STRATEGIC COMPETITION IN SOUTHERN ASIA
Arms Race or Modernisation?

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Military Modernisation
Modernisation

Military Modernisation has two facets:

• Replacement of obsolete/obsolescent weapons and equipment; new acquisitions are naturally more modern.

• Qualitative upgradation of combat capabilities through the acquisition of force multipliers – net centricity, EBOs (C2, situational awareness, RSTA, PGMs, light-weight protection).

• Qualitative upgradation is not happening.
Funds for Modernisation

• Defence Budget for FY 2017-18 US$42.18 billion is < 1.60 per cent of projected GDP – lowest since the 1962 war with China.

• Share of Capital Expenditure has fallen from 34.7 to 33.0 of the budget.

• After allowing for committed liabilities, < US$1 billion available for new acquisitions.

• With 10 per cent of the total as initial payment, new contracts worth US$10 billion may be signed.

• Procedural delays often lead to the surrender of funds.
Army Modernisation

- Howitzers (all 155mm): 145 US M777; 120 Dhanush (Indigenous); 100 K-9 Vajra (SP); SSM: BrahMos; MBRLs: Smerch, Pinaka; no progress: 155mm (52 calibre) towed guns – 1,500 pieces.

- Large number of MBTs and ICVs are still night blind.

- Air Defence, light helicopters, C4I2SR systems – largely obsolescent. NO UCAVs.

- Infantry: Rifles need replacement; BPJs deficient.
Air Force Modernisation

- Squadrons: Peak – 39, present – 33, required – 42.


- Mig-21 & Mig-27: Required 245 + 87; contracted 20 LCA Tejas (+20, +83). (Competing: F-16/18, Gripen)

- Recent acquisitions: AWACS – 3 (Phalcon/IL-76), C-17 – 10 (+1), C-130J – 6 (+6), CH-47 – 15, Apache – 22, Mi-17V5 – 80 (+59). (Ka-226 LUH??)

- SAMs/AAMs: S-400, Akash, Spyder, MRSAM, BrahMos, Meteor.

- Future: FGFA, AMCA, AWACS, 56 Airbus C-529, modernisation of Mirage 2000, Mig-29…
Strategic Forces Modernisation

• Missiles: Agni-IV canisterised, MIRV likely; Prithvi SRBM likely to be phased out.

• SSBN: Arihant induction shortly; second SSBN under construction; K-4 (3,500 km, trial stage).

• BMD system (endo/exo-atmospheric) still technology demonstrator, no deployment.

• NCP under construction; GCS for military satellite coming up…

• Strategic Planning Staff (SPS) in place.

• Future: Agni-V (5,000 km).

• Doctrine: NO change.
Strategic Competition
Trends in Strategic Behaviour

• Change in India’s response to Pakistan’s war for Kashmir (proxy war??): Tactical assertiveness, under umbrella of strategic restraint.

• Resumption of negotiations (Comprehensive Bilateral Dialogue) with Pakistan only after cross-border terrorism ends.

• Cold Start doctrine for war in the plains – multiple thrust lines; shallow objectives.

• NO CHANGE in India’s ‘no first use’ nuclear posture.

• India is increasingly more willing to contribute positively to security in the region.
Trends in Strategic Behaviour

- Implementation of CPEC has further deepened the collusion between China and Pakistan:
  - Increase in presence of Chinese troops on Pakistani soil.
  - Pakistan’s dependence on China will increase – economic indebtedness.
  - Gwadar Port likely to become a Chinese citadel/naval base in due course.
  - Efficacy of SAARC will be further undermined.
Trends in Strategic Behaviour

• Indo-US Strategic Partnership – a paradigm change in India’s outlook:
  • Hedging strategy against negative fallout of China’s rise.
  • Nucleus of cooperative security framework for the Indo-Pacific.
  • Defence cooperation poised to rise to next higher trajectory – joint threat assessment, intelligence sharing, joint contingency planning, joint operations…
  • US support for Pakistan army is a spoiler.
Trends in Strategic Behaviour

• Strategic stalemate in Afghanistan; could degenerate into civil war.

• ISIS has begun to make inroads.

• Pakistan is in a state of slow motion implosion.
FISSIPAROUS TENDENCIES
INTERNAL INSTABILITY

POLITICAL SYSTEM
PUNJABI MAJORITY
FEUDAL MINDSET
WEAK DEMOCRATIC
INSTITUTIONS
FRACTURED IDEOLOGY

ROLE OF PAK ARMY
‘DEEP STATE’
CONTROLS FOREIGN
& SECURITY POLICIES
INTERFERENCE IN
POLITICS
ISLAMISATION

WEAK BASIC
FABRIC
IDENTITY CRISIS
COMPETITIVE
SUB- NATIONALISM

AUTOCRATIC REGIME
STRONG ARM TACTICS TO
SUPPRESS RESENTMENT
AND MUFFLE DISSENT

HOSTILITY WITH INDIA
KASHMIR BOGEY

PAKISTAN’S SLOW MOTION IMPLOSION
Pakistan’s Slow Motion Implosion

- Tensions with India and Afghanistan.
- TTP-TNSM insurgency in KPK.
- Creeping Talibanisation.
- Shia-Sunni divide; frequent clashes.
- Fissiparous tendencies: Balochistan, Gilgit-Baltistan.
- Islamisation of the army (several attacks on army establishments with insider help).
- Failing economy.
- Poor civil-military relations.
Ugly Stability
Despite its numerous internal challenges...
Pakistan continues to sponsor trans-border terrorism as an instrument of state policy...
Waging war through asymmetric means to wrest Kashmir from India
Support to Haqqani network to destabilise Afghanistan government.
If Pakistan wants, the Taliban insurgency can be wound up in a month.

- Ashraf Ghani
Grave Provocation

- Punjab, J&K, Parliament, Mumbai…
- Recent terrorist attacks:
  - Gurdaspur (Punjab) – Jul 2015
  - Udhampur (J&K) – Aug 2015
  - Pathankot Air Base (Punjab) – Jan 2016 (A week after PM’s Lahore visit.)
  - Pampore (J&K) – Jun and Oct 2016
  - Uri (J&K) – Sept 2016 (Surgical strikes.)
- Masterminded by the ISI; executed by LeT and JeM.
- Handling of Kulbhushan Jadhav case.
India’s Strategic Restraint

Despite grave provocation, India has consistently showed immense strategic restraint...
India’s Strategic Restraint

Attack on army camp at Uri was the last straw… followed by trans-LoC surgical strikes on a wide front.
India’s Strategic Restraint

New policy: Tactical assertiveness under the umbrella of strategic restraint.
Ugly stability prevails... Miscalculation is possible.
US Role in South Asia
## Relationship with the US

### India
- Strategic partner
- Designated ‘Major Defence Partner’
- Intel sharing
- US largest supplier
- Growing bilateral trade ($115 bn, 2016)
- People-to-people contacts, tourism, students

### Pakistan
- MNNA
- Supports ISAF fight against Taliban
- Land route for arms, ammo and supplies for ISAF
- Receives coalition support funds, surplus military equipment from the US
- Arms sales
US Concerns in South Asia

- **US Assessment:** Pakistan is going down the tube... nuclear weapons could fall into Jihadi hands.

- **To prevent this – a vital national interest – it is necessary to support and strengthen the Pakistan army.**

- **India-Pakistan tensions could lead to conflict – with risk of escalation to nuclear exchanges. Hence:**
  - Counsel India to continue to show restraint and resolve Kashmir dispute.
  - Call on Pakistan’s ‘deep state’ to stop cross-border terrorism.
US Actions in South Asia

- No real pressure on Pakistan to stop state sponsorship of terrorism.
- Dozens of Russian citizens and companies are under US, EU, Canadian and Japanese sanctions; only a few Pakistanis designated as terrorists.
- CSF and arms transfers continue despite American deaths in Afghanistan at the hands of Haqqanis.
- Efforts to promote ‘new normal’ nuclear Pakistan as responsible nuclear power.
Impact of US Policy

• Policy prescription to ‘support and strengthen’ the Pakistan army finds no resonance in New Delhi. It is:
  • Helping to destabilize Pakistan’s neighbours.
  • Helping the army to maintain its salience in Pakistan’s polity and guide key foreign and security policies.
  • Undermining democracy and civilian control over the military.
Impact of US Policy

• US support for the Pakistan army is slowing down further growth of the strategic partnership with India, particularly defence cooperation – doubts about US intentions.

• Since the key requirement is to safeguard Pakistan’s nuclear warheads, assistance should be limited to achieving that aim.

• If support to Pakistan continues, the relationship with India could become merely a transactional one.
Looking Ahead
Looking Ahead

• Pakistan MUST stop trans-border terrorism.
• Resumption of stalled peace process contingent on above...
• Need for military-to-military CBMs; nuclear CBMs and NRRMs.
• Both must tone down political rhetoric and media frenzy.
Looking Ahead

• India has exercised immense strategic restraint, but must formulate a strategy to prosecute limited conventional conflict under a nuclear overhang to:
  – Deter future terrorist strikes.
  – Achieve limited political and military aims if deterrence fails.
• The Cold Start doctrine gives India the option to launch offensive operations in the plains with minimum risk of escalation to nuclear level.