



RESEARCH ARTICLE

**India's Quest for a Limited War-fighting Doctrine; Analyzing the Sundarji, Cold Start, Joint Doctrine Indian Armed Force and Land Warfare Doctrine**

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*Abstract*

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*The strategic stability of South Asia predominantly depends on India and Pakistan. However, the Indian quest to indulge Pakistan in a limited war remains a constant threat to the strategic stability of South Asia. The dynamics of strategic stability have remained complex due to the hostile relations between India and Pakistan. India has remained in the process of doctrinal transformation since the 1980s. The Sundarji doctrine, Cold Start, Joint Doctrine (Indian Armed Forces), and Land Warfare doctrine all aim at launching an offensive against Pakistan. To supplement India's ambitious aims in the region, India has frequently introduced innovative war-fighting doctrines. The Indian military's aggressive approach towards the region reflects India's adherence to the principles of offensive realism. The theory of offensive realism promulgates the maximization of power by the dominant states. Therefore, it appropriately defines India's limited warfighting aims in the region. The study provides a comprehensive understanding of prominent Indian war-fighting doctrines and their shortcomings. Consequently, it provides an in-depth knowledge of limited Indian war-fighting doctrines.*

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## Introduction

A military doctrine is one of the essential components of warfighting. A doctrine describes the framework in which the armed forces will be operating. A military doctrine refers to the "fundamental principles" by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions to support national objectives. It is authoritative but requires judgment in application.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, a doctrine defines principles for military forces that are aligned with the national security objectives of the state. Drafting a military doctrine is a challenging task. Military officials must consider the national security objectives of the state.

The first Indian military doctrine was crafted by the then COAS of the Indian Army during the 1980s and is known as the "Sundarji Doctrine." According to the doctrine, India would deploy seven holding corps alongside the border with Pakistan. The holding corps were to repel any Pakistani attack, and the Indian Air Force was to provide air cover for Indian troops. Besides, three strikes corps deployed deep inside India were meant to launch an offensive against Pakistan. The strike corps was to infiltrate Pakistani territory, destroy the Pakistan Army's center of gravity, and divide Pakistan in two.<sup>2</sup>

However, this offensive military doctrine was unable to fulfill India's quest for limited warfighting. The shortcomings of the Sundarji doctrine were exposed during the Operation Parakram, which took place after an attack on the Indian Parliament in 2001.<sup>3</sup> To address the shortcomings of the Sundarji doctrine, India, in 2004, came up with another limited war-fighting plan known as the Cold Start Doctrine (CSD). The Cold Start introduced eight division-sized integrated battle groups (IBGs) with mechanized

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<sup>1</sup> DoD Dictionary, "DoD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms," *Joint Publication*, (2020),1-02, <https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/dictionary.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Syed Kashif Ali, "An Overview of Indo-Pak military doctrines," *Daily Times*, September 8, 2018, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/98383/an-overview-of-indo-pak-military-doctrines/>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

infantry, artillery, and armor. In addition, operating in synergy with the Indian Air Force (IAF), India raised eight IBGs to launch an offensive inside Pakistan and hold territory later to use as a bargaining chip. Furthermore, during the Cold Start, the Indian army's time was reduced from three weeks to 72 hours at most. Under this doctrine, India aimed to keep Pakistan's response under the latter's nuclear threshold.<sup>4</sup>

In response to India's offensive war-fighting aim, Pakistan in 2011 inducted a short-range surface-to-surface ballistic missile, the *Nasr*, that can be equipped with nuclear warheads.<sup>5</sup> Pakistan considers *Nasr* a force multiplier that has enhanced Pakistan's deterrent capability. *Nasr*, according to the then Pakistani Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa, has deterred India from implementing the Cold Start doctrine: "*Nasr* has put cold water on Cold Start."<sup>6</sup> The statement depicts Pakistan's perception of *Nasr* as a stabilizing factor in South Asia.

