

# Doctrinal Shift in the Indian Military: Implications for Pakistan

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## Abstract

*This paper examines the doctrinal shift in the Indian military's strategy and its implications for Pakistan and regional stability in South Asia. Since the overt nuclearization of South Asia, India has progressively moved from a defensive to an offensive posture, culminating in the introduction of the New Land Warfare Doctrine in 2018. These doctrines emphasize limited war scenarios, force modernization, surgical strikes, and hybrid warfare, signaling a strategic pivot aimed at asserting dominance over Pakistan. Through a historical analysis of India-Pakistan relations, the paper elucidates the transformation in India's military doctrine and its repercussions for strategic stability in the region. It utilizes the Security Dilemma Theory to explain the escalating arms race and the cycle of action and reaction between the two nuclear-armed neighbors. Furthermore, the study critically analyzes India's military modernization efforts, including the operationalization of doctrines such as the Cold Start Doctrine and the capability for surgical strikes, and their potential to undermine conventional deterrence in South Asia. The paper argues that India's doctrinal shift and military modernization pose significant security challenges for Pakistan, compelling it to adopt countermeasures to maintain strategic parity. The implications of this evolving security dynamic are profound, risking an escalation into a comprehensive conflict with far-reaching consequences for regional and global peace. The*

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*study concludes by advocating for a comprehensive strategy by Pakistan to address these challenges.*

**Keywords:** New Land Warfare Doctrine-2018, Strategic Stability, India, Military Modernization

## **Introduction**

The transformation in India's doctrinal stance and its strategic posture represents a profound menace to the strategic equilibrium in South Asia, with particular implications for Pakistan. Since its inception in 1947, India has employed different strategies aimed at attaining its interest towards Pakistan. The historical trajectory of their relationship is marked by numerous conflicts, with both nations entangled in protracted disputes over issues such as Kashmir, water distribution, terrorism and extremism, proxy conflicts, hybrid warfare, and psychological operations. In response, both states have refined their strategic doctrines to assert regional dominance.

The shift in India's posture became particularly pronounced post-1971, following the secession of East Pakistan, a process in which India played a significant role by supporting the Mukti Bahini insurgents, subsequently escalating into a full-scale conflict that culminated in the disintegration of Pakistan.<sup>1</sup> In the aftermath, India accelerated the modernization of its military forces, emphasizing the mechanization of its army and the development of Main Battle Tanks (MBTs) and Armored Personnel

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<sup>1</sup> Rudrajit Bose, "Genocide, Ethical Imperatives and the Strategic Significance of Asymmetric Power: India's Diplomatic and Military Interventions in the Bangladesh Liberation War (Indo-Pakistan War of 1971)," *Security and Defence Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (June 30, 2022), 50, <https://doi.org/10.35467/sdq/146060>.

Carriers (APCs), in collaboration with Russia. This period also saw the establishment of three Indian Strike Corps directed against Pakistan.<sup>2</sup>

The mid-1980s introduced the Sunderji Doctrine, which envisaged bifurcating Pakistan and executing deep territorial incursions. Concurrently, India sought to neutralize Pakistan's nascent nuclear capability through a clandestine operation, in collaboration with Israel, targeting the Kahuta laboratories. This ambition was further manifested in the Brass-tacks exercises, which contemplated a conventional military onslaught against Pakistan.<sup>3</sup> Thus, the collaboration between both countries aimed at debilitating Pakistan's nuclear program, or at the very least, inflicting sufficient damage to delay its development of nuclear weapons in the foreseeable future. However, the planned assault was averted due to Pakistan's countermeasures, which included proactive diplomacy and extensive air maneuvers.<sup>4</sup>

The Sunderji Doctrine was effectively countered by Pakistan under the directive of General Zia Ul Haq, who instructed A.Q. Khan, the chief nuclear scientist of Pakistan, to partake in an interview with Mushahid Hussain Syed and A.K Nayyar. During this interview, A.Q. Khan stated that Pakistan had attained the status of nuclear weapon state and would employ nuclear weapons in defense if faced with aggression or an attempt at attack by any country.<sup>5</sup> This declaration represented Pakistan's initial strategy to deter India from launching attacks on its nuclear and conventional sites.

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<sup>2</sup> "Calling the Cavalry Indian Army and Its Mechanized Buildup," accessed January 22, 2023, <https://www.myind.net/Home/viewArticle/calling-the-cavalry-indian-army-and-its-mechanized-buildup>.

<sup>3</sup> Ehsan M. Ahrari, "Eating Grass: The Making of the Pakistani Bomb by Feroz Hassan Khan," *Mediterranean Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (2014), 31.

<sup>4</sup> Jo Inge Bekkevold, Ian Bowers, and Michael Raska, *Security, Strategy and Military Change in the 21st Century: Cross-Regional Perspectives* (routledge, 2015).

<sup>5</sup> Kuldip Nayar, *Beyond the Lines: An Autobiography* (Roli Books Private Limited, 2012).

Concurrently, Pakistan conducted military exercises named Zarb-e-Momin, aimed at deterring India from initiating conventional attacks in the context of the Brass-tacks exercises.

In 1980s, both strategies were implemented to prevent India from launching conventional and non-conventional attacks against Pakistan. This approach enabled both nations to avoid conflict during that decade. Subsequently, Pakistan enhanced its conventional and nuclear capabilities, which served as a deterrent against potential Indian attacks.<sup>6</sup>

In 1998, Pakistan conducted six nuclear tests in Chaghi, Baluchistan, thereby becoming the second country in South Asia to declare itself a nuclear-armed state.<sup>7</sup> This marked a pivotal moment in the bilateral relations between the two countries. Following their nuclearization, India and Pakistan experienced a limited conflict in the disputed Kargil region.<sup>8</sup>

After a brief conflict over Kargil, India and Pakistan restored peace but the main element was nuclear weapon which prevented India and Pakistan from attacking each other. After the Kargil war, there was a terrorist attack on the Indian parliament. India brought about 800,000 troops to the border with Pakistan under Operation Parakram.<sup>9</sup> It was a huge mobilization and it took almost 27 days to bring its troops to the border because the Indian strike corps were deep inside India in Ambala, Mathura, and Bhopal.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Zulfqar Khan, "The Changing Dynamics of India-Pakistan Deterrence," *Pakistan Horizon* 66, no. 4 (2013), 1.

<sup>7</sup> "India and Pakistan on the Brink: The 1998 Nuclear Tests – Association for Diplomatic Studies & Training," accessed August 22, 2023, <https://adst.org/2014/07/india-and-pakistan-on-the-brink-the-1998-nuclear-tests/>.

<sup>8</sup> Bommakanti Kartik, "Coercion and control: Explaining India's victory at Kargil," *India Review* 10, no. 3 (2011), 328.

<sup>9</sup> Todd S. Sechser and Matthew Fuhrmann, *nuclear weapons and Coercive Diplomacy* (Cambridge University Press, 2017).

<sup>10</sup> Walter C. Ladwig III, "A Cold Start for Hot Wars? The Indian Army's New Limited War Doctrine," *International Security* 32, no. 3 (January 1, 2008), 90, <https://doi.org/10.1162/isec.2008.32.3.158>.

Three weeks were sufficient for Pakistan to execute counter-mobilization along the border with India and fortify its defense against the Indian military. Pakistan's strike corps, located in Mangla (I-Corps) and Multan (II-Corps), require merely three to four days to reach the border, enabling swift mobilization and defense establishment. Consequently, India lost the element of surprise, rendering an attack on Pakistan impracticable.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, additional factors contributed to deterring India from crossing the border. These included:

- the nuclear factor, and
- the external mediation.

Historical precedents suggest that nuclear-armed states avoid engaging in conventional warfare.<sup>12</sup> India's mobilization sought to invoke international diplomatic intervention, given the global and regional risks posed by confrontations between nuclear powers. This concern led the United States to play a pivotal role in easing tensions between the two nations. From the 2001-2002 standoff, India achieved two objectives:

- Exerted pressure on Pakistan regarding its Kashmir policy, and
- Internationalized the Kashmir conflict and associated it with alleged terrorism.<sup>13</sup>

Following successful international diplomacy and considering the nuclear context, India eventually withdrew its forces from the border.

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<sup>11</sup> Jaganath Sankaran, "Pakistan's Battlefield Nuclear Policy: A Risky Solution to an Exaggerated Threat," *International Security* 39, no. 3 (January 2015), 51, [https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC\\_a\\_00191](https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00191).

<sup>12</sup> John K. Warden, *Limited Nuclear War: The 21st Century Challenge for the United States* (Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory, Center for Global Security Research, 2018).

<sup>13</sup> Khadija Abid, "Post 9/11 and Pakistan's Policy on Kashmir Issue," *Center for Strategic and Contemporary Research (CSCR)*, 2016.

Nonetheless, the primary deterrent against escalation was the presence of nuclear weapons, which precluded the possibility of a large-scale conventional conflict in the region—a scenario posing a grave threat to regional nuclear deterrence. A conventional war between India and Pakistan carries the inherent risk of escalating into a comprehensive conflict.<sup>14</sup>

Christopher Clary in his article examines the doctrinal evolution of the Indian Army, highlighting the absence of civilian intervention. Clary traces the transition from a defensive stance post-1947 to the adoption of maneuver warfare after 1971, followed by mechanization in the 1980s, and an emphasis on rapid, limited offensive strikes post-2002.<sup>15</sup> The Indian Army: Its Contribution to the Development of a Nation" by S. Cohen provides a historical analysis of the Indian Army. This essay delves into the origins of the Army, its performance during World War II, and its significant role in shaping the nation and its developmental trajectory.<sup>16</sup>

R. Rajagopalan's paper, "Restoring Normalcy: The Evolution of the Indian Army's Counterinsurgency Doctrine," discusses the fifty-year evolution of the Indian Army's counterinsurgency strategies in response to changing strategic priorities.<sup>17</sup> W. Ladwig, in his 2004 publication, examines the Indian Army's shift from defensive military doctrines to the Cold Start doctrine. This doctrine emphasizes quick mobilization for limited

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<sup>14</sup> Vipin Narang, "Posturing for Peace? Pakistan's Nuclear Postures and South Asian Stability," *International Security* 34, no. 3 (2010), 78.

<sup>15</sup> Christopher Clary, "Personalities, Organizations, and Doctrine in the Indian Military," *India Review* 17 (2018), 121, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14736489.2018.1415283>.

<sup>16</sup> S. Cohen, "The Indian Army: Its Contribution to the Development of a Nation," *The Journal of Asian Studies* 31 (1972), 4, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2052295>.

<sup>17</sup> R. Rajagopalan, "'Restoring Normalcy': The Evolution of the Indian Army's Counterinsurgency Doctrine," *Small Wars & Insurgencies* 11 (2000), 44, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592310008423260>.

reprisal operations, marking a significant strategic shift.<sup>18</sup> In “Indian Defence Policy: Themes, Structures and Doctrines,” Harsh V. Pant explores various aspects of India's military strategy. The book encompasses the historical development of the Indian Army, Navy, and Air Force, as well as their roles in Indian diplomacy and domestic security.<sup>19</sup>

The collection of articles and papers provides an in-depth analysis of the Indian Army's strategic evolution and its impact on national development. Our study will build on this literature and focuses on Indian capabilities to implement these doctrines in light of new development such as Indian Military modernization. The subsequent part of this study will examine the doctrinal shift in the Indian military towards offensive postures and strategies, including the adoption of new doctrines and military modernization, what capabilities does India possess to operationalize these doctrines, and what are the strategic implications for Pakistan? This study investigates the effects of India's military doctrinal changes on Pakistan and the wider South Asian security landscape provides critical insight for scholars, policymakers, and the international community.

Adopting a qualitative methodology, this study harnesses an array of secondary sources to construct a nuanced analysis. Through the meticulous examination of scholarly articles, books, and archival materials, it endeavours to uncover underlying themes and patterns. By engaging with existing literature comprehensively and critically, the research not only

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<sup>18</sup> W. Ladwig, “A Cold Start for Hot Wars? The Indian Army's New Limited War Doctrine,” *International Security* 32 (2008), 158, <https://doi.org/10.1162/isec.2008.32.3.158>.

<sup>19</sup> Harsh V. Pant, “Handbook of Indian Defence Policy: Themes, Structures and Doctrines,” 2015, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315674742>.

synthesizes past findings but also contributes new insights, demonstrating the enduring value of qualitative analysis in scholarly inquiry.

In the following sections, a theoretical framework grounded in Security Dilemma Theory, the study explores the nuanced dynamics of escalating tensions between India and Pakistan, driven by India's doctrinal shifts towards offensive military postures. This framework sets the stage for a comprehensive examination of Indian military doctrines, including the Cold Start Doctrine, surgical strikes, and the New Land Warfare Doctrine of 2018, analyzing their strategic intent, operationalization capabilities, and implications for regional stability. Through a detailed assessment of India's military modernization efforts and capabilities, the study highlights the challenges these doctrinal changes pose to Pakistan, prompting a need for strategic countermeasures. The implications for Pakistan are critically analyzed, suggesting a multifaceted response strategy encompassing military readiness, diplomatic outreach, and regional cooperation to mitigate risks and ensure long-term peace.

## **Security Dilemma**

The Security Dilemma Theory is a fundamental concept in international relations that describes a situation where the efforts of one state to enhance its security cause insecurity in other states, leading to a cycle of escalation that can inadvertently increase the likelihood of conflict, despite the original defensive intent of the actions.<sup>20</sup> This dilemma arises because the military

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<sup>20</sup> Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (1978), 214.



capabilities or actions of one state are often perceived by others as potentially offensive, even if the intentions are purely defensive.<sup>21</sup>

In the context of India's military modernization and doctrinal shifts towards more offensive postures, such as the adoption of new doctrines and the emphasis on surgical strikes, the theory can be applied to understand the implications for Pakistan and regional security dynamics.<sup>22</sup> As India enhances its military capabilities and adopts doctrines that allow for more aggressive strategies, Pakistan may perceive these developments as a direct threat to its security. This perception is not necessarily tied to the actual intentions behind India's military modernization, which may be aimed at addressing perceived threats from China or internal security challenges.<sup>23</sup> However, the lack of transparency and the historical context of the conflict between India and Pakistan contribute to the perception of these actions as offensive rather than defensive.

In response to India's military enhancements, Pakistan is likely to take measures to ensure its security. This could include accelerating its military modernization, developing new weapons systems (such as short-range missiles), and adopting counter-doctrines. These actions are undertaken to preserve Pakistan's security and deter potential Indian aggression. However, from India's perspective, Pakistan's military advancements may also be perceived as a growing threat, further fueling the security dilemma.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Shiping Tang, "The Security Dilemma: A Conceptual Analysis," *Security Studies* 18, no. 3 (2009), 623.

<sup>22</sup> Ghazala Yasmin Jalil, "Nuclear Arms Race in South Asia," *Strategic Studies* 37, no. 1 (2017), 41.

<sup>23</sup> Muhammad Ali and Syed Mussawar Hussain Bukhari, "Indian Military Doctrine and Its Impact on South Asia's Strategic Stability," *Margalla Papers*, 2022, <https://doi.org/10.54690/margallapapers.26.i.98>.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

The cycle of action and reaction can lead to an arms race, where both India and Pakistan continuously expand their military capabilities to counter perceived threats from the other. These dynamic increases military expenditure and diverts resources from other critical areas such as economic development and social welfare. Furthermore, it raises the stakes and the risk of miscalculation, potentially making minor incidents escalate into major confrontations.<sup>25</sup>

## **Indian Military Doctrines**

India has introduced multiple military doctrines since 2003, signaling a profound transformation in its strategic posture and operational capabilities within South Asia. Initiatives such as the Cold Start Doctrine (CSD), the conceptualization of surgical strikes, the integration of a Joint Armed Forces Doctrine, and the articulation of the 2018 Land Warfare Doctrine (LWD) collectively underscore a shift towards rapid, limited engagements under a nuclear threshold, with a pronounced focus on Pakistan. These strategic adaptations, aimed at enhancing offensive capabilities and operational flexibility, have significantly altered the security dynamics in the region, indicating India's preparedness for potential multi-front conflicts and its strategic emphasis on addressing perceived threats from Pakistan. The next section provides a detailed discussion of these doctrines.

### ■ ***Cold Start Doctrine: Shallow Operations***

Post-2003, speculations emerged regarding India's development of the CSD, aimed at executing limited, rapid, and decisive operations under a nuclear canopy. The CSD envisaged deploying a defensively oriented force

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<sup>25</sup> Mohd Lateef Mir, "The Nuclear Conundrum between India and Pakistan," *World Affairs: The Journal of International Issues* 23, no. 2 (2019), 87.

along the border, imbued with offensive capabilities, to respond swiftly to any terrorist incidents purportedly linked to Pakistan. This strategy represented a significant shift in military tactics and, from 2004 onwards, India began to refine its military capabilities through numerous exercises in alignment with this doctrine.

The CSD constituted a critical evolution in South Asian military strategy, with the Indian Army intending to reconfigure its border forces by integrating offensive components for proactive engagements. For instance, the transformation of the traditional Defensive or Holding Corps into a Pivot Corps was contemplated, incorporating both offensive and defensive elements.<sup>26</sup> These enhancements would encompass air support, advanced air defense systems, modern battle tanks, gunship helicopters, close air support for surveillance, reconnaissance, armed UAVs, spy satellites, and the support of long-range artillery to impede the progress of enemy armored forces. The conceptualization of these Pivot Corps or Independent Battle Groups (IBGs) was to facilitate their deployment along the Pakistan border, enabling rapid and decisive actions within a 45–48-hour timeframe.<sup>27</sup>

▪ ***Sub-Conventional Warfare 2008: Surgical Strikes***

In 2011, the introduction of Tactical Nuclear-Weapons (TNWs) diminished the likelihood of a limited conflict under CSD.<sup>28</sup> However, 2012 saw the Indian Air Force (IAF) conceptualizing sub-conventional warfare tactics, specifically surgical strikes, within its IAF Doctrine. This strategic pivot

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<sup>26</sup> Rizwana Abbasi and Muhammad Saeed Uzzaman, *Changing Patterns of Warfare Between India and Pakistan: Navigating the Impact of New and Disruptive Technologies* (Taylor & Francis, 2023).

<sup>27</sup> “What Is India’s ‘Cold Start’ Military Doctrine?” | The Economist,” accessed March 6, 2023, <https://www.economist.com/the-economist-explains/2017/01/31/what-is-indias-cold-start-military-doctrine>.

<sup>28</sup> Malik Qasim Mustafa, “South Asian Nuclear Thresholds: Repercussions of Cold Start Doctrine and Tactical Nuclear Weapons,” *Strategic Studies* 35, no. 2 (2015).

aimed at normalizing surgical strikes against Pakistan, thus altering the status quo in South Asia concerning Pakistan. This strategic recalibration was evidenced by an attempted surgical strike on Balakot following the Pulwama attack in 2019, which did not achieve its intended outcomes.<sup>29</sup>

▪ ***Joint Armed Forces Doctrine 2017: Surgical Strikes***

The strategic evolution of the Indian military aims to pinpoint opportunities for engagements characterized by short durations and high intensities, emphasizing the importance of speed, flexibility, and augmented operational reach. This endeavour reached its zenith with the establishment of a Joint Warfare Doctrine in 2017, which amalgamated insights from the previously distinct doctrines of the Army, Air Force, and Navy. This doctrine highlights the surgical strike as a pivotal element within India's cohesive combat strategy, posing a considerable menace to Pakistan.<sup>30</sup>

The surgical strike strategy, first delineated in the 2012 IAF Doctrine, signifies a calculated posture by Indian policymakers. They posit that, in response to any militant incursion in Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IIOJK) or within India purportedly with the Pakistan Army or the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate's involvement India retains the capacity to execute a surgical strike.<sup>31</sup> The incumbent Indian Army Chief has reiterated the likelihood of such operations.<sup>32</sup> This doctrinal shift in the

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<sup>29</sup> Masood Ur Rehman Khattak, "The Indian Army's Land Warfare Doctrine 2018: A Critical Analysis," *IPRI Journal* 20, no. 1 (2020).

<sup>30</sup> Zulfqar Khan and Zafar Khan, *India's Evolving Deterrent Force Posturing in South Asia: Temptation for Pre-Emptive Strikes, Power Projection, and Escalation Dominance* (Springer Nature, 2020).

<sup>31</sup> Dr Salma Malik, "Indian Surgical Strike: Implications and Response by Pakistan," *IPRI Journal*, June 9, 2020, 72–104, <https://doi.org/10.31945/iprij.200104>.

<sup>32</sup> "Pakistan Says Army Chief Gen Naravane's Comment on Strikes across LoC Reckless," *Hindustan Times*, January 3, 2020, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/pakistan-says-army-chief-gen-naravane-s-comment-on-strikes-across-loc-reckless/story-eJDv67R5haycZxH5C398uM.html>.

Indian military's strategy carries profound security implications for South Asia. Since any such incursion is expected to elicit a commensurate response from Pakistan, potentially escalating the situation. This dynamic raises the specter of a minor skirmish transforming into a substantial conflict.<sup>33</sup>

▪ ***New Land Warfare Doctrine 2018: A Critical Analysis***

To overcome shortcomings of previous doctrines, the Indian Army doctrines introduced LWD in 2018.<sup>34</sup> Under this doctrine, India plans to restructure its armed forces to become more streamlined and agile, equipping them with the latest weaponry and equipment. The strategy includes conducting limited or punitive strikes often referred to as surgical strikes particularly against Pakistan. This military doctrine is designed to prepare the Indian military for potential multi-front engagements involving both China and Pakistan. Statements from Indian Air Chiefs have underscored the Indian military's capability to engage in a two-front war against these nations.<sup>35</sup>

However, the majority of India's military deployments, doctrinal developments, weapon acquisitions, and strategic focus predominantly target Pakistan. A significant portion of India's military posture, particularly the II-Corps stationed in Chandigarh, Punjab, is oriented towards Pakistan, with approximately 50% of the Indian Army's strike capacity allocated

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<sup>33</sup> "Prime Minister Imran Khan's Address on Pulwama Incident - Press Releases - Embassy of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan Beijing," accessed February 20, 2023, <http://www.pakbj.org/index.php?m=content&c=index&a=show&catid=12&id=320>.

<sup>34</sup> "India's Land Warfare Doctrine 2018: Hoping for the Best, preparing for the Worst," accessed February 16, 2023, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/01/indias-land-warfare-doctrine-2018-hoping-for-the-best-preparing-for-the-worst/>.

<sup>35</sup> "Rebooting the Indian Army: A Doctrinal Approach to Force Restructuring," orfonline.org, accessed August 22, 2023, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/rebooting-the-indian-army>.

there.<sup>36</sup> This disposition suggests a strategic inclination towards engaging Pakistan in future military scenarios. LWD of 2018 introduces the concept of a multi-front scenario, indicating a broad operational scope. However, in practice, the bulk of the Indian Army's deployment remains focused on Pakistan.

The operationalization of this doctrine is envisaged through the integration of IBGs. While previously, IBGs were equivalent in size to a division, recent adjustments have reduced their scale, envisioning them as units comprising 5,000 to 6,000 troops. These IBGs are to be fully equipped with offensive capabilities, air-defense systems, artillery, and integrated command and control structures, thereby enhancing their operational effectiveness.<sup>37</sup>

### **Indian Capability to Operationalize these Doctrines**

In contemporary warfare doctrines, there has been a paradigm shift towards reducing the size of military forces while emphasizing rapid deployment capabilities for conducting multiple incursions swiftly. This evolution underscores the intensification and acceleration of modern warfare dynamics. India's strategic military endeavours, aimed at enhancing capabilities through doctrines like CSD and advancements in sub-conventional warfare, underscore efforts to find a way for a conflict below nuclear threshold. The aftermath of the 2008 Mumbai attacks and subsequent military developments reflect a complex interplay of regional security dynamics, where India's operational readiness and modernization

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<sup>36</sup> Zaki Khalid, "Examining High-Level Changes in the Indian Army Headquarters," *Centre for Strategic and Contemporary Research* (blog), May 14, 2022, <https://cscr.pk/explore/themes/defense-security/examining-high-level-changes-in-the-indian-army-headquarters/>.

<sup>37</sup> "Indian Army Commences Integrated Battle Groups Trials," accessed September 21, 2023, <https://www.janes.com/defence-news/news-detail/indian-army-commences-integrated-battle-groups-trials>.

face significant challenges. Efforts to augment its military through acquisitions such as S-400 air defense systems and advanced surveillance technologies reveal an effort to operationalize these doctrines.

▪ ***Capabilities to Operationalize Cold Start Doctrine***

India persistently implemented the CSD along its border with Pakistan to refine this specific strategy. However, the doctrine faced a critical setback in 2008 following the Mumbai attacks, which resulted in the tragic loss of over 177 people. The Indian reaction to this incident severely impacted the bilateral relations between India and Pakistan, leading to a cessation of diplomatic ties and initiating a blame game from the Indian side.<sup>38</sup> In the aftermath of the 2008 attacks, the feasibility of operationalizing CSD came into question as India lacked the offensive capabilities required to effectively execute the strategy against Pakistan.<sup>39</sup>

In response, Pakistan initiated reciprocal military exercises starting in 2009, notably the Azm-e-Nau exercises, which were aimed at preparing for counterattacks in the event of an Indian assault under the CSD framework.<sup>40</sup> However, a pivotal development occurred in 2011 with Pakistan's induction of short-range missiles into its arsenal, marking a significant shift in the strategic balance of South Asia. The introduction of short-range missiles rendered the execution of CSD or any proactive military operations by India against Pakistan as highly risky, potentially escalating to uncontrollable levels. Rajesh Basrur's observation underscores this delicate balance: 'While

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<sup>38</sup> Polly Nayak and Michael Krepon, *The Unfinished Crisis: US Crisis Management after the 2008 Mumbai Attacks* (Henry L. Stimson Center, 2012).

<sup>39</sup> Stephen P. Cohen, *The Future of Pakistan* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2011).

<sup>40</sup> Shuja Nawaz, *The Battle for Pakistan: The Bitter US Friendship and a Tough Neighbourhood* (Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2020).

a full-scale war between India and Pakistan is unlikely, the possibility of a limited engagement escalating into a major conflict cannot be dismissed.<sup>41</sup>

■ ***Capabilities to Operationalize Sub-Conventional Warfare Doctrine***

Following the Balakot strike, Pakistan executed counter surgical strikes, deploying six H-Weapons on critical strategic locations of the Indian military in the region referred to IIOJK.<sup>42</sup> This action reinforced Pakistan's conventional deterrence in South Asia, curbing India's propensity for maneuvers against Pakistan. Despite this, India's ongoing military modernization poses a potential challenge to Pakistan's conventional deterrence, especially with the acquisition of long-range air defense systems such as S-400 from Russia and Barak-8 from Israel.<sup>43</sup> Contrary views are held by Indian scholars.

When Bharat Karnard, a distinguished professor from India, was questioned about the likelihood of India conducting surgical strikes post the induction of S-400 system, he responded, "Balakot-type strikes would be contingent upon terrorist activities traced back to Pakistan, as reiterated by the Indian Prime Minister. S-400 is primarily intended to counter the more significant threat posed by China."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Ms Kokab Al-Saba, Noor Fatima, and Masood Ur Rehman Khattak, "India's Hybrid Warfare Strategy: Implications," *Journal of Xi'an Shiyu University, Natural Science Edition* 19, no. 07 (2023).

<sup>42</sup> "Three Years After Balakot: Reckoning with Two Claims of Victory • Stimson Center," accessed February 22, 2023, <https://www.stimson.org/2022/three-years-after-balakot-reckoning-with-two-claims-of-victory/>.

<sup>43</sup> "From Russia's S-400 to Israel's Barak-8 Missiles: How India Is Fortifying Its Defence," *The Times of India*, October 25, 2018, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/from-russias-s-400-to-israels-barak-8-missiles-how-india-is-fortifying-its-defence/articleshow/66362137.cms>.

<sup>44</sup> Bharat Karnard, Personal interview by Kokab Al Saba, October 18, 2021.



▪ ***Capabilities to Operationalize Joint Armed Forces***

***Doctrines***

Indian standpoint posits that, as a major regional power, it is imperative to adopt the strategy of surgical strikes for future engagements. Conversely, this notion is unequivocally rejected from the Pakistani perspective. The execution of a surgical strike, in its true essence and spirit, necessitates the deployment of aircraft, gunship helicopters, and Special Forces. This involves penetrating a specified area, achieving designated objectives, and subsequently withdrawing without sustaining losses. Considering the geographical proximity, Pakistan's air defense systems, the fortified Line of Control, and the perpetual vigilance in the region, the probability India acquiring the capability to conduct surgical strikes within Pakistani territory effectively.

▪ ***Capabilities to Operationalize New Land Warfare***

***Doctrine***

The operationalization of military doctrine is contingent upon adequate force modernization. The Indian military is significantly enhancing its capabilities across various domains. An analysis of their force modernization trajectory reveals a gradual integration of new technologies. For instance, IAF currently operates 33 squadrons, yet to achieve air superiority against Pakistan, a total of 42 squadrons are deemed necessary, indicating a requirement for additional aircraft to maintain air supremacy.<sup>45</sup>

The primary asset of IAF is the Russian-manufactured SU-30 MKI aircraft, boasting a range of approximately 3,000 km, extendable to 8,000

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<sup>45</sup> "New Report on IAF: It Can't Protect North-Eastern and Western Frontiers Simultaneously | Explained News - The Indian Express," accessed September 22, 2023, <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/new-report-on-iaf-it-cant-protect-eastern-and-western-frontiers-simultaneously/>.

km with aerial refueling. Presently, the IAF has a fleet of 275 SU-30 MKI aircraft and has placed orders for an additional 53 units. Concurrently, the IAF has inducted 36 French Rafale aircraft, which, despite their advanced capabilities, are insufficient for establishing complete air dominance over Pakistan.<sup>46</sup>

To enhance cross-border operational logistics and supply capabilities, the Indian military is incorporating new technologies, through collaboration with the United States, including the Hercules, Chinook, and Globemaster aircraft.<sup>47</sup> These additions are aimed at addressing operational deficiencies and facilitating rapid deployment in potential conflicts.

Furthermore, the acquisition of Apache helicopters is poised to augment the Indian Army's capability for swift operations, particularly under the nuclear deterrence framework. An initial order of 22 helicopters has been placed, with an additional procurement of 11 units designated for army use, thereby bolstering the offensive operational capacity.<sup>48</sup> The integration of Apache Gunship Helicopters with modern tanks constitutes an effective combination for potential adversaries.

Moreover, the adoption of the Long-Range Reconnaissance and Observation System (LORROS) from Israel underscores this strategic expansion.<sup>49</sup> LORROS is utilized to monitor the cross-border movement of individuals, serving as a critical asset for long-range reconnaissance and

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<sup>46</sup> "Su-30MKI Multirole Fighter Aircraft," accessed September 23, 2023, <https://www.airforce-technology.com/projects/su-30mki-multirole-fighter-aircraft-india/>.

<sup>47</sup> Dr Adam B Lowther and Dr Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, "Building a Partnership between the United States and India: Exploring Airpower's Potential," 2015.

<sup>48</sup> Masood Ur Rehman Khattak, "Indian Military Modernisation: Implications for Pakistan," *Strategic Studies* 39, no. 1 (April 24, 2019), 40, <https://doi.org/10.53532/ss.039.01.00117>.

<sup>49</sup> Efraim Inbar and Alvite Singh Ningthoujam, *Indo-Israeli Defense Cooperation in the Twenty-First Century* (Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, Bar-Ilan University, 2012).

observation along the LoC. This system is capable of providing reconnaissance and observation over distances of approximately 16 kilometers, thereby offering advanced intelligence concerning adversaries. Furthermore, the Indian military has embraced Network Centric Warfare (NCW) capabilities; in 2005, it launched a program named the Force Multiplication Command Post (FMCP). This initiative aimed at integrating information acquired from satellites, aircraft, Airborne Warning and Control Systems (AWACS), and Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), facilitating real-time data access for commanders, whether stationed in bunkers or operational rooms. Since 2004, these practices have been incorporated into military exercises.

The Indian military has enhanced its surveillance capabilities with battlefield surveillance radars capable of tracking enemy movements along the border. Additionally, the development of indigenous Swati Weapon Locating Radars (S-WLRs) has enabled the precise localization of enemy artillery, mortar sites, and rocket launch positions. Currently, forty such radars have been deployed along the LoC, has potential of complicating operations for Pakistani security forces stationed along the LoC and the international border. Concurrently, India has advanced its airborne early warning and control (AEW&C) capabilities, notably through indigenous development, aiming to bridge existing strategic gaps.<sup>50</sup>

The procurement of advanced UAVs further bolsters surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities. Moreover, the acquisition of the Heron TP drone from Israel, capable of conducting armed strikes, presents a significant strategic challenge to Pakistan, necessitating the formulation of

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<sup>50</sup> “Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) | Defence Research and Development Organisation - DRDO, Ministry of Defence, Government of India,” accessed September 23, 2023, <https://www.drdo.gov.in/drdo/airborne-early-warning-and-control-aewc>.

effective countermeasures.<sup>51</sup> The induction of the Harpy missile, a UAV designed for radar neutralization, and its advanced variant, the Harop missile—with a range of 1000 km and a payload of 15 kg—poses a direct threat to Pakistani military assets. India's space program has achieved notable advancements, including the launch of the RISAT-II spy satellite in 2009, offering round-the-clock surveillance capabilities.<sup>52</sup> The addition of dedicated satellites for the Navy, Army, and Air Force enhances strategic information gathering, providing India with a significant informational advantage over Pakistan.

While Pakistan's F-16 and JF-17 Thunder aircraft offer some surveillance capabilities, they cannot compare to the continuous, all-weather intelligence provided by spy satellites.<sup>53</sup> Indian Army's modernization efforts extend to infantry equipment, with investments in modern weapons, lightweight firearms, and advanced communication devices, thereby has potential of enhancing soldier performance in combat scenarios. The T-90S Main Battle Tank (MBT) forms the core of India's armored forces, with current holdings of approximately 900 units and plans to expand this fleet by adding 32 more regiments, gradually phasing out older models.<sup>54</sup> Comparatively, while Chinese and 80% of Pakistani tanks

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<sup>51</sup> “The Acquisition of Three Proven Heron Drones Is Just the First Step – the Czech Army Needs Many More of These Assets | CZDEFENCE - Czech Army and Defence Magazine,” accessed September 23, 2023, <https://www.czdefence.com/article/the-acquisition-of-three-proven-heron-drones-is-just-the-first-step-the-czech-army-needs-many-more-of-these-assets>.

<sup>52</sup> Ajey Lele, *Asian Space Race: Rhetoric or Reality?* (Springer Science & Business Media, 2012).

<sup>53</sup> “JF-17 Thunder Fighter Has Capability to Compete with Any Modern Fighter Jet,” accessed September 23, 2023, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/968149/jf-17-thunder-fighter-has-capability-to-compete-with-any-modern-fighter-jet>.

<sup>54</sup> “Army to Have Russian T-90 Tanks with ‘Make in India’ Element as Pakistan Threat Looms Large,” India Today, accessed September 23, 2023, <https://www.indiatoday.in/mail-today/story/indian-army-defence-arms-russian-t-90-tanks-make-in-india-pakistan-threat-349472-2016-10-31>.

are equipped with night vision capabilities, only 50% of Indian tanks have similar technology, indicating a critical gap in India's armored warfare capabilities.

To address this and other strategic vulnerabilities, India has entered agreements with Israel and Russia for the acquisition of Barak-8 and S-400 long-range air defense systems, respectively.<sup>55</sup> These systems are anticipated to bolster India's defensive posture against Pakistani aerial and missile threats. Significant developments in artillery capabilities, through collaborations with South Korea and the United States, as well as the indigenous Dhanush Advanced Towed Artillery Gun System (ATAGS) program, are aimed at enhancing the Indian Army's operational effectiveness.<sup>56</sup> This modernization of artillery assets is essential for halting enemy advances and supporting armored maneuvers, underscoring India's commitment to upgrading its military power.

## **Implications for Pakistan**

According to Lt. Commander (Retd.) Kamran Hamid Hashmi of National Institute of Maritime Affairs- (NIMA), “The Indian doctrinal shift from total war to limited counter-force adventures is highly detrimental and is unlikely to achieve any lasting superiority over Pakistan since it is practically impossible to disarm Pakistan completely. Furthermore, Indian temptation for a limited war would spark an interminable arms race in peacetime, making the region’s strategic stability more fragile.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> “India and Pakistan’s Main Battle Tank Forces: An Overview – The Diplomat,” accessed September 23, 2023, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/02/india-and-pakistans-main-battle-tank-forces-an-overview/>.

<sup>56</sup> “Indian Army’s Artillery Modernization | Defense.Info,” accessed September 23, 2023, <https://defense.info/defense-systems/indian-armys-artillery-modernization/>.

<sup>57</sup> Kokab Al Saba and Kamran Hashmi, Personal Interview, NIMA, January 1, 2023.

Within the framework of land warfare doctrine, the concept of the surgical strike has been reaffirmed. According to this doctrine, India maintains a punitive response strategy, aiming to deter hostile actions through surgical strikes. Subsequent to this doctrinal reinforcement, an operation was conducted against Pakistan in Balakot, which did not achieve its intended outcomes. In retaliation, Pakistan engaged, resulting in the downing of two Indian aircraft.

The integration of the surgical strike strategy into the new land warfare doctrine is not a novel development, as this approach has been under consideration since 2012. Despite gradual advancements in operational planning, the execution of this strategy against Pakistan led to significant diplomatic repercussions for India. The insistence on such strategies underscores a challenging dynamic in India-Pakistan relations, with the latter explicitly rejecting the establishment of a new status quo and indicating a readiness to respond with measures exceeding mere reciprocity.<sup>58</sup>

Pakistan's conventional capabilities are positioned to address such contingencies effectively. However, the ongoing force modernization of the Indian military presents a significant challenge. India is currently in the process of acquiring the S-400 and Barak-8 air defense systems. Concurrently, the Indian Air Force has inducted advanced French Rafale aircraft and is also negotiating with Israel for the procurement of armed UAVs. These enhancements could potentially posit a challenge for Pakistan's security framework. Consequently, the decision for the Pakistani Air Chief to authorize counter surgical strikes, in light of the S-400 and

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<sup>58</sup> K. Kidwai, "Deterrence, Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control," in *Keynote Address, "Workshop on South Asian Strategic Stability."* *International Institute for Strategic Studies and Centre for International Strategic Studies, February*, vol. 6, 2020.

Barak-8 systems being incorporated into India's arsenal, represents a complex strategic dilemma.<sup>59</sup>

India's strategic alliances significantly influence regional dynamics. Through military diplomacy, India has established connections with the United States, Russia, the European Union, and Israel, seeking to enhance its operational capabilities with their support. The military modernization efforts of India pose challenges to the strategic stability and balance of power in South Asia, potentially initiating an arms race.

This is attributed to India's aspirations for regional hegemony, the modernization of its armed forces with western assistance, and the development of a nuclear submarine aimed at countering China's influence. Consequently, India's predominance in the Indian Ocean region is perceived with apprehension by other South Asian nations.

India is implementing a strategic policy inspired by Chanakya Kautilya's six-fold approach, which advocates for forging alliances with major powers to address operational deficiencies and to incorporate offensive weapons and equipment. Furthermore, the Indian Army places a strong emphasis on regular military exercises as part of this doctrine, conducting annual exercises to operationalize these strategic concepts.

## **Pakistan's Response**

On a question to Indian military's interplay with limited war doctrines since the nuclearization of South Asia, Toby Dalton was of the view that, "these were predictable responses to the challenges of military strategy in a nuclearized environment – driving down the level of conflict and risk-taking

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<sup>59</sup> Shreya Mundhra, "Countering S-400 Missiles, Pakistan Says Its 'Stealth Drones' Capable of Thwarting India's Missile Defense System," *Latest Asian, Middle-East, EurAsian, Indian News* (blog), January 21, 2022, <https://www.eurasiantimes.com/challenging-s-400-missiles-pakistan-says-its-stealth-drones-india/>.

owing to escalation probability of large maneuver warfare. Just as Pakistan's development of short-range missiles was a predictable response given perceptions that India was seeking to exploit a deterrence gap (that probably never actually existed" and Pakistan is also developing precision missiles and also purchasing new aircraft from China.<sup>60</sup>

Any conventional asymmetry would push this region towards instability and turmoil. Pakistan is unlikely to accept any surgical strike or limited war options.<sup>61</sup> Any Indian misadventure under new doctrine would be a dangerous development which may have unwarranted consequences for South Asian security. In this context, Pakistan's dependence on its conventional capabilities to deter India from implementing the Cold Start, proactive, or new land warfare doctrines against Pakistan.<sup>62</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The doctrinal shift in the Indian military's strategy is posit to have implications for Pakistan and regional stability in South Asia. India's transition from a defensive to an offensive posture, characterized by military modernization, adoption of new doctrines, and emphasis on surgical strikes, poses significant security challenges for Pakistan. This transformation has escalated the arms race and heightened the security dilemma in the region, increasing the risk of conflict escalation. The historical context of India-Pakistan relations, highlighting the cyclical nature of their strategic interactions. India's military doctrines, capabilities, and the potential for operationalizing its strategies, offering insights into the strategic recalibration towards offensive postures. For Pakistan, India's doctrinal shifts necessitate a comprehensive strategy encompassing military

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<sup>60</sup> Toby Dalton, Personal interview by Kokab Al Saba, December 1, 2022.

<sup>61</sup> Kidwai, "Deterrence, Nuclear Weapons and Arms Control."

<sup>62</sup> Michael Kugelman, Personal Interview by Kokab Al Saba, 27 December 2022.



preparedness, diplomatic engagement, and regional cooperation. For dialogue and peaceful resolution of disputes as essential components of ensuring long-term stability in South Asia. The importance of addressing conventional asymmetries and strengthening indigenous defense capabilities to maintain strategic parity. The evolving security dynamics in South Asia, driven by India's doctrinal shift and military modernization, call for a nuanced understanding and strategic foresight from all stakeholders. Ensuring peace and stability in the region requires a concerted effort towards dialogue, confidence-building measures, and cooperative security frameworks.