Indian Military Modernization Under the Modi Regime

Dost Muhammad Barrech¹, Arhama Siddiqa²

¹Department of International Relations, University of Balochistan (UOB), Quetta
²Research Fellow at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI)

Abstract

The past few decades have seen a structural shift in international politics, with multilateralism replacing bilateralism, as evidenced by China’s rise in security and economic domains. The turn of the 21st century has also seen the rise of another aspiring power - India. With the assumption of office by Prime Minister Modi in 2014, the Indian military has been going through fundamental changes. Under the ‘Joint Indian Armed Forces and the Land Warfare Doctrines’, India aims to achieve greater strategic outreach. Indian military modernization since 2014 witnessed a steep rise. India being a strategic ally of the US, has been emboldened to modernize its military that, by and large, will make New Delhi more belligerent, augmenting Pakistan’s security concerns. Though a lot has been written on India’s military modernization, this paper seeks to address the gap in the literature on how the modernization factor has come about, driven primarily by the Hindutva ideology underpinned by the Modi regime. By incorporating the neo-realistic perspective, this paper argues that unless countermeasures are taken, Indian aggression and military modernization might trigger a full-blown war in the foreseeable future especially given that Modi may come back to power in 2023.

Keywords:
India Military Doctrine, LEMOA, COMCASA, BECA, Russia, Hypersonic Missiles

¹ The author is former Research Associate of the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI), currently, is a lecturer in the International Relations (IR) Department at the University of Balochistan (UOB), Quetta. He is also a Ph.D. (IR) candidate at the International Islamic University Islamabad (IIUI). He can be reached at bareach87@gmail.com
² The author is Research Fellow at the Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad (ISSI) She is a LUMS and Warwick alumna. Her research focus is Middle East and great power rivalry in South Asia. She can be reached at arhama.siddiqa@gmail.com
Introduction

It goes without saying that defining ‘power’ in the arena of international relations is an uphill task. The past few decades have seen a structural shift in international politics, with multilateralism replacing bilateralism, as evidenced by China’s rise in both the security and economic domains. The turn of the 21st century has also seen the rise of another aspiring power - India. With the assumption of office by Prime Minister Modi in 2014, there were expectations of great changes in the Indian military. However, despite some policy reforms, his first term in office was underwhelming, to say the least. During his second term, the Indian military has been going through fundamental changes. In 2019, the post of Chief of Defense staff was created. The bona fide objective was to create a center of the joint command of the entire army (encompassing land, air and water forces) and leads the structural and intellectual; transformations with the military body.¹

One of the problems that past Indian governments have highlighted is the fact that over the last 40 years, India has been the world’s largest arms importer. Hence, during his tenure, Modi has placed weight on building up India’s domestic defense industry. This falls under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat (self-sufficient India) initiative. Under this, the government has also focused on defense exports, which grew by almost 700 percent between 2016 and 2019.²

Moreover, the Indian military is engaging more on the military diplomacy front, which is evidenced by the signing of foundational agreements with the US, which have opened up more avenues for Indo-US military ties. This pathway also includes increased engagement with consonant countries, such as those in the QUAD Quadrilateral Security Dialogue, which consists of the US, Japan, India and Australia, aimed at countering China’s rise. Furthermore, under the ‘Joint Indian Armed Forces and the Land Warfare Doctrines’,³ India aims to achieve a greater strategic outreach. The key features of India’s military modernization under this doctrine include strengthening the Indian forces, the stipulation of limited war, upgrading military power and developing counterforce capabilities.

Though a lot has been written on India’s military modernization, this paper seeks to address the gap in the literature on how the modernization has come about, driven primarily by Hindutva ideology underpinned by the Modi regime. The methodology used in this paper is based on secondary sources and adopt an analytical method to assess the process of Indian military modernization.