India introduced two more doctrines, the Joint Doctrine for Indian Armed Forces, and the Land Warfare Doctrine, in 2017 and 2018, respectively. The former validated what India called "surgical strikes" as a response to any terrorist infiltration. Moreover, India shifted from "credible minimum deterrence" to "credible deterrence."<sup>7</sup> The omission of the word "minimum" further complicated the Indian nuclear doctrine. Because of India's growing arsenals, Pakistan has remained skeptical of India's adherence to "credible minimum deterrence." Presently, India

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<sup>4</sup> Franz-Stefan Gady, "Is the Indian Military Capable of Executing the Cold Start Doctrine?" *The Diplomat*, January 29, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/01/is-the-indian-military-capable-of-executing-the-cold-start-doctrine/>.

<sup>5</sup> Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, "Pakistan's *Nasr* Missile: 'Cold Water' Over India's 'Cold Start'?" *The Diplomat*, January 31, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/01/pakistans-nasr-missile-cold-water-over-indias-cold-start/>.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> "Indian Armed Forces Joint Doctrine 2017: A Critical Appraisal," *Daily Times*, March 1, 2018, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/208706/indian-armed-forces-joint-doctrine-2017-critical-appraisal/>.

operates a variety of strategic and tactical nuclear arsenals.<sup>8</sup> In addition, India completed its nuclear triad with the introduction of nuclear-powered submarines. Therefore, Pakistan's skepticism gained firm ground when India officially adhered to credible deterrence.

The following important feature of this doctrine includes India's shift to airstrikes in retaliation for alleged Pakistani-sponsored terrorism.<sup>9</sup> By contextualizing airstrikes in nuclear South Asia, India's adherence to airstrikes is the most destabilizing factor. Any breach of territorial sovereignty by India can erupt into a conflict between India and Pakistan. The Indian post-Pulwama airstrike at Balakot in 2019 and Pakistan's timely response reassured that cross-border airstrikes would remain a destabilizing factor for South Asia. Lastly, the doctrine emphasizes India's capability development and self-reliance through the indigenization of technology.<sup>10</sup>

The Land Warfare Doctrine, under which India aims to fight a war on two and a half fronts against China, Pakistan, and internal security.<sup>11</sup> The idea originates from India's perception of the regional security environment. India aims to counter the perceived threats emerging from China and Pakistan, as India perceives these two countries as competitors in the region.<sup>12</sup>

Land warfare doctrine is a comprehensive doctrine that integrates the elements of advanced warfare as well. Under this doctrine, India seeks to incorporate artificial intelligence to enhance

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<sup>8</sup> Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, "Strategic Stability in South Asia: The Role of USA," *Journal of Contemporary Studies* Vol. 1, No. 1, (1) (2012), [https://www.ndu.edu.pk/fcs/publications/fcs\\_journal/JCS\\_2012\\_summer/1.Strategic.pdf](https://www.ndu.edu.pk/fcs/publications/fcs_journal/JCS_2012_summer/1.Strategic.pdf).

<sup>9</sup> Headquarters Integrated Defense Staff, "Joint Doctrine Indian Armed Forces," *Ministry of Defense, Government of India*, (2017), [https://bharatshakti.in/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Joint\\_Doctrine\\_Indian\\_Armed\\_Forces.pdf](https://bharatshakti.in/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Joint_Doctrine_Indian_Armed_Forces.pdf).

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Land Warfare Doctrine, "Indian Army," (2018), <http://www.ssri-j.com/MediaReport/Document/IndianArmyLandWarfareDoctrine2018.pdf>.

