against Pakistan and China, is potentially threatening strategic stability in South Asia.*

Keywords: Strategic Stability, Defence Policy, Indian military modernization

*Mr Furqan Khan is a researcher and undergraduate student of Department of International Relations, National Defence University, Islamabad, Pakistan.

**Ms Asma Bilal is a Lecturer, PhD Scholar in Department of International Relations, National Defence University, Islamabad, Pakistan

Introduction

It was the former US President Bill Clinton who termed South Asia as the world's 'most dangerous place' on earth. Invariably, for no other reason but for the naked struggle for power that exists between Pakistan and India. The onset of enduring rivalry at the time of partition has been shaping the geopolitics of South Asia which has pushed the twin born states to sharpen their nose for a hard-headed arms race. Since then, the two countries have taken the classical Latin adage too seriously that *Si vis Pacem, para Bellum*, "if you want peace, prepare for the war".¹ However, there comes a doubt on the former part of the adage either it corresponds, at least partly, to the strategic intentions of both powers. This is because development on one side is strategically calculated or miscalculated as an offensive design on the other and thus triggers a matching response on part of the later with no element of 'strategic restraint'.

This research article is based on qualitative methodology and by using both primary and secondary data; it explores India's military postures and its role in framing an 'uncontrolled' arms race in South Asia. It argues that the continuous efforts of militarization by India, strategic shift in its doctrinal evolution with greater emphasis on offensive postures against Pakistan and China offsets regional balance and threatens strategic stability in the South Asian region. India's military modernization with advance weapons acquisition and hostile provocations during the Modi administration reflect not only its aggressive designs for the regional countries but also ambitions of becoming not only a regional but global power. To understand the current military modernization, it is first important to conceptualize the transition in Indian strategic thinking from the Defensive military posture to the Defensive-Offensive and finally to the Offensive mode of engagement under the Cold Start Doctrine (CSD). Therefore, the first part identifies various strategic rationales behind the transition by taking a necessary look into the Indian doctrinal shift over the past seven decades with growing regional ambitions. The second part focuses on the Modi defence policy that is of offensive intentions in the guise of the acquisition of the 'defensive' weapons, modernizing army, and indigenizing military equipment. Given the unfavourable consequences of the aforementioned developments for the South Asian region, the article in the third part will attempt not only to enumerate various associated strategic parameters

¹Publius Flavius Vegetius Renatus, *Vegetius: Epitome of Military Science* (Liver Pool University Press, 2001), 63.

but also addresses India's false sense of security under the 'defensive-cum-offensive' strategy and its implications for the South Asian strategic stability.

Evolution of India's Defence Doctrine

Out of the repressive colonial history following its independence, New Delhi adopted Gandhian approach to its security which advocated "Indian practice of non-violence precluded the need for a military establishment altogether".² The statement is a reflection of the democratic non-violent approach which became the cornerstone of the 'Nehruvian Model'. The Indian political elite tried to get rid of the western-oriented concept of the military as the formidable element of power. They rather kept military aloof to any outside adventurism with the 'inward' approach as the dominant facet of Indian national security.³ Despite a firm opposition to his utterly optimistic approach at home, Prime Minister Nehru continued to adopt optimism as the essence of his outside engagement with regional and extra-regional nations, especially towards China.

The setback in 1962 Sino-India War changed Nehru-led military thinking and set the focus on outward security challenges; thereby expanding India's will to accumulate power by military advancement and modernization. The Indo-Pak war of 1965 also contributed to a shift from a purely defensive posture to a counter-offensive one which was elaborated by Brigadier S. K. Sinha that "It is only through military preparedness that a nation can defend its frontiers against any external threats. And Defence does not merely mean waiting to be attacked at the enemy's point of own choosing. It requires the defender to retaliate so that through counter-offensive the aggressor may be frustrated and defeated".⁴ The doctrinal shift was first visible when India resorted to aggression by launching "a pre-meditated, multi-dimensional strategic plan involving multi-pronged offensive operation" to successfully dismember Pakistan in

²Glynn L. Wood, and Daniel Vaagenes, "Indian Defense Policy: A New Phase?" *Asian Survey* 24, no. 7 (1984): 721-35. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2644185>

³ Brig (Retd) Vinod Anand, "Nehru Era's Defense and Security Policies and Their Legacy", *Vivekananda International Foundation, Occasional Paper*, March 2014. <https://www.vifindia.org/sites/default/files/nehru-era-s-defence-and-security-policies-and-their-legacy.pdf>

⁴ Ali Ahmad, *India's Doctrine Puzzle: Limiting War in South Asia* (New Delhi: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2004) 39.

1971.⁵Hence, out of this triumph,India widened its strategic horizon with expanded ambitions; thereby portraying herself as an emerging regional power.⁶

In this way, the post-independence ‘defensive doctrine’ which was described by former Indian Defence Minister George Fernandez as “non-aggressive, non-provocative defence policy based on the philosophy of defensive defence” was replaced by a new doctrine labelled as the ‘Sundarji Doctrine’ sketched on the philosophy of ‘defensive-offense’.⁷ The doctrine suggested deploying seven ‘holding corps’ along the Western border regionconsisting of static infantry divisions, mechanized divisions, and a limited number of armoured divisions. However, the main role of the holding corps was to checkmate hostile advances. The offensive part of the doctrine comprised three ‘strike corps’ with each coveredby “an armoured division with mechanized infantry division and extensive artillery support”.⁸ Strike Corps were to be placed in central India to upset the two Pakistani Strike Corps with ‘deep sledgehammer blows’ during a hostile situation.⁹Sundarji Doctrine was considered as a composition of ‘deterrence-by-denial’ as well as ‘deterrence-by-punishment’ with both the pivot and the strike corps.¹⁰

Strategic Shift in Defence Doctrine

The failure to mobilize the ‘strike corps’ in the projected time during the Twin-Peak Crisis following a terrorist attack on Parliament in 2001 led the Indian Army to rethink the ‘Sundarji Doctrine’. Mounting defense expenditures and growing conservatism in Indian policymaking hierarchy transformed India’s strategic thinking; thereby leading it to adopt a proactive and offensive military doctrine. Announced in 2004, the ‘Cold Start’ Doctrine has provided a comprehensive framework to the Indian armed forces to engage Pakistan in full offensive mode. The Doctrine calls for certain adjustments to enhance Indian offensive

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Ibid

⁷RizwanZeb, “Tactical Weapons, Strategic Aims: Countering Indian Military’s Conventional Superiority and Cold Start Doctrine”, *Asia Dialogue*, September 26, 2018. <http://theasiadialogue.com/2018/09/26/tactical-weapons-strategic-aims-countering-indian-militarys-conventional-superiority-and-cold-start-doctrine/>

⁸ Walter C. Ladwig, “A Cold Start for Hot Wars? The Indian Army’s New Limited War Doctrine.” *International Security* 32, no. 3 (2007): 158-90. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30130521>.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰AbhijnanRej and Shashank Joshi, “India’s Joint Doctrine: A Lost Opportunity”, *ORF Occasional Paper*, 12, January 2018.https://www.orfonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/ORF_Occasional_Paper_Joint_Doctrine.pdf

capability by relying on her 'pivot corps' to deny Pakistan enough time to mobilize and respond. Hoping to give the enemy a strategic surprise, CDS restructures India's offensive power by converting the three 'strike corps' of the Indian Army into eight Integrated Battle Groups (IBGs) synergized and supported by the Indian Air Force and Indian Navy. These eight IBGs will launch offensive strikes along different 'axes of advance' which, assumed by the Indian strategic thinkers, will 'hard-press' the Pakistani forces to concentrate on which of the eight advances.¹¹

While calling for a change in India's military warfare capabilities and Integrated Battle Groups, the former Indian Army Chief General Bipin Rawat stated that "we are going to test-bed the IBGs very soon; I am suggesting that we are integrated in peacetime to save the time wasted in 'integrating' while going for combat."¹² The Chief furthered that each IGB will include almost 8-10,000 troops comprising of "four to six battalions of infantry and armoured, two to three artillery regiments, an engineer unit, integrated signal units, and dedicated integral logistics".¹³

Limited War Concept

With growing militarization in Indian politics, the concept of Limited War is gradually taking place in the Indian strategic circles, especially about Pakistan. The term has been used frequently to 'punish' Pakistan for the alleged perpetration of terrorist attacks in Indian Held Kashmir and India. The intention to wage a limited war with Pakistan is also evident by the perceived objectives of the Cold Start Doctrine (CSD) which seeks to conduct 'shallow offensives' to achieve 'limited objectives' without touching the nuclear threshold.¹⁴ This indicates a clear diversion from a defensive approach to a full scope offensive mode under the Cold Start Doctrine. Pratap Bhanu Mehta, former president at the Delhi-based Centre for Policy Research, commented on the dramatic doctrinal shift and argued that "India has jettisoned the always somewhat hypocritical stance that militarism is not a proper ingredient of foreign policy.

¹¹ Walter C. Ladwio, "A Cold Start for Hot Wars?", 158-90.

¹² Ajay Benerji, "New Battle Groups to face Pak, Says Army Chief", *The Tribune India*, Nov 5, 2018. <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/archive/nation/new-battle-groups-to-face-pak-says-army-chief-678928>

¹³ Ibid

¹⁴ Nishank Motwani, "Be prepared for an India-Pakistan Limited War", *The Diplomat*, October 5, 2008. <https://thediplomat.com/2018/10/be-prepared-for-an-india-pakistan-limited-war/>

Its resort to coercive diplomacy, its espousal of nuclear arms, and its strategic use of war talk signal a willingness to act tough”.¹⁵

India's former defense minister, George Fernandez in a seminar on 'Dynamics of Limited War' organized by the Institute of Defense Studies and Analysis (IDSA) in January 2000 stated that Kirgil war was the first instance when India's post-nuclear military operations were handled in the limited war perspective, and that "India understood the dynamics of limited war after it declared its nuclear weapons status."¹⁶In fact, in a panel discussion organized by Centre for Contemporary Conflict, Indian Chief of Staff Committee and Chief of Army Staff, V.P. Malik argued that "space exists between proxy war/low-intensity conflict and a nuclear umbrella within which a limited conventional war is a distinct possibility."¹⁷ This was an explicit reference to India CSD which is designed to wage a limited war with Pakistan. However, this could force Pakistan to consider the first use of nuclear weapons as last resort analogous to the 'use them or lose them' logic.¹⁸

Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) in Indian Armed Forces

The rapid transformation in the Indian Armed Forces following the adoption of the Cold Start Doctrine (CSD) represents a comprehensive Revolution in the Military Affairs (RMA). Coveting a great power status in the region coupled with various numerous challenges at home including religious fundamentalism and insurgencies, India is undergoing significant enhancements in its military technology, doctrines, and operational conduct. "India has already embarked upon 15 years (2012-2027) Long Term Integrated Perspective Plan (LTIPP) of around hundreds of billions of dollars. The LTIPP is further divided into three, five-year Services Capital Acquisition Plan (SCAP) (2012-2017, 2017-2022, and 2022-2027). SCAP is further

¹⁵PratapBhanu Mehta, "A New Foreign Policy?" *Economic and Political Weekly* 38, no. 30 (2003): 3173-175. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4413830>

¹⁶Swaran Singh, "Indian debate on limited war doctrine", *Strategic Analysis* 23, no. 12, pp. 2179-2183. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09700160008455190>

¹⁷V.P. Malik, "Strategic Stability in South Asia", panel discussion, Centre for Contemporary Conflict, Monterey, California, June 29-July 1, 2004. <https://www.hsd1.org/?view&did=449184>

¹⁸Ali Ahmad, "The Interference of Strategic and War Fighting Doctrines in the India-Pakistan Context", *Strategic Analysis* 33, no. 5, pp. 701-715, August 12, 2019. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/09700160903064521?needAccess=true>

subdivided to meet more immediate needs through Annual Acquisition Plans (AAP).”¹⁹ For this purpose, a Technological Perspective and Capability Road Map (TCRP) are also formulated “to attain self-reliance in technological superiority in all its services. This future capability acquisition ranges from battlefield information dominance to electronic warfare; application of nanotechnology to weapons of mass destruction (WMD) defence; precision-guided munitions to Electro-Magnetic Pulse (EMP) weapons; and lastly the advanced multi-role jet fighters to Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicles (UCAV’s).”²⁰ The purpose is to end the Indian reliance on arm imports and build indigenous capabilities.

Missiles Development

In the recent surge for acquiring and advancing military weapons, the Indian Defence Acquisition Council has approved the procurement of 5,000 French-made second-generation MILAN ATGMs. Previously, DRDO was already developing the Man-Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile (MPATGM) with the VEM Technologies Ltd and successfully conducted test-fired in September 2018.²¹

It has also conducted a “sixth flight test of the nuclear-capable Nirbhay, a subsonic long-range (1000 kilometer), solid-fuel cruise missile from the Integrated Test Range on Abdul Kalam Island off the coast of Odisha”.²² The missile can carry a 200-300-kilogram warhead. Moreover, India has also successfully tested the anti-satellite (ASAT) missile in March 2019, to demonstrate its prowess to destroy satellites in orbit.²³

¹⁹ Maj. Gen PK Chakravorty (Retd.), “India’s Military Modernisation: The Long Term Integrated Perspective Plan (LTIPP) 2012-2027”, *India Strategic*, September 12, 2012. https://www.indiastrategic.in/topstories1735_India_military_modernisation.htm

²⁰ Amit Cowshish, “MoD Unveils Defence Procurement Procedure 2016”, *India Strategic*, March 2016, https://www.indiastrategic.in/MoD_Unveils_Defence_Procurement_Procedure_2016.htm

²¹ Franz-Stephan Gady, “India’s DRDO Test Fires Indigenous Man-Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile”, *The Diplomat*, September 16, 2018. <https://thediplomat.com/2018/09/indias-drdo-test-fires-indigenous-man-portable-anti-tank-guided-missile/>

²² Franz-Stephan Gady, “India Test Fires Nuclear Capable Nirbhay Cruise Missile”, *The Diplomat*, April 15, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/04/india-test-fires-nuclear-capable-nirbhay-cruise-missile/#:~:text=The%20Indian%20Ministry%20of%20Defense's,Kalam%20Island%20off%20the%20coast>

²³ Iain Marlow and Jason Scott, “Mission Shakti: India’s anti-satellite test sends a stark message to China”, *Business Standard*, March 29, 2019. https://www.business-standard.com/article/current-affairs/mission-shakti-india-s-anti-satellite-test-sends-a-stark-message-to-china-119032900123_1.html

Militarization of Space

Besides acquiring advanced capability on the ground, air, and waters, the Indian military is thriving to employ military assets in space. It has employed almost 13 advanced military satellites capable of surveillance and reconnaissance which are being used to synergize the tri-services of the Indian Armed Forces. India operates several ‘eye in the sky’ satellites including the Cartosat-1, Cartosat-2E and Microsat-R launched in 2017. Among the spy satellites include the Risat-1 and Risat-2, based on the X-Band SAR’s employed in the Israeli ‘TecSAR’ reconnaissance satellite. The launch of the electronic intelligence satellite EMISAT on March 31, 2019, by the ISRO on behalf of the Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) asserts India’s continuous militarization of space. GSAT-7 (also known as the INSAT-4F) is a ‘multi-band military satellite’ for the Indian Navy which enables it to exercise its Blue Water capabilities. Similarly, the GSAT-7A is used by the Indian Air Force and Indian Army to “interlink different ground radar stations, airbases and AWACS aircraft”.²⁴ The satellite boosts IAF’s “Network-Centric Warfare capabilities” which runs parallel to the concept of RMA.²⁵

Besides keeping eyes in the sky on neighbours, India has also developed the anti-satellite capabilities. This was demonstrated in a recent test of the ASAT by India in shooting down its own satellite in space on 27 March 2019. India has developed this capability through the BMD programme which is “two-tiered missile defensive systems that comprise the Prithvi Air Defence (PAD) system and Advanced Air Defence (AAD). The PAD provides long-range high-altitude ballistic missile interception during an incoming missile’s midcourse phase, and the AAD offers short-range, low-altitude defence against missiles in the terminal phase of their trajectory”.²⁶

Terming India as a ‘global space power’, the Indian PM Narendra Modi claimed his country to have “registered its name as a space power”.²⁷ The test provoked responses from the

²⁴Surender Singh, “Why Isro’s Gsat-7A launch is important for the Indian Air Force”, *Times of India*, December 19, 2018. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/why-isros-gsat-7a-launch-is-important-for-iaf/articleshow/67153347.cms>

²⁵Ibid

²⁶Air Marshal Narayan Menon, “Ballistic Missile Defence System for India”, *Indian Defence Review* 27, issue 3 (July-September 2015). <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/spotlights/ballistic-missile-defence-system-for-india/>

²⁷Sanjiv Miglani, “India shoots down own satellite; PM hails India’s arrival as ‘space power’”, *Reuters*, March 27, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-india-satellite/india-shoots-down-own-satellite-pm-hails-indias-arrival-as-space-power-idUSKCN1R80IA>

major powers. Russia, having critically examined the test and its consequences for the weaponization of space, called on India to join the “Russian-Chinese draft treaty on preventing the placement of weapons in outer space”.²⁸ The US also expressed concerns over the test and the debris of the destroyed satellite.²⁹ Pakistan, while terming space as ‘world’s heritage’, called for international condemnation of the ASAT test and argued that “boasting of such capabilities is reminiscent of Don Quixote’s tilting against windmills”.³⁰ The development questions India’s intentions in space for “once you acquire a certain capability, intentions can be changed irrespective of the commitments of the past”.³¹ Such a change in intentions is visible in India’s space politics where it is ready to install military assets in space.

‘Made in India’- Defence Industry

With Modi in power, a shift has taken place in the military-industrial complex. The Indian defense industry though small was previously dominated by the public sector which is now changing with the new policy of ‘Made in India’ which allows foreign direct investments in the defence sector. Modi wants to transform India from the world’s largest importer of military equipment into a manufacturing powerhouse. The new policy has also increased the interest of the private sector in the defence industry who are scouting for foreign partners with \$130 billion of military contracts up for grabs in the next few years. The notable companies include the TATA group in partnership with Honeywell International and Airbus, Mahindra Group, Hero Group, Reliance Anil Dhirubhai Ambani Group, Bharat Forge in partnership with Israel’s Rafael, and Hinduja Group with Larsen & Toubro.³²

²⁸ Andrew Korybko, “Russia’s Response to India’s ASAT Missile Test wasn’t what New Delhi Expected” *Center for Research and Globalization*, April 1, 2019. <https://www.globalresearch.ca/russias-response-to-indias-asat-missile-test-wasnt-what-new-delhi-expected/5673254>

²⁹ Sriram Lakshman, “US Tracking Space Debris from India’s ASAT test”, *The Hindu*, March 28, 2019. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/us-takes-note-of-indias-anti-missile-test-expresses-concern-over-space-debris/article26660487.ece>

³⁰ “Islamabad assails testing of anti-satellite weapon by New Delhi”, *The Dawn*, March 28, 2019. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1472336>

³¹ Asif Durrani, “Is India heading for a space war”, *Daily Times*, April 2, 2019. <https://dailytimes.com.pk/372187/is-india-heading-for-a-space-war/>

³² “The Seven homegrown firms fighting over India’s \$620 billion defence market”, *Quartz India*, February 20, 2015, <https://qz.com/india/346941/the-seven-homegrown-firms-fighting-over-indias-620-billion-defence-market/>

Maritime Security Strategy 2015

The US naval officer and historian Alfred Thayer Mahan once said that “whoever attains maritime supremacy in the Indian Ocean would be a prominent player on the international scene. Whoever controls the Indian Ocean dominates Asia. This ocean is key to seven seas in the 21st century; the destiny of the world will be decided in these waters”.³³ It is the third-largest ocean in the world; providing SLOCs to almost 80 percent of the world’s oil trade. Given the dividends provided by the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), it is growing to become a new area of conflict for the major powers including the US, China, and India. India is observing critically the geopolitical shift from the Atlantic Ocean to the Asia-Pacific. Ambitious to attain wider navigation and control in the Indian Ocean Region, New Delhi is expeditiously modernizing the Indian Navy with advanced vessels including aircraft carriers, destroyers, stealth frigates, and nuclear submarines. With a redefined and wider area of interests for the Indian Navy, the new Maritime Security Strategy *Ensuring Secure Seas: India’s Maritime Security Strategy* was promulgated on October 26, 2015. The strategy is a modified version of its predecessor *Freedom to Use the Seas: India’s Maritime Military Strategy* drafted in 2007. The new strategy carries a larger strategic angle with the “Red Sea, Gulf of Oman, the Gulf of Aden and their littoral region, the Southwest Indian Ocean, including IOR island nations therein and East coast of Africa littoral regions” classified as the primary area of interest for the IN.³⁴

The strategic shift in the Indian Navy Doctrine is visible by the shift from the term ‘Using’ in the previous strategy to the ‘Secure’ in the new document. In an effort to transform the Indian Ocean into India’s Ocean, New Delhi has taken drastic measures in ensuring conventional and strategic military build-up in the Indian Ocean with formidable Second-Strike Capability (SSD). India has allocated almost US \$ 16 Billion just for the acquisition of Nuclear-Powered Submarines. New Delhi is planning to acquire “160 naval ships, 3 aircraft carriers and more than 40 warships and submarines including anti-submarine corvettes and stealth

³³ Amrita Jash (Book Review), *India’s ocean: the story of India’s bid for regional leadership* by David Brewster, *Strategic Analysis*, 39:4, 466-467, 2015.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/43281311>

³⁴ Darshana M. Baruah, “India’s Evolving Maritime Strategy”, *The Diplomat*, December 3, 2015. <https://thediplomat.com/2015/12/indias-evolving-maritime-strategy/>

destroyers” so as to transform IN into a formidable Blue Water Navy.³⁵ The most striking developments, however, are the acquisition of INS Vikramaditya and the commissioning of Arihant-Class Nuclear Powered Submarine.³⁶

On November 5, 2018, INS Arihant completed its ‘first deterrence patrol’. While responding to the development, India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi, without naming Pakistan, signalled its aggressive intentions in a tweet that “INS Arihant gives a befitting response to those who indulge in nuclear blackmail”.³⁷ INS Arihant is deployed at the Vishakapatnam as part of the Eastern Command. Therefore, in order to keep a check on the Arabian Sea and Pakistan, India is developing more nuclear submarines that are projected to be deployed at Mumbai and a planned Karwari naval base that falls at a striking distance from strategically important Gwadar port.³⁸

Joint Military Doctrine 2017

As part of the integration of its armed forces, the Integrated Defence Staff (IDS) of India unveiled a second version of the Joint Doctrine of India Armed Forces (JDIAF-17) on 25th April 2017.³⁹ The employment of a Joint Doctrine is one of the key features of the RMA which enhances the war-time synergy among the tri-services of the armed forces. This reflects the ‘network-centric warfare’ approach of the RMA. The doctrine employs significant offensive postures that seek a larger role for offensive conduct and execution of military operations. Despite being awarded different sections in the doctrine, there does not exist a considerable difference between offensive and defensive operations. Aiming the offensive operations “to seize the initiative (of the first strike) from the enemy”, the defensive operations will be carried out to produce a conducive environment for offensive strikes.⁴⁰ This suggests that defensive operations

³⁵Mustansar Hussain Tasir, “Indian Ocean: Militarization and Regional Implications”, *Global Village Space Magazine*, April 5, 2018.<https://www.globalvillagespace.com/indian-ocean-militarization-and-regional-implications/>

³⁶Asma Sana and Shaheen Akhtar, “India’s ‘Indo-Pacific’ Strategy: Emerging Sino-Indian Maritime Competition”, *Strategic Studies* 40, no. 3 (Autumn 2020), 1-21.

³⁷Rajat Pundit, “Nuclear Submarine INS Arihant Completes Patrol, Country’s Nuclear Triad Operational”, *Times of India*, Nov 6, 2018.<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/as-nuclear-sub-arihant-returns-after-first-deterrence-patrol-indias-nuclear-triad-complete/articleshow/66515624.cms>

³⁸Masood Ur Rehman Khattak, “Indo-Russian Strategic Cooperation: Implications for Deterrence Stability in South Asia”, *Islamabad Policy Research Institute, IPRI Journal* XVIII (2018), 135

³⁹Dinakar Peri, “Decoding the Joint Indian Armed Forces Doctrine”, *The Hindustan Times*, May 8, 2017. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/decoding-the-doctrine/article18404994.ece>

⁴⁰Joint Doctrine of the Indian Armed Forces. *Directorate of Defense; Headquarters Integrated Defense Staff (IDS) Ministry of Defense*, Page No. 19, New Delhi, April

can be preventive (first) strikes, 'proactive' and hence aggressive. This is corroborated by the JDIAF which says that the "defensive operations will be aggressive intrinsically aggressive in design and offensive in conduct".⁴¹ In other words, the defensive and offensive domains are overlapping which reflects an offensive inclination of the Indian political and military elite.

The most disturbing is the 'potential shift' in the draft nuclear doctrine employed in 1999. The JDIAF-17 replaces the policy of Credible Minimum Deterrence (CMD) with Credible Deterrence (CD).⁴² This was the continuation of the BJP's manifesto's promises which pledged to "revisit and update Indian's nuclear doctrine".⁴³ However, Indian National Security Advisor (NSA) under the Modi's government, Ajit Kumar Dovel in 2014 at the Sixth Munich Security Conference Core group signalled a possible shift from the 'Credible Minimum Deterrence' to 'Credible Deterrence'⁴⁴ which was revealed officially for the first time in the document of Joint Doctrine of Indian Armed Forces-2017.

Moreover, the Doctrine also emphasizes using 'Surgical Strikes' against 'terror provocations' and draws prospects for escalation of the conflict from the sub-conventional to the conventional level. The bottom line is that India's hysterical approach to strategic stability and bold emphasis on "credible deterrence, coercive diplomacy, and conclusively by punitive destruction, disruption and constraint in a nuclear environment" re-energizes efforts that can put the already fragile strategic stability in South Asia at risk.⁴⁵

Strategic Partnerships: A Force Multiplier

Due to the growing aggressive posture in India's foreign policy, especially after 2001, military build-up and modernization has become the cornerstone in India's partnership with the major powers. In other words, India's alliances with different powers are in "tune with its

2017. https://www.ids.nic.in/IDSAdmin/upload_images/doctrine/JointDoctrineIndianArmedForces2017.pdf

⁴¹Ibid

⁴²Joint Doctrine of the Indian Armed Forces. *IDS*, 2017.

⁴³ "Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat: Election Manifesto 2014", *Bharatiya Janaata Party (BJP)*, 2014. <http://cdn.narendramodi.in/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Manifesto2014highlights.pdf>

⁴⁴ Abhijit Lyer-Mitra, "Era of Effective Deterrence", *The Pioneer*, October 31, 2018. <https://www.dailypioneer.com/2014/columnists/era-of-effective-deterrence.html>

⁴⁵ Dinakar Peri, "Decoding the Joint Indian Armed Forces Doctrine", *The Hindu*, May 8, 2017. <https://www.thehindu.com/opinion/op-ed/decoding-the-doctrine/article18404994.ece>

perceived military needs than a result of ideological conviction”.⁴⁶ Over the past two decades, India has expeditiously cultivated over a dozen strategic partnerships with major powers including the United States, Russia, Israel, Japan, UK, France, and Germany. India signed only seven bilateral agreements from 1947 to 2001, while signed 19 agreements from 2000 to 2008.⁴⁷ New Delhi has relied on bilateral strategic partnerships with Russia and the United States to acquire state-of-the-art weaponry, ranging from artillery and small arms to highly advanced next-generation fighter jets with long-range air defence systems.

The United States

The United States being the second-largest supplier, is modernizing Indian Armed Forces with sales including C-17 Globemaster and C-130J transport aircraft, P-8I maritime patrol, and submarine hunter aircraft, CH-47 Chinook, Apache attack helicopter and M-777 lightweight Howitzers and varying types of Torpedoes and anti-ship missiles.⁴⁸

The India-US defence worth is expected to grow around \$10 billion in the next couple of years. Recently, US- India has further given the order of 10 more Poseidon-81 long range-maritime patrol aircraft after inducting “first eight Boeing –manufactured P-81s, which are packed with sensors and armed with Harpoon Block –II missiles, MK-54 lightweight torpedoes, rockets and depth charges to detect and destroy enemy submarines.”⁴⁹ More recently, the sale of 24 naval multi-role MH-60 Romeo helicopters(\$2.6 billion), the National Advanced Surface to Air Missile System –II for the missile shield over Delhi (almost \$1 billion), and six more Apache attack helicopters (\$930 million) which will contribute to the fragile strategic environment in the Indian Ocean.⁵⁰

⁴⁶Pratap Bhanu Mehta, “A New Foreign Policy?” *Economic and Political Weekly* 38, no. 30 (2003): 3173-175. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4413830>

⁴⁷ Ibid

⁴⁸Ankit Panda, “India Takes Delivery of Four US-Made Chinook Helicopters”, *The Diplomat*, February 12, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/02/india-takes-delivery-of-four-us-made-chinook-helicopters/#:~:text=On%20Sunday%2C%20India%20received%20the,on%20the%20country's%20western%20coast.>

⁴⁹Rajat Pandit, “India lining up defence deals worth \$10 billion with US amid trade Row”, *Times of India*, June 24, 2019, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-lining-up-defence-deals-worth-10-billion-with-us-amid-trade-row/articleshow/69919916.cms>

⁵⁰Ibid

India is growingly transforming from a strategic partner to a de facto US ally in the region. In fact, Mike Pompeo while explaining the unprecedented growth in strategic partnership with India, argued that “Tide’s begun to turn”, and that “they [India] absolutely need the United States to be their ally and partner in this fight[against China].”⁵¹ Following this in October 2020, the US signed Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) with India to complete a series of bilateral strategic agreements Washington signs with its vital strategic partners.⁵² The General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) in 2002 was the first of the quartet which was followed by the signing of Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) in 2016, and the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) in 2018.⁵³ These agreements allow the two countries to share sensitive strategic information, share each other’s military basis, sale critical military equipment, and improve defense cooperation.

Russia

On the other hand, India is acquiring S-400 Long-Range Russian Ground to Air Missile Defense System to India was formally signed during visit of the President Vladimir Putin to New Delhi on October 5, 2018.⁵⁴ According to the deal, Russia will supply five regiments of the advanced S-400 air defense system. In face of growing tensions with Pakistan along the LoC after Balakot misadventure and with China in Ladakh, India has recently requested Russia for early delivery of the system which Russia assured to be delivered by the end of 2021.⁵⁵

The S-400 air defense system is designed to engage targets such as Jammers, reconnaissance, radar detection, and control aircraft, tactical ballistic missiles, medium-range ballistic missiles, and all other viable sources of air attack. Dubbed as the ‘Game-Changer’, the system can fire four different types of missiles to engage targets including the very long-range

⁵¹ShankhyaneelSarkar, “‘Tide’s begun to turn’: Pompeo says US, India partners in fight against China”, *Hindustan Times*, October 10, 2020. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/tide-s-begun-to-turn-pompeo-says-us-india-partners-in-fight-against-china/story-qjKoSrOYSk283MqrC2RzcJ.html>

⁵² S.M. Hilali, “BECA – a new Indo-US bilateral agreement”, *The News*, November 2, 2020. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/737917-beca-a-new-indo-us-bilateral-agreement>

⁵³Ibid

⁵⁴ Stephen Kravchenko, NcBipindra, “Russia and India Sign \$5 Billion Air Defense Deal in New Delhi”, *Bloomberg*, October 5, 2018.

⁵⁵Snehesh Alex Philip, “Russian to deliver S-400 by 2021-end, but will supply missiles and bombs amid LAC tensions”, *The Print*, July 1, 2020. <https://theprint.in/defence/russia-to-deliver-s-400-by-2021-end-but-will-supply-missiles-and-bombs-amid-lac-tensions/452285/>

40N6E with a range of 400kms, 48N6 with 250kms, 9M96E2 with 120kms and the short-range 9M96E with a range of 40kms.⁵⁶ Moreover, the system employs sophisticated electronic warfare systems, hence offering a little concession to be jammed or destroyed. Such effective counter-measures are challenging to be defeated because of the rapid frequency-hopping with agile beam steering capabilities of the system.⁵⁷ The S-400 enhances the 'Defensive Counter-Air (DCA)' operations by effectively neutralizing penetrating enemy aircraft and missiles in the friendly airspace.⁵⁸ With the delivery of the S-400 system, India's capabilities to deny airspace to the penetrating airborne hostile objects including aircraft, ballistic and cruise missiles will be enhanced.

The system, therefore, poses a 'clear and present danger' to Pakistan which has long been trying to ensure India's vulnerability to a considerable extent to deter Delhi's aggressive designs. With a detection range of 600km, India will be able to monitor Pakistan's air assets and an opportunity to engage the targets at 400km, even inside Pakistan's airspace.⁵⁹ It means Pakistani aircrafts will be prone to interception soon after it flies off the Pakistani airbases. Moreover, as part of Pakistan's deterrent strategy, Islamabad relies on the short-range Low Yield Nuclear Missile Nasr (Hatf-IX) and strategic nuclear weapons which include all the short, mid and intermediate-range ballistic missiles. Both of the weapons are vulnerable to the S-400 interception and thus shake the deterrence as well as the strategic stability in South Asia to a dangerous extent.

Israel

Since the recognition of Israel by India, the relationship between the two had been flourished and this relationship is further augmented during the Modi administration. Modi has become the first PM to visit Israel in 2017 which was reciprocated by Israeli PM in 2018. The

⁵⁶ Stephen Bryen, "Russia's S-400 System is Way More Dangerous Than You Think", *The National Interest*, January 18, 2018.

⁵⁷ Keir Giles, "Russian Ballistic Missile Defense: Rhetoric and Reality", *United States Army War College Publication*, June 2015. https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/russian-ballistic-missile-defense-rhetoric-and-reality/?utm_source=rss&utm_medium=rss&utm_campaign=russian-ballistic-missile-defense-rhetoric-and-reality

⁵⁸ Dr. Can. Kasapoglu, "Turkey's S-400 Dilemma", EDAM Foreign Policy and Security Paper Series, 2017/5, *Center for Economics and Foreign Policy Studies*, July 2017.

⁵⁹ Petr Topychkanov, "Where Does Pakistan Fit in Russia's South Asia Strategy?" *Moscow: Carnegie Moscow Center*, 2017.

two countries are actively engaged in developing military ties. Modi-Netanyahu relationship has also been called as ‘Bromance’ by some pundits. Moreover, the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) shows some interesting facts about their relationship, India is the world's largest importer of weapons in the world and it buys 50 percent of Israel's weapons export which makes Israel third-largest supplier of Indian weapons.

India's Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) and Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) have successfully produce medium-range surface-to-air missile (MRSAM) using the Cooperative engagement capability (CEC) sensor netting system, which will allow the real-time sharing of sensor data on incoming targets among warships. The project is referred to as Barak 8 and “In 2018, IAI announced a mega-contract worth \$777 million for the supply of long-range surface-to-air Barak 8 missile systems to seven Indian warships”.⁶⁰

The close cooperation between the two countries is resulting in private partnerships between the local and foreign industries. In 2017, Indian Kalyani Group and Israel Rafael signed an agreement to manufacture the Spike Anti-Tank Guided Missile (ATGM) Spike and other Defence products. After the Pulwama incident, the Indian Army approved importing “240 Israeli-made Rafael Advanced Defense Systems Spike medium-range (MR) anti-tank guided missiles (ATGM) and 12 launchers as part of an “emergency purchase” to meet immediate operational requirements. They are first in the private sector to manufacture missiles.”⁶¹

Defensive-cum-Offensive Strategy

New Delhi has been consistently trying to augment its offensive capabilities vis-à-vis Pakistan and China. While terming China a ‘potential threat’ to its leading role in South Asia and Asia-Pacific, India uses this China-centric dilemma to scale up their military capability.

China and India Expanding Regional Ambitions

Its offensive and hostile intent stem from its broader regional ambitions vis-à-vis China to champion regional dominance. New Delhi's collusion with Western allies spearheaded by the

⁶⁰ Yaakov Lappin, “Israel wraps up second-highest defense export year in past decade”, *Israel Hayom*, May 21, 2019, <https://www.israelhayom.com/2019/05/21/israel-wraps-up-second-highest-defense-export-year-in-past-decade/>

⁶¹ “Kalyani Group to set up Missile System MRO facility in Hyderabad”, *United News of India*, March 16, 2019, <http://www.uniindia.com/kalyani-group-to-set-up-missile-system-mro-facility-in-hyderabad/south/news/1531052.html>

US under different strategic arrangements including QUAD is an attempt to provoke China in the Indo-Pacific and advance its regional ambitions. Despite Modi's talks about India's strategic autonomy, he is taking New Delhi into the US' camp against China.⁶² Its recent tensions with China in Eastern Ladakh represent India's will to challenge the status quo in the disputed territory across Line of Actual Control (LAC) by building infrastructure and military installations. The face-off and strategic loss in Ladakh invited criticism from the US against China which will also provide precision artillery rounds and satellite imagery to help India in the Ladakh sector. Russia, its another strategic partner, pledged to provide the advanced S-400 air defense system before the projected time. France with Rafael fighter jets and expected Israeli air defense systems aimed to supplement India's position in the Ladakh sector.⁶³ Such hostile collision with western powers against China has also concerned Beijing which has repeatedly warned New Delhi to stay away from US-China strategic competition.⁶⁴ However, India's offensive military posture and policy guides New Delhi to strengthen its strategic partnership with the US to advance its geopolitical ambitions and emerge as the dominant power and security provider in the region.

Pakistan and India's Growing Military Capabilities

On the other hand, the military build-up is stepping down the power equation against Pakistan. While calling for monitoring India's growing offensive capability, Walter C. Ladwig III feared that "as 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" consequently resulting in 'potentially catastrophic results'.⁶⁵ Desiring to achieve an unbeatable position in relevance to Pakistan, India is trying to legitimize arms acquisition by clothing their offensive posture in the veil of defensive acquisitions. The recent deals with Russia, Israel, and

⁶² Harsh V. Pant and Julie M. Super, 'India's "non-alignment" conundrum: a twentieth century policy in a changing world', *International Affairs* 93: 1, 69–91, 2017. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/1468-2346.12336>

⁶³ "India-China tensions: Allies help India muscle up for a hostile neighborhood", *The Economic Times*, June 29, 2020. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-china-tensions-allies-help-india-muscle-up-for-a-hostile-neighbourhood/getting-battle-ready/slideshow/76684625.cms>

⁶⁴ "Beijing warns India not to engage in US-China Confrontation", *Pennews*, June 1, 2020. <https://www.pennews.net/national/2020/06/01/beijing-warns-india-not-to-engage-in-us-china-confrontation>

⁶⁵ Walter C. Ladwig, "A Cold Start for Hot Wars? The Indian Army's New Limited War Doctrine" *International Security* 32, no. 3 (2017): 158-90. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/30130521>

United States underpin India's manipulation of the Defensive-Offensive paradigm to continue military acquisition without being questioned by the international community on its implications for the strategic balance and stability in South Asia. These advancements will provide multiple offensive advantages to India which challenges Pakistan's conventional deterrent capabilities. Such a defensively-enshrouded-offensive strategy of India has been described in this research as a 'Defensive-cum-Offensive' strategy. This is true, especially for the advanced air defense systems which are expected to be acquired from Russia, Israel, and the US.

This is because acquiring additional arms by a state renders a dual effect. On one side, it increases the security of the acquiring state while on the other hand, augments the fear of vulnerability of the 'other'. However, a weapon that guarantees the security of a country while 'threatens' that of the other can neither be counted as a purely defensive weapon nor purely an offensive one but finds a place in between. For example, Israel voiced concerns over the anti-aircraft missiles in Lebanon and called them 'offensive' weapons but ironically termed their own cluster bombs in Beirut as 'defensive'. This also shows that the offensive or defensive role of a weapon is not necessarily defined by the nature of it being defensive or offensive but by the role it plays in a particular strategic environment shaped by two or more conflicting adversaries.⁶⁶ Similarly, India acquires air defense systems in pretext to counter more powerful China but renders dilemma for Pakistan as it encourages India to browbeat Pakistan into a new normal with its limited war strategy.

Therefore, the expeditious military modernization catalyzes the existing arms race in South Asia. Feeling disadvantaged from the rapid advancement of India's military capabilities, Pakistan is likely to augment its military power with more offensive weapons. The rapid military advancement will prompt Pakistan to increase its nuclear stockpile and Low Yield Nuclear Weapons which will increase chances for a nuclear confrontation between the two arch-rivals. This is because "India's military modernization is reducing Pakistan's conventional deterrent" and hence leading to a nuclear arms race.⁶⁷ Referring to this, the former US Assistant Secretary of Defense Peter Lovoy posits that "India's military

⁶⁶ Ibid

⁶⁷ Zafar Khan, "India's Ballistic Missile Defense: Implications for South Asian Deterrence Stability", *The Washington Quarterly*, Volume 40, Issue 3, 187-202, October 5, 2017.

modernization program has led to a growing disparity between the Indian and Pakistani conventional military capabilities” which will lower the nuclear threshold.⁶⁸

Hence, India’s attempt to balance its power vis-à-vis China and emerge as the dominant power in the region triggers Pakistan’s strategic build-up and raises a two-front confrontational situation where its false sense of security and hostile approach threatens regional strategic stability

False Sense of Security and India’s Miscalculations

India growing military modernization and acquisition of advanced weapons gives its political leadership a false sense of security. It encourages New Delhi to exaggerate its ability to browbeat neighbours, especially Pakistan and China. This increases the chances of conflicts and hence the large escalation in the region. This is because India's military modernization, “can lead Indian planners to mistakenly believe that fighting a conventional war does not threaten major population and industrial centres with a Pakistani counter-value strike. Emerging asymmetries in technology and military strength will likewise contribute to India’s false sense of superiority and lead India to pursue escalation dominance during a limited conventional conflict, seeking to terminate hostilities on its terms”.⁶⁹ However, such miscalculation has cost India more visibly in two important events, the Balakot Strikes against Pakistan and the face-off in Ladakh with China.

Miscalculated Balakot Strikes against Pakistan

In February 2019, India escalated the situation in response to a suicide attack on the Indian military convoy in the Pulwama district of the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Bearing the loss of more than 40 Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) men, India alleged Pakistan of involvement and resorted to aggression by launching ‘precisely missed’ airstrikes in Balakot city of Pakistan’s Northern KPK province; resulting in a minor injury with

⁶⁸ Peter R. Lavoy, “Islamabad's Nuclear Posture: Its Premises and Implementation,” extracted from Henry D. Sokolski, ed, *Pakistan’s Nuclear Future: Worries Beyond War* (Carlisle, PA: US Army War College, January, 2008), 134.

⁶⁹ Mansoor Ahmad, “Pakistan’s Tactical Nuclear Weapons and Their Impact on Stability”, *Regional Insight, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, June 30, 2016, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2016/06/30/pakistan-s-tactical-nuclear-weapons-and-their-impact-on-stability-pub-63911>

considerable ecological devastation.⁷⁰ The strikes tested Pakistan's deterrence capability; its fighter jets struck the whereabouts of the Indian military installations on the next morning; while shooting down a Su-30MKI and a Mig-21 of the IAF in a hot pursuit dogfight across the LoC. The pilot of the downed Indian jet was arrested on the Pakistani side who was then handed over to India as a 'peace gesture'.⁷¹ The Pakistani retaliation and intrusion verified significant patches in India's proactive defenses and aerial surveillance which cautions India against its failure to read capabilities of regional adversaries.

Eastern Ladakh Face-Off with China

Similarly, India provoked China with its unilateral actions to challenge the status quo of the disputed Ladakh region by declaring its Union Territory. Its bold border incursions and building of military infrastructure have pushed New Delhi towards a deadly face-off with the Chinese troops in the Ladakh sector across the LAC. India miscalculated action cost India not only some 20 soldiers and officers but also lost some 60 sq. km to China.⁷² India's bold approach is seen by its analysts as a risky business of the Modi government to shove away China for Trump's America who is bent on squeezing China for failing to fulfil its responsibilities in regards to the COVID-19. Phunchok Stobdan, a former Indian diplomat and author of "The Great Game in the Buddhist Himalayas: India and China's Quest for Strategic Dominance", believes that "India has increasingly been seen as aligning with the U.S. and that can't benefit India in the long-term".⁷³ He attributes Chinese assertiveness against smaller powers like India, Japan, and Australia as part of Chinese approach of; 'kill the chicken to scare the monkey', where intimidating these smaller powers could help China win over the US in its geostrategic competition in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

⁷⁰ JIJ, "Pakistan to lodge 'eco-terrorism' complaint against India over damage to trees from airstrikes", *The Japan Times*, March 2, 2019. <https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2019/03/02/asia-pacific/pakistan-lodge-eco-terrorism-complaint-india-damage-trees-airstrikes/#.XKQ6NdIzbc8>

⁷¹ Anjana Pasricha, "Indian pilot arrested by Pakistan returns home", *Voice of America*, March 1, 2019. <https://www.voanews.com/a/pakistan-brings-captured-indian-pilot-to-border-for-handover/4809310.html>

⁷² Muhammad Saleh Zaafir, "China captures over 60sq km area", *The News*, June 9, 2020. <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/670161-china-captures-over-60sq-km-area>

⁷³ Archana Chaudhary, "Ladakh shows Modi is risking relations with China by getting too close to Trump", *The Print*, June 5, 2020. <https://theprint.in/defence/ladakh-shows-modi-is-risking-relations-with-china-by-getting-too-close-to-trump/435970/>

Indian false sense of security and miscalculations pushed the region first, almost into a nuclear war with Pakistan, and then into a potential conflict with China. A continuation of such offensive behaviour from New Delhi broadens prospects for a two-front war with China and Pakistan that it cannot handle but could potentially threaten regional peace and stability.⁷⁴ Therefore, India should not fall lull to 'the false sense of security' of its overwhelming military modernization or strategic backup from its partners.⁷⁵

Conclusion

The increased military advancement coupled with the doctrinal change in the Indian strategic thinking is a threat to the regional stability. The acquisition of weapons more than required for its security marked by the flagrant military approach pitches the environment towards destabilization. This is because hyper realists suggest that the possibility of war increases with an increase in the power gap between the rival states. India's military disparities are felt only when combined with its ambitious designs to achieve regional dominance, especially under Narendra Modi's government. For this, its attempt to challenge China's growing assertiveness reflects more a subsidiary obligation to its promising strategic partnership with the US than the manifestation of a prudent approach to address its genuine interests of trade and cooperation. This is because the use of force and aggression will only serve to 'decline the utility' of peace and cooperation.

The rules of the game in the Post-Cold War era defines the use of military force for revisionist agendas or conquering territories as totally 'irrelevant' in contemporary world politics. The neoliberals also consider force as 'outmoded and blunt instrument' which rather yields obstruction to peaceful achievement of national interest. Therefore, as argued by Michael R. Chambers that "India must possess enough force to defend itself, but it should not have so much that it makes others fearful".⁷⁶

⁷⁴ "India, Pak threatened to unleash missiles: sources" *Deccan Herald*, March 17, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-india-kashmir-crisis-insight-idUSKCN1QY03T>

⁷⁵ Eric Gomez, "Try As It Might, Ballistic Missile Defense Won't Solve the United States' North Korea Problem", *The Diplomat*, June 6, 2017. <https://thediplomat.com/2017/06/try-as-it-might-ballistic-missile-defense-wont-solve-the-united-states-north-korea-problem/>

⁷⁶ Michael R. Chambers, "South Asia in 2020: Future Strategic Balance and Alliances", *Strategic Studies Institute (SSI)*, US Army War College, 122 Forbes Ave, Carlisle, PA, P. 255-256, November, 2002.

Moreover, India's regional ambitions discourage New Delhi from entering reconciliation and the process of cooperation. This is because being a self-claimed emerging world power; India does not accept any equation with Pakistan. The bottom line is that India's acquisition of advanced military equipment and the gradual transition from the defensive to the offensive military doctrine represents a will to vitalize its dominance in South Asia which will not only increase the gravity of security dilemma but will also render the fragile deterrence in-effective.