By incorporating the neo-realistic perspective, this paper argues that unless countermeasures are taken, Indian belligerence and military modernization might trigger a full-blown war in the foreseeable future especially given that Modi may come to power in 2023. This research paper first provides a brief overview of steps undertaken by Modi to modernize India’s military and includes summaries of the Indo-US foundational documents, Indian Cold Start Military Doctrine and Indian Headways in Hypersonic Missiles. It will also assess the implications of Modi’s agenda (with regard to the Indian military doctrine) for the region at large.

Theoretical Framework

According to the theory of offensive realism, the best way for great powers to survive in a system of anarchy is to maximize their power and pursue hegemony. This gives rise to the notion of collective security to achieve a balance of power. This will inevitably lead to more conflict since they are aiming to revise the established order. India’s military doctrine has been dominated by the principles of offensive neorealism, which favors its incursions into enemy territory. In light of the growing ‘Saffronisation’ in India, there are increasing modes of thought which adhere to aggressive posturing and force operation, especially with reference to its neighbor Pakistan. Its offensive military aims to include retributive costs on the enemy, which usually involve capturing territory to gain leverage in the post-war negotiations.

This theory is important in explaining India’s quest to acquire more power. For realists, military power is central. Especially, in light of its border issues with both Pakistan and China, New Delhi has invested heavily in expanding and modernizing its military arsenal. In this regard, concurrent with investing heavily in uplifting the security on its borders, India has also entered into bilateral arrangements with various powers (most significant of which is the US). In order to counter any semblance of asymmetry, India has been pursuing the development of indigenous capacities, which include hypersonic missiles as well as defence arrangements in its neighbourhood. Through its military modernization, India has sought and achieved the status of a regional hegemon in South Asia. The neorealist principle of balance of power is also applicable to India when looking at the attributes which have shaped its foreign policy with neighbours Bangladesh and Sri Lanka.
Here, it is also important to note the US’s accommodation of India’s rise. Washington does not view New Delhi as a threat but rather as an ally and a vital component in countering China. This can also be evidenced by Lisa Curtis (former Deputy Assistant to the US President Donald Trump) when she stated that “the US supports India’s rise as a power and net security provider in the Indian Ocean ‘and beyond’. Subsequent Indo-US deals also are proof of the close relationship the countries share. In its turn, India openly supports the US in its objectives, especially when it comes to the concept of ‘a free and open Indo-Pacific’.

Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA)

The Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), signed between India and the US in 2016, has played a substantial role in bilateral military cooperation between the two countries. This initiative includes the three basic agreements; the Logistics Support Agreement (LSA), Communications Interoperability and Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA), and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-spatial Cooperation (BECA). These agreements aim at increasing the foundational substructure and interoperability between the militaries through common standards and systems. Moreover, the sale and transfer of high-end technologies are also included in the domain. Essentially, LEMOA provides an access to the military facilities of both sides so that they can hold joint exercises, training, replenishment, and recruitment.

It is no secret that the US does not need to build its military facilities from the scratch. Unlike Afghanistan and Iraq, India is already well-equipped militarily. The LEMOA agreement is beneficial for India as it helps further its ambitions to be a regional power, allowing it to enhance the strategy of “Akhand Bharat” (greater India) and become a regional hegemon. LEMOA allows the two allies to use each other’s military facilities to counter growing Chinese influence in Asia and to engage in counter-terrorism. Similarly, this agreement was an integral part of the Obama’s administration strategy to contain China and its rapidly increasing influence in the region. The agreement allows the US Navy to deploy 60% of its surface ships in the Indo-Pacific region in the near future but also provides India with a strategic partnership in this regard. Moreover, India now has access to US filaments

7 “US Navy to have 60% surface ships in Indo-Asia Pacific region,” The Economic Times, July 12, 2018.
across the globe, primarily in the Asia-Pacific, as it is important for New Delhi to counter growing threats from both the Chinese and Russian quarters. Furthermore, the agreement also integrates humanitarian support and disaster relief for both countries.

Even though there were fears of India becoming another military base for the US before signing the LEMOA, these anticipations were put to rest by the former Indian Defense Minister Manohar Parrikar when he said, “It (LEMOA) doesn’t have anything to do with the setting up of the base.” In light of the LEMOA agreement, the US Navy carried out its long-range anti-submarine warfare and maritime surveillance aircraft, P-8 Poseidon, from India’s strategic base in Andaman and Nicobar Islands. In addition, the Indian military had also bought US platforms such as the C-130 Hercules special operations planes and the Globe master C-17 strategic air lifters. All in all, the LEMOA highlights the growing cooperation and partnership between the Indian and the US militaries and focuses on strengthening the defense partnership between the two in South Asia and also the Indian Ocean Region.

Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA)

In 2018, the US and India reached a security agreement known as Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) during its ‘2+2’ Ministerial Dialogue. Prior to this, India signed the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) in 2016. It was the first of the three foundational agreements that grant client state access to acquire high-tech military equipment from the United States. The last of this series was BECA, signed in November 2020.

It is a variation of Communication Interoperability and Security Memorandum Agreements (CISMOA) signed by the United States and its


foreign partners such as France and Singapore. This agreement will remain in effect for ten years and can be terminated with six month notice.\(^1\)

COMCASA provides India with access to high end military equipment. For example, this offers Indian military access to secure and encrypted communication equipment installed on its aircrafts such as C-130, C-17 and P-81 aircraft and Apache and Chinook helicopters. Under this agreement, India will also get access to the Sea Guardian drones along with IFF and VHS systems which are immune from spoofing. In addition, this also establishes a legal framework to transfer secure and encrypted communication equipment.\(^2\)

The agreement was on hold for the past ten years due to concerns on the Indian side that it might compromise the freedom of its security apparatus. However, the rogue Modi regime focused on enhancing its military strength and reached an agreement regardless of criticism. As New Delhi carefully carves its relations with Russia, it is yet to be seen how these agreements will affect India’s relations with Russia.

However, there has been a major shift in the US policy towards China since the Obama administration, which is complemented by its extensive engagement with India. In 2016, India was given STA-1 (Strategic Trade Authorization-1) status, and India seeks Nuclear supplier group membership (NSG) which is opposed by China. In 2017 as the tensions between China and India spiraled downward, the realization of India as a strategic counterweight to China’s rise has taken significance as she is also a member of the Middle East Quad. This depicts the strategic significance of India not only for the Indo-Pacific region, but beyond.\(^3\) Moreover, since the ostensible stall between these countries has been averted and India enjoys the status of “Major Defense Partner” of the United States in South Asia. Last but not the least, for the region, it only portrays remilitarization with sophisticated and advanced weapons/ defense systems. For Pakistan, the major takeaway is to adopt a broader foreign policy rather than putting all eggs in one basket. The


scope of its defense and economic ties should be expanded based on national interests rather than aligning merely with the rising sun.

Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA)

The signing of the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) between India and the US marked the conclusion of the triumvirate “foundational agreements” that aims to fortify military collaboration between India and the US. BECA was signed during the ’2+2’ ministerial dialogue held in 2020. It stems from an earlier agreement in 2002 called the General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA).

This agreement allows both India and the US to share high-end military technology, which includes confidential satellite material as well as other sensitive data. It also provides India with American geospatial intelligenceaffording real-time access to American geospatial intelligence that ultimately increases the accuracy of automated systems and weapons such as missiles and armed drones and further to this, India will also get map information and satellite images. Moreover, it will equip it with topographical and aeronautical data, including advanced products that will aid in efficient navigation and detecting targets on land, air and sea.

Secondly, BECA will improve the bilateral Air Force cooperation between India and the US. Consequently, this enables fighter aircrafts to reach their target in an effective and efficient manner. Thirdly, the agreement also complements the Indian Missile program as it will provide Indian batteries with a high-quality GPS to circumnavigate missiles with real-time intelligence to target enemy points. The sharing of ‘military grade data’ can help draw more accurate coordinates. Last but not the least, along with military purposes, equipment under the auspices of this agreement can also assist in monitoring natural disasters. Moreover, this enables the exchange of liaison officers between India and the US. Hence, strengthening the cooperation between the two countries.

From an Indian perspective, any such agreement is pertinent for securing its northern and western borders. Since Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) rose to power, the warmongering characteristics of India is on an upward trajectory. India’s aggressive actions such as intrusion into Pakistani airspace in 2019, successive skirmishes with Chinese forces at the Dokhlam region and most recently accidental landing of an Indian missile on Pakistan’s soil in 2022

showcase that New Delhi might use these systems for its malign intentions against its rivals such as Pakistan and China. This leads an already volatile South Asian region towards complete annihilation, especially in case of any miscalculation with irreversible consequences.  

All in all, BECA, along with COMCASA and LEMOA, provide India with a unique opportunity to become US’s top strategic partner in the Asian region.

Indian Cold Start Military Doctrine

The Indian Cold Start military doctrine was initiated after a terror attack on the Indian parliament in 2001. The Indian army under the Modi regime has further bolstered the Cold Start military doctrine. New Delhi is well aware that since its archrival Pakistan is a nuclear power, waging a nuclear war would be catastrophic for both states. Therefore, it has adopted the Cold Start military doctrine via-a-vis Pakistan. The policy is aimed at deploying troops on the Indian Western border in case the situation remains disposed towards a full-blown war with Pakistan. The doctrine is believed to have been allowing Indian forces to carry out continued attacks within the territory of Pakistan, thwarting a nuclear retaliation from the former.

It also involves a unified battle group of the Indian military to conduct operations. The Cold Start doctrine (CSD) enables the Indian army to take offensive operations against Pakistan within 48 hours, taking the enemy by surprise. Though the idea of CSD received credentials after the Indian Operation Parakarm started after an assault on the Indian Parliament in December 2001, the operation, by and large, exposed Indian weak and unprepared offensive power to mobilize troops along the border. After the attack on the Indian parliament, New Delhi’s deployment of its army to the border took nearly a month, which gave sufficient time to its adversary Pakistan to take countermeasures. In this regard, Army Chief Gen.

Deepak Kapoor - appointed in 2009 - maintained that “a major leap in our approach to the conduct of operations has been the successful firming-in of the 'Cold Start' strategy.”  

For a long time, India was in a state of denial and did not accept the CSD. But the Indian former Chief of Army Staff General Bipin Rawat (2017) publicly endorsed the CSD in an interview, stated that


“The Cold Start doctrine exists for conventional military operations. Whether we have to conduct conventional operations for such strikes is a decision well thought through, involving the government and the Cabinet Committee on Security”.19

Rawat’s confession puts Pakistan in a deep quandary, resulting in the bolstering of deterrence posture and the building of low-yield tactical nuclear weapons by Islamabad. CSD impelled Pakistan to eschew the no-first-use nuclear doctrine vis-à-vis India. The Indian limited war under CSD within Pakistan’s territory encompasses mobilization of airpower and mechanized infantry formations within 48-72 hours of military war with Pakistan. Such Blitzkrieg-style operations, arguably, require coordination between the Indian Air Force and Indian Army to demonstrate overwhelming conventional prowess. According to the Indian experts, the CSD is attributed to counter Pakistan’s asymmetric warfare of supporting non-state actors against India. More worryingly, launching air strikes within the territory of Pakistan under the CSD will head both nuclear states towards a nuclear war.20

Even though the CSD aims at avoiding a full-scale war, it nevertheless is making strides towards making inroads within Pakistan. The element of surprise with regard to an adversary is an important component of the CSD.21 By launching limited strikes within Pakistan, New Delhi desires to avoid a full-scale retaliation from Islamabad but still maintains the power show with its adversary.

Russian S-400 missiles defense system bolstering Indian Military

It is no secret that Indian statecrafts are perceptive and are reluctant to keep all eggs in one basket. New Delhi maintains a balanced approach in crafting foreign policy in regional and international politics, as evidenced from its purchase of weapons by both the US and Russia. Indian PM Modi espouses the adage “the enemy of my enemy is my friend”. He has purchased Russian S-400 missiles, negating US concerns about not buying Russian weaponry. The S-400 air defence missile systems deal amounting to a massive USD 5.5 billion was inked in 2018 between India and Russia. New Delhi believes that Russian missiles are productive in countering both China and Pakistan.22 Intriguingly, the deal overlooks the US legislation entitled Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA), through which

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20 Ibid.
21 Ibid.
Washington will penalize its allies who dare to purchase weapons from Russia. CAATSA is a political tool of the US, seeking to decrease Russian rising clout in Eurasia and Europe, curbing Iran’s missiles program and limiting North Korean weapons of mass destruction.\(^23\)

The US, which in January 2021 imposed CAATSA on Turkey after purchasing S-400 missiles from Russia, now seems to be least bothered when it comes to applying the same law to India. New Delhi is unconcerned about CAASTA and believes that it is the US law, not the law of the US. Washington is fully cognizant of the fact that India is a vital player in the containment of China. Hence, sanctioning it would prove counterproductive, and they would end up losing a crucial ally in the Indo-Pacific region. The US, rather, is looking forward to attracting the Indian market, given that India is a huge exporter of weapons and approximately 86% of its military equipment and weapons are the Russian origin. After mending ties in 2001, the US started exporting weapons and equipment to New Delhi.

Applying CAATSA to New Delhi will diminish the military power of India vis-à-vis China and will bring New Delhi and Moscow further closer – something which Washington will never want to happen.\(^24\) The bona fide objective of India in purchasing Russian missiles is to counter China and Pakistan in the region. India, consequently, deployed S-400 missiles in the Punjab province, which has constantly been increasing the security dilemma for Beijing and Islamabad. The Indian missile system is stationed at both borders with Pakistan and China.

New Delhi desperately needs missiles on the Line of Actual Control (LAC), due to its standoff with China. The deployment, by all means, will strengthen Indian air defence capacity. India appears to be in an advantageous position and is now capable of defending its air defence bubble against missiles, aircraft, rockets and cruise missiles.\(^25\) Mansoor Ahmed, an analyst working as a senior fellow at the Center for International Strategic Studies, Islamabad, has argued that the deployment of S-400 missiles would pave the way for military miscalculation vis-à-vis China and Pakistan. "India may be emboldened to resort to military adventurism, believing its 'Cold Start' doctrine for punishing strikes and destabilizing incursions into Pakistan", he...


Admittedly, Pakistan’s conventional deterrent is disturbed by S-400 missiles. One of the analysts argued that “Suppression or destruction of enemy air defense (SEAD/DÉAD) will likely have taken greater priority for the Pakistani Air Force in response to the S-400 acquisition.”

Indian Headways in Hypersonic Missiles

India, under the Modi regime, is believed to have been making rapid progress in building hypersonic missiles. The latest report unveiled by an independent Congressional Research Service (CRS) claims that the US, China and Russia have sophisticated hypersonic missiles programmes, but there are several countries like India, France, Japan, Australia and Germany that possess the most advanced hypersonic weapons technology. New Delhi, in collaboration with Moscow. It has been developing Mach 7 hypersonic cruise and BrahMos II missiles, the report added. Modi is on a journey of building a Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle programme as an indigenous, dual-capable hypersonic cruise missile tested Mach 6 scramjet in 2019, currently operating nearly 12 hypersonic wind tunnels. It is interesting to note that India has surpassed the US in hypersonic technology. Chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, Senator Jack Reed, has argued that in the domain of Hypersonic technology India, China and Russia appear to be gaining an advantage over the US.

“We are about to emerge for the first time in the history of the world in a trilateral nuclear competition. No longer bilateral. The Soviet Union, the United States -- no, it's China, Russia, and the United States,” Senator Reed added. Testing the indigenous hypersonic weapon is a great milestone for the incumbent Indian government. Rajnath Singh, Indian Defense Minister, maintained that a successful test of the hypersonic missile was a monumental achievement and attributed it to Modi’s vision of making India self-sufficient.

India is actively engaged with Russia in hypersonic cruise missiles. Hypersonic missiles are reckoned to be travelling five times faster than the speed of sound. They have two categories encompassing glide vehicles and cruise missiles powered by engines supposed to be launched into space before returning to their points. Experts opine that Indian Hypersonic cruise missiles

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27 Ibid.


29 Ibid.

are hard to be detected because they have the ability to fly at lower altitudes and are more maneuverable in space.\textsuperscript{31}

As far as Indian officials are concerned, China is making hypersonic missiles exponentially that is disturbing the balance of power in the region. Rajnath Singh, in this regard, articulates that India ought to develop hypersonic missiles to maintain credible deterrence. "In order to maintain a minimum credible deterrence, we have to immediately think about hypersonic cruise missile development. It will be a revolutionary step in our defense sector, and we all have to put our efforts into it.” Singh added.\textsuperscript{32} Singh also tweeted that Indian DRDO achieved a great milestone by successfully testing Hypersonic Technology Demonstrator Vehicle based on an indigenous scramjet propulsion system.

New Delhi, with this great achievement, will make further headways in critical technologies in the next phase. DRDO is also working on a BrahMos-II hypersonic anti-ship missile Singh added. According to reports, “it is expected to obtain over six times the speed of sound on hypersonic scramjet technology”.\textsuperscript{33}

Indian Military Modernization: Implications for the region

Indian military modernization under the Modi regime disturbs strategic stability overwhelmingly, escalates conventional disparities in South Asia, forcing Pakistan to rely more on nuclear weapons to thwart foreseen Indian belligerence and aggression. New Delhi, with rapid economic growth, spends massively on its military, having the contemplation of becoming an emerging global power.\textsuperscript{34} Walter C Ladwig maintains that “to date, the Indian military modernization has largely been about recapitalizing the force and attempting to replace outdated platforms. Thus, it has not had a significant impact on the military balance.”\textsuperscript{35} India has been transforming its military modernization using sophisticated technological advancements that invariably put Pakistan under tremendous pressure as Islamabad, due to economic constraints, cannot afford to implement its military modernization.


\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.


\textsuperscript{35} Walter C Ladwig-III, (Assistant Professor in International Relations at King’s College London) in an emailed interview to the author on October 18, 2017.
Admittedly, the most vulnerable country as far as the Indian military modernization is concerned is Pakistan. China, on the other hand, is economically and politically strong enough to thwart Indian aggression. Against this backdrop, Islamabad will remain a vulnerable to such aggression. According to Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), India in 2020 remained the fifth largest military spender in the world and spent USD$72.9 billion on the military. China, meanwhile, after the US is the second-largest military spender, spent USD$252 billion dollars. Pakistan is nowhere in the race to compete with India in military expenditure. Islamabad, with its weak economy in 2021, spent USD$11 billion dollars. Imbalanced military expenditure ostensibly puts Pakistan at a disadvantageous position.

India continues to embroil in territorial disputes with China and Pakistan. A steep increase in Indian military expenditure will alter the geopolitical landscape of South Asia and will pose grave challenges to both China and Pakistan. New Delhi is in a fierce race to become a great power in the emerging global order. Modi regime is ruthlessly trying to obtain encrypted defense technologies from the US and other defence partners. It is a fait accompli; the US, including the western countries, are supporting India due to commercial interests, including the containment policy of China.

Revolutionizing the Indian military by inking the following defence deals with the US, such as LEMOA, and COMCASA, enhances Indian deterrence capability vis-à-vis China and Pakistan. As mentioned earlier, LEMOA gives access to both the US and India to use each other's bases, ports and air bases and is designed to contain China in the Indo-Pacific, but that will have the ramifications for Pakistan too. COMCASA, on the other hand, granted India encrypted communication equipment embarking on the path of consolidation of the US and Indian naval and air forces to communicate safely during peace and war.

The signing of the BECA between the US and India on the 27th of October 2020 will further complicate the strategic stability of the region. BECA will inevitably modernize the Indian military, giving easy access to capitalize on the US geospatial intelligence and hence paving the way for an increased

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36 Ibid.
accuracy of Indian weapons. All this will prove to be instrumental in fighting wars, geo-spatial intelligence, sailing ships and identifying the location of targets. Under BECA, the US and India can share telephonic intercepts and high-end satellite images. The addition of the aforementioned sophisticated technologies in the Indian military will intensify apprehensions of China and Pakistan, resulting in a disturbance of the balance of power in the region.  

BECA was signed when India was engaged in a standoff with China in Ladakh. One of the crucial components of BECA was to exchange data on Chinese weapons and troops at the Line of Actual Control (LAC). It is a clear manifestation of the US and India that BECA is likely to be used against China. India, in this context, is a bulwark and proxy of the US. Prima facie, great power competition between the US and China is in full swing. The US alone cannot compete with China and desperately requires the services of New Delhi to contain China. Containment of the former will also antagonize Pakistan, which remains an iron brother of Beijing. BECA is extremely likely to trigger a new security dilemma in the region which will no doubt generate an arms race and further will culminate in an exacerbating regional stability.  

The provision of technological advancement to India will accelerate Islamabad’s worries. In this milieu, it is argued that "Pakistan has been consistently highlighting the threats posed to strategic stability in South Asia as a result of the provision of advanced military hardware, technologies and knowledge to India".  

Conclusion  

Modi, after assuming responsibility as the prime minister of India in 2014, made countless efforts in the country's military modernization. Indian skirmishes with China and Pakistan and the US containment policy of China made the environment rife for Modi to move towards military modernization. The “Hindutva” ideology underpinned by Modi has also played a catalyst role in the military modernization of the country. The ideology is based on dominating the region and requires military prowess to threaten neighboring states. New Delhi is lucky enough as geopolitical dividends so far go in its favor on account of the US containment of China. The military modernization

of New Delhi will also materialize the US geopolitical objectives in the region.

Without a doubt, the locus of great power competition has, ostensibly, shifted to the Indo-Pacific region. The domination of Indo-pacific will be a turning point in great power rivalry. India, a strategic ally of the US and a major member of the QUAD, will have the support of the latter members in the Indo-Pacific region.

As the saying goes that “when India sneezes, everybody gets cold”. India’s geopolitical and geo-economics influence in the region cannot be underestimated. India, more worrisomely, is extremely likely to be bolstered by the US in great power competition. The US military pacts with New Delhi, such as the LEMOA, COMCASA, and BECA will have severe implications for the region.

New Delhi is also simultaneously exploiting the Russian market purchased Russian S-400 missiles. Meanwhile, the US continues to remain as mute as a statue as far as Russian S-400 missiles supplies to India are concerned and is unwilling to impose CAATSA on India. As mentioned earlier, India never keeps all eggs in one basket and will continue to exploit both the US and Russian weaponry markets. Even in the prevailing Ukraine crisis, New Delhi has assured Moscow that it will continue to import oil from Russia. Here it is important to note that nearly 85 percent of Indian artillery is of Russian origin. Thus, irritating Moscow will prove counterproductive for New Delhi.

India is in a fierce competition to become a regional as well as a global power. In this context, its military modernization is essential for maintaining domination in the region. However, New Delhi lacks cordial ties with its immediate neighbouring countries, embroiled in territorial and water disputes. In the military sphere, smaller states are unmatchable with India; thus, safe to say that they are left under the shadow of India. However, China and Pakistan are the only states in the region, giving a tough time to New Delhi. India, under the shadow of the US, has constantly been witnessing growing bolstering. Obviously, it is in the US national interest to modernize the Indian military modernization. The more India has militarily modernized vis-à-vis China, the more it will remain instrumental for the US in China’s containment policy. The region is unlikely to remain immune to the implications of Indian military moderation.

In order to counter India, China is striving to enhance its nuclear weapons and hypersonic missiles, while Pakistan is ready to join the Chinese bloc so as to diminish Indian imminent threats. In short, the current Ukraine crisis ascertains that foreign invasion and the possibility of war cannot be ruled out.
In this light, Indian belligerence and military modernization might trigger a full-blown war in the foreseeable future.