<sup>12</sup> Meenakshi Ganguly, "Silencing Dissent India," *Human Rights Watch*, September 7, 2018, accessed October 4, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/09/07/silencing-dissent-india>.

the operational efficacy of the Indian Army. For precision attacks, the Indian Army, and the Indian Air Force to operate in synergy based on credible intelligence. Furthermore, Indian force modernization is a prerequisite to meeting the doctrinal requirement.<sup>13</sup> For Pakistan, the implications of this doctrine are worrisome, as India's heavy investments in the already superior conventional forces exacerbate Pakistan's security concerns. This article extensively discusses evolving Indian war-fighting doctrines such as the Sundarji, Cold Start, Joint Doctrine, Indian Armed Forces, and Land Warfare doctrines and their impact on South Asia's strategic stability.

### **The Offensive Sundarji Doctrine**

Throughout the 1980s, India remained in turmoil. As a result, the separatist and insurgency movements spiked, jeopardizing the internal security of India. India's fragile internal security situation necessitated deploying the Indian Army to defuse these separatist movements. The three most significant separatist movements were in Punjab, Assam, and Kashmir,<sup>14</sup> originating from ethnonational fault lines, these regions demanded independence from India. The Indian Army alleviated these internal threats, which hindered the doctrinal advancements of the Indian Army. However, India crafted the first Indian military doctrine in the 1980s. General Krishnaswamy Sundarji, the Indian Army chief in the 1980s, crafted an offensive war-fighting strategy against Pakistan. After him, this military doctrine was named the Sundarji Doctrine, and he was a strategic thinker.<sup>15</sup> In parallel, he established cordial relations with

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<sup>13</sup> Younis Chughtai, "Indian Land Warfare Doctrine-2018: What it means for the Region," *Daily Times*, January 10, 2019, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/342370/indian-land-warfare-doctrine-2018-what-it-means-for-the-region/>.

<sup>14</sup> Ahsan I. Butt, *Secession and Security: Explaining State Strategy Against Separatists*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 2017), 83, <https://library.oapen.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.12657/30763/642739.pdf;jsessionid=A5943CAB654C35AE0327B18B0D914E6D?sequence=1.jkgh>.

<sup>15</sup> Maroof Raza, "General K Sundarji-A Mixed Legacy," *Salute*, August 6, 2020, accessed October 25, 2020, <https://salute.co.in/general-k-sundarji-a-mixed-legacy/>.

the political leadership of India; this was contrary to the previous practice of turbulent civil-military relations.

The Indian civil-military relations fall under “objective civilian control under the normal theory of civil-military relations.”<sup>16</sup> This theory propagates Samuel Huntington’s concept of “objective civilian control” from his book on *The Soldier and the State*.<sup>17</sup> Objective control refers to the maximization of military effectiveness under an assured civilian authority. Huntington presented this argument in his book mentioned above as “the recognition (from civilian authorities) of autonomous military professionalism.”<sup>18</sup> In this way, the military’s attention is focused on executing political aims with all its capabilities and effectiveness. On the contrary, Huntington’s concept of “subjective civilian control” exists. This concept advocates the meddling of the military in politics and encourages the political socialization of the military. However, this concept does not apply to Indian civil-military relations. Historically, the Indian military, specifically the Indian Army, has remained under Indian political leadership; this constrained the Indian Army’s aspiration to maneuver in the region. However, Gen. Sundarji got the opportunity to stretch India’s military muscle to counter internal and external threats. During his tenure as Chief of the Indian Army, Indian political and military interests were most closely aligned.<sup>19</sup> As a result, the Indian political leadership was willing to utilize the military component to achieve political ends. Resultantly, the Indian political leadership increased defense spending. During Sundarji’s tenure, the defense

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<sup>16</sup> See Ankit Mukherjee, “Civil-Military Relations and Military Effectiveness in India,” in Rajesh Basrur, et. al, *India's Military Modernization: Challenges and Prospects*, (London, Oxford University Press, 2014), 196-229.

<sup>17</sup> Eliot A. Cohen, “The Soldier and the State: The Theory and Politics of Civil-Military Relations; The Professional Soldier: A Social and Political Portrait,” *Foreign Affairs*, (September 1, 1997), <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/reviews/capsule-review/1997-09-01/soldier-and-state-theory-and-politics-civil-military-relations>.

<sup>18</sup> Ankit Mukherjee, *Civil-Military Relations and Military Effectiveness in India*.

<sup>19</sup> See Christopher Clary, “Personalities, Organizations, and Doctrine in the Indian military,” *India Review* 17, No. 1 (2018), 100-121, [http://www.christopherenclary.com/uploads/3/9/7/7/39777795/clary\\_casi\\_doc\\_trine\\_am.pdf](http://www.christopherenclary.com/uploads/3/9/7/7/39777795/clary_casi_doc_trine_am.pdf).

budget accelerated from 3.57% of the GDP in 1985 to 4.11% in 1986, 4.23% in 1987, and 3.75% in 1988.<sup>20</sup> Thus, during Sundarji's period, the Indian defense sector got the top portion of the GDP in history.

Indian military procurements increased during the 1980s. The Indian tri-services inducted modern equipment; these advancements enhanced India's conventional power against Pakistan. During the 1980s, India justified modern procurements as a countermeasure to balance the US-Pakistan defense alliance. Pakistan, in the late 1980s, became the second-largest recipient of US military and economic aid after Israel.<sup>21</sup> The US-Pakistan alliance was formed to support *Mujahedeen* against the Soviet Union's invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. The Indian leadership was critical of the advanced technologies acquired by Pakistan and perceived it as a revisionist state<sup>22</sup> in pursuit of India's hegemonic designs.

The offensive posture of the Indian Army demanded several innovations in the force structure of the Indian Army. First, the Indian Army relied more on infantry divisions for forward defense. Later, the military leadership, particularly then Lt. Gen. Krishna Rao, highlighted the importance of armored formations to enhance the operational efficacy of the Indian Army. Subsequently, Rao proposed an integral armored division within the infantry divisions.<sup>23</sup> Resultantly, India initiated the mechanization of the Indian Army in 1969, which was completed in 1979 when the Indian Army raised a Mechanized Infantry Regiment.<sup>24</sup> The

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<sup>20</sup> "Indian Military Spending/Defense Budget 1960-2020," *Macrotrends*, accessed October 27, 2020, <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/IND/india/military-spending-defense-budget>.

<sup>21</sup> "Timeline: History of US-Pakistan Relations," *Dawn News*, July 4, 2012, <https://www.dawn.com/news/731670/timeline-history-of-us-pakistan-relations>.

<sup>22</sup> Ejaz Haider, "India is the revisionist power," *The Express Tribune*, July 28, 2011, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/219335/india-is-the-revisionist-power>.

<sup>23</sup> Rao, KV Krishna, *Prepare or Perish: A Study of National Security*, (New Delhi: Lancer Publishers, 1991).

<sup>24</sup> Gautam Lalotra, "Know all about Mechanized Infantry Regiment, Indian Army's Combat Arm with Lethal Firepower," *News Nation*, January 26, 2017, <https://english.newsnationtv.com/india/news/know-all-about-indian-armys-mechanised-infantry-regiment-159168.html>.

regiment incorporates “BMP-1 and BMP-2 Infantry Fighting Vehicles, BTR-60, and BTR-70 Armored Personnel Carriers to enhance the speed and mobility of the Indian Army.”<sup>25</sup> The Indian Army’s aspiration to gain massive offensive power was to defeat Pakistan rather than solely defend India. In this regard, Ravi Rikhye wrote, “A new armored force for India is the only way we can decisively defeat Pakistan instead of continually being forced to accept a virtual stalemate.”<sup>26</sup>

The Indian Army chief in the 1980s, General Sundarji, drafted the first Indian offensive military doctrine, which later came to be known as the “Sundarji Doctrine.” The doctrine proposed seven holding corps positioned along the international border with Pakistan. These holding corps comprised “infantry divisions for static defense, mobile mechanized divisions to thwart the enemy’s attack, and a limited number of armored units.”<sup>27</sup> In parallel, the three-strike *corps prepare* for an offensive counter-attack. Each strike corps was composed of “mobile armored columns,” an armored division, and mechanized infantry with extensive artillery support.”<sup>28</sup> The holding corps at the border were not for fighting, but for preventing and holding any attack from the enemy; hence, the seven holding corps were for defensive purposes.

On the contrary, the three-strike corps possessed offensive power. Three-strike corps were stationed in Mathura, Ambala, and Bhopal at a significant distance from the international border.<sup>29</sup> In the event of a crisis with Pakistan, the holding corps would halt the attack, whereas the strike corps would launch the counter-offensive

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<sup>25</sup> “The Mechanized Infantry Regiment Raising Day, Indian Army,” *Reliance GCS*, March 1, 2018, accessed on October 26, 2020, <https://medium.com/@reliancegcs/the-mechanised-infantry-regiment-raising-day-indian-army-5c884f88766b>.

<sup>26</sup> Ravi Rikhye, *War That Never Was: The Story of India's Strategic Failures*, (New Delhi: South Asian Books, 1988).

<sup>27</sup> Ali Ahmed, “India’s Limited War Doctrine,” *IDSIA Monograph*, (2012): 21-22, <https://idsa.in/system/files/Monograph10.pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Walter C. Ladwig III, “A Cold Start for Hot Waters? The Indian Army’s New Limited War Doctrine,” *International Security* Vol. 32, No. 3 (Winter 2007/2008), 158-190, (p.160).



and penetrate deep inside Pakistan through the Rajasthan sector, destroying the center of gravity of the Pakistan Army and cutting the country in two through "deep sledgehammer blows."<sup>30</sup> The Indian Air Force was responsible for executing two tasks: gaining air superiority against Pakistan and later providing close air support to the ground forces, the strike corps.

### **Military Exercise or War Planning? Operation Brasstacks**

The Indian military, under the command of General Sundarji, conducted a military exercise named "*Brasstacks*" near the western border with Pakistan. Brasstacks took place in the plains of Rajasthan, within 100 miles of Pakistan. The exercise included nine infantry, three mechanized, three armored, and one air assault division, along with three armored brigades under four corps.<sup>31</sup> The exercise was massive, bigger than any NATO exercise, and the biggest since WWII. The Indian leadership claimed that this enormous mobilization aimed to validate the new concepts of offensive war-fighting and synergy operations, including the Recognized Army Plain Infantry Division or RAPID.

In contrast, the Pakistani military leadership remained skeptical of India's intentions and doubted the Indian infiltration into Pakistan. The Pakistani analysts contextualized the situation as India's attempt to display its conventional military advantage against Pakistan.<sup>32</sup> Operation Brasstacks inflated the security dilemma for Pakistan; India wanted to trigger a response from Pakistan, resultantly justifying India's pre-emptive strike against Pakistan's nascent nuclear infrastructure and facilities.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> Pravin Sawhney and V.K. Sood, *Operation Parakram: The War Unfinished*, (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2003), 81.

<sup>31</sup> "Brasstacks," *Global Security.org*, accessed October 28, 2020, <https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/war/bras-tacks.htm>.

<sup>32</sup> Shaikh Aziz, "A leaf from history: Target: Pakistani nukes," *Dawn News*, June 21, 2016, accessed October 28, 2020, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1218098>.

<sup>33</sup> Ahmad Ibrahim, "The Efficiency of Pakistan's Nuclear Posture During Brasstacks Crisis," *STRAFASIA*, August 16, 2020, accessed October 28, 2020, <https://strafasia.com/the-efficiency-of-pakistans-nuclear-posture-during-brasstacks-crisis/>.

Pakistan responded promptly to diffuse the conflict. Pakistan quickly mobilized the V Corps, the entire Armored Corps, and the Southern Air Command near the Indian border. In parallel, Pakistan Navy ships were mobilized to sabotage any Indian offensive maneuver.<sup>34</sup> Thus, Pakistan mobilized almost all the strategic resources to protect territorial integrity. By then, India and Pakistan were aware of each other's nuclear advancements. Pakistan efficiently conveyed to the then-Indian ambassador to Pakistan S.K Singh that if the Indian forces crossed the international border, Pakistan was ready to annihilate Indian cities.<sup>35</sup> Therefore, the Indian political leadership abstained from escalating the conflict.

Operation Brasstacks had four stages. Brasstacks I was involved in the mapping exercise, discussion, and planning. Brasstacks II synergized computerized war games by the Indian Army and Air Force. Brasstacks III comprises small exercises to support large-scale, mobile offensive operations at the division and corps levels. Lastly, Brasstacks IV was a practical implementation of the stages mentioned above.<sup>36</sup> These stages were imperative for the successful implementation of Operation Brasstacks. Formulating concepts, synergy operations, and mobilization of the Indian Army required prior planning conducted during these four stages.

The Indian military objectives behind Operation Brasstacks were ambiguous. Brasstacks was described by India as a military exercise to put innovative Indian warfighting strategies to the test. In his book, *The War That Never Was: The Story of India's Strategic Failures*,<sup>37</sup> Ravi Rikhye presented three main arguments

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<sup>34</sup>“Operation Brasstacks,” *Pakistan Strategic Forum*, accessed June 11, 2021, <https://pakstrategic.com/2021/01/13/operation-brasstacks/>.

<sup>35</sup> Shaikh Aziz, “A leaf from history: Target: Pakistani nukes,” *Dawn News*, November 8, 2015, accessed June 12, 2022, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1218098>.

<sup>36</sup> Michael Krepon and Nate Cohn, “Crises in South Asia: Trends and Potential Consequences,” *Stimson Center*, (2011), 30, <https://www.stimson.org/wp-content/files/fileattachments/Crisis%20in%20South%20Asia%20Trends%20and%20Potential%20Consequences.pdf>.

<sup>37</sup> Ravi Rikhye, *The War That Never Was: The Story of India's Strategic Failures*, 37-38.

concerning Operation Brasstacks. First, is a dichotomy between the Indian political and military leadership regarding initiating a war with Pakistan. Also, concerning the objectives of the exercise, the Indian Army was acting independently from other services. Second, General Sundarji was trying to create a situation to compel Pakistan to attack India, resultantly justifying India's declaration of war. Finally, Pakistan's countermeasures to the Indian offensive military exercise were deliberately unseen to create panic and align the Indian civil-military leadership.<sup>38</sup> A retired Indian Lt. Gen. P.N. Hoon emphasized Operation Brasstacks to start a fourth war with Pakistan in his book *The Untold Truth*. General Sundarji and the then Minister of State for Defense, Arun Singh, designed Brasstacks to trigger Pakistan's response in Kashmir, justifying India's decision to initiate a full-fledged war with Pakistan.<sup>39</sup> In parallel, an international observer writes, "General Sunderji's strategy was to provoke Pakistan's response, and this would provide India with an excuse to implement existing contingency plans to go on an offensive against Pakistan and take out its nuclear bomb projects, in a preventive strike."<sup>40</sup> These shards of evidence verify Pakistan's skepticism about Operation Brasstacks. Instead, the operation had the more significant objective of exploiting Pakistan's conventional disadvantage vis-à-vis India.

### **Indian Strategic Failure; Operation Parakram**

On December 13, 2001, the Indian Parliament was attacked by five gunmen. The Indian government quickly blamed Pakistan for this terrorist attack, which outraged the Indian public, military, and political leadership. Contrary to Operation Brasstacks, this time the Indian military had political approval. However, there were deficiencies in the Indian military's preparedness; the Indian Navy and Air Force were ready in one week. The Indian Army, following the Sundarji Doctrine, had holding corps prepared where the

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Lt-Gen P.N. Hoon, "Hero Behind Army's Capture of Siachen Dies," