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CLAWS Journal

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New Delhi

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Note from the Editor

The CLAWS Journal Summer 2023 is focused on strategic, technological, financial and diplomatic aspects of the development of military capabilities. The authors, who are acknowledged experts in their diverse fields, write on a number of subjects which educate and make us contemplate hitherto obscured or opaque areas in these subjects. They cover aspects of air and space capability development, organisational evolution, the value of intangible aspects such as military diplomacy and alliances, and strategic affairs in our neighbourhood or globally.

The past six months have been eventful. They have witnessed an acceleration of certain trends that had been underway since 2014 when Russia first took over Crimea. This exacerbated the geopolitical frictions at global, regional, and domestic levels fuelled by uncertainty and insecurity. Undoubtedly the war in Ukraine is one of the defining conflicts of this decade and a continuation of the conflict between the erstwhile USSR and the West. That conflict itself was rooted in ideology and two different political systems each of which tries to enhance its sphere of influence and the strength of its system. The evolution of modern warfare and lessons learnt from this war in various spheres of defence and strategic studies are evident because Ukraine finds mention in a number of articles in this issue. This is either directly or indirectly because willy-nilly the Ukraine war does enter any military discourse—whether in detail or in passing.

The articles help us to feel and flesh out the contours of our national security in the coming years where both for the West and India, the ever-looming foreboding threat from China cannot be brushed aside. With an unsettled border with China, there is a need to continuously visualise the context and contours of India's future wars and the new ways of warfare where variants such as non-contact warfare as a strategy to fight

multi-domain wars are continuously gaining traction. Credible military capabilities must be backed by synergy across all domains. Internal insecurity exemplified by the unrest in Manipur cannot be pushed to the background because our competitors will be quick to look for chinks in our armour.

This issue has two book reviews, the books are those which have been around for a few years, but their content merits that they are given greater reach and focus due to the importance of their subjects.

One of the articles on this issue rightly states that it is better to be forewarned of change than to confront its implications in the midst of conflict. The difficulty lies in a reasonable identification of future conflict trends and in focusing on change, within defined parameters, that should allow for an advantage in war. A number of articles attempt to point towards such advantages, but these can be concretised only with further research.

In line with this, the focus of this journal as always is to educate, refresh and trigger critical thinking on the issues covered which can lead to debate and evolution in security doctrine and warfighting concepts with the broader picture of international relations as a background. The ultimate aim is to further hone national security.

Managing Editor

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The Salience of Air Power in Accelerating Land Operations Across Various Terrains

Diptendu Choudhury

Abstract

India's persistent continental threat has ensured that employment of force through the medium of air has not only remained vital, but has become increasingly definitive in military strategy and outcomes. An analysis of the air power roles undertaken by the IAF towards the land campaigns in all the wars brings out one fact clearly. That is, along with the land operations of the Indian Army which have been fought in diverse geographical terrains, the IAF too has fought alongside in each of them, in a wide variety of roles. Each terrain type presents unique operational advantages and challenges for both land and air warfare, and also provides synergistic employment opportunities, tailored to the adversary-specific warfighting requirements. The IAF has immense capabilities critical in accelerating land operations in all terrains, provided it is synergised at every level from planning to execution.

Air Marshal **Diptendu Choudhury**, PVSM, AVSM, VM, VSM (Retd) a fighter pilot and scholar, is a former Commandant of the National Defence College, New Delhi.

Introduction

In the history of India's wars, with its unique threat and geographical environment combined with the regional dynamics, the contribution of air power in the land campaigns has been consistent. From the Burma Campaign, 1947-48, 1965, 1971 and 1999 Indo-Pak Wars, and the 1962 Indo-Chinese War, India's persistent continental threat has ensured that employment of force through the medium of air has not only remained vital, but has become increasingly definitive in military strategy and outcomes. This is especially so since over the years while our adversaries have remained the same, there has been a threat-proliferation across all domains, an expansion in the spectrum of warfare ranging from the non-conventional to the hybrid, and a blurring of the normative ideals of warfare itself. With two enemies with whom India shares long and hostile borders—one near-peer and one stronger—who share an enduring strategic relationship and an extensive military one, the possibility of a 'two-adversary-multi-front' war remains a reality. Throw in conflict terrains that range from salt marshes, deserts, the obstacle-ridden developed sector of the plains on the West, the harsh climatic high altitudes of the North, and the densely forested hilly jungle terrain of the North East, and India's comprehensive military challenges are like no other in the world. In this complex threat scenario, given that both strong opposing Air Forces form an integral part of their respective military strategies, the salience of air power in India's future military strategy needs a fresh approach. Thankfully, history provides invaluable lessons and insights, both in overcoming past mistakes, and finding newer ways to do business.

Home Truths

In the Burma campaign, the Indian Air Force flew over 16,000 missions of Army cooperation, as it was called earlier, consisting of bombing, interdiction and close air support sorties, to great effect.[1] In the Kashmir

War of 1947-48, the entire fighter operations were almost entirely for assisting Army operations.[2] Despite the ground attack experience of past wars and the significant offensive air power capability, the IAF was unfortunately not offensively committed in the 1962 war with China, a regret that continues to haunt the military and the nation. In the 1965 war against Pakistan, 60 per cent of fighter sorties were towards Counter Surface Force Operations (CSFO).[3] In the 1971 Bangladesh war, which was the first- and only-time air power was used without any constraints or restrictions, the CSFO effort was 52 per cent.[4] In Kargil, it constituted 46 per cent of the air effort. These figures do not include the thousands of helicopter and transport sorties flown in each war, exclusively towards air assistance and logistics.[5] The very basis for joint warfare lies in three basic undeniable truths—Army's need for offensive air power for its concentrated firepower, depth of penetration, and speed; its vulnerability to enemy air; and the AF's ability to provide these. An analysis of the air power roles undertaken by the IAF towards the land campaigns in all the wars brings out one fact clearly. That is, along with the land operations of the Indian Army which have been fought in diverse geographical terrains, the IAF too has fought alongside in each of them, in a wide variety of roles. But given the disparate sizes of the two Services, there is bound to be a gap in the future Coordinated Air Operations (formerly CSFO)[6] expectation of the Army, and the AF's ability to meet it. This is especially so, since the latter also has an equally significant role to play in wresting a certain degree of control of air for all military operations, and for strategic air operations against strategic military assets and

Despite the ground attack experience of past wars and the significant offensive air power capability, the IAF was unfortunately not offensively committed in the 1962 war with China, a regret that continues to haunt the military and the nation.

But unlike in the past, where counter-air campaign was the precursor to offensive air operations, the IAF today executes them simultaneously in parallel from day one, as it will in the future.

infrastructure, war-waging and economic targets in depth, well beyond the tactical battlespaces. Thus, "understanding the larger responsibilities of air power at the national level and its inclusion in the larger military strategy, will serve the interests of Jointness better".[7]

Coordinated Air Operations: Future Air Power Roles

Though misunderstanding of the much-debated 'control of air' remains alive amongst some, it has long become a key warfighting imperative for militaries world over. Mellinger posits that "whoever controls the air generally controls the surface",[8] it provides the land forces with the freedom of action while reducing vulnerability to the enemy's aerial attacks. In the Indian context, it is especially important as both its adversaries are capable of seriously threatening friendly forces *from the air and directly impacting land operations.* The 1971 war, where the IAF achieved air supremacy in the East and air superiority on the Western Front, underscores the importance of a degree of control of the air. Muqueem wrote—"The defensive strategy of the PAF in fact, gave the IAF a free hand to interdict Pakistan communications and other strategic targets and keep pressure on Pakistan troops in the forward areas. The situation as it emerged seemed that, while the PAF managed air superiority in their bases, the IAF could operate without hindrance in the forward areas and over Pakistani vital communications along her borders."[9] In future wars, favourable air situation (FAS) and limited sectoral air superiority, are the best that can be expected in highly contested, and contested airspaces, respectively. But unlike in the past, where counter-air campaign was the precursor to offensive air operations, the IAF today executes them simultaneously in parallel from day one, as it will in the future. Since, "Control of air

is vital for the successful execution of a nation's military strategy, joint operations and Service-specific operations, the degree of control of the air directly impacts the extent and effectiveness of Air-Land operations,"[10] and therefore it must be a part of the nation's military strategy.

An overlooked vital takeaway from the 1971 war was the efficacy of interdiction and depth strikes on surface operations. In the East—"a little over two-thirds of IAFs air effort was in direct support of the Indian Army in the land battle",[11] which was able to severely disrupt the road, rail and waterways networks, over and above counterforce targets. In the Western sector, "long-range interdiction cut down Pakistan's ability to reinforce battle areas"[12] with systematic attacks on road and railway networks, ammunition and fuel dumps, key bridges, etc. Strategic targeting impacted the fuel supplies and power generation capacity—"its fuel supplies became extremely scarce and fuel had to be imported in tankers by road from Iran."[13] IAF's contemporary warfighting repertoire and concepts of operations have long been focused and dedicated to joint operations, and the achievement of the larger military objectives. And even today, 80 per cent of its offensive targeting includes strategic centres of gravity, deep strikes against enemy target systems of combat forces and reserves, and air interdiction (AI) of infrastructure, fuel, ammunition and combat logistic nodes, enemy road-rail communication systems, troop concentrations, command and control nodes, etc. Interdiction operations are vital to "destroy, neutralise or delay the enemy's reinforcements, supplies, or strategic military potential before it is brought to bear in the battlefield, to isolate the enemy forces in the battle zone and restrict his freedom of manoeuvre" and "their effects are cumulative, and must continue to degrade the war-fighting capacity of the enemy's land forces. Joint planning and coordination of fire are key to effective AI".[14] And it must be emphasised here that interdictions and is a part of its coordinated air operations, is over and above battlefield air strikes (BAS).

Close air support (CAS) or BAS as it is called today, remains the most challenging of all air power roles through history, and has been the key source of all dissent between Armies and Air Forces world over.

Close air support (CAS) or BAS as it is called today, remains the most challenging of all air power roles through history, and has been the key source of all dissent between Armies and Air Forces world over. Camouflage, concealment and dispersion of targets, identification of the enemy, and distinguishing them from friendly forces to avoid fratricide, are challenges which remain. US aviators argue that CAS merely duplicated the abilities of artillery, whereas interdiction provides a unique capability, US infantry officers contend that with artillery being rarely available in sufficient quantity, the flexibility of air power enables massing firepower at critical points, and also produces a greater psychological effect on friendly and hostile forces alike.[15] In the Korean and Vietnam War, senior Army generals believed that air power primarily was a source of firepower to augment ground artillery, essentially in support of localised ground combat. They wanted that there should be some minimum number of CAS sorties provided per unit per day that could not be taken away. They also wanted entire Air Force fighter units placed directly under the operational control of the field army commander, ignoring the limited aircraft resources, which may or may not be used given the large demand for platforms for other mandated missions. This contradictory viewpoint has persisted in all US wars including the Gulf War, where CAS formed only 26 per cent of all the sorties flown during the five-day ground war, most of the missions actually became interdiction during execution. Post-war analysis concluded that *tactical air power was used as it has always been used in the past. It was not integrated into the ground scheme of manoeuvre, and once again CAS was flying artillery.*[16] Despite the persistent coincidences in thinking amongst some in the Army, the IAF is acutely aware of the

importance of BAS. Its doctrine highlights the need for joint planning, disposition of own forces, integration and close coordination of the fire plan, electronic warfare and communications jamming, tactical ISR, and crucially, airspace coordination with the integrated air defence operations, over the tactical battlespaces which directly impact the efficacy of BAS. Since proliferation of man-portable air defence systems (MANPADS) raises the safe operating envelope of air operations— unlike in the past— it will reduce the 'visibility' of BAS efforts to the troops on the ground.

Aerial reconnaissance, with whatever limited assets are available, has played a vital role in all wars. While in 1947 surface operations were mostly dependent on aerial recce, in all subsequent wars photo recce (PR) missions revealed vital dispositions and movement of the enemy. Shortage of assets and centralisation of this role led to inordinate delays in the 1965 war,[17] which in 1971 with an increase of Fighter Recce (FR) capability was invaluable,[18] but post-mission photo development, analysis and dissemination from a joint perspective, emerged as an area needing attention,[19] as also brought out by Candeth,[20] and Krishna Rao.[21] Today, space-based constant stare is needed over designated areas in depth, for close monitoring of the enemy key ports, airfields, road-rail-river communication hubs, strategic assets, military reserves, missiles and air defence assets, etc., and equally importantly to provide targeting imagery. At the operational levels, up to depths of 40-50 km, fighter recce, and specialist platforms, with stand-off imagery capability will be vital. Though Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) capability has expanded with space-based imagery, key challenges of persistent stare capability, time-criticality, and analysis capacity remain.

Considering the wide swath of coverage desired across our long borders and vast hinterland depths of the adversaries, four important factors must be considered. First, ISR assets and their utilisation will always be at premium, given the limited availability of indigenous satellites, limited dedicated aerial ISR and EW platforms, and limited

AD is the veritable glue which underpins each and every air operation, directly impacts the level of enemy interference in land operations, and is a conjoined twin of offensive air operations.

ground environmental stations (GES) for download, analysis and dissemination. Second, their limited availability compels centralised utilisation. Third, is the vulnerability of tactical aerial assets to enemy air defence. This makes use of remotely piloted aircraft extremely vulnerable to MANPADS, and they can only be employed in benign air defence environments. Even then, they would be vulnerable to enemy fighters with long-range beyond visual-range missiles. The use of small drones are a viable option, but are limited by their range, area of coverage and the choice of sensors. And finally, weather and environmental conditions impact ISR, and therefore multi-sensor capability is a necessity.

AD is the veritable glue which underpins each and every air operation, directly impacts the level of enemy interference in land operations, and is a conjoined twin of offensive air operations. It involves defensive and offensive missions for the protection of friendly airspaces, civil and military assets, and most importantly ensures freedom of own air and surface operations. Defensive Counter Air (DCA) also includes combat air patrol (CAP) missions over its own territory, to protect civil and military assets and tactical battlespaces against enemy air strikes and their air defence aircraft, and allow friendly BAS to operate safely. Offensive Counter Air (OCA) comprises of hi-tech air defence fighters tasked to ingress into hostile airspace to draw out and shoot down enemy CAP before friendly strikes enter. Depth strategic strikes and high-priority interdictions are covered by these missions in time and space, and also provided with dedicated AD escorts wherever necessary. BAS are covered by these missions when in the vicinity, else are provided air defence by TBA CAPs. The volume of air defence surveillance coverage today has

expanded exponentially with advanced radars capable of vast three-dimensional airspace coverage. IAF's extended integrated air defence (IAD) is a multi-tiered 'system of systems' with an array of radars and multiple surface-to-air guided weapons (SAGW) of different capabilities and engagement ranges, integrated and arranged in tiers, which provides a much larger area of air defence coverage. Combined with long-range SAGW like the S-400 Triumf, the offensive air defence coverage extends well into adversarial airspaces, capable of shooting down air threats over their own territory.[22]

Across Terrains: Leveraging Air Power

"The swift and extensive offensive air power activation in the Ladakh crisis of 2020, with a clear intent to undertake all operational tasks and provide support to the entire range of military operations envisaged in a possible high-altitude conflict, was a display of asymmetric deterrence of India's offensive air power capability".[23] Similarly in the 2019 Balakot strike, the ability to penetrate Pakistan's robust air defence system and decision cycle, to carry out a stand-off precision strike well inside its territory was clearly demonstrated by the IAF. Both these are indicative of its present-day significant operational capabilities, which are kept honed across all terrains of envisaged land operations, despite the reduced combat bench strength. Each terrain type presents unique operational advantages and challenges for both land and air warfare, and also provides synergistic employment opportunities, tailored to the adversary-specific warfighting requirements.

In the Rann and the desert sector, the terrain, relatively lesser obstacles, and population density, enable speed and depth of penetration, rapid manoeuvre, and a higher possibility of success for an offensive air-land operation. The coastal sector, with its high density of strategic targets, makes it a centre of gravity for a synchronised offensive pincer of air-sea operations. Offensive counter air of the front-tier active air

Given the strategic importance of Punjab to Pakistan, the battlespaces here will be highly contested both on the ground and in the air. Here, the greatest asymmetric advantage will be the high volume and intensity of IAF's offensive operations.

bases, to reduce the flexibility and level of interference of the enemy air, is essential for swift manoeuvre warfare. Offensive air defence and extensive interdiction will enable strategic isolation of the Southern sector, by targeting the vulnerability of its linear road-rail-river communication system, which forms a part of the strategic China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Stand-off precision weapons and long-range vectors will be effective for strategic targeting in-depth, and minimising civilian collateral in urban areas. Fighter and attack helicopter BAS will be most effective in this sector given the terrain and the nature of surface operations likely.

In the developed sector with its densely populated obstacle-ridden terrain, the land campaign in all probability will be a force-on-force attritional one. Given the strategic importance of Punjab to Pakistan, the battlespaces here will be highly contested both on the ground and in the air. Here, the greatest asymmetric advantage will be the high volume and intensity of IAF's offensive operations demonstrated during Exercise *Gagan Shakti* in 2018, which will invaluable.[24] Given the concentration of high-value target systems of military infrastructure, reserves, C2, key airfields, power, energy, logistics, communication nodes, etc., depth strikes and interdiction will be invaluable for shaping land operations by isolating critical battlespaces. Since this region has the highest density of quality PAF assets and SAGW systems, Suppression of Enemy Air Defence (SEAD), offensive and defensive counter missions will be preponderant to all air and land operations. Being a highly contested air and battle space, FAS will be contested, and combined with the high density of MANPADS, fighter BAS will be a challenge—while attack helicopter

and RPA missions will be extremely high risk. The offensive capability of IAF's IAD and IA's air defence systems will play a critical role in this region. The high possibility of threat from the enemy air in the initial days, will need dynamic mobility for their safety, which will impact their 24x7 availability. Standoff precision targeting will be needed for high-value interdiction to increase mission survivability, and reduce civilian collateral damage in the high-density urban areas. The need for close integration of IA and IAF AD assets, excellent air space management, near continuous tactical ISR, and closely synergised tactical fire-plan, will be definitive for the success of land operations. In the plains, unlike in 1971, large-scale airborne operations even by night are unviable in highly contested air spaces. However, it may be possible on a smaller scale in benign airspaces, dictated by opportunity.

In the North West, the immense learning post-Balakot activation, combined with the retained lessons and skillsets of Kargil, will pay dividends in all air operations in this region. Challenges in radar and SAGW coverages will make control of air dynamic and therefore, counter air against key airfields here will dictate the efficacy of all operations, especially in the North. The enemy's operations have followed a repetitive pattern in all the wars in this region, and the weight of IAF's offensive thrust in the Punjab region will affect the quantum of enemy air effort in the region. BAS will be constrained by enemy air defence, predictable attack directions, and target acquisition challenges due to the terrain. Therefore, interdiction of vital communication networks, logistic nodes and artillery positions will be more effective, and offensive helicopter operations will be governed by their high-altitude capabilities and hostile air defence. Preserving our own airfields which are vital for the troop and logistic movements, safety of inter-valley troop movements, and safety of our key communication lifelines, will need dedicated air defence in this region. Special operations by air will be effective with tactical use of terrain cover and darkness.

Depth offensives against the enemy's layered defences will be possible only by the IAF, by extensive parallel targeting.

Against China, the dynamics of land operations are significantly different. Targeting the deployed People's Liberation Army (PLA) forces, military assets, logistic nodes and communication infrastructure,[25] will be vital in IA's defensive operations. Interdiction behind the frontlines and at intermediate depths, along with simultaneous targeting of depth strategic military assets, will shape the operations. PLA Air Force's inability to exercise air superiority in the region,[26] coupled with the IAF's offensive capabilities, provides an asymmetric advantage for high-altitude land operations. Given its limited air-to-ground strike ability, China has attempted to compensate it by the ballistic missiles of the PLA Rocket Force, against the IA's target systems and IAF bases.[27] But their total numbers in the theatre, warhead capacity and accuracy, vis-à-vis a large number of IA targets, number of IAF's bases, its dispersal plans and use of civil airfields, mitigates much of the risk. Also, China's critical vulnerabilities on its Eastern and Southern sea boards, and the large geographical distances in between, reduce the options of redeploying them against India. The weapon and deployment densities, which are presently specific areas of China's focus against India in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh, will keep the IA engaged in the assessed *like-for-like retorts.*[28] Depth offensives against the enemy's layered defences will be possible only by the IAF, by extensive parallel targeting—in the frontages to assist the IA in its defensive operations by keeping the PLAAF off its back, and targeting PLA's offensive elements; in the intermediate depths, to cut off the logistic and communication lifelines; and in the depths, to target the PLAAF on the ground by striking its key air bases in the region,[29] its fixed air defence radars and missile sites, its aircraft and UAVs in the air, and identified long-range vector deployments. Penetrating the region's equivalent of Anti-Area-Access-Denial deployment will therefore

be critical not only to all IAF operations, but it will also be the deciding factor in giving the IA, with its significant high-altitude warfare experience and skills, a fighting chance.

The terrain dictates that the majority of the assistance to the IA will be interdiction heavy like in the Kargil war. BAS will face similar challenges as in the North, and will be a challenge in the dense jungle terrain of the North East. The enemy air defence deployment will necessitate the IAF to use terrain masking tactics for penetration and targeting. This is where its vast professional experience and relentless training in offensive strikes, SEAD, and air-air combat will enable it to breach the regional A2AD, by going 'below, above, and around' it, using multi-mode penetration, saturation, decoying, etc.—skill-sets which the IAF regularly trains for. The current advantage of force ratios, better payload capacity, higher mission rates, larger number of airfields, dispersed launch and recovery capabilities at lower altitudes,[30] swift turn-around between missions, air-air refuelling (AAR) and AWACS/AWEC integration, long-range multi-mission offensive air defence capabilities, will all play a significant role in carrying the fight to the enemy. Coordinated offensive air and air defence operations will enable the IA to even carry out limited offensives. Space-based ISR will be critical.

End Thoughts

Air power has lots to offer, but it has not been leveraged adequately and has been restrained in all past wars, except for 1971. Today, despite the reduced numbers, the IAF has immense capabilities critical in accelerating land operations in all terrains, provided it is synergised at every level from planning to execution. While structural military reorganisation is some time away,[31] there are enough robust organisational structures to enable true joint planning and execution. Bolstering IAF's ISR, EW, long-range air defence systems and standoff precision targeting capabilities, IA's BAS communications and investing and integration of GES with IAF's ISR,

plugging in IA's air defence assets into IAF's IAD, will prove invaluable. Joint planning, conduct and analysis of adversary-specific joint exercises will enable development of realistic and implementable concepts of operations. Mutual trust, faith and respect are the *Sine Qua Non*.

Notes

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Enhancing Combat Capabilities 2035 with Affordable Defence Spending

Rajan Katoch

Abstract

It is feasible to significantly enhance combat capabilities by 2035, within the resources realistically available. However, aiming to enhance combat capabilities by 2035 cannot be done by merely presenting wish lists and hoping that funds will be somehow available. It can only be achieved if we plan ahead realising that defence spending has to be affordable for the nation. Other major countries are restructuring their armed forces with this realisation, and there is no reason why we cannot do so too. There are opportunities that can be seized and realised within the budgets available, provided we are ready to think differently. From historical service-specific and turf-conscious thinking, we need to move on to adopt a whole-of-nation approach in support of our national security goals. We need to learn the lessons of recent experience, and look at optimal trade-offs accordingly.

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Introduction

We do need to enhance the combat capabilities of India's armed forces. This seems self-evident. What does it have to do with the affordability of defence spending? Surely enhancing combat capabilities depends on the essentiality of national security, threat perceptions, strategic and operational requirements, for which money just has to be found. After all, the issue of enhancing capabilities is a purely professional concern. The political leadership thinks so too. It is generally content to treat defence matters as a holy cow. Defence budgets attract limited scrutiny, not just in India but also in more developed countries. The general feeling is that the bigger the budget the better. In India very often we find the defence budget being passed without debate in Parliament.

Defence budgets attract limited scrutiny, not just in India but also in more developed countries. The general feeling is that the bigger the budget the better. In India very often we find the defence budget being passed without debate in Parliament.

In practice, there is a problem. The problem is that the budget represents a hard constraint on our ambitions. We need to recognise this hard constraint. The trend for the last ten years has been that the budget for defence has remained in the range of 9-12 per cent of the total budget.[1] There hasn't been any dramatic change in this ratio, and is not likely to be in the future. That is the reality. There are always competing developmental requirements and a balance has to be struck somewhere. The trade-off between defence and development has been pithily expressed as the "guns vs. butter" conundrum. Will the share of guns grow at the expense of butter? It is not going to happen. It bears appreciation that this is not in the interest of national security either.

We need to remember that in the long run, it is only rapid economic growth fuelled by developmental expenditures and investment that will

expand the overall national pie (Gross Domestic Product or GDP) and enable the funds available for defence to grow rapidly in real terms. The case of China is a good example. Official figures for spending on defence were almost the same for India and China in the 1980s. Decades of higher rates of economic growth since have multiplied China's capabilities for spending on defence enormously. It is officially now about three and a half times that of India.[2]

Within the available defence budget, it is noteworthy that more than 70 per cent is being absorbed by the revenue component. This component is essentially manpower costs, and in turn, one-third share of this goes to pension payments. Typically, less than 30 per cent is left for capital expenditures, which finances equipment.[3] This gives very limited room for manoeuvre. Of course, both manpower and capital are equally important for enhancing combat capabilities, but it is arguable that the current "teeth-to-tail" ratio could be improved.

So, can we do anything to enhance combat capabilities with these limited resources and rigid expenditure structures? Yes, we can! Only, we need to think differently, very differently.

Debates on defence policy usually focus on the number of aircraft, warships, tanks, personnel, etc. These are not the objectives or outputs. They are the inputs towards realising the objective. The key question is what is the contribution of each of these inputs of equipment and manpower to the desired output of enhancing combat capability for the future? And what would be the impact of changes in these inputs on the desired output? What are the opportunity costs? What are the trade-offs?[4] This article looks at these questions in three broad categories of manpower, capital and geography.

Manpower

The issue here is whether the present structure of defence spending is sustainable. A large and growing share of manpower costs limits the

room for future capital acquisitions. Ballooning pension payments squeezes the ability to maintain operational manpower. The proportion of both manpower costs in general, and pension payments in particular, need to be reduced without affecting combat readiness or disadvantaging existing personnel. If they can be reduced, it would free up resources to meet operational needs and to enhance future capabilities. Are there any ways to control manpower costs, and the growing share of pension payments, without affecting operational readiness?

Veterans would recall that not very long ago, the established practice was for jawans to be recruited for a colour service of seven years. Tomorrow, if upon review, the four-year period is felt to be too short, the option of extending the tenure or even reverting to the seven-year service is always there.

There are ways, if we are ready to look at national security as a whole, rising above turf battles. Consider just three policy tweaks that can make a huge difference. These are, strengthening and consolidating the *Agniveer* initiative, enabling a system of lateral movement of personnel to paramilitary forces, and outsourcing of logistic and support functions. These are elaborated below.

With the *Agniveer* system having been implemented, personnel below officer rank are now recruited for a four-year tour of duty. This is extendable for one-fourth of the personnel following the completion of the four years. Most major countries today have similar systems in place. It is an important step towards building a youthful profile of operational personnel, and stemming the unsustainable growth of pensions.

Agniveer might not turn out to be a very revolutionary idea. Veterans would recall that not very long ago, the established practice was for jawans to be recruited for a colour service of seven years. Tomorrow, if upon review, the four-year period is felt to be too short, the option of

extending the tenure or even reverting to the seven-year service is always there. Over a period of time, this will result in the share of pensions in defence expenditure falling, creating space for alternative uses of funds.

This brings us to the second policy change that is required, that of mandating lateral movement of services personnel to paramilitary forces. The idea is not new. Rather, it has been strongly recommended by expert bodies right from the Kargil Review Committee to the Seventh Pay Commission.[5] Strangely, this is the one recommendation of these august bodies that is somehow always one of the very few not taken up for implementation by the government of the day.

The case for doing so is a no-brainer. Many paramilitary forces like the Border Security Force (BSF), Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP), Special Services Bureau (SSB), Coast Guard, Assam Rifles perform similar border security functions and work closely with army and navy formations. All of them including others like the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) would benefit from an infusion of competitively selected highly trained officers and personnel who would be theirs till their (much higher) retirement age. The share of defence pensions would decline over time, improving the teeth-to-tail ratio. The armed forces would become more attractive, and be able to recruit the best from society. Systemically, combat capabilities would be enhanced, while reducing the overall share of salary and pension expenditure.

The ballpark numbers match up. For example, the Army has a sanctioned strength of about 13 lakh personnel, and the intake is about 50,000 a year.[6] With the Agniveer scheme in force, perhaps 35-40,000 may be released every year after completing their service period. Against this, the central paramilitary/armed police forces already number about 10 lakh,[7] and are expanding rapidly. Their requirement for fresh annual induction will in all likelihood exceed the numbers available from the services personnel.

So why hasn't it happened yet? There has been fierce resistance from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) to any such implied encroachment on its turf. At the decision-making level, the MHA view has tended to prevail over the various recommendations. There is speculation that underlying the political support for the MHA stand is the unstated thinking in top political and bureaucratic circles that the paramilitary forces need to be kept in a separate space from the military. This thinking needs to move on.

Functions like maintenance of defence estates, manning of headquarters with administrative personnel, and even routine accounting functions can be performed equally efficiently by professional contractual personnel without necessarily deploying large pensionable civil service cadres for the purpose.

As a reform, this is a low-hanging fruit. It can be done. Yes, there are a number of actions required to get there. It will require an enabling statutory framework to be put in place. It will take time to work out and get everyone on board. But the most important is to take a decision that will necessarily be a break from the past. We need to set aside past practices and prejudices, and focus firmly on how to achieve the optimal deployment of national manpower assets for enhancing our overall national security capability for 2035 and beyond.

The third major manpower initiative has to be to outsource to the extent possible logistic, support and housekeeping functions. For example, the tasks of maintenance of properties, workshops, supply of food and personnel equipment could easily be outsourced. The Indian private sector is very much capable of delivering the goods and services required. Operational efficiencies are likely to improve, and the overall costs reduced. This would be mainly because the costs of retaining the associated permanent manpower to perform these services will go down.

The rationale for retaining of a large permanent, pensionable civilian manpower borne on the defence budget also needs review. Functions like maintenance of defence estates, manning of headquarters with administrative personnel, and even routine accounting functions can be performed equally efficiently by professional contractual personnel without necessarily deploying large pensionable civil service cadres for the purpose. This too would help reduce the manpower costs significantly without affecting operational imperatives.

Security concerns may be cited by vested interests against outsourcing and contractual arrangements. However, such contractual systems are already the existing practice in the armed forces of major Western countries. In some countries, for example in Russia, even the fighting forces are partially outsourced![8] The question really has to be not why it should be done but why not?

Capital

As we have seen, the share of the capital component in the defence budget is relatively low. The services would always like to have more money to fund badly needed equipment and capital acquisitions. Maybe if there are changes in defence manpower policies as suggested, the share of the pie available for capital expenditures will grow. Even if it does not, we can still enhance combat capabilities in an affordable manner by looking closely at trade-offs and opportunity costs.

Most public debate on defence matters centres around high-end big-ticket acquisitions, such as the Rafael fourth-generation fighter jet, a third aircraft carrier, and the main battle tank. These acquisitions acquire glamour, visibility and sometimes become an end in themselves. They also tend to become a prestige issue for the Service concerned. It becomes difficult to take a step back and honestly assess all the options on the table and see whether we are getting the required "bang for the buck!"

Building combat capability around the newer, cheaper, rapidly evolving technologies is going to be crucial in future warfare.

Should we, for example, seriously consider a third aircraft carrier that on present estimates may cost the equivalent of the Ministry of Defence's entire capital budget for 2023-24?[9] Something that can be sunk by an anti-ship ballistic missile (ASBM) costing a few crores in an actual war? As China has shown in its South China Sea strategy, the mere threat that this could happen is enough to deter even highly advanced American aircraft carriers. Or would it be better to aim to achieve the desired objectives by beefing up naval capabilities through smaller missile-based ships, submarines, unmanned aerial and underwater vehicles (UAVs and UUVs), etc.?

Should we spend money on expensive[10] top-end fourth-generation fighter jets like Rafale with long delivery timetables, at a time when we don't really know how long the conventional paradigm of air superiority will hold in a rapidly changing battlefield? The Ukraine war has already demonstrated how an effective Ukrainian anti-aircraft defence has been capable of denying airspace to sophisticated fighter jets available with the Russian Air Force. Is it not possible for increasingly versatile Artificial Intelligence (AI) guided UAVs to perform the tasks that are needed? Should we be aiming to more rapidly develop our space capabilities for combat applications? Or should we think of other options that may achieve the battle objectives better with the same expenditure and perhaps lower human costs?

Do we need to expand our armour capabilities, when recent experience—again in Ukraine—has brought out their vulnerabilities in modern war? Options like relying more on land, air and sea missile capability, mobile precision fire artillery systems, helicopters, unmanned systems and drones come to mind, particularly in view of recent experience from combat zones, notably Ukraine. Building

We need to be clear about what is expected of the armed forces. Are they expected to be prepared to have the offensive capability to capture territory currently held by China and Pakistan, or are they expected to focus on the defensive capability to hold the line and push back against aggression?

combat capability around the newer, cheaper, rapidly evolving technologies is going to be crucial in future warfare.

The United States of America (USA) is attempting to answer such questions in its Force Design 2030, intended to be a total revamp of its Marine Corps. Force Design 2030 is going by the assumption that "we will not receive additional resources, we must divest certain existing capabilities and capacities to free resources for essential new capabilities."[11] Such an assumption is a good basis for a realistic assessment of what is needed to enhance capabilities.

We need to flag four sets of issues that would help such an assessment. These are clarity of objectives, lessons of recent combat experience, effective use of technology, and developing indigenous capability. A call on what exactly is needed, how much, and in what time frame has of course to be taken by the professionals and political leadership.

First, it becomes easier to weigh the trade-offs once the end objective is clearly defined. We need to be clear about what is expected of the armed forces. Are they expected to be prepared to have the offensive capability to capture territory currently held by China and Pakistan, or are they expected to focus on the defensive capability to hold the line and push back against aggression? Are we seeking to build a blue water navy to dominate the oceans or are we seeking to protect our coastline and exclusive economic zones, and deter aggression? Do we want to deploy the finest fighter aircraft, or do we want to use air and space effectively to defend the country and destroy enemy capabilities?

Second, it is evident that recent conflicts, most notably the one in Ukraine, challenge existing thinking about the conduct of modern warfare. They have demonstrated how with the help of the right technologies, a combatant relatively weaker in conventional capabilities can successfully neutralise the overwhelming superiority of the adversary in land, sea and air. Smaller and cheaper weapons systems can deny dominance to expensive, modern systems. For example, extensive use of drones and surface-operated missiles can and have neutralised air power superiority, massive deployment of armour, and strong naval presence. Autonomous unmanned weapons have arrived, whether in the form of drones, UAVs, or UUVs. Artificial Intelligence is adding to the capabilities of such weapons, enabling them to perform hazardous and lethal tasks in combat without risking valuable human lives. Should we not seek to plan ahead to absorb these lessons of experience?

Third, effective utilisation of available technology is becoming a critical factor influencing battle outcomes. For example, advanced communication networks will be increasingly important in future warfare. Ukraine has effectively relied on the SpaceX satellites to maintain its communication systems in support of its war effort even when its land-based systems were being destroyed.

The potential of Internet of Military Things (IoMT) is being just realised, and both the US and China are reportedly investing heavily in it. The Indian army is already reportedly using IoMT for securing communication linkages. Beyond battlefield communication, it has useful applications in reconnaissance and target identification functions. Side by side, a robust cybersecurity capacity must be a priority. Happily, these are all areas, where there is an abundance of technical talent in India, and the potential of private sector entities, has to be utilised for enhancing capabilities at a reasonable cost.

Such technologies have the potential to tilt battlefield outcomes and need to be increasingly factored into any assessment of combat

Isn't it strange that as the world's largest arms importer, we trust foreign governments and the foreign private sector to provide needed arms for the forces, but have reservations in trusting domestic players?

capability. The capacity for mass indigenous production is an added advantage. Notably, a country like Turkey with a much smaller industrial base has successfully been able to mass-produce drones that have proved their worth,[12] and are now being widely exported. Surely it is feasible for Indians to replicate and surpass such efforts?

This brings us to the fourth set of issues. The ability of a country to supply domestically the needs of the forces is going to be increasingly important in the emerging multi-polar world where allegiances are in flux. Projected combat capabilities may remain on paper if there are unforeseen geopolitical bottlenecks. "*Atmanirbharta*", literally meaning self-reliance, summarises the idea well. We are far from this goal. It is sobering to appreciate that India is the world's largest arms importer![13]

Indigenous combat capability can only be developed with an all-of-nation approach, wherein the traditional hesitation in trusting the domestic private sector would need to be shed. Security concerns and perceived technological limitations are the overt reasons for this hesitation. Both these concerns need a rethink. Isn't it strange that as the world's largest arms importer, we trust foreign governments and the foreign private sector to provide needed arms for the forces, but have reservations in trusting domestic players?

Technological competence is surely not an issue. We all know that space rocket missions demand the most exacting of technological standards, and the laws of physics permit zero margins of error in space. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) already sources components for its rockets from the private sector, and plans on big-time private sector manufacturing for its space programme in the future.[14] Surely then a

vast majority of less technologically exacting defence needs can be fulfilled by domestic industry? In fact, we need to look at the role of commercial service providers and private industry as essential force enablers for enhancing long-term combat capacities.

Can we accelerate existing thinking and set a time frame wherein management control of non-performing ordnance factories is handed over to the best-suited private sector players?

Fortunately, things are changing now, and *Atmanirbharta* is a stated policy. But they are changing slowly and hesitantly. There is a need to think more radically. Making productive use of underperforming ordnance factories is one example. Can we accelerate existing thinking and set a time frame wherein management control of non-performing ordnance factories is handed over to the best-suited private sector players? There are complexities in such processes, but the sooner they are overcome, and more productive and efficient use is made of existing assets, the stronger will become the foundation of our combat capability in the future.

Geography

Recent history has led to combat capabilities and force deployment being geographically North-centric. This is inevitable as battles have been fought since Independence in the North essentially due to faultlines that are a legacy of colonial rule. Though, as a matter of fact, all the colonial rulers whether British, French or Dutch arrived by the sea from the South!

It is arguable that today the South needs significantly greater attention. Indonesia is a mere 90 nautical miles from the southernmost tip of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. In between are the Straits of Malacca and the Six Degree Channel, amongst the world's most strategic waterways. For example, two-thirds of the world's oil trade passes through the Indian Ocean. About 70 per cent of the oil bound for China passes through this

area.[15] The US, United Kingdom (UK) and France have island bases and a major presence in the Indian Ocean.[16] The "string of pearls" strategy of our unfriendly neighbour poses potential threats, with a listening post in Little Coco Island of Myanmar, a naval base in Djibouti and control of Hambantota port in Sri Lanka. Under the circumstances, for our economic and national security, we need not only to enhance military capabilities in the region for deterring hostile actions; rather we should aim to turn the tables by exploiting our maritime geography.

Geography presents us with opportunities. A strong-armed presence in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands chain can be a game changer, and enable us to exert deterrent capability and project force far beyond the mainland. In the establishing and equipping of such a base, lessons can be drawn from China's Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) strategy,[17] designed and operationalised to limit the deterrence and intervention capabilities of the US and allies in the South China Sea. A2/AD rests on air and maritime missile-based defensive systems and are aimed at neutralising the advantages of superior enemy forces and challenging the enemy's freedom of movement in the area covered.

Similarly, the extended national jurisdiction available through the Lakshadweep Islands needs to be leveraged to its potential. This area is close to the shipping routes of traffic using the Suez Canal and has strategic value. Possibly the small size and fragility of these coral islands may make it difficult to establish a regular base. In that case, we can draw lessons again from the Chinese efforts at creating artificial islands and then militarising them. The possibility of creating artificial platforms for establishing military capabilities needs to be explored seriously, as it would dramatically enhance the potential to project force.

For overtly militarising our island assets, a political decision will have to be taken. Such a decision has immense national security ramifications. Intent already seems to be there. There is a plan for "holistic development" of the Great Nicobar Islands.[18] However, we need to go all the way, with

the plan including the development of combat capability in the form of a strong tri-Service base, not just a token presence. If we do not move ahead, we risk falling behind the curve till it's too late. Recall the recent loaded statement of a Chinese official that "the Indian Ocean is not India's ocean!"

On the other hand, a lean but well-equipped tri-Services base on these islands with A2/AD-like capabilities would be a force multiplier. The very existence of such a base can, like a prickly hedgehog, deter attackers, while creating the possibility of being able to disrupt enemy action if needed, in a much wider area than hitherto possible. It would be a way of turning geography to our advantage, big time. Sure, there would be a cost, but arguably less than the cost of some prestige projects that have a questionable rationale in future combat scenarios. Would this not be a more optimal use of the available financial resources?

Conclusion

Aiming to enhance combat capabilities by 2035 cannot be done by merely presenting wish lists and hoping that funds will be somehow available. It can only be achieved if we plan ahead realising that defence spending has to be affordable for the nation. Other major countries are restructuring their armed forces with this realisation, and there is no reason why we cannot do so too. There are huge opportunities all around us that can be seized and realised within the budgets available.

Changes in the long-prevailing mindsets are the need of the hour. From the historical Service-specific and turf-conscious thinking, we need to move on to adopt a whole-of-nation approach in support of our national security goals, and look at optimal trade-offs within that approach.

Former US President Trump put it well "[a]s long as you are going to be thinking anyway, think big![19]" To transcend narrow loyalties, and look only at the big picture—it's tough, but it has to be done. Cold rationality and absorbing the lessons of experience must guide the process of making

policy decisions and taking strategic calls for the future. As set out above, it is possible and doable to significantly enhance combat capabilities by 2035, within the resources realistically available.

But to do so, we need to start acting now!

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Generating Military Power Through Partnering

Harsh Vardhan Singh

Abstract

One primary lesson that has emerged from Russia-Ukraine conflict is that no nation can engage in a conflict alone. Be it geo-economics, geo-strategy or any other compulsion, the present-day entwined global order would ultimately force all nation-states to finally take sides. In an era of great-power competition, a network of partnerships carefully curated over the past 75 years provides India with a unique advantage. These networks are the backbone of an international order that has ensured strategic autonomy and created an environment of multi-polarity. Partners help share the burden of common defence in tangible and intangible ways. Sino-Pak collusion and the likelihood of a unitary front along our Northern and Western borders is a stark reality. This however in the military domain poses a distinct but inextricably linked challenge for contemporary land forces which need mitigation by inculcating new doctrinal templates.

Introduction

The first anniversary of special military operations by Russia in Ukraine has come and gone, but in this one year many myths of warfighting have been shattered and yet some more created. The one primary strain

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The present-day entwined global order would force all nation-states to finally take sides and neutrality or the more glamorous non-alignment is dead and buried.

which emerges prominently is that no nation can fight a war alone, be it geo-economics, geo-strategy or any other compulsion. The present-day entwined global order would force all nation-states to finally take sides and neutrality or the more glamorous non-alignment is dead and buried. Even USA has looked at its NATO allies to shore up Ukraine's capability to take on a Goliath like Russia. The US Department of Defense (DoD)'s 2018 National Defence Strategy states that, "A more lethal, resilient, and rapidly innovating Joint Force, combined with a robust constellation of allies and partners, will sustain American influence and ensure favourable balances of power that safeguard the free and open international order."[1] Even USA embodies the idea of generating land power through partnerships along the spectrum of conflict. It is a combination of different dimensions of C5 (cooperation-competition-crisis-confrontation and conflict). Conflict being in the military, economic, information, space, cognitive and cyber domains. The tactics used are regular and irregular using state and non-state actors.

Historia Magistra Vitae, a Latin word meaning "history is a teacher", was used by Cicero in his 'De Oratore'.[2] It expresses the idea that the study of history serves as a lesson for the future. History plays the role of a teacher in many ways. It helps us develop our knowledge and opinions, informs our analysis of present-day events and moral issues and is the road map to one's self-conception. The idea of partnering to generate power is synaptic to Indian history with Chanakya's Mandala Theory eulogising the virtues of creating strategic linkages. Chanakya lived in a period of persistent strife and violence and realised the importance of studying war as an important aspect of statecraft. *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* too deal with wars and treat rivalries as natural and normal. However, it is

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the *Arthaśāstra* that forms the foundation of intrinsic Indian strategic thought.

Kautilya has divided both antagonists (*Aris*) and allies (*Mitras*) into various kinds based on their characteristics. Though the former are always potential enemies and the latter potential friends, their exact nature is very relevant in determining the policy route to be taken with them. Among the neighbours, there may be those with an inimical disposition (*Aribhavi*), those who are friendly (*Mitrabhavi*) and those bound by vassalage (*Bhrityabhavi*).[3] The *Aribhavi* enemies are always intent on harming the conqueror (*Vijigishu)*, while the *Mitrabhavi* neighbours are the ones who undertake a campaign simultaneously with the conqueror in pursuit of the same objective or who independently undertake a campaign that helps the *Vijigishu* or who trades in troops and material with him to support his conquest.[4] This shows that the inevitability of having allies and partners has been established for a long, thus the modern strategic articulation demands the same be incorporated to fight future conflicts.

In an era of great-power competition between China, United States of America and Russia, a network of partnerships carefully curated over the past 75 years provide India with a unique advantage. These networks, particularly in Africa and Asia, are the backbone of an international order that has ensured strategic autonomy and created an environment of multi-polarity, creating space for economic growth around the world. Partners help share the burden of common defence in tangible and intangible ways. The partnership with like-minded nations creates combined capabilities that far exceed what India could bring to bear on its own. While the geo-construct of Indo-Pacific with QUAD may sound or look vast; it indeed is a microcosm which needs the QUAD members to support each other in

this colossal contest of wills and develop our capabilities not as summative but as an exponential whole. Mahatma Gandhi once said "I believe in the essential unity of all that lives. Therefore, I believe that if one person gains spiritually, the whole world gains and that if one person falls, the whole world falls to that extent."[5]

One doesn't have to look far back to find examples of the importance of allies and partners to Indian national security. Without the support in science and technology, the Atmanirbharta[6] project of India would have encountered challenges but India has science and technology sharing arrangements with 83 countries[7] which provide the much-needed impetus to the CNP of India. Without intelligence sharing by partners, defeating transnational terrorist organisations with criminal and narco nexus would be far more challenging.[8] In Indo-Pacific, India is working closely with partners to deter China, stem its hegemonic onslaught and play an essential role in deterring aggression, maintaining stability and ensuring free access to the global commons. BIMSTEC, Quad, SCO and other multilateral arrangements strengthen India's ability to confront a variety of security threats China poses. Change is a constant and in words of Benjamin Franklin, "If you finish changing, you are finished".[9] India is at a strategic inflexion point, standing at a crossroads with the established world order in its death throes.

The accentuated stature of India as *a net security partner in IOR*[10] would demand the capacity and capability to project Sharp Power[11] along with kinetic vectors and adjust its overseas footprint and activities to inspire confidence in other nations. To meet future challenges successfully in an era of finite resources, Indian Armed Forces need to shore up deterrence not only in the conventional domains of land, sea and air but develop capabilities in new domains of space, cyber and cognitive domains. Developing a comprehensive plan to adapt and revitalise the Indian doctrinal framework to synergise actions with partners is both an essential component of a broader strategy for securing own national interests

Maintaining partnerships in the military domain requires sustained effort and reliable and consistent communications, and it rests on a foundation of shared objectives and trust.

and ensuring global balance of power. To compete successfully against Pakistan, deter Chinese aggression, the Armed Forces will need to make difficult decisions about the kinds of systems in which it invests as part of *Atmanirbharta*, how it is postured in key regions in the Indo-Pacific and what kinds of capabilities it is willing to sell (or not sell) to its partners.

Any military officer having served abroad is likely to confess that adapting to joint operational procedures and methods can be the hardest and most painstaking exercise.[12] Maintaining partnerships in the military domain requires sustained effort and reliable and consistent communications, and it rests on a foundation of shared objectives and trust. Growing threats from China and Pakistan, reticence of neighbours like Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh means that India needs to reach out as a reliable partner[13] now more than ever, as points of friction and volatility can result in adverse consequences. Ultimately, shared concerns over common threats and shared security interests are the cornerstone of partnerships. Nations and the polity must however balance many competing demands and pressures to govern; hence, it is rare that India and other neighbours will view each problem the same way or agree on mitigation measures in full. Developing and sustaining partnerships will merit persuasion, persistence, commitment and propensity to compromise for the greater good.

While India has always claimed strategic autonomy,[14] it has to seek more than collaboration; it is to metamorphose from a quest for independent results to a rapport of co-creation, shared responsibility and risks. The true partnership would entail ascertaining shared values and capitalising on the strength of each partner to achieve a level of influence that ensues from a stand-alone model. Shared values in military form

would lead to coalescing force potential, societal demands and policy action to create a sustainable and inclusive path to threat mitigation and attainment of regional goals. Partnerships can be classified into two categories in the military domain.

Concerted Partnership

- Partners share intelligence and coordinate efforts but do not share decision-making power.
- Enhanced degree of autonomy exists with no permanent organization commitment.

Deliberate Partnership

- Member states share decision-making power and are subjected to risk exposure.
- Entails integrated creation of objectives, resource sharing and execution of partnership functions.

It is clear that a broad consensus does exist on the premise of partnering as we claim to achieve the status of 'Net Security Partner in IOR'. Unlocking the full potential of India would entail embracing the deviations of *'why to partner'* to *'how to partner'*. Organisations like armed forces which are result oriented and in a tearing hurry to succeed, discount some essential inquiries amidst the avid enthusiasm of co-working. Key ones are: How to build trust? What issues merit partnerships? What assets can be dedicated to the partnership? What are the metrics to define success of the partnership?

Answers to the above-mentioned questions may sound altruistic but they do enable us to define the desired end state we should be working towards. Trust has to be the scaffolding on which the augmentation of military power would be built. This would be generated by adopting the core values of:

There is no harm in acknowledging the fact that national interests would continue to reign supreme but partnering entails temporary surrender of national interests for greater good of regional interests.

- **Parity and Respect** Acknowledging the values armed force of every nation brings to the partnership. Resource contribution and organisation culture of each force may differ but the power of partnering would be in harnessing the strength of each member state.
- **Commitment** There is no harm in acknowledging the fact that national interests would continue to reign supreme but partnering entails temporary surrender of national interests for greater good of regional interests.
- **Transparency** Sharing information, maintaining lines of communication and honest iterations around challenging issues would be intrinsic to partnership's success.
- **Tenacity** It would be imperative to be tenacious; instead we would be facing breakdowns rather than breakthroughs while encumbered with challenging propositions.

Nation-states enter into partnerships at the regional and global level as they seek viable options to promote their mutual national interests, create an eco-system of collective security against threats, conduct HADR missions and engage in peacekeeping, enforcing and peace-building operations. During responses to such situations, nation-states execute a cost versus benefit analysis with respect to their national interests and then determine why, when, in what form and how would they engage in partnering and apply the vectors of the nation's comprehensive national power. States also determine the modus operandi and extent of their commitment for reasons known as well as unknown to other partners. The composition of such a partnered force may metamorphose as partners commit or exit as and when respective national objectives evolve or force

contributions to reach the culmination point of their nation's ability. Joint Force Commanders should expect to conduct operations under the ambit of such an eclectic partnership. While the tenets of partnering cannot assure success, ignoring them may precipitate mission failure due to a lack of unity and economy of effort. One thing that must always remain at the back of our minds while ideating on partnering is that although nations will often offer forces while partnering, they will *rarely relinquish command of their forces in entirety.* This presents us with a paradox of divergence in convergence.

The employment of military power *"at war"* in the classical Westphalian concept of interstate war[15] is well understood by one and all and partnering in the modern context does not manifest in this quadrant of conflict. It is the role essayed by military power in "Military Operations Other Than War (MOOTW)"[16] which includes the nebulous domain of countering non-traditional warfare waged by belligerents who are non-state actors—along with their attendant organised criminal, illicit economic and governmental corruption components—that the capabilities of land power can be enhanced by partnering. As land force leaders one should carefully consider such factors as mission, nature of the operational environment, quantum of the force, risks involved, duration and rules of engagement (RoE) as these would also define the levels of partnering.

The beginning of partnering must be a prolific cross-pollination of research, military education and development, procurement support and expeditious utilisation of production resources. Military force capability amplification will also depend on standardisation of operating procedures and enhanced interoperability within partner nations' forces to achieve practical cooperation. The basic purpose of standardisation of operational procedures is to achieve synergy among partners through the efficient use of resources and the reduction of operational, logistic, communications, technical and procedural encumbrances in operations. Interoperability

greatly enhances the competencies of partnered operations as such forces are interoperable across material and nonmaterial capabilities and can operate together effectively in numerous ways.

Having enunciated the conceptual construct of partnering, we get down to the brass tacks of things which need to be done on the ground, after all the proof of the pudding is in eating it. The key structural enhancement that should ameliorate the partnering effort is a liaison setup with coordination centres. Partnering demands the establishment of interaction between forces of each nation even during peacetime ensuring a better understanding of TTPs, facilitating the ability to synergise operations, assisting in the transfer of vital information, enhancing mutual trust and developing teamwork. The linguistic difference within a partnership is a massive impediment and can present a real challenge to C2, efficient communications and unity of effort. Wherever and whenever possible, liaison officers should be able to facilitate interaction and coordination with other forces. Another method from a futuristic perspective would be the use of a coordination centre for fusing the intelligence picture and be the *locus foci* around which the C2 structures can be strapped on. It would provide partner nations' armed forces with a platform to execute the planning process and support an integrated interaction for the leadership in crisis situations.

In a transnational environment, partnering must be synchronised, coordinated and/or integrated with international government agencies like UNO, and non-governmental organisations (Red Cross or Red Crescent) in an attempt to achieve unity of effort in the operational area. Commanders must ensure that armed forces comply with applicable national and international laws during the conduct of all operations. International agreements are the primary source of rules of international law applicable to US, multinational, and Host Nation partnered forces. The most comprehensive are status-of-forces agreements (SOFAs); which need to be articulated and penned well in advance.

Since the Napoleonic era, the armies have always marched on their stomachs and there is eternal truism to this thought. While we can pontificate to no end on issues of operational and legal prudence, it finally boils down to the logistics of sustaining this force. Successful logistic operations are governed by several unique principles. First, logistic operations will have to be a collective responsibility of partner forces. Although nations will inherently support their respective forces the land force commanders at ground zero would have to be given sufficient authority over logistic resources to ensure that the force is supported in the most efficient and effective manner. Cooperation and coordination are necessary among participating forces to avoid duplication and an askew tooth-to-tail ratio, thereby reducing the logistic footprint and making the force more responsive.

Cooperation and coordination are necessary among participating forces to avoid duplication and an askew tooth-to-tail ratio, thereby reducing the logistic footprint and making the force more responsive.

Conclusion

Armed forces must build on partnering and aim to deliver deterministic priorities—stabilising our region, contributing to the resilience of friendly countries, and enhancing our responsiveness in all phases of the conflict cycle. Partnering would strengthen India's common security only if we understand our strengths, what we do best and what we could do better. Only then can we ensure peace and stability in the region.

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Adapting Quickly to Emerging Forms of Warfare in the Indian Context

BS Dhanoa

Abstract

The military-strategic community is awash with former practitioners, strategic thinkers, and policymakers whose job it is to look at future trends in warfare, influenced as they are by the seductive pull of the latest technological game-changer. In this cacophony of ideas and contestable claims, new means of waging war, for mostly the same old reasons, are discernible and can be grasped by strategic audiences who then look at the specific context in which some of these very ideas could fructify into doable strategic effort for a nation's overall wellbeing. This paper has tried to view the Indian strategic context without delving into too many specific recommendations for change in our policies, other than to crystallise them, or new structures in the military organisation as it exists. Instead, it tries to view this context through a wide-angle lens, searching for the pros and cons of change in the Sub-continental strategic-military future, and how our top leadership and military commanders could be better prepared, mentally as well as in material capabilities, for a war of the future.

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Introduction

Predicting the future is a perilous business, especially when it involves trying to crystal-gaze methods of warfare nations could use in order to secure national interests in a polarised and fractious 21st-century world. India is handling a decades-long proxy war with Pakistan[1] and, since May 2020, an intractable military standoff in Eastern Ladakh with China.[2] A military, keeping in check two 'hand in glove' inimical neighbours, who have not hesitated to use force for settling territorial disputes,[3] and historical slights, can have a hard time peering beyond day-to-day operational challenges, and thus could be blindsided by disruption in the strategic paradigm. Such disruption may occur with the induction of better technology on the battlefield by an adversary, as also the emergence of new forms of conflict that confound traditional thinking and yet are able to achieve the same, or similar, strategic results that previous wars aimed for. It, therefore, becomes imperative that while the bulk of the Indian armed forces may ward off existing threats, there should be a cohort of civilian and military strategists along with uncommitted military forces who ideate, incubate and develop new weapons and novel techniques of warfare that could negate existing weaknesses in capabilities and give an edge over adversaries in the future. Such change is all the more necessary today when a wide array of new and ever-improving technologies, from machine learning, artificial intelligence, long-range precision strike (LRSP), hypersonic glide vehicles, cyber and space-based capabilities, et al., are touted as game changers for the future of warfare. India too needs to understand, develop and induct weapons and forces across emerging and new domains of warfare; forces that are innovative and adept at the exploitation of these new technological capabilities.

Getting it Right

However, before any identification of new warfare concepts and associated means for the execution of new doctrine, it is important to understand

certain truisms about future warfare. Sir Michael Howard has said—and I paraphrase,

> "we're never going to get the problem of future war precisely right. The key is to not be so far off the mark that you can't adapt once the real demands of combat reveal themselves, and you need leaders who can adapt rapidly to unforeseen circumstances. They need to be able to retain the initiative as well as sustain the types of campaigns that require a broad range of capabilities."

The key is to not be so far off the mark that you can't adapt once the real demands of combat reveal themselves, and you need leaders who can adapt rapidly to unforeseen circumstances.

The human dimension of war is immensely important for the Army as well; we need leaders who are morally, ethically, and psychologically prepared for combat and who understand why breakdowns in morals and ethics occur. In his book *The Face of Battle*, the military historian John Keegan has said that "it is towards the disintegration of human groups that battle is directed." How sure then are we that a threat identified now will remain so in the future? Thus, will decision-makers and force planners be implementing policy based entirely on assumptions and guesswork when reworking outmoded structures or formulating new equipping guidelines force-wide, when these may make the military clumsy at handling actual threats which manifest in the near future. India, unfortunately, does not have the luxury of time or the financial leeway to make such policy errors when it comes to defence equipping. The necessity for change demands prudence and a need to stay within defined parameters (themselves difficult to identify) when it comes to implementing new doctrine and technology infusion into armed forces, which continue to hold on to archaic technology and traditional (though time-tested) structures.

Victory ultimately comes easier to nations that understand the strategic context of the conflict they are involved in, have the tenacity to stick through adversity, innovate with existing systems to get better results, adapt faster to changed circumstances and are able to draw on all strategic resources to stymie a much stronger adversary.

Doctrinal Confusion

There also exists some doctrinal confusion in the minds of senior military commanders who tend to view existing perspective plans for the modernisation of forces as being synonymous with an adaptation of new warfighting methods (though an element of better exploitation is ever present in upgraded and new platforms such as combat aircraft, frontline warships, missiles, tanks long-range artillery, etc.), and hence they are likely to misread or ignore the real challenges posed by new warfare techniques that an adversary like China is actively developing and testing.[4] However, to be fair to such military minds, history does point to the fact that it is not just new warfare methodologies that are the main arbiters of war. Victory ultimately comes easier to nations that understand the strategic context of the conflict they are involved in, have the tenacity to stick through adversity, innovate with existing systems to get better results, adapt faster to changed circumstances and are able to draw on all strategic resources to stymie a much stronger adversary. The US defeat in Vietnam and the ongoing war in Ukraine are good examples of such actions by committed nations battling seemingly unwinnable odds. Thus, in the Indian context as well, the need and the means for new and untested weapons systems and nascent doctrine needs to be framed against the requirement of what changes are we likely to witness in the Sub-continental strategic context over the near term.

The Indian Context

The Indian Sub-Continent last witnessed a limited war in 1999, the Kargil War, which had a restricted geographic spread, and the committal of forces was a fraction of the actual active military strength of either side. There was full-fledged mobilisation of forces during Operation Parakram (December 2001) and we've seen partial deployments with the potential to ratchet up a level or two against China in the last decade. On the whole, however, other than the ongoing Low-Intensity Conflict (LIC) in Jammu and Kashmir that engages a percentage of the Indian Army and sharp faceoffs with China, the military domain has seen a level of relative calm. And yet as the world's premier military power, the United States, withdrew from Iraq and Afghanistan, the vacuum created in the Middle East and closer home has sought to be filled by revanchist powers such as China, Russia and even Pakistan. In the Gulf, the desire to dominate events in support of national aims has seen Saudi Arabia and the Islamic Republic of Iran engage in not-so-subtle power plays through proxy wars in Yemen, Syria, Libya and even Lebanon. In all these smaller military conflagrations what stands out is the use of non-standard means of force generation and exploitation of fast-improving technologies such as drones, long-range missiles, small fast attack craft that are difficult to detect and neutralise, the exploitation of the ever-expanding reach and influence of social media and the vast reliance on open source intelligence (OSINT) in conjunction with traditional means to develop a superior understanding of the adversary. Each and every one of these improvements in weapons' tech and means of conducting warfare, within the context of conventional war and outside of it, is available to all protagonists (state and nonstate) involved in orchestrating violence for political ends in the Indian context.

New Warfare Concepts

War remains an extension of politics by other means in this century as much as it did in the 19th century when Carl von Clausewitz

It is under the positive overhang of capable conventional forces that a nation can actually bring to bear unconventional warfare capabilities that give it superior results.

made this significant observation.[5] The only change that seems to have come about is that nation-states, and non-state actors, indulge in actions loosely clubbed under Grey Zone Warfare,[6] i.e., that nebulous space between peace and declared war. It is within this space that Indian strategists and our armed forces ought to be spending their cognitive and financial resources, to try and grasp the nuances of such warfare and develop means of negating their effects while increasing their own abilities to execute such operations when required. This is not to say that the deterrent qualities and warfighting capabilities of conventional forces ought to be reduced or neglected. It is under the positive overhang of capable conventional forces that a nation can actually bring to bear unconventional warfare capabilities that give it superior results. This is never easy to develop, or even convince regular military mindsets to actively pursue in order to induct such systems and operators over a period of time. We have seen this slow progress occur in the development and fielding of strategic capabilities in Space, Cyber and Special Operations with the raising of such headquarters and units in a very nascent form since 2018[7] or so. Our major potential adversary China is miles ahead in these very forms of warfare as it remains focused on matching, if not exceeding, US capacity in these futuristic warfare fields. Not to be overtaken by China, the US has in the meanwhile established the Irregular Warfare Centre (IWC) which seeks to "To Strategically ILLUMINATE current and future irregular threats, crises, and obstacles; and to ADDRESS current and future irregular threats to the US, allies, and partners by providing optionality."[8]

Information Warfare

Another field of warfare, which is as old as a war but where the tools to execute given strategies have increased exponentially, is propaganda. The means of influencing human minds in the internet age have exploded to such an extent that such influence operations are waged relentlessly, 24x7, by all interested actors and nations with consummate ease. Social Media (SM) in all its digital forms is the preferred means to put out themes for targeting audiences already predisposed to given biases. These are subtly enhanced and misdirection together with misinformation is cleverly sought to be hammered home every minute to the target set so that "mind capture" and "thought alignment" occurs very rapidly and almost permanently. While countermeasures restricting access (China's Great Firewall is an example) are inadequate ways of limiting the debilitating effects of such warfare, Indian armed forces have to significantly up their game in the field of information warfare and propaganda so as to target the minds of enemy audiences and get them to think about the futility of actual war. This form of warfare is today morphing and changing even as we go about our daily lives, and with the development of AI tools such as ChatGPT and other forms of algorithmic manipulation, a perfect storm of cyber, information and AI-induced hypnosis, leading to a total collapse of a nation's mental and moral faculties seems plausible to bring about in the near future.

Armies are, in the main, conservative organisations that have proven time and again to be ready for the last war when faced with new threats.

Cognitive Flexibility

Armies are, in the main, conservative organisations that have proven time and again to be ready for the last war when faced with new threats. This happens because of a combination of factors, some of which have been alluded to in the opening few paragraphs. One of the key causes for

such an inability to be even somewhat correct with threat identification is cognitive inflexibility. Combined with a refusal to change in the face of mounting evidence that many of the existing security strategies being relied on are ill-suited for deterring or defeating emerging threats, it becomes a lethal hurdle. The need of the hour is to have mid and senior-level military leaders who are well-versed in futuristic forms of warfare and technological advances that have the potential to seriously impact the strategic domain (AI for example). This calls for a de novo look at how professional military education (PME) is structured and imparted across the breadth of officers' service careers across the three Services, and how it could foster better cognitive flexibility in key military leaders when the time arrives. This sounds lofty and a bit "in the air" and yet if we do not focus on improving the intellect and cognitive bandwidth of military leaders, there will be serious resistance to recognising and adopting plans that can face up to the expected challenges of the future.

Politico-Strategic to the Operational

The idea of a nation with singularity of thinking in its security domain, from the politico-strategic (civilian) to the operational (military), is a seductive one. History however informs us that in the past when such alignment of thought occurred, nations have gone to war with little or no concern for the aftermath of their actions. The First World War, World War Two, and wars in Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq and Ukraine are among prominent examples of such alignment. However, it is pertinent to mention that there has to be clarity of thought, and a broad acknowledgement at the politico-strategic level (which in our case is that of the CCS and the NSA) as to what strategic threats a nation is likely to face. These should be spelt out in adequate detail through a National Security Strategy. It does not have to be a very voluminous document; just written with sufficient prescience to identify and broadly fix national security concerns that would have to be focused on in the coming decade

and beyond. The military hierarchy, headed by the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), could then draw out the national military strategy, or the strategic lines of effort, which joint forces require to be equipped and prepared for, drawing on their cognitive competence and a flair for assessment of required capabilities that future perspective plans can focus on. It will need frequent give and take at the level of the CDS's office and our higher-level defence organisation within the Ministry of Defence, and even the PM's Office. However, drawing upon the learned guidance of advisory bodies such as the NSCS and NSAB, as also strategic think tanks, this complete cycle of looking out a few years forward can become a prime mover for shaking conservative military organisations from their stupor. They would thus be better prepared to adapt and modify plans for a change in war-fighting strategies which are in sync with the real threat.

Grey Zone Implications

The past decade of Russian involvement in Ukraine has shown the success and pitfalls of adopting a doctrine of 'conflict below the threshold of full-scale war'. It worked in the annexation of Crimea and the subsequent slow-burn conflict that occurred in the Donbas Region.[9] It was declared by many strategic thinkers[10] that Russia had perfected the art of Grey Zone Operations and thus was a step ahead of the conventional might of NATO and the US in pursuing political aims through the scalpel-like use of force, nonstate actors and mercenaries. The subsequent build-up and launch of Russia's Special Military Operation in Ukraine in February 2022,[11] possibly under similar assumptions as earlier successes here, and its transformation into a bloody all-out war on Ukrainian territory, that shows no signs of letting up, is a warning to other nations seduced by the doctrine of Grey Zone Operations. It also has implications beyond new force structuring for strategic planners, as this war amply illustrates. It informs us that "war has a vocabulary and grammar of its own" and

thus all the crystal ball gazing and seductive pull of new forms of warfare could easily lead a nation's leaders and armed forces astray when it comes to dealing with war at the Clausewitzian level of "Politics, Chance and Passion."[12] The smart lesson here is to keep an eye out for new warfare trends and yet tinker with existing military means and a nation's warfare strategies only when serious deliberations, or actual faceoff/conflict, suggest that change is the only way forward.

Conclusion

In 1849, French writer Jean-Baptiste Alphonse Karr wrote, "*plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose*" or "the more things change, the more they stay the same." This has been the theme running through this article. There is no denying the fact that armed forces, given their size, ethos, traditions and culture tend to resist change till external stimulus upsets their equilibrium. It is better to be forewarned of change than to confront its implications in the midst of conflict. The difficulty lies in a reasonable identification of future conflict trends and in focusing on change, within defined parameters, that should allow for an advantage in war. Twentieth century military history is replete with such examples, from the development of long-range radio communications, aerial warfare, undersea warfare, the Blitzkrieg doctrine, rocket technology, and the development of nuclear weapons, to the coming of age of the cyber warrior to name just a few. Globally, premier armed forces have adjusted to each one of these technological revolutions through a revolution in military affairs of their own. We stand on the cusp of multiple mini-revolutions in technology today. Change in how war is, or ought to be, waged, i.e., its character, is evident all around us. And yet we must acknowledge that the visceral nature of why it is waged, together with the calculus for going to war, hasn't really changed for centuries. Between these two inconsistent paradigms, nations have to keep abreast of the strategic context and induce required improvements and fresh ideas into the military mind. This has

to be done while ensuring that basic military structures are neither too rigid nor inflexible to adapt to newer threats and innovative battlefield technologies that would otherwise overcome or render obsolete one's own military strength. A large element of such flexibility lies in how the cognitive capabilities of present and future leaders, both strategic and operational, are nurtured and empowered. They are the ones who have to identify, fix and inculcate the requisite flexibility in doctrinal thought and adaptation of 'game-changing' technology that continues to grow, and at places, overwhelm human capacity. Today the blurring of lines between war and peace itself places stress on a nation's security establishment as it deals with a plethora of intertwined threats. Nations are constantly in competition with each other within the Diplomatic, Informational, Military and Economic paradigms. Such an ongoing scrabble to secure a country's medium to short-term interests is likely to make any rapid transition from relative peace to a sudden flare-up of fighting so much more difficult to identify and control. These are strategic conundrums that have no easy answers. Nations and their strategic thinkers have to be constantly in the geo-political arena, grasping at threads of change which could make a significant difference to existing competition and improve the chances of coming out ahead in the geo-strategic game.

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The India-Afghanistan-Pakistan Conundrum

Tilak Devasher

Abstract

It has been two years since the US withdrew from Afghanistan in an ignominious manner, though in keeping with the declared US objective to exit Afghanistan. This article carries out a recapitulation and an assessment of the security situation since then which can best be described as a conundrum. Forward progress appears to be very slow as the conflicting interest of the three countries impede it and the Taliban's continuation of their non-inclusive government and persistence with a closed society shackles it. The article indicates the limited options in the road ahead in order to make the best out of a bad situation.

Introduction

There have been several critical developments in the region during the last two years that vitally impact the triangular India-Afghanistan-Pakistan relationship. The key development, of course, was the US withdrawal from Afghanistan and especially the manner in which it was done. The immediate impact of the withdrawal was that it led directly to the Taliban

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military takeover of Kabul and most of the country. In Pakistan, there was a regime change when the incumbent Prime Minister Imran Khan was removed in April 2022 through a democratic process. His government was replaced by a coalition headed by Shehbaz Sharif. The deposed Imran Khan, however, refused to accept the democratic process and made all kinds of allegations about a US conspiracy being behind his ouster. He wanted to force fresh elections through a demonstration of street power. Unprecedented floods in Pakistan devastated the country, throwing millions out of their homes and forcing them to seek shelter in the open. In contrast, in India, there was political stability with a strong government in power and the economy marching ahead confidently.

Afghanistan

After bolstering the Afghan government for 20 years, the US left quite abruptly in August 2021 though it was obvious that it would right since the February 2020 so-called peace deal with the Taliban. This deal, in effect, handed over the country to the Taliban simply because the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) did not have the requisite training or equipment to deal with the Taliban. Without air support and artillery, they just melted away, as had the various mujahideen factions in 1995-96 when confronted with the Taliban.

The Taliban have consolidated their hold since coming into power in August 2021 but there are major issues of governance, serious restrictions on women like during 1996-2001, a humanitarian crisis and ungoverned spaces where the al Qaeda (AQ), the Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP) and a host of other terrorist organisations are festering and growing in strength. The composition of the Taliban government does not instil confidence that they would be amenable to any kind of inclusive government. Nor are there any indications that they would be willing to compromise on their hard-line ideology. Those who believed that the Taliban had changed were only fooling themselves.[1]

Both the AQ and the ISKP have grown in strength and even doubled their numbers. They could, thus, pose a significant threat beyond Afghanistan according to recent US government estimates.[2] As a recent UN Security Council assessment concluded "terrorist groups enjoy greater freedom in Afghanistan than *at any time in recent history.*"[3] It is assessed that both ISKP and AQ have the intent to conduct external operations and could be able to launch attacks on Western targets sooner rather than later.

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The issue of international recognition of the Taliban continues to be a question mark, though a lot of countries are bypassing this by resorting to 'engagement' rather than recognition. Russia, China Iran, and Turkey have kept their missions open. There is also the issue of Afghan funds frozen in the US.[4] In a nutshell, the Taliban are holding the Afghans hostage and hoping that Afghan suffering would force the international community to step in to provide humanitarian aid and recognition.

Afghanistan-Pakistan Dynamics

When the Taliban captured power in Afghanistan in August 2021 there was jubilation in Pakistan. It was perceived as a victory of Pakistan's decade-long project of clandestine support to the Taliban despite being a 'major non-NATO ally' in the US 'War on Terror'. The then-prime minister,

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Imran Khan, triumphantly proclaimed that the Afghans had broken the shackles of slavery.[5] Religious parties in Pakistan saw it as the victory of jihad with barely concealed assertions of a similar 'revolution' in Pakistan. These parties were inspired by the Taliban to achieve full Islamisation through the implementation of Shariah in Pakistan.[6]

The euphoria was understandable. Pakistan's policy of support for the Taliban was premised on the assessment that an Afghanistan ruled by the Taliban would strengthen Pakistan's security. First, it would ensure that India was booted out of Afghanistan. Second, a grateful Taliban would recognise the British-era Durand Line as the international border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Apart from securing Pakistan's borders, it would also quash the aspirations of the Pashtuns on both sides of the Durand Line for Pashtunistan. Third, the Taliban would help Pakistan against the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) by disarming them and removing their camps from Afghanistan's territory. Part of Pakistan's jubilation was also due to the apparent failure of Indian strategy and policy. The perception was that with the Taliban in Kabul, Indian investment of over US$ 3 billion since 2001 on development and reconstruction projects would come a cropper. Since Pakistan viewed its relations with Afghanistan partly through the Indian prism, the Taliban victory was seen as a massive boost to its influence in Afghanistan at the cost of India. However, today, almost two years after the Taliban stormed into power, Pakistan's policy is in tatters and none of its objectives have been met. Not surprisingly, the jubilation of 2021 has been replaced with serious security concerns.

While India did leave Kabul after the Taliban came to power, today India is back and at the request of the Taliban. They want India to restart the infrastructure projects it was working on. Above all, Mullah Yakub,

the acting defence minister and son of Mullah Omar, the Taliban founder, offered to send Afghan military officers to train in India.[7] Then, the Taliban declined to recognise the Durand Line. Most likely they will not do so in the future too. They have gone a step further by removing parts of the fence in some areas. Adding salt to injury, they have termed the issue of the Durand Line as not settled and described the fence as dividing a nation.[8] In their earlier rule in the 1990s too, the Taliban had refused to recognise the Durand Line on at least three occasions according to Mullah Zaeef, the then Taliban ambassador in Islamabad.[9]

Finally, the Taliban have openly refused to take any action against the TTP and instead have offered to facilitate talks between the outfit and Pakistan. As Sirajuddin Haqqani, a staunch ally of Pakistan and the acting Interior Minister told a visiting Pakistani Jirga that they did not want to coerce the TTP. "They have waged jihad with us against the Americans and made sacrifices. It would be better that Pakistan and TTP come to terms, after giving each other some concessions."[10] Though talks were held on at least two separate occasions, accompanied by a ceasefire, they have broken down. The TTP has carried out several devastating attacks in parts of Pakistan, including Balochistan, Punjab and Islamabad the capital, apart from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK).

A new and potentially dangerous development is the assertion of the Taliban government that US drones entered Afghanistan through Pakistan airspace[11] and that Pakistan was receiving millions of dollars in return. The Taliban have maintained that they have evidence, and videos, at their disposal to back their claims of how Pakistan has given the US access to its airspace.[12]

What Pakistan did not factor in its assessment was that the relationship between the Taliban and the TTP was deep. When the US intervened in Afghanistan in 2001 and the Taliban were forced to flee, the tribal elements of the erstwhile Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) provided them refuge. Today, these tribal elements are bunched together as the

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TTP. Under the unwritten code of the Pashtuns known as Pashtunwali, the Taliban have a responsibility to provide TTP protection in Afghanistan. Not to do so would make them '*baigarat*' or without honour in the eyes of other Pashtuns.[13]

The basic demand of the TTP is the establishment of a Shariah-based Islamic regime in Pakistan. However, of late, they have taken to articulating a nationalist line. For one thing, they want the demerger of FATA with KPK and in an interview, Noor Wali Mehsud, the TTP Amir, said that his group aimed to make the tribal districts of Pakistan (along the Afghan border) independent. This projection of being a Pashtun nationalist group is new and is similar to the Taliban's position of not recognising the Durand Line as an international border.[14]

Pakistan is thus faced with a twin problem on both sides of the Durand Line. While the Taliban have disputed the Durand Line, challenging Pakistan's territorial integrity, the TTP is pursuing a reversal of the merger of the former FATA and KPK. This Pashtun pincer from either side of the Durand Line may lead to strengthening the idea of a larger Pashtun-inhabited area. If not handled imaginatively such an idea could morph into a Pashtun separatist movement with all its attendant consequences.

The leverage that Pakistan thought it could exercise of securing international recognition and economic assistance for the Taliban has had little success. The international community has made it clear that it would not rush to recognise the Taliban unless they changed their behaviour.

The Pakistan narrative that the Taliban had evolved and changed has fallen flat in the face of their refusing to relinquish their hard-line stance on ideology, women's rights and allowing girls into school. Pakistan is now faced with the prospect of having to prop up a cash-starved Afghanistan just when its own economy is struggling. Clearly, Pakistan will have to revisit its decades-long policy regarding Afghanistan and look for a different strategy. Such a strategy could encompass kinetic action against the TTP inside Afghanistan. By doing so Pakistan could very likely get sucked into a war of attrition not just with the Taliban but also other ethnic groups in Afghanistan.

India-Afghanistan Dynamics

India has deep cultural, historical, and civilisational ties with Afghanistan and these longstanding linkages will continue to guide the Indian approach. India has been among Afghanistan's most significant donors[15] over the past twenty years. New Delhi has provided scholarships to Afghan students, offered food and medical assistance, and helped restore Afghanistan's war-ravaged power grid.[16] All this has strengthened India's position in the country and there is across-the-board goodwill towards India in Afghanistan. This is one of the key reasons for the Taliban's outreach to India.

The decision of the Indian government to send 50,000 tonnes of wheat,[17] 13 tonnes of medicines, and 500,000 doses of COVID vaccines as humanitarian assistance[18] provided the first big opening. It was recognised that this expanding humanitarian outreach needed an Indian presence on the ground rather than relying on only multilateral organisations for the distribution of aid. Therefore, outreach to the Taliban became an important policy priority.

An Indian delegation led by a joint secretary in the external affairs ministry went to Kabul in June 2022. During the visit, several Taliban leaders underscored their preference for an Indian diplomatic presence.[19]

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The Taliban possibly recognise that there is no getting away from India's economic, regional, and global clout. For the Taliban, an outreach to India allows it to put in place some sort of hedging strategy to offset its dependence on Pakistan. Quite possibly they also realise that India could be a better or an additional interlocutor than Pakistan. Hence, it appears that they are investing major political capital by reportedly giving assurances of acting against Pakistan-backed terrorist groups like Lashkar-e-Taiba and Jaish-e-Muhammed.[20]

India is, however, not likely to break away from the international consensus and recognise the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan (IEA). Though it has entered a period of engagement by opening a 'technical' office in its embassy, India will remain in a wait-and-watch mode, to see how the rest of the world reacts and responds to the developments inside Afghanistan. India does not have any illusions about what the Taliban are and what they represent or that they would change. This also means that India would be looking very closely at their assertions about the Jaish and the Lashkar. Tactically, Indian moves, however, do signal that New Delhi is not willing to give up its geo-political stakes in Afghanistan or give up on the Afghan people. Overall, the India-Taliban relationship will take time to work itself out. It can be described as a work in progress.

India-Pakistan Dynamics

There have been a couple of positives on the bilateral front. A key one was the reinstitution of the ceasefire on the LoC in February 2021. This, however, did not translate into a process despite Pakistan's assertions

during the March 2021 Islamabad Security dialogue, the aim of which was to showcase Pakistan's desire to change the narrative from 'geopolitical contestation to geo-economic integration'. The key takeaway on Indo-Pak relations was General Bajwa saying that Pakistan was keen to 'bury the past and move forward.'[21] The expectations raised were crushed, however, when Imran Khan, as PM, shot down what Imran Khan as Commerce Minister had approved: the import of sugar and cotton from India. He stated that there could be no trade with India unless the August 5, 2019 changes pertaining to J&K were reversed.[22] There was a lot of perplexity in India as to why this was done because, for a change, it appeared that the army was on board to normalise relations. The major political event that could have favourably impacted bilateral relations was the exit of Imran Khan from the helm in Pakistan. Imran Khan had injected into the bilateral discourse such personal animosity and rancour against Prime Minister Modi that was not only surprising for a head of government, but made the resumption of a political dialogue impossible. His efforts to praise Indian diplomacy in his post-exit speeches have been noted but seen as a desperate attempt to claw back some goodwill in India. No one is, however, buying this.

Bilawal Bhutto, the incumbent Foreign Minister, on a visit to Goa for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) meeting in May 2023 also made it clear that Pakistan's position remained the same as under Imran Khan, i.e., no dialogue till the constitutional changes of August 5, 2019 in J&K were reversed. This is not going to happen. Hence, the possibility of resumption of dialogue seems remote. Moreover, taking a leaf from Imran Khan, Bilawal Bhutto, too, has resorted to some very un-parliamentary words about the Indian prime minister.

Moreover, given the scale of internal problems—political, economic, judicial, security and coping with the after-effects of the devastating floods—inherited by the Shehbaz Sharif government, it is unlikely that any political capital would be expended on Indo-Pak relations.

Pakistan's national interest is not to have a strong and inclusive government in Kabul that could challenge the validity of the Durand Line.

On the negative side, since August 2019 there has been evidence of Pakistani drones dropping arms, ammunition, IEDs and drugs in Punjab and J&K.[23] This is a clear indicator that the ISI and the Khalistani terrorists in Pakistan are attempting to revive the insurgency in Punjab, using narco-terrorism in a big way. There has also been a spurt of Khalistani propaganda activities abroad. Such activities can hardly be conducive to fostering a climate for bilateral dialogue.

Thus, the focus in Indo-Pak relations is likely to be on the management of relations rather than on normalisation till there is clarity about what is happening in Pakistan. In other words, not letting relations deteriorate. In general, the relationship with Pakistan is unpredictable, and a single terror incident can change the discourse.

Here a word about the role the US has played a critical role in the region is in order. Twice in the past, the US has abandoned Afghanistan and left it to Pakistan to deal with. It was Pakistan's two-faced approach over the last two decades that was singly responsible for the US not being able to meet its objectives in Afghanistan. Even if the US national security interests in Afghanistan are now restricted to transnational and regional terrorist activity emanating from the region, if outsourcing Afghanistan to Pakistan is on the cards again, it could be a mistake. It will have all the attendant consequences, like in the past, of funding Pakistan, without Pakistan changing its military mindset of crafting a dependent Afghanistan. It is unlikely to succeed, as it hasn't in the past, because Pakistan's national interest is not to have a strong and inclusive government in Kabul that could challenge the validity of the Durand Line. A weak government, however, would allow for ungoverned spaces

where international and regional terror groups will incubate and multiply, threatening the entire region with terrorism, drugs and refugees.

The Road Ahead

Finally, what does the road ahead look like for the region? Overall, security issues are likely to remain predominant in the India-Afghanistan-Pakistan relationship, at the expense of economic ones. In Afghanistan, the Taliban will further consolidate their regime but will be vulnerable due to the humanitarian suffering of the Afghans, total marginalisation of women, lack of international recognition and the growth in the attacks by the ISKP. Pakistan is unlikely to find the kind of security it was looking for with a Taliban government in Kabul — neither with regard to India nor the Durand Line nor the TTP. In an ideal world, the Pak leaders would re-assess reality and look at India and Afghanistan as trading partners as its own National Security Policy (NSP) claims — prioritising geo-economics instead of geopolitics. This, however, seems unlikely at the moment. India is likely to adopt a cautious wait-and-see approach while at the same time pushing for humanitarian assistance for the Afghan people. Indo-Pak relations are likely to be in limbo till the political and economic situation clarifies and stabilises in Pakistan and Pakistan walks back on its position about the August 5, 2019 events. So, what is the way out? Possibly, there are no short-term solutions or quick fixes. For the medium and longer term the road to stable Af-Pak relations and the region would lie in a democratic and pluralist Pakistan. Such a Pakistan could gradually change the prevalent security mindset of the Pakistani establishment and evolve beyond seeing Pakistan's security purely in military terms. It would be easier for such a democratic Pakistan to treat Afghanistan as a sovereign country and a trading partner instead of a strategic space that Pakistan could manipulate to set up a dependent government and fulfil distant foreign policy and security goals. It would also be easier for such

a government to stop seeking parity with India and look at it as a trading partner.

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China's Military Space Capabilities and Its Implications for India

Amrita Jash

Abstract

China's rapid advancements in space-based capabilities from surveillance and communications to navigation and earth observation, are just not competing against but are also challenging the American supremacy in outer space. With a strong military dimension to its space programme, China aims to make itself combat-ready in fighting an informationised and intelligentised warfare' as China sees space as a critical domain in international strategic competition. This makes it imperative to understand the nature of China's space programme, the use of space for Chinese military operations and its implications for other countries.

Introduction

In preparing for future wars, militaries around the globe are now developing counter-space technology and space assets. With military activities becoming dependent on the space domain, it is increasingly turning 'outer space' into a theatre of military operations. For instance, in 2019, NATO recognised space as a new operational domain, alongside

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air, land, maritime and cyberspace. The 2020 Defense Space Strategy of the US posited that: "Space is now a distinct warfighting domain, demanding enterprise-wide changes to policies, strategies, operations, investments, capabilities, and expertise for a new strategic environment."[1] In gauging the threat posed by the development and testing of counter-space technologies by countries, the US categorically identifies "China and Russia", as:

It was in 2007, that China became the third country after US and Russia to conduct an anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons test that deliberately destroyed one of its defunct polar weather satellites.

> "the greatest strategic threat due to their development, testing, and deployment of counterspace capabilities and their associated military doctrine for employment in conflict extending to space. China and Russia each have weaponized space as a means to reduce U.S. and allied military effectiveness and challenge our freedom of operation in space."[2]

However, unlike Russia, China is a latecomer to the space race. It was in 2007, that China became the third country after US and Russia to conduct an anti-satellite (ASAT) weapons test that deliberately destroyed one of its defunct polar weather satellites known as Fengyun-1C, in low Earth orbit by a kinetic kill vehicle carried on a medium-range ballistic missile.[3] While the test was internationally condemned for generating the largest debris in the Earth's orbit, but China had a symbolic gain by demonstrating its ability to hit satellites at that range. In 2013, China's DN-2 rocket test, reached the altitude of the geosynchronous Earth orbit satellites, thus indicating China's capability to target higher orbits. China created the BeiDou navigation satellite system (BDS)[4] as an alternative to the US Global Positioning System (GPS), the Russian GLONASS, and

the European Galileo systems. With a total of 35 satellites in orbit, the BeiDou constellation has outnumbered the 31 operational GPS satellites that were in orbit as of May 2020. China has invested in a human space program, known as "Project 921"; in 2003, China sent its first crewed spacecraft into space, making it the third country after the US and Russia to send humans into space; in November 2022, it sent three taikonauts to its recently completed Tiangong space station. Lastly, it plans to build a lunar research station in partnership with Russia by 2035. Besides this, it must be noted that with the above-mentioned achievements and plans, Beijing has made great strides in the creation of military space technology, especially in satellite communications and reusable spacecraft.

These developments highlight that China's space programme has matured at a rapid pace—from military to civilian space applications. In this context, the paper seeks to examine four key aspects: the nature of China's space programme, China's perception of outer space, the role of space in China's military operations and lastly, the implications of China's growing space capabilities for India.

China's Space Programme. The 2022 US Department of Defense (DoD) report notes that China is developing counter-space capabilities that include direct-ascent anti-satellite missiles, co-orbital satellites, electronic warfare, and directed energy systems, that can contest or deny an adversary's access to space as also operations in the space domain during a crisis or conflict.[5] Apart from developing capabilities, PRC's prioritisation of 'space' is also represented in the creation of the Strategic Support Force (SSF) in 2015 which heralds an expanded role for space capabilities in Chinese military operations. The other important aspect of China's growing space capabilities is the 'space dream', as the 2022 white paper on "China's Space Program: A 2021 Perspective". This quoting President Xi Jinping[6] is "[t]o explore the vast cosmos, develop the space industry and build China into a space power […]. In line with this China's goals for outer space entail:

"to enhance its capacity to better understand, freely access, efficiently use, and effectively manage space; to defend national security, lead self-reliance and self-improvement efforts in science and technology, and promote high-quality economic and social development; to advocate sound and efficient governance of outer space, and pioneer human progress; and to make a positive contribution to China's socialist modernization and to peace and progress for all humanity."[7]

Table 1: Timeline of China's 'Space Dream'

Year	Target Goal
2020	Long March 8 Carrier will make its debut: Goal Achieved • Maiden flight launched on December 22, 2020. • Second flight launched on February 27, 2022, that delivered 22 small satellites into orbit.
2025	Realisation of Suborbital spaceflight.
2030	Launch of 100-tonne heavy lift carrier rocket.
2035	Reusable carrier rocket will be developed.
2040	Nuclear powered space shuttle will be built.
2045	China to become an all-round world-leading country in space equipment and technology.

Source: Annotated by the Author with reference to Ma (2017)[8] and Newspaper articles.

It is important to note, China's space dream, as explained by President Xi Jinping in 2013, entails that: "the dream of space flight is an important part of the strong country dream [and] the space dream is an important component of realising the Chinese people's mighty dream of national rejuvenation […] it is part of the dream to make China stronger".[9] Here, the watchword is 'stronger', which indeed has military connotations. To argue, although various civilian entities are involved but the military component is predominant in China's space programme. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) holds and

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) holds and has historically managed and continues to command and control the PRC's space-based capabilities.

has historically managed and continues to command and control the PRC's space-based capabilities.

The organisational structure, infrastructure and affiliations of the Taikonauts, all fall under the PLA, as:[10] First, China National Space Administration (CNSA) falls under State Administration for Science, Technology and Industry for National Defense (SASTIND). Second, the launch sites, control centres, and many of the satellites are directly run by the PLA. For example, Taikonauts lift off from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Centre (Base 20 of the PLASSF) directed by the PLASSF's Beijing Aerospace Flight Control Centre, with Telemetry, Tracking and Control support from the Xi'an Satellite Control Centre (PLASSF's Base 26) and on termination of the mission, land at one of two sites in Inner Mongolia operated by the two bases. Lastly, all Taikonauts are active members of the PLASSF, who belong to the Astronaut Corps under the PLASSF Space Systems Department's China Astronaut Research and Training Centre.

Hence, China's space-related objectives and programme must be evaluated in the context of its other significant military changes, all of which are steps towards fighting an 'informationised war', as the 2015 US-China Economic and Security Review Commission report notes:

> "Unlike the United States, China does not have distinctly separate military and civilian space programs. Under this nebulous framework, even ostensibly civilian projects, such as China's human spaceflight missions, directly support the development of People's Liberation Army (PLA) space, counterspace, and conventional capabilities."[11]

Outer Space in China's Military Strategy and PLA's Military Operations

Why the race for dominance in space and counter-space capabilities? The answer lies in preparing for an informationised warfare, where communications and technological dominance, long-range precision strikes, C4ISR [Command, Control, Communications, and Computers (C4), Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR)], anti-access anti-denial (A2/AD), and joint force integration are impossible without substantial and varied space capabilities. To argue, precision-guided munitions are ineffective without precise target positions, and battle networks provide C4 aid in utilising ISR, both before and during operations. The PLA is hence increasingly considering using space in its military operations. This perception represents the critical role and significance of space in China's military calculations.

The assessment of the security challenges facing China and the types of war the PLA must be prepared to fight are the main drivers of revisions in the PLA's military strategic guideline. The PLA perceives that "the form of war is accelerating its evolution to informationisation", which calls for China to build a national defence mobilisation system that can meet the requirements of "winning informationised wars and responding to both emergencies and wars".[12] In view of this, the 2015 defence white paper on "China's Military Strategy" was the first official document that delineated "outer space" as "a new security domain" and "a commanding height in international strategic competition".[13] Furthermore, in 2019, China's defence white paper defined "outer space" as "a critical domain in international strategic competition" and identifies the role of space in "improving the capabilities of joint operations command to exercise reliable and efficient command over emergency responses, and to effectively accomplish urgent, tough and dangerous tasks".[14] As China's national defence aims at "safeguarding China's interests in outer space"[15], the PLA is tasked with: "safeguard[ing] China's security and interests

In Chinese perception, the goal of space operations is to achieve space superiority (制天权), defined as "ensuring one's ability to fully use space while at the same time limiting, weakening, and destroying an adversary's space forces".

in new domains" by "proactively prepare[ing] for military struggle" to "seize the strategic initiative in military competition".[16]

In Chinese perception, the goal of space operations is to achieve space superiority (制天权), defined as "ensuring one's ability to fully use space while at the same time limiting, weakening, and destroying an adversary's space forces",[17] as the *Textbook for the Study of Space Operations*, published by the Academy of Military Science, entails: "Whoever is the strongman of military space will be the ruler of the battlefield; whoever has the advantage of space has the power of the initiative; having 'space' support enables victory, lacking 'space' ensures defeat".[18] Furthermore, the 2013 *Science of Military Strategy* predicts that future wars may begin in outer space and cyberspace and that "achieving space superiority and cyber superiority are critical for achieving overall superiority and being victorious over an enemy".[19] The military component is very apparent in Chinese scholarly writings that assert that the "control of space is a prerequisite for control of terrestrial domains", as in Chinese view:

> "Space power improves battlefield awareness capabilities, strengthens joint operations systems, improves precision strike capabilities, and increasingly strengthens overall battlefield superiority. Integrated joint operations increasingly rely on space power and space is the high point of informationized warfare."[20]

In China's military strategy, an essential part of PLA's approach to future wars is the need to secure "information dominance (*zhixinxiquan*;

制信息权)", for which the PLA needs to "speed up to upgrade weaponry and equipment, and work to develop a weaponry and equipment system which can effectively respond to informationised warfare and help fulfil the missions and tasks".[21] In dominance over the information realm, the PLA:

> "continues to develop counterspace capabilities—including direct-ascent anti-satellite missiles, co-orbital satellites, electronic warfare, and directed-energy to disrupt [an] adversary's C4ISR (Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance) advantages through such means as attacking its computer and communications systems. Accordingly, the PLA is establishing information warfare units and capacities, and developing anti-satellite capabilities [and] space warfare weapons."[22]

Specifically, on the growing role of space for the PLA Air Force (PLAAF), the 2019 White Paper suggests:

> "In line with the strategic requirements of integrating air and space capabilities as well as coordinating offensive and defensive operations, the PLAAF is accelerating the transition of its tasks from territorial air defense to both offensive and defensive operations, and improving its capabilities for strategic early warning, air strikes, air and missile defense, information countermeasures, airborne operations, strategic projection, and integrated support."[23]

Space significantly factors in the PLA's operations, as having superior capabilities in space offers the PLA potential military advantages on land, at sea, and in the air. As the 2019 report of the US Defense Intelligence Agency suggests that the PLA views space superiority as well as the ability to control the space-enabled information sphere and to deny adversaries

The SSF's support to the PLA involves: centralising technical intelligence collection and management, which provides intelligence support to the theatre commands, enables power projection, supports strategic defence in the space and nuclear domains, and enables joint operations.

their own space-based information gathering and communication capabilities, as critical components of modern "informatised warfare".[24] The creation of the Strategic Support Force in late 2015 to guide the PLA's space, cyber, and EW missions further exemplifies the growing importance of outer space in PLA's warfighting and joint combat operations. In 2016, SSF's newly appointed commander, Gao Jin stated that:

> "[T]he SSF will raise an information umbrella (信息伞) for the military and will act as an important factor in integrating military services and systems, noting that it will provide the entire military with accurate, effective, and reliable information support and strategic support assurance (准确高效可靠的信息支撑和战略支援保障)."[25]

In defining the role and intentions of the SSF in supporting the PLA, the 2019 White Paper posits that:

> "The PLASSF is a new type of combat force for safeguarding national security and an important driver for the growth of new combat capabilities. It comprises supporting forces for battlefield environment, information, communications, information security, and new technology testing. […] the PLASSF is seeking to achieve big development strides in key areas and accelerate the integrated development of new-type combat forces, so as to build a strong and modernized strategic support force".

In terms of "information support", the SSF's support to the PLA involves: centralising technical intelligence collection and management, which provides intelligence support to the theatre commands, enables power projection, supports strategic defence in the space and nuclear domains, and enables joint operations.[26] Precisely, the missions of the SSF include: the detection of targets, the reconnaissance and the return of target information; the undertaking of daily navigational operations and the management of Beidou satellites and space reconnaissance; the defence of electromagnetic and cyberspace tasks — the "new areas that determine whether [Chinese] military will win the battle in the future."[27] In this regard, the SSF oversees two deputy theatre command-level departments: the Space Systems Department responsible for military space operations, and the Network Systems Department responsible for information operations, which includes technical reconnaissance, cyberspace warfare, and psychological operations.[28] Therefore, outer space figures significantly in China's military calculations and the PLA's military modernisation.

Implications for India

China's space program has matured rapidly however, China's space capabilities still usually lag behind those of the US and Russia. But its rapid pace of development, makes it ahead of many other countries' programmes, such as India's. The worry concerns China's weaponisation of space as a means to reduce the freedom of operations of other countries in space. Specifically, China's operational counter-space capability has significant implications as China could employ its counter space capabilities in targeting the space assets of countries with which it has adversarial relations, such as the US and India. The 2017 US DoD report notes that:

> "PLA writings emphasize the necessity of 'destroying, damaging, and interfering with the enemy's reconnaissance ... and communications

satellites,' suggesting that such systems, as well as navigation and early warning satellites, could be among the targets of attacks designed to "blind and deafen" the enemy."[29]

India is involved in a boundary dispute with China which has only got worsened in recent times with the Eastern Ladakh stand-off since 2020. Given the tensions at the border with the future scenario of the possibility for armed conflict between India and China over the disputed border, China's expanding space and counter-space capabilities has and will have negative-sum effects on India's security. Hence, India must be ready to face an enemy with space technologies. But since India is a latecomer to the arena of military use of space, India has a significant worry, as evident from the recent remarks of India's Chief of the Air Staff Air Chief Marshal V R Chaudhari, who described the space as "the ultimate high ground", by stating:

"The race to weaponise space has already started and the day is not far when our next war will spread across all domains of land, sea, air, cyber and space. There is a need to develop both offensive and defensive space capabilities to safeguard our assets. We [India] need to capitalise on our initial successes in space and prepare ourselves for the future."[30]

India's concern stems from the asymmetry in its space programme vis-à-vis China. While Indian government agencies such as the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) are building India's space-based strategic capabilities, but when juxtaposed with China, India's capabilities are lagging behind both economically and militarily.

Comparative Assessment: China and India (as of 2021)

Parameter	China	India
Expenditure on space	US$ 11 billion	US$ 1.5 billion
ASAT Capability Test	Demonstrated in 2007	Demonstrated in 2019
Reconnaissance and remote sensing fleet	120	19

Source: Author's own.

Given China's expanding space-based military capabilities, the query remains: are Indian Armed Forces prepared to counter a Chinese attack? This intervention demands significant attention as PLA's space capabilities aim towards fighting a "system-destruction warfare" while the new operational concept is that of multi-domain precision warfare. The PLA intends to identify key vulnerabilities in the operational system of an adversary, especially such as India, and then launch precision strikes against those vulnerabilities.

What can be expected in case of an armed conflict between India and China? One of the outcomes will entail PRC's employment of its counter-space capabilities to limit or prevent India's use of its space-based assets. Besides, China will use directed energy weapons and satellite jammers, operational ground-based ASAT missile to target low-Earth orbit satellites or destroying satellites up to geosynchronous Earth orbit. In this regard, India should be concerned as China's military space capabilities are being developed with sophistication to counter the US capabilities and this itself, in many ways makes the PLA's capabilities more advanced especially with information dominance, precision strikes and joint operations. Therefore, it becomes an urgent need for India to make big strides in developing its space-based military capabilities- both indigenously as well as in partnership with other countries.

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Capacity Building for Military Diplomacy

Asoke Mukerji

Abstract

India's military diplomacy objectives of capacity building are geared toward enhancing capacities in military inventories as well as honing capacities in the training and deployment of India's armed forces. In the pursuit of its military diplomacy, India has responded to the challenges posed by its two avowed adversaries (Pakistan and China) through interactive partnerships with its preferred strategic partners. The character of India's military diplomacy is "human-centric". It looks at the capacity of India's armed forces for achieving the tasks set for them, particularly when deployed to maintain international peace and security under the United Nations. This article carries out an assessment of the current status in this sphere to ascertain the extent to which India's core national interests are being assisted by military diplomacy.

Introduction

India's objectives of building capacity for its military diplomacy are conditioned by the ongoing process of transforming India into one of the major world powers during the 21st century, for which an external environment of peace and security is essential. As a developing country

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that is home to the largest and most diverse population in the world, the challenges facing India are *sui generis*. India must find its own path of using military diplomacy for responding to these challenges. India's Raksha Mantri, Shri Rajnath Singh, while addressing India's Defence Attaches in October 2022, emphasized that India's military diplomacy is tasked with "securing national interests in line with foreign policy, strengthening international cooperation and enhancing the capabilities and preparedness of the Armed Forces".[1]

India's military diplomacy objectives of capacity building are geared toward enhancing capacities in military inventories as well as honing capacities in the training and deployment of India's armed forces.

Background

India's military diplomacy objectives of capacity building are geared toward enhancing capacities in military inventories as well as honing capacities in the training and deployment of India's armed forces. Both these aims must be self-sustaining. India's ability to achieve these goals is linked to India's commitment to the principles of sovereign equality, strategic autonomy, and self-reliance or *Atmanirbharta*.

The initial focus of newly independent India was on augmenting capacities in its land and air forces. This followed the outbreak of hostilities over India's borders with Pakistan (since 1947) and China (since 1962). A concentrated attempt to enhance India's maritime forces has been in place since March 2015, following the launch of India's Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) Indian Ocean policy.[2]

Two prisms can be used to assess India's progress in using international cooperation to build up the capacities of its armed forces. One prism is the initiative to create appropriate institutional frameworks to address capacities for the manufacture of military equipment, while broadening

international military cooperation with select strategic partners. A new synergised approach integrating defence and diplomacy has been introduced by India to make such institutional frameworks deliver results on the ground.

The other prism highlights the "human-centric" character of India's military diplomacy. This looks at the capacity of India's armed forces for achieving the tasks set for them, particularly when deployed to maintain international peace and security under the United Nations. The key factor for this assessment is the continued professionalism of India's armed forces. A constant process of upgrading professional skills has resulted in the enhanced ability of the Indian armed forces to meet increasingly complex challenges at home and abroad.

In the pursuit of its military diplomacy, India has responded to the challenges posed by its two avowed adversaries (Pakistan and China) through interactive partnerships with its preferred strategic partners. The traditional method of capacity building using military diplomacy, which relied on exchanges of visits of military delegations, participation in military exercises, and military training programmes, is being gradually subsumed into India's new framework through "defence and foreign affairs" (or 2+2) dialogues. Such frameworks for capacity building of the Indian armed forces are in place today with the United States, Japan, Australia, and Russia.

The 2+2 Dialogue Mechanism

The objective of the 2+2 dialogues is to integrate capacity building in military diplomacy in a selective and prioritised manner, which will give specific results on the ground for securing India's key strategic interests. A key element in the successful implementation of this initiative is the reciprocal support of India's strategic partners, particularly when it comes to creating sustainable and equitable partnerships on the ground.

- **United States**. The India-United States "2+2" dialogue was initiated in September 2018 in New Delhi. It has built on the "enabling" agreements negotiated by India and the United States between 2002 and 2020, which include the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA) in 2002, the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) in 2016, the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) in 2018 and the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) for Geospatial Intelligence in 2020.[3]

  At its fourth meeting held in April 2022 in the United States, the 2+2 dialogue mechanism reiterated its objective to enable the militaries of India and the United States to "coordinate closely together across all domains", including the "new defence" domains of space, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and cyber, with "enhanced Indian participation in advanced courses across these emerging domains". Special emphasis has been placed on "equipping" the militaries of the two countries "to exchange information in real-time across domains" including by liaison officers in "each other's military organisations". In the area of joint manufacturing, the dialogue identified the bilateral Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) to "co-develop Air Launched UAVs", while looking to use India's existing naval shipyards and facilities for the "repair and maintenance of ships of the US Maritime Sealift Command (MSC) to support mid-voyage repair of US Naval Ships".[4] The first use of India's naval infrastructure by US naval ships under this dialogue mechanism took place in March 2023, when the US Naval dry cargo ship *Matthew Perry* successfully completed maintenance and repair work at the Larsen & Toubro shipyard near Chennai.[5]

  Two policy issues regarding the use of capacities developed through the 2+2 dialogue mechanism between India and the United States will need monitoring. First, the impact of deepening engagement

India is the only participant of the Quad that is not bound by military alliance treaties with the United States, in contrast to both Japan and Australia.

between a strategically autonomous India and the world's pre-eminent military power, which prefers to engage through its military alliances to project its strategic interests. India is the only participant of the Quad that is not bound by military alliance treaties with the United States, in contrast to both Japan[6] and Australia[7].

In a broader framework, this is also visible in India's interaction with the United States as the driver of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), which has declared its aspiration to play a bigger role in India's strategic neighbourhood.[8] The US-led NATO's abrupt withdrawal from neighbouring Afghanistan in mid-August 2021, obliterated in one unanticipated stroke India's assiduously built-up strategic investments in Afghanistan. These included closing all 5 diplomatic representations of India in Afghanistan, and jettisoning India's US$ 3 billion development assistance programme that prioritised healthcare and education for Afghanistan's women and children. The US-led NATO action will be a salutary point of reference for India in this context.[9]

In specific terms, the military alliance between the United States and Pakistan, initiated in 1955, has evolved into designating Pakistan as a "major non-NATO ally" under US domestic law.[10] This plays out on the ground in terms of the impact on India's military capacities developed in cooperation with the US, and their likely use against Pakistan. Complicating this is the fact that the US continues to pursue its strategic interests in Pakistan through the Pentagon's Central Command, and its strategic interests in India and China through the Pentagon's Indo-Pacific Command, throwing up a challenge that is invariably leveraged in favour of its Central Command.[11]

The second issue is US policy on restricting the export of technology to India, particularly "dual use" technologies that have both military and commercial applications. Bilateral diplomatic negotiations between India and the US addressed these restrictions, symbolised by the Indo-US Nuclear Deal of 2008, which ended "technology denial regimes against India that have been in place for three decades".[12] India's subsequent negotiation and membership of three major multilateral export control regimes have provided a framework for enhanced military cooperation with the United States, as well as the other 2+2 dialogue partners of India.[13]

The incremental forward movement to provide a new basis for technology transfers for defence cooperation has been registered since 2015, when the "New Framework for India-US Defence Cooperation" was renewed for 10 years. This was followed a year later by designating the bilateral relationship as a "Major Defence Partnership". Since 2018, the US has allowed India to receive licence-free access to a wide range of military and dual-use technologies that are regulated by the US Department of Commerce. However, in a conflicting signal, the United States Trade Representative placed India on a select "Priority Watch List" of seven countries (including China and Russia) in April 2023 for failing to protect US intellectual property rights that anchor its technologies,[14] including dual-use technologies.

- **Japan.** The India-Japan 2+2 Dialogue, initiated in 2019, held its second meeting in Tokyo in September 2022. The meeting stressed the "vast potential for the two countries to expand bilateral cooperation in the areas of defence equipment and technology cooperation" and mentioned "ongoing cooperation in the areas of Unmanned Ground Vehicle (UGV)/Robotics".[15]

The role of Japan in partnering with India to augment its capacities through military diplomacy is underpinned by Japan's

Prospects for the effective use of capacities developed jointly between India and Japan in the Indo-Pacific are sustained by the notable fact that both India and Japan define the Indo-Pacific region as encompassing the entire Indian and Pacific oceans.

acknowledged technological capacities. The 2+2 dialogue mechanism is being built on bilateral agreements signed between India and Japan in 2015 on the "Transfer of Defence Equipment and Technology" and "Securing Measures for Protection of Classified Military Information", along with the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement, signed in 2021.

Prospects for the effective use of capacities developed jointly between India and Japan in the Indo-Pacific are sustained by the notable fact that both India and Japan define the Indo-Pacific region as encompassing the entire Indian and Pacific oceans. This contrasts with the policy of the US and Australia, which do not include the western Indian Ocean from the west coast of India to the eastern coast of Africa, including the crucial Gulf region, in their definition of the Indo-Pacific framework.

Japan looks to partner with India in developing capacities for the manufacture of "UAVs and anti-UAV systems, robotics, underwater communication, lithium-ion batteries and intelligence systems".[16] This technology-driven capacity-building objective with India will be tested by the obligations of Japan under its bilateral defence treaty with the United States.

- **Australia.** The India-Australia 2+2 Dialogue was initiated in September 2021 in New Delhi, which prioritised "maritime domain awareness through information sharing and practical cooperation". The area of cooperation in "defence industries including Unmanned Vehicles and other niche technologies" was identified for future action.[17]

India has built on its shared experience with Australia in joint Allied military operations during the two world wars of the past century. This includes the emotively significant battle for Australia of Gallipoli in 1915.[18] Despite the lack of a common definition of the scope of the "Indo-Pacific" a Mutual Logistical Support Agreement (MLSA) signed in 2020 has provided the basis for "more sophisticated operational cooperation enabling increasingly complex military engagement, and greater combined responsiveness to regional humanitarian disasters".

Future cooperation in military diplomacy with India will face the test of Australia's obligations under its bilateral defence treaty with the US.

Capacities in interoperability in the area of naval deployments by the Indian Navy have been a focus of multilateral exercises such as the MALABAR naval exercise of 2020, and the bilateral AUSINDEX which has seen the deployment of Australian naval ships and personnel to India.[19] Future cooperation in military diplomacy with India will face the test of Australia's obligations under its bilateral defence treaty with the US, as well as the obligations on technology transfers inherent in the new Australia-UK-US (AUKUS) military alliance.

- **Russia.** The first meeting of the India-Russia 2+2 Dialogue was held in New Delhi in December 2021. This coincided with the session of the India-Russia Inter-governmental Military Technical Commission (MTC), which has been meeting annually since 2001 under the annual India-Russia Summit. Since 2002, bilateral cooperation overseen by the MTC has resulted in India's acquisition of equipment, including items that are being manufactured in India with transfers of technology from Russia. The most prominent of these are the T-90S main battle tank, the Su-30MKI fighter jet aircraft, the *Talwar*-class stealth technology guided missile frigates, and the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile. Each of these items made with modern technologies

The implementation of the objectives for Russia's participation in capacity building of India's military diplomacy could be impacted in the short term by the increasing unilateral sanctions being imposed on Russia's military-industrial enterprises by NATO on account of the Ukraine conflict.

is in use today in India's terrestrial, air, and maritime domains, strengthening India's capacity to counter threats to its territorial integrity and sovereignty.

The joint statement issued after the India-Russia Summit of December 2021 confirmed that in response "to India's quest for self-sufficiency, the partnership is reorienting presently to joint research and development, co-development and joint production of advanced defence technology and systems", which would be implemented through a long-term cooperation agreement for 2021-2031.

It was agreed that India and Russia would undertake "joint manufacturing in India of spare parts, components, aggregates and other products for the maintenance of Russian origin arms and defence equipment under Make-in-India programme through a transfer of technology and setting up of joint ventures for meeting the needs of the Indian Armed Forces as well as subsequent export to mutually friendly third countries".[20]

Capacity building through military diplomacy with Russia in the 2+2 dialogue mechanism builds upon the work of the MTC, while creating space for the participation of the private sector in manufacturing. The first result of this is the manufacture by a joint venture in Amethi from January 2023 of AK-203 assault rifles for the Indian Army.[21]

The implementation of the objectives for Russia's participation in capacity building of India's military diplomacy could be impacted in the short term by the increasing unilateral sanctions being imposed

on Russia's military-industrial enterprises by NATO on account of the Ukraine conflict.[22]

United Nations PKOs

Over 264,000 Indian troops have served since 1950 in 51 out of the 71 UN peacekeeping operations (PKOs),[23] symbolising India's commitment to use its military capacities for maintaining international peace and security. UN PKOs have been a two-way process for capacity building in India's military diplomacy.

During the Korean War (1950-1953) Indian troops of the 60th Parachute Field Ambulance Unit tended to about 195,000 cases, while General Thimayya of India chaired the Neutral Nations Repatriation Commission that handled the 200,000 prisoners of war who had to be repatriated to their home countries.[24] The bravery of Indian troops under Captain Gurbachan Singh Salaria of 3/1 Gurkha Rifles, the only Indian soldier to have been awarded the Param Vir Chakra (posthumously) while on duty in the UN PKO in the Congo in 1961[25] is legendary. Indian women peacekeepers deployed in the UN PKO in Liberia between 2007-2016, the first-ever all-women's unit deployed in PKOs by any UN member-state,[26] became "role-models" for their role in catalysing the empowerment of local women in Liberia. Indian troops currently deployed in the ongoing civil war in South Sudan,[27] have won plaudits for their professionalism and compassion.

The existing capacities of India's armed forces, hallmarked by their high professionalism, have contributed to the effectiveness of the PKOs deployed in exceptionally volatile environments, such as the major crises in Africa. At the same time, participation in PKOs in such unstable environments has added to the capacities of India's armed forces to operate in extremely challenging conditions, while keeping the "human-centric" protection of civilians foremost in their operations. The background of India's professional troops, many of them from rural communities who

have sought to mitigate conflicts on the ground using traditional non-doctrinaire methods, has generated empathy for India in conflict-afflicted countries where they have been deployed. This has enhanced international support for India's military diplomacy in the cause of peace, security, and development [28] stretching back more than seven decades.

Maritime capacity building

In 2009, UN Security Council Resolution 1851 mandated an international response to the threat posed by piracy for the sea lanes of communication in the western Indian Ocean. The resolution established a Contact Group on Piracy off the coast of Somalia (CGPCS). Between 2009 and 2017, India contributed 65 Indian Naval ships to participate in the CGPCS, the bulk of which were made in India. Adding to their effectiveness were two "stealth" frigates, the *INS Tarkash* and *INS Trishul* (built in Russia in 2010 and 2000 respectively for Indian specifications. The number of attacks came down from 117 in 2009 to one in 2016, through the coordinated actions of the navies of 25 countries. No ship escorted by the Indian Navy was hijacked. In strategic terms, the success of the CGPCS ensured the shifting of the Piracy High Risk Area closer to the Somali coast from the Central Arabian Sea thereby saving substantial insurance costs for all the merchant ships and reducing the costs of India's international trade and shipping.[29]

This experience provided the basis for India's ambitious capacity-building initiative in setting up a maritime domain awareness international centre in India. In December 2018, India established an Information Fusion Centre—Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) near New Delhi. The objective of the IFC-IOR is to promote real-time collaboration for maritime safety and security in view of the region's importance with respect to world trade and security. The Centre provides a hub for sharing maritime security information in the region. Since its inception, the

Centre has established working-level linkages with more than 50 nations and multinational/maritime security centres.[30]

On August 9, 2021, Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi chaired a special UN Security Council session devoted to maritime security. The session was attended by President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya and President Vladimir Putin of Russia at the head-of-state level, and Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh of Vietnam. Prime Minister Modi elaborated on the objectives contained in India's SAGAR policy, emphasising India's support for an inclusive, cooperative approach to partnerships in military diplomacy.[31]

Conclusion

India's calibrated approach to capacity building in its armed forces using military diplomacy deserves greater recognition. The outcome of current trends will have an impact on both the effectiveness of India's armed forces in an increasingly turbulent international environment, as well as on strengthening the increased participation of India's skilled workforce in a national endeavour to secure India's core national security interests.

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Chinese Belligerence on the Line of Actual Control (LAC): India's Approach

SL Narasimhan

Abstract

The article traces the background to the Chinese belligerence on the LAC right from the early 1950s and brings us up to date on the many instances of clashes or standoffs between the two countries. It carries a sector-by-sector brief analysis and thereafter gives out nine crisp points that come up as an assessment of the actions taken by India to get an understanding of India's approach. This brings out that India has been adopting measures commensurate with the time, resources, state of infrastructure and diplomatic and military capabilities to handle the situations that arise along the LAC.

Introduction

India and China became independent entities nearly two years apart. At that time, both countries had their own aspirations. India wanted to become the leader of the non-aligned world and China a leader of the communist world. In the initial years of their existence, both tried to be nice to each other. So much so, that they signed the Agreement

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between the People's Republic of China and India on Trade and Intercourse with Tibet in 1954 based on the Panchsheel.[1] Even today China's foreign policy is based on the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence. It is a different matter that China acknowledges Mr Nehru's contribution to the Panchsheel less today. The bonhomie of the early years soon gave way to animosity. The primary reason for that was the intrusions by the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) from 1954 onwards. The bilateral relationship further deteriorated when it was discovered that China had constructed a road through Indian territory in Aksai Chin in 1957.[2] Thereafter, the relationship between India and China went through a downward spiral. The 1962 war by China on India further exacerbated the situation. After going through several ups and downs, today the bilateral relations between India and China are at crossroads after the Galwan incident of 2020. This article traces India's approach to the incidents on the Line of Actual Control. In order to do that it is imperative to understand how the issue on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) started manifesting. It all seems to have started from the Barahoti area in 1954.

The bonhomie of the early years soon gave way to animosity. The primary reason for that was the intrusions by the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) from 1954 onwards.

1954-59[3]

Middle Sector. The first note on the boundary violation seems to have originated from the counsellor in the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi on 17 July 1954 to India's Ministry of External Affairs complaining that 30 Indian troops had crossed into the Wuje (Barahoti) area after crossing Niti Pass in the Middle Sector. He further reinforced his stand on 13 August 1954. India responded on 27 August negating the Chinese counsellor's claim and India's note also included a counter claim that the Chinese

troops had crossed into Indian territory in that sector. Further India's response ended by saying, "It is hoped that the Government of China will instruct the local authorities in Tibet not to cross into Indian territory as we have instructed our authorities not to cross into Tibetan territory".[4]

On 18 August 1955, in a note to the counsellor in the Chinese Embassy in New Delhi, India raised the issue of the Chinese collecting taxes from graziers in the area of Barahoti. The Chinese denied it. On 15 September 1955, an Indian patrol was stopped by the Chinese in the area of Damzan which is 10 miles short of Niti Pass. However, the Indian patrol managed to go ahead but the Chinese patrol remained in Indian territory. On 28 April 1956, an armed Chinese patrol intruded in the area of Nilang which is on the Indian side of Tsang Chokla. On 7 June 1956, for the first time, India issued orders to its patrols not to allow Chinese to pass through Tunjun La. On 8 June 1956 China indicated that Tunjun La was part of China. This was contrary to the 'Agreement between the People's Republic of China and India on Trade and Intercourse with Tibet' in 1954, wherein Tunjun La was identified as one of the border passes. This seems to be the start of the boundary question between India and China. A joint investigation was proposed by India and accepted by China.

The complaints and counter-complaints continued. The second place where the intrusion took place was in the area of Shipki La on 1 September 1956. The Indian government took up the issue again with China. Shipki La was also identified as a border pass in the 1954 agreement mentioned above. This was followed by two more incursions on 10 and 20 September 1956. In the 10 September incident when the Indian patrol tried to move ahead, the Chinese threw stones at them and threatened to use grenades. So, throwing stones at each other at the border incidents started at that time. Things took a different turn when in 1958, the Chinese moved into two places in the Middle Sector and established posts when the Indian posts withdrew for winter, at Lapthal

(latitude 30°-44'N; Longitude 80°-8'E) and Sangcha Malla side of the Balcha Dhura Pass (latitude 30°-40'N; longitude 80°-12'E), which is considered as the traditional boundary between India and China.

Western Sector. In July 1958, Chinese troops moved in and occupied Khurnak Fort in Eastern Ladakh. India in a note dated 2 July 1958 mentioned that in an inconclusive conference in 1924 held between the Tibetan Region of China and Kashmir State, the status of Khurnak Fort was never questioned and intimated that the Indian government would be sending a reconnaissance party to the fort area. On 18 October 1958, India sent an informal note to the Chinese embassy in Delhi regarding the road constructed by the Chinese in Eastern Ladakh. This road is the Western Highway as we know it today. On the same note, information was requested from the Chinese government regarding a patrol which went missing at the end of August 1958. China protested the intrusion of two patrols and many aircraft, confirmed the apprehension of two Indian patrols, and informed that these patrols would be deported from China on 22 October 1958 through the Karakoram Pass. On 30 July 1959, India sent a note regarding a patrol that went missing in the Western Pangong Tso area and the establishment of a Chinese post at Spanggur.

Eastern Sector. The third sector that opened up was the Lohit sector in Eastern Arunachal Pradesh. In a note given to the Chinese Embassy on 17 January 1959, the Indian foreign Office protested the intrusion of Chinese personnel in Lohit area on 27/28 September 1958 who after camping in Indian territory had moved towards Burma from there. The note also mentioned about an earlier intrusion in October 1957, wherein the intruding party came up to Walong. In response, China complained that Indian troops in conjunction with "Tibetan rebel bandits" occupied Migyitun area. Indian response to that Chinese note accepted Migyitun and other areas mentioned in the Chinese note as Chinese territory and denied any action by Indian troops. It also denied any collusion with "Tibetan Rebels". On 7 August 1959, an intrusion by an armed patrol

In early 1959 both countries also intimated each other of air violations from each other's territory. Thereafter, there was a heated exchange between both countries regarding the Tibetan Movement.

was reported in Khinzemane sector which was protested through a note on 11 August 1959. On 25 August 1959, a Chinese patrol opened fire on an Indian picket south of Migyitun and moved further South and opened fire on Longju Post and on 26 August 1959. This was protested on 28 August 1959.

In early 1959 both countries also intimated each other of air violations from each other's territory. Thereafter, there was a heated exchange between both countries regarding the Tibetan Movement. Throughout this period, both India and China protested incidents on the border and countered each other's protests with their own. Starting from 1958 onwards, Indian patrols were either apprehended or ambushed by the PLA, particularly in the Western Sector.

India's response was to adopt a limited defensive deployment, a euphemism for forward deployment. As part of this, 43 posts were established in the Western sector and 25 posts in the Eastern sector. These were small, isolated posts which did not have adequate reinforcements or logistics support. Therefore, when the 1962 war took place these were easily overrun by the PLA.

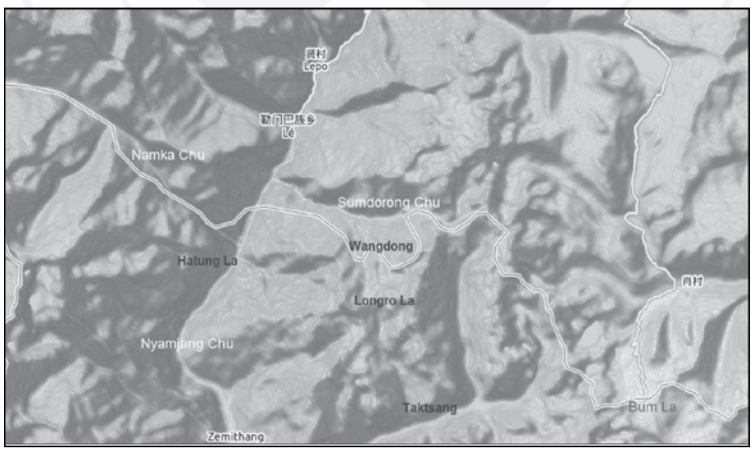
Other Major Incidents

Nathu La and Cho La Incidents—September-October 1967. A skirmish took place in Nathu La in Sikkim due to disagreement over the laying of the border fence at Nathu La by Indian armed forces from 11 to 14 September 1967.[5] The PLA fired at the Indian troops attempting to lay the boundary fence. India responded strongly causing heavy casualties on the Chinese. The issue was resolved after three days. On 1 October 1967, in Cho La which lies a few kilometres north of Nathu La, a skirmish

took place between Indian armed forces and the PLA over the location of a stone.[6] The issue was whether it was in Indian or Chinese territory. In the ensuing firefight, casualties occurred on either side.

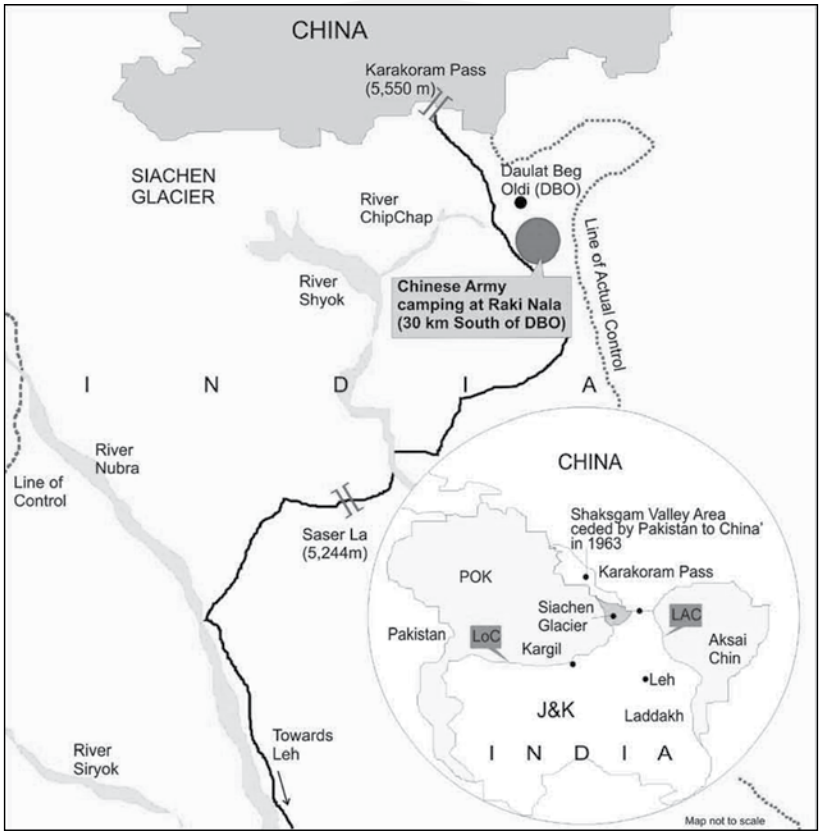
Tulung La Incident—1975.[7] In 1975, the Chinese had moved a company to the India-China boundary at Tulung La in Arunachal Pradesh and despatched a platoon forward which had erected stone walls 500 m south of that pass. When an Assam Rifles Patrol went to that area, they were fired upon killing four soldiers[8] of the 5 Assam Rifles Battalion who were doing the job of scouts for the battalion.

Sumdrong Chu Incident.[9] The Intelligence Bureau (IB) Personnel of India used to occupy a seasonal post at Wangdong near Sumdrong Chu from 1984. When they withdrew from the post for the winter of 1985, the PLA moved in and constructed a helipad and a post and deployed 200 troops. When the IB personnel went back in the summer of 1986, they were surprised to see the Chinese in Indian territory. Immediately, Operation Falcon and Operation Chequerboard were launched in which a brigade of Indian troops were Heli-lifted and deployed in counter penetration and dominating positions. De-escalation started in 1987 and in 1995 both India and China vacated two posts each. See Map below:



Source: https://www.openstreetmap.org/#map=12/27.7649/91.7607&layers=C

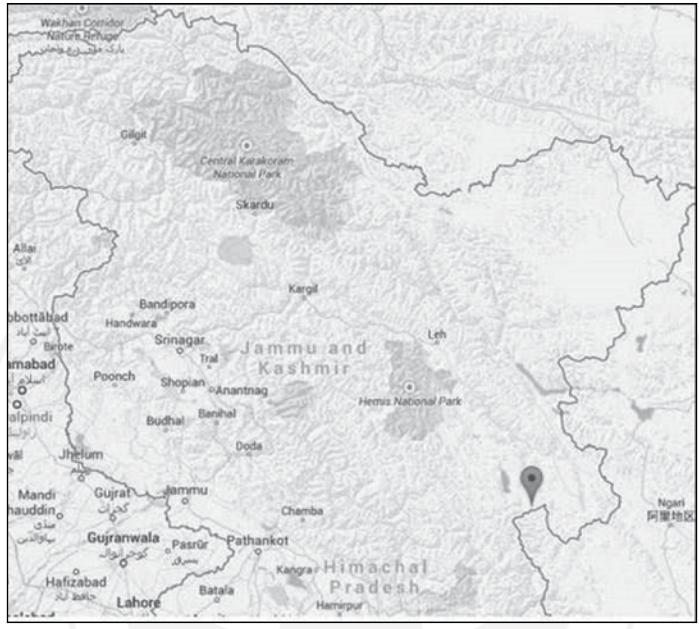
Depsang Incident. On 15 April 2013, a Chinese patrol came into the Indian side of the LAC and pitched tents near Burtse.[10] Indian army also pitched tents close to the Chinese patrol. After three weeks of negotiations, the face-off was resolved on 5 May 2013. This incident took place when Mr Li Keqiang was visiting India for the first time as Premier of China. See Map below:



Source: http://www.indiandefencereview.com/spotlights/looking-beyond-the-dbo-face-off/

Chumar Incident 2014. When Mr Xi Jinping was visiting India for the first time as President of China, China moved heavy machinery into Indian territory to construct a road in the Chumar area in Eastern Ladakh

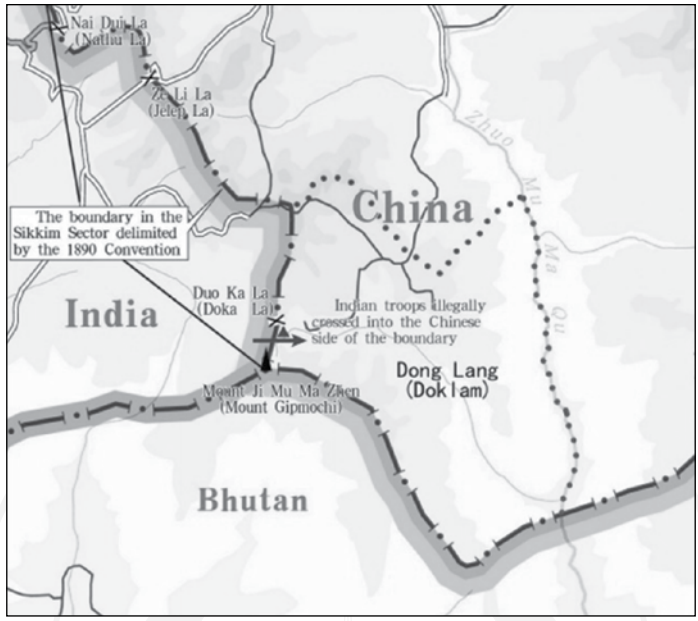
on 10 September 2014.[11] A face-off ensued thereafter. Military and diplomatic efforts diffused the situation and the situation was resolved on 25 September 14. See Maps below:



Dolam (Doklam) Incident 2017. On 16 June 2017, the Chinese started constructing a road from Dokala to Jampheri Ridge. Indian troops moved in and stopped the construction. This was because the Chinese action violated an understanding reached between the Special Representatives of both countries in 2012[12] that any change to the tri-junction areas will only be carried out with the prior concurrence of all three countries. This resulted in a standoff that lasted for 72 days. It was resolved through negotiations and the Chinese stopped the construction of the road.

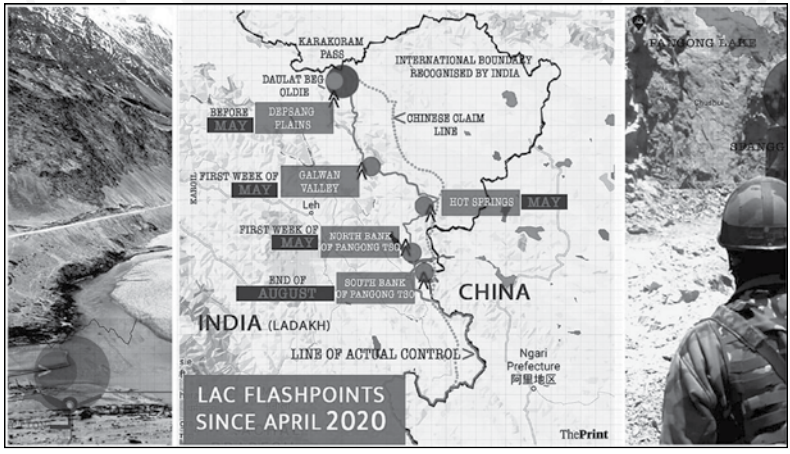
Please refer Maps below for the Dolam incident:

Source: https://thewire.in/uncategorised/doklam-india-china-bhutan



Source: Map released by Chinese Spokesperson

Incidents of 2020



Source: https://theprint.in/defence/5-maps-that-tell-you-all-you-want-to-know-about-india-vs-china-in-ladakh/507289/

The year 2020 became an inflexion point in the bilateral relationship between India and China. The clashes that took place in the Galwan Valley resulted in casualties on both sides after a gap of 45 years.

The year 2020 became an inflexion point in the bilateral relationship between India and China. The clashes that took place in the Galwan Valley resulted in casualties on both sides after a gap of 45 years. When China diverted a large number of troops that had been mobilised for the annual exercises that are conducted by PLA opposite Eastern Ladakh, Indian army mobilised its troops mirroring the mobilisation of PLA. That resulted in a stalemate. Indian army's occupation of Kailash range on the southern bank of Pangong Tso on 29-30 August 2020 took the PLA by surprise and facilitated in speeding up the disengagement process. However, even after 18 rounds of Corps Commander Level talks and an equal number of Working Mechanisms for Consultation and Coordination, the process is still in the works.

The Period 1988-2013

While the work on the boundary question started after the deployment of the Indian Ambassador late Mr K R Narayanan in 1976, it really got a boost after the visit of late Mr Rajiv Gandhi to China in 1988. Work on various agreements started and during the visit of Mr Narasimha Rao in 1993, India and China signed the Agreement on the Maintenance of Peace and Tranquility along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas. This was followed by the visit of Mr Jiang Zemin to India in 1996 during which both countries signed the 'Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of India and the Government of the People's Republic of China on Confidence-Building Measures in the Military Field Along the Line of Actual Control in the India-China Border Areas'. Simultaneously, joint working groups and expert groups

were set up to resolve the boundary issue. These groups met approximately 15 times, but the progress achieved by them was considered not up to the mark. Therefore, when the late Mr AB Vajpayee visited China in 2003 a Special Representative Mechanism was instituted to speed up the progress. A three-step mechanism was agreed upon to resolve the boundary question.[13] The first step was to establish the political parameters and guiding principles. This was achieved when an 'Agreement on the Political Parameters and Guiding Principles for the Settlement of the India-China Boundary Question' was signed between both countries during the visit of Mr Wen Jiabao, then Premier of China on 11 April 2005. The second step, that is, establishing the framework for a final package settlement is still in progress. The third step of delineating and demarcating the boundary will come later.

Despite all the standard operating procedures and agreements that were signed between both countries, the major incidents mentioned above still happened.

Despite all these measures, there were face-offs still happening. A number of Standard Operating Procedures were set up and agreed upon by both sides to ensure face-offs are resolved amicably. Around the year 2000, a process of exchanging maps showing respective perceptions of the boundary started. Maps of the Middle Sector were exchanged. But when the process of exchanging the maps of the Western sector started, the Chinese delegation pulled out of the process. Notwithstanding subsequent efforts, this process has not restarted again. In order to further streamline the procedures an 'Agreement Between the Government of the Republic of India and the government of the People's Republic of China on Border Defence Cooperation' was signed on 23 October 2013. In spite of all the standard operating procedures and agreements that were signed between both countries, the major incidents mentioned above still happened.

Post Galwan Incident

During the negotiations that took place between military commanders initially and thereafter they were joined by the Ministry of External Affairs representatives, the methodology for disengagement included a temporary moratorium on patrolling. This implies that in each of the disengagement points, namely, Galwan, Patrolling Point 15, Patrolling Point 17 and Pangong Tso, a mutually accepted distance (it varies as per the understanding reached during negotiations for each of these points) will not be patrolled by both the sides, till this issue is resolved. As this article goes to print, it is presumed that further negotiations are going on, in the Depsang Bulge and Demchok areas.

Assessment

It was necessary to recapitulate the incidents and the actions carried out by India so that an assessment could be made. There are nine points that come up as an assessment of the actions taken. These are explained in the succeeding paragraphs.

- **Protests and Counter Protests.** In the initial period of the intrusions and faceoffs it was protests and counter-protests that was the norm. 1958 onwards even though our forces suffered casualties India's approach was to lodge protests and counter-protests. This can be attributed to the remoteness of the area where these incidents occurred, lack of ability to reinforce and logistically sustain the small detachments and patrols.
- **Standing Ground and Responding to Chinese Actions.** In the incidents of Nathula, Chola, Sumdrong Chu, Depsang, Chumar, Dolam and incidents of 2020, the response of India and her forces seems to be to stand the ground and respond supported by strong diplomatic support. This also negates the feeling that India has been meek in her response and cedes ground to the Chinese.

- **Eastern Ladakh Seems to be More Important for China.** While there have been incidents in Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim, the number of incidents in Eastern Ladakh, out number them manifold. Infrastructure development along the northern borders which was sluggish earlier, has been given the necessary impetus. Moreover, formations have been reoriented from the western to the northern border, thus indicating the resolve to face any threat that could emanate along that border.

Galwan incident has been an inflexion point in the bilateral relationship between India and China. India has taken a stand that bilateral relations will be guided by three mutuals—mutual respect, mutual sensitivity, and mutual interest.

- **Influence Operations and Grey Zone Warfare.** Prior to the Dolam incident of 2017, China always complained that Indian media is very active and that creates problems in resolving the issues. During the Dolam incident and thereafter, China's media has become very proactive and tried to create and shape the narrative in her favour. It is not that faceoffs have not been happening earlier. Many incidents were resolved through discussions between local commanders. The new-found media activism acts as an added factor that complicates the resolution of the issues.
- **Cyber War.** The number of cyber-attacks on Indian entities was much higher after the Galwan Incident. India's response has been measured and efforts have been made to strengthen the cyber defence capabilities.
- **Three Mutuals**. As mentioned earlier, Galwan incident has been an inflexion point in the bilateral relationship between India and China. India has taken a stand that bilateral relations will be guided by three mutuals—mutual respect, mutual sensitivity, and mutual interest.

Also, it is being conveyed constantly that the status of the border will determine the status of the bilateral relations thereby implying that unless the situation on the LAC gets back to pre-April 2020 levels and an understanding not to alter the status quo on the LAC unilaterally is arrived at, the bilateral relationship is unlikely to improve.

- **New Confidence Building Measures (CBMs).** During their meeting on the sidelines of the SCO meeting in Moscow in September 2020, foreign ministers of India and China had agreed in the fifth of their five-point statement that new CBMs may be considered to avoid incidents such as Galwan. CBMs have been a way to handle such incidents.
- **Bold Action as per Need of Situation.** Bold actions like occupying the Kailash Ranges, and Op Chequerboard have paid rich dividends. This is one of the methods adopted by India. Similarly, when needed she has also accepted a temporary moratorium on patrolling. Therefore, a flexibility of approach has been adopted by India as per the need of the situation.
- **Non-Lethal Weapons.** As mentioned earlier, the effort to not use lethal weapons and use sub-lethal weapons has its roots as early as 1956. It has also been seen that the Chinese have placed orders for sabres, etc. with particular specifications. The use of non-lethal weapons may become common in future.

Conclusion

The above brings out that India has been adopting measures commensurate with the time, resources, state of infrastructure and diplomatic and military capabilities to handle the situations that arise along the LAC. We need to study the course of actions so far so that we are better prepared to handle whatever form Chinese belligerence takes in the future. Along with that, we need to encourage confidence-building measures to reduce

the chances of misperceptions leading to uncontrolled escalation. This is in the interest of both countries.

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Pakistan's in a Mess, But It's Survival Likely

Syed Ata Hasnain

Abstract

The article carries out a recapitulation of key past events and a realistic assessment of the situation in Pakistan and its implications, especially in the region. The economy, internal stability and security, political leadership and foreign affairs, all seem to drive Pakistan towards an abyss. Will it fall into it or will it recover? Political elements in Pakistan will always play the politics which exploit the negatives of Indo-Pak relations to create opportunities for themselves. Only a stable government can give peace a chance, but in Pakistan, the only government which can be stable is the one which has the backing of the army. The current political crisis and its implications indicate a number of scenarios playing out which going by past precedent and the imperative of the army remaining the king makers are predicted by the author with precision.

Introduction

Pakistan has long been heading towards a situation where it could be perceived as a failed state, or at least a state under immense strain. Everything that goes into the efficient functioning of a nation appears

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under stress. The economy, internal stability and security, political leadership and foreign affairs, all seem to drive the nation towards an abyss. On the other side of the border is its nemesis, India—which had many problems during its early years after independence but now seems to steadily progress towards a much higher economic and geopolitical status. It is aspiring to be a US$ 5 trillion economy in the next few years and US$ 10 trillion economy by 2035 or perhaps earlier. Its leadership now bears the self-confidence to virtually declare the next 25 years as the *Amritkaal* or the period of runaway success which could be labelled a golden period. Neighbours have a way of either joining each other's success or becoming a mutual bane. Considering Pakistan's current status and that of the interim future, its acrimony towards India and the cussedness with which it views its relations, it's very unlikely that India is going to find a cooperative partner on its west flank, even if that cooperation would actually mean something positive for Pakistan. The progressive study of Pakistan is therefore a compulsive imperative for India and especially India's strategic community because linked to the latter's aspirations is the state of affairs in Pakistan which today appears heading only southwards. This paper sets out to examine Pakistan and the challenges it appears to face, but has no way of overcoming those.

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The Challenges for Pakistan

Although the current political shenanigans between Imran Khan and the Pakistan army may appear to take the focus, these issues are not even half as important as the internal security situation in Pakistan which from 2007 has been on a steady decline along with its economy. Hence this article looks first at these two issues.

Internal Security of Pakistan. Pakistan's tryst with internal threats from terrorism commenced after the Lal Masjid intervention by the Pakistan Army in 2007—an attempt by Pervez Musharraf to curb the rise of internal radical churning. That is when the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) came into being. TTP is an alliance of militant networks formed to unify opposition against the Pakistan Army.

From 1977, Zia-ul-Haq as President and Chief martial law administrator had initiated the process of greater Islamisation (read radicalisation) to bring Pakistan closer to the Islamic world and use the ideology to Pakistan's advantage by attempting the isolation of India and targeting its with proxies. This was the first coming of terrorists into Pakistan; the second was in 1980 when transnational extremist elements were sponsored by Pakistan, in conjunction with the US and Saudi Arabia, against the Soviet army in Afghanistan. In the first two instances, the target of the terrorists was external. However, the third coming in 2007 mentioned above, unleashed terrorism internally. The most prominent consequence of this action, the TTP, has ever since remained a thorn in the side of the Pakistan security forces.

As is well known, the internal war against the TTP continued till 2018 when the Pakistan army ostensibly declared victory; it was premature. The usual mistake armies the world over make is to treat the end of physical resistance by a terrorist group as the end of its existence. the TTP was aware that in the existing circumstances of Pakistan's politics and ideological way of things, its opportunities would come sooner than later; the networks were intact even as the Pakistan army claimed victory. The TTP laid low while other radical parties, such as Tehreek-e-Labbaik Pakistan, made political headway through the strategy of attempting to strangulate the government by frequently blockading the national capital. It had the tacit sympathy of Imran Khan's party, the Tehreek-e-Insaf (TEI) and his government. The outreach of radicals into Punjab also multiplied many times over.

The TTP is now fast re-emerging; the geopolitical circumstances have changed just as it rightly assessed, but much faster than it could have predicted. Within a year of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan, the Afghan Taliban is correctly assessing that it will need Armageddon for the US forces to return to a region where its forces fought over 20 years with little strategic outcome. The Afghan Taliban is therefore shaking off the mantle of Pakistan's control over it. It was a creation of Pakistan's ISI and probably envisages a far greater role for itself in the ensuing intra and inter-civilisational confrontation against forces that do not profess its extremist radical ideology, in the regional context.

It appears that the Afghan Taliban's initial aspiration is to ideologically dominate the Af-Pak region thereby dictating the internal discourse in Pakistan. That discourse of the early 1980s is what led to the creation of the Taliban movement. Whether today it has changed or not is a debatable point but Pakistan is struggling and realising the folly of following a policy of promoting extremist radical ideology. The same is deeply embedded in its civil society and is strangulating it within. The Afghan Taliban is also placing greater pressure on the boundary issue with Pakistan, questioning the finality of the Durand line and its fencing. Its strategy appears to dwell on pressurising Pakistan by forcing the commitment of its security forces to both border security and internal security-related issues. It is fully aware of Pakistan's limitation in being unable to balance its security needs between the three areas of its compulsive focus. These are:

- Afghanistan (including the border issue).
- The internal security of Pakistan (to include sectarian, ethnic and ideological threats).
- The eastern border with India with special attention towards the Kashmir issue.

Baloch separatism has taken the internal threats several notches higher than ever existed. It is making it extremely difficult for the

The Pashtun sentiments are being re-energised due to the developments in Afghanistan. As it is the Pashtuns see themselves as a separate entity/ nationality.

Chinese-assisted projects in Baluchistan to function or be completed due to the threats from the Baloch separatists. This has had a serious impact on Sino-Pak relations too and is partially responsible for the Chinese reluctance to pursue infrastructure development in Baluchistan and other affected areas.

The Pashtun sentiments are being re-energised due to the developments in Afghanistan. As it is the Pashtuns see themselves as a separate entity/nationality. Now with the Afghan Taliban not wishing to acquiesce to Pakistan's strategic needs there are dangerous developments taking place at the Durand Line. The fencing of the border is objected to since there is nothing permanent about the Durand line as per Afghan understanding. In all these years after 2001 the Afghan Taliban—protégés of the ISI no doubt—have maintained an independent line of thinking on the border issue with Pakistan. At Pakistan's mercy for the last two decades, earlier they were in no position to protest. The border issue is one domain where now the Afghan Taliban can express its resentment against the strangulating hold of Pakistan's ISI and regenerate Afghan nationalism too. The latter is necessary because as is well understood, the Taliban is no monolith.

The Economic Scene. Pakistan has never been able to replicate the initial promise it displayed in the 1960s when its citizens while visiting India were the cynosure of all eyes. The fantasy items they brought for their friends and relatives made Indians feel as if Pakistan was El Dorado. After 1971 Pakistan could never replicate that and has had to go to the IMF 23 times for economic bailouts.[1] The country has been in a perpetual balance of payments crisis for many years and the state of its current economy is sufficiently worrisome. Shamshad Ahmed, Pakistan's former foreign secretary stated—"anyone who takes charge

of the government immediately comes to us and asks us to arrange a trip to the US or Saudi Arabia to go looking for loans right away".[2] Plans of debt servicing and regeneration of the economy do not ever seem to be the priority. Living from loan to loan and building up a cascading debt without any plans of expanding exports is the catastrophic policy Pakistan has pursued for many years. India suffered the ignominy of its forex reserves touching rock bottom at US$ 1 billion in 1991, but the active consensus-based political approach to changing its economic policies led to a turnaround without which India would have been in serious trouble. Pakistan unfortunately does not have the good fortune of national interest being the uppermost consideration of its political and military leadership, for whom self-gratification is the focus. According to Moeed Yusuf, the former NSA under the Imran Khan government, the Pakistan economy for much too long was built upon the security model. The Pakistani leadership was satisfied with resources coming in on the basis of the geopolitical and geostrategic importance that Pakistan posed at any given time. He failed to say how shallow the thinking of the leadership was, that a national economy could be built on the basis of a nation remaining strategically significant forever. He was, however, courageous enough to say that Pakistan first needs to admit its past mistakes. However, anyone who does this would face political opprobrium. Which politician would change this? Yet Pakistan will need to find someone with political gravitas and high leadership qualities to admit past mistakes, throw the electoral hustings to the winds and take some courageous actions to restore even a semblance of the economy and in fact that of basic governance. If Pakistan is going to get driven

Yet Pakistan will need to find someone with political gravitas and high leadership qualities to admit past mistakes, throw the electoral hustings to the winds and take some courageous actions to restore even a semblance of the economy.

by considerations such as those which effectively removed one of its best economic brains from the scene, then no one can come to its assistance. Atif Mian, the well-known Pakistani economist and Economic Advisor to Imran Khan was removed from the appointment very early in his tenure in 2018, Pakistan's suicidal radical extremists demanded his removal because he followed the Ahmadiyya faith which is banned in Pakistan since Ahmadiyya do not endorse the finality of the Holy Prophet of Islam.

The creaking Pakistan infrastructure is collapsing with the recent nationwide power outage extending almost 24 hours in some areas. Recovery without infrastructure that supports growth, will remain a major challenge for Pakistan. Loans have been promised from many donors but will be insufficient to see a long-term recovery rather than just a temporary tactical patchwork to get over the bad times.

The Current Political Crisis and its Implications

The PDM took the form and shape of opposition unity with Pakistan Muslim League (N) and the Pakistan People's Party (PPP) as leading lights; an 11-party alliance with Maulana Fazlur Rehman of Jamaat Ulema-e-Islam (F), as the president. It was founded in September 2020 as a movement against then PM Imran Khan, accusing his regime of poor governance, political victimisation of opponents, and mismanaging the economy and foreign policy.

Opposition alliances have a long history in Pakistan. They have come together against military dictators but with varying success. Field Marshal Ayub Khan was removed from the presidency in the late 1960s by such an alliance, but these were less successful against Zia-ul-Haq's presidency in the 1980s. What is noticed is that progressively the influence of the classic civil society like the one that could rally for the removal of Ayub Khan in 1968, has waned. This influence today has been replaced by the radical voice in society; power seems to flow from the ability to muster street strength for violent blockades of cities and establishments. In yester

years the Pakistan Army's voice carried. A word from the local Corps Commander would clear the streets. That is no longer true. The Army likes to retain influence but avoids direct confrontation with mobs and street demonstrations; its a house divided although on the surface this does not appear so.

Imran Khan was stable until he fell out with the Pakistan Army. That facilitated Shahbaz Sharif's election as the PM on 11 April 2022 after a vote of no confidence against Imran Khan carried in the Pakistan National Assembly. However, it is increasingly clear that Imran Khan is the most popular political leader in Pakistan today. His power emanates from the street and the Army is unsure of how to handle him. He can easily pander to the radicals and has a following within the Pakistan Army too. With the backdrop of the failed economy, the general elections are unlikely to be held. The PDM would be glad to get a reprieve from the current crisis and work towards building its effectiveness towards winning the election. Currently, it enjoys the confidence of the Pakistan Army and none else. The latter would want to see the back of Imran Khan or ensure that he does not return to power. The Pakistan Army may have weakened its hold on polity but it still carries the capability to select a PM just like it did in the case of Imran Khan.

A crisis emerged on 9 May 2023 when the Government/Army sent a posse of Rangers to arrest Imran Khan. All hell broke loose as a PTI mob entered even the residence of GOC 4 Corps at Lahore. The Army probably wanted to keep itself away from the public eye but as it turned out it is now completely in the eye of the storm. The events were all over electronic and social media. This unending drama over Imran Khan is going to continue for some time. After all the shenanigans we have seen thus far it seems doubtful that the Pakistan Army or the constituents of the PDM would like to see Imran Khan back to power after a future election. The retribution then will be worse than anything before. Things in Pakistan do not progress as per rules and that is why Imran Khan

Things in Pakistan do not progress as per rules and that is why Imran Khan has to watch his back. The Supreme Court may have supported him so far; how long more will that continue is anybody's guess.

has to watch his back. The Supreme Court may have supported him so far; how long more will that continue is anybody's guess. Once the Army has decided to flex its muscles it will have no qualms about abrogating the constitution or democracy. It will be a virtual 'coup'. Both the PDM and the Pakistan Army need each other at the moment. How their fight against the Supreme Court will pan out, while retaining democratic credentials, is going to be a major challenge.

A plausible scenario could be the Army weeding out Imran supporters within the senior ranks (they are known to exist) as a first step. The postponement of the election to allow the PDM the space to project itself in better light from a governance angle seems inevitable. To remove Imran Khan from potential candidacy for PM he could either be assassinated (as in so many previous cases) or judicially defanged with the Army staying in the background. The Army will have to work overtime to convert an election result to its choosing. That is because Imran Khan's elimination or arrest would spark some high-energy protests in the streets. Thus far it appears the Army under General Munir is getting the upper hand because it is effectively eroding the power base of the PTI through threats against many of the high-profile members of Imran Khan's PTI. We are likely to see a substantial rise in General Munir's power once he ensures that a majority of Corps Commanders of his choice are appointed by October 2023. Lt Gen Faiz Hameed the former DG ISI who is hugely favoured by Imran Khan appears to have been marginalised. Gen Munir is slowly ensuring that he has full control over the Army but there is yet no certainty of the situation.

What could be debated in this situation is whether the above crisis is an existential threat to Pakistan. This does not seem to be, as Pakistan has

seen much of the same before; only this time the economy too being in a poor state the unpredictability factor is much higher. However, it appears Pakistan, will pull through and will be bailed out by the US, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

With the Pakistan Army in the grip of factionalism and attempting to maintain national stability, its campaign against the TTP has lacked lustre this time and the concept of employing soft power at the outset that Gen Asim Munir has declared, is flawed. It requires a strong kinetic response followed up by doses of soft power. Besides this, much has to be done to neutralise the negatives arising out of the extremist ideology which promotes chaos through issues such as blasphemy laws and the pursuit of minorities.

Radicalisation and its Dangers

The majority of Pakistani society was slow in ferment towards radicalisation. The political community did not get immediately affected as was evident from the results in elections where the radicals made only a marginal impact till 2012. However, over time the writ of the radicals has increased dramatically. The symbolic juncture for drastic change was the assassination of Salman Taseer in 2011, the governor of Punjab, at the hands of Mumtaz Qadri a policeman in service with Pakistan's Punjab police. Qadri was promoted to a household name with no resistance from the state. It was around this time that the Pakistan Army commenced getting the first indicators that it had overplayed its ideology card. In fact, right after the 2007 incident involving the entry of the Pakistan Army into Lal Masjid, internal militancy gathered weight. It came to a head post the next major set of events—the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) attack on Karachi airport in June 2014 and the Army Public School Peshawar on 16 December 2014, which saw the launch of Pakistan Army's Operation Zarb-e-Azb in full intensity from 2014 to 2018. One-third

The international community has reasons to feel concerned, especially because of Pakistan's nuclear weapons which are in a state of tenuous command and control.

of the Pakistan army's active brigades were deployed for the operation. The tactics followed by the Pakistan Army was bewildering. Entire villages in Swat and parts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa had been forcibly vacated to allow Pakistan's gunships to rake the built-up areas.[3] Such tactics obviously increase radicalisation.

The international community has reasons to feel concerned, especially because of Pakistan's nuclear weapons which are in a state of tenuous command and control. The US probably got wind of the deteriorating state of things early enough and changed tack to some extent by backing Pakistan to control the internal situation in Afghanistan and the region in general. The refurbishment package for the F-16s was also linked to this. However, the reality is that the hard money that is required for recovery is not coming Pakistan's way. Without a disciplined approach and strict international oversight, a recovery is yet too far; the first question is that of survival and the manner in which the inevitable violence will manifest. However, the possibility remains far from Pakistan's weak political leadership and the Pakistan army attempting to execute anything that will draw India into the already complex situation.

Time is running out. Any bailout that the international community considers will take time to manifest; it's the interim period which is really challenging. There is much talk of implosion and the potential move of masses of population towards the international borders. The latter will bring with it another element of chaos which will add to the already existing turmoil. In all this, can the Pakistan army meet all the demands that are placed upon it?

Conclusion

The PDM government could have endeared itself to those pushing the peace narrative with India but it has remained halfway. To its credit, the ceasefire at the LoC has been held since 25 February 2021. However, recent utterances by Shahbaz Sharif inspired no confidence as he harped on the same issues, ostensibly to retain some hard-line support and the Army's backing. Logic dictates that Pakistan's economic situation will not allow it to provoke India lest the spiral of escalation becomes uncontrolled. Yet, there will be a segment within Pakistan's hard-liners that would rue the loss of all that was invested in the turbulence created in J&K. Thus, Pakistan is unlikely to pull back altogether from the sponsoring of proxy war and will work towards the retention of influence in J&K. The new-found opportunities in Punjab would also need to be exploited and the feasibility of bringing these together with the J&K opportunities would always remain a priority. Political elements in Pakistan will always play the politics which exploit the negatives of Indo-Pak relations to create opportunities for themselves. Not until a stable government comes to power and has the backing of the Pakistan Army, will these elements relent and allow peace a chance. The connection with China and its dependence on it for economic bailouts will always constrain Pakistan from changing its stance towards India. We can expect a dynamic situation to prevail with threats changing, contingent upon the changes in Pakistan's economic situation. For those who imagine the implosion of Pakistan and its inability to remain a coherent state it should be remembered that the effects of that scenario could be much more unpredictable and much less under our control;

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hence much more difficult to respond to. As a final word Pakistan is likely to survive the chaos and continue to be an irritant for India.

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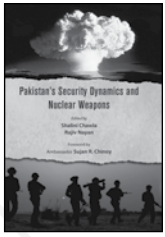
Book Reviews

Pakistan's Security Dynamics and Nuclear Weapons
Shalini Chawla and Rajiv Nayan (eds)



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Namita Barthwal

Pakistan's nuclear thinking, doctrine, and posture are critical for Indian policymakers and the international security community. For Pakistan, nuclear arsenals are rationalised as an ultimate guarantee of security, a deterrent to Indian conventional military superiority, and an umbrella to pursue a proxy war through terrorism. The book, *Pakistan's Security Dynamics and Nuclear Weapons*, co-edited by Dr Shalini Chawla and Dr Rajiv Nayan is an attempt to gain a deeper understanding of Pakistan's intricate security dynamics from a large number of experts in a wide range of disciplines. The book is divided into three sections with a number of chapters in each section covering the overarching theme of the section.

The first section is about the Pakistani state's various security facets. Experts have attempted to identify Pakistan's most pressing problems, such as the country's economy and its ongoing crisis, the complexities of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), regional extremism and

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terrorism, the issue of Baloch marginalisation, the Indus Water Treaty, and Pakistan's perpetual Afghanistan problem.

Lieutenant General Ata Hasnain discusses Zia's doctrine in great detail in the second chapter. The three pillars of Pakistan's strategy against India examined by the General are: maintaining a nuclear balance with India, using irregular warfare as a form of hybrid conflict, and religious radicalism. The chapter looks at the reasons Pakistan is likely to continue its intimidation strategy against India, using Jammu and Kashmir as a theatre of operations.

The outline of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is covered in detail in the third chapter by Jayadeva Ranade. China sees the CPEC as a way to increase its influence and global reach, while Pakistan sees the corridor as a way to alleviate its economic problems. The chapter highlights the CPEC's drawbacks for Pakistan and discusses its difficulties. The fourth chapter, written by Tilak Devasher, examines Balochistan's socio-economic marginalisation over the previous seven decades. The chapter details how, despite its strategic importance, Baluchistan is currently a patchwork of conflicts and fault lines that have grown more violent as time passes. The fifth chapter written by Riya Sinha, examines the causes of Pakistan's economic crisis, analysing the deficits in Pakistan's annual budget planning and highlighting missed opportunities for economic reform. This has led to a vicious cycle of external borrowing and debt default. The Indus Water Treaty has been a source of debate in both India and Pakistan. The sixth chapter written by Dr Uttam Kumar Sinha, provides details of the treaty, critical Indian projects questioned by Pakistan, and potential options that rest with India. The author brings out that though India-Pakistan's strained relationship is marked by increasing mistrust, the treaty has endured. The final chapter in this section is written by Dr Shakti Sinha. It elaborates on Pakistan's Afghanistan conundrum. The seventh chapter makes the case that Afghanistan is a result of Pakistan's internal dynamics, specifically the military's desire to "become and remain

the sole arbiter of power within the country." According to the author, Pakistan's Afghanistan strategy has sought to "prevent an alleged fear of being encircled by an India-Afghanistan alliance."

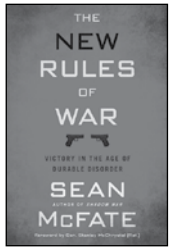
The Second Section focuses on Pakistan's Army, Navy and Air Force. Starting with the eighth chapter, Lieutenant General DS Hooda outlines the goals, prevailing ideologies, organisational culture, and values of the Pakistan Army. Although the Pakistani Army claims to support a democratic system, in reality, it favours its own authority over all institutions of the country. The Army's interests and belief in unconventional warfare are covered in this chapter. The author offers insight into the traditional war-fighting theory of the Army as well as what the future holds. Air Vice Marshal Amit Aneja in the ninth chapter writes a thorough history of the Pakistan Air Force (PAF) and its Deterrence strategy. The author discusses the crucial issue of using air power while under nuclear threat and provides insight into Pakistan Strategic Air Force Command, one of the PAF's primary commands. Pakistan's ambition to acquire a sea-based nuclear deterrent is critical for regional nuclear dynamics, and the tenth chapter by Dr Vijay Sakhuja provides a comprehensive understanding of its naval strategic thinking and policy formulations.

Section Three is specific to nuclear issues. It elaborates on and evaluates the nuclear dimensions of Pakistan and the debate around the presence of Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNWs), Pakistan's broad strategy, missile build-up, nuclear proliferation, and full spectrum deterrence. Dr Rajiv Nayan, in the eleventh chapter, provides a comprehensive analysis of Pakistan's nuclear grand strategy. It focuses on India to mobilise resources and provide legitimacy to its nuclear program, but the grand strategy is to establish it as a custodian of the Islamic civilisation, which may facilitate its hegemony over a broad region. The chapter elaborates on Pakistan's objectives, its proliferation network, alliances and the grand strategy post-Balakot strikes. Dr Shalini Chawla, in the twelfth chapter, traces the genesis of the nuclear doctrine and assesses what Pakistan

implies by achieving Full Spectrum Deterrence. She suggests that India needs to strengthen its strategic posture towards Pakistan. Pakistan has a selection of air, ground, and sea-launched ballistic and cruise missiles with a range of capabilities. Professor Rajaram Nagappa in the thirteenth chapter provides a thorough analysis of Pakistan's ballistic and cruise missiles. According to the chapter, Pakistan appears to be far from developing a credible second-strike capability. It also details Pakistan's missile project. In the fourteenth chapter, Dr Manpreet Sethi addresses India's approach, which treats all nuclear weapons equally, and defends the logic and justification of TNWs from Pakistan's perspective. She makes a strong case that Islamabad's employment of TNWs will not result in any renunciations of India's massive retaliation policy. Pakistan's nuclear development was heavily dependent on outside help, and the country's network of proliferators did raise some concerns. The fifteenth chapter co-authored by Arjun Anand and Aarushi Vikram, offers some insight into the recent history and projected future of Pakistan's network of nuclear proliferation.

In conclusion, Dr Shalini Chawla and Dr Rajiv Nayan place four critical outcomes of the book for further assessment to determine Pakistan's nuclear posture in the future: first, Pakistan's reliance on nuclear weapons is likely to increase due to insecurity; second, the nuclear arsenal is expected to expand with Chinese support; third, Pakistan uses a low nuclear threshold to gain strategic advantage and fourth, Pakistan will continue to highlight the dangers of a probable nuclear war in the region.

The New Rules of War: Victory in the Age of Durable Disorder
Sean McFate



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Anuradha Oinam

In the book *The New Rules of War* the author Sean McFate a former paratrooper and contractor, who later became a professor, writes that in the changing world order, war remains a constant—but warfare is evolving incessantly. States that used to be the sole legitimate entities in warfighting tend to hire new actors to fight on their behalf based on ideologies or other interests. Similarly, defeating an enemy does not remain confined only to conquering territories and killing their troops but to influencing others quickly by using tools, mediums and cunning strategies. It seems modern war is one-step ahead of the traditional way of war-fighting, as it is 'more than warfare and more to warfare than killing'.

By acknowledging this emerging war-fighting trend, the author focuses on a few critical questions: why has America stopped winning wars, why the West continues to lose wars, and what are the new rules of war the West should adapt to for winning modern war/conflicts? Introspecting the historical accounts of wars since the end of WW II until today, it is tough to exemplify any winning war fought by the West. A point in case is wars in Korea, Vietnam, Panama, Somalia, Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan and Syria where despite having the strongest militaries

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and sophisticated weapons victory was partial or incomplete. The author opines that this is because of strategic atrophy or strategic incompetence, since the West still believes in the model of fighting conventional wars. Winning a war by killing more enemies or seizing territories is irrelevant today. Instead, the author asserts what matters is where you are when the war is ended. A noteworthy point, which the author stresses, is the lack of knowledge about the contemporary war ideology among the war futurists of the West. Influenced by Hollywood they find it difficult to comprehend wars where bullets are no longer as effective as non-kinetic elements such as information warfare and influence operations.

The author highlights ten *New Rules of War* the West needs to be trained in to prevail in the age of durable disorder and win modern wars/conflicts. In *Rule 1: Conventional War is Dead*; McFate urges the West to change their old method of war-fighting approach. Non-state actors through terrorism, ethnic cleansing, and other forms of violence have adopted a new war-fighting style surpassing conventional war. Rivals of the West, such as Russia and China, no longer fight conventional wars. In *Rule 2: Technology Will Not Save Us,* the author asserts that technology is no longer the decisive weapon; instead, low-tech will be used in future wars. He cautions that if the West invests in sophisticated weapons and neglects to invest in humans, they will lose in modern war. *Rule 3: There is No Such Thing as War or Peace—Both Coexist Always,* says that war and peace co-exist and conflicts hibernate in peace. Countries like Russia and China use disguised war as peace to achieve their political interests. They use non-military tools to conceal their action in the war. Russia calls it 'New Generation Warfare', and China, the 'Three Warfares Strategy' and its brinkmanship tactics or the escalate-deescalate method—to confuse the West. *Rule 4: Hearts and Minds Do not Matter,* critiques the West's assumptions of 'winning hearts and minds' as counterinsurgency (COIN) tactics, which is irrelevant today. In other words, the West will not win the people's hearts by providing social services such as building and

rebuilding nations, roads, and hospitals. If such was the case, why has the West lost wars in Afghanistan and Iraq despite their huge investment in humanitarian aid and social services. The author suggests new COIN strategies the West needs to focus on and states that building foreign legions can be another alternative, as they can provide long terms boots on the ground. *Rule 5: The Best Weapons Do Not Fire Bullets*, highlights that in modern warfare, the utility of force has been declining as countries like Russia use refugees as effective weapons rather than firepower. A point in the case is the bombing of Syria by Russia to send a stream of refugees to Europe—to destabilise Europe. That is the indirect way of winning a modern war. In the new war, influence is more powerful than bullets. Therefore, the West should use influence as weapons and a superior narrative of the conflict as weapons, to win against its rivals. *Rule 6: Mercenaries Will Return,* underlines the increasing involvement of mercenaries/private military companies/private security companies in modern warfare. The author argues that mercenaries are going to stay for fighting in non-conventional wars and in fact, they will change the course of modern warfare.

A new security vacuum is created with the erosion of states, especially in weak, fragile or failed states, hence *Rule 7: New Types of World Powers Will Rule*, highlights the emergence of new elites such as insurgents, caliphates, narco-states, warlords' kingdoms, and mercenary overlords to fill this void. Gradually, they might breed into regional superpowers to rule in these states. In *Rule 8: There Will be Wars Without States***,** the author problematises how the West fails to see a real war; instead, they portray or assume it as a law enforcement challenge. McFate opines that narco-war is as bloody as terrorism. Narco-war is an actual war in modern times without states involved in it. Another is the privatised wars fought by mercenaries or private forces as they fight a real war without any states involved. South America and Africa provide classic examples of these forms of war.

Rule 9: Shadow Wars Will Dominate, is the extrapolation of Rule 8. Private forces or mercenaries are offered plausible deniability, which is more influential than firepower in this day and age of information. In the shadow wars, 'information is used as a weapon, plausible deniability as a tactic, and subversion as a strategy' by states, which the West fails to accept. For instance, Russia is a disinformation superpower in the battle of narratives. In *Rule 10: Victory is Fungible,* the author elucidates how winning a battle differs from winning a war in modern-day warfare. One can win a battle militarily but lose the war. A point in the case is the US where it along with its allies lost in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria. In modern warfare, tactical dominance is insufficient and tacticians need strategic education.

Sean McFate gives a holistic view and an extensive account of the subject, based on his personal experiences. He cautions that states exploiting conventional tactics tend to lose maximum wars. He affirms that if the West does not adapt to the new rules of war, there will be more defeats than victories in the coming days. Hence, to win a future war, he gives a few suggestions: jettisoning the concept of war; understanding modern warfare; adopting plausible deniability; using non-kinetic weapons like deception and influence; using mercenaries and offering a strategic education and increasing the number of wars artists who understand these concepts. The book reflects the author's in-depth research and reproduces his vast experiences with detailed relevant illustrations. This book benefits young scholars working on security studies and refreshes the minds of serving officers, veterans and war strategists by helping them think out of the box.

The book is a case study of the US and West's experience in war fighting. It cannot generalise the same method to every country, especially the smaller and developing countries. The methods may be compatible with the global military aims of a superpower like the United States. But for others, the methods may need application after modifications due to

regional or local dynamics. Another limitation of the book is regarding Rule 1. The ongoing Russia-Ukraine crisis is a full-fledged conventional war fought by mercenaries or private forces, which falsifies Rule 1.

In a nutshell, the book is all about why the US or the West fails to win modern wars against rivals, what other countries can do is learn from and adapt to these new rules of war and in this manner prepare themselves for modern-day war fighting.

Notes for Contributors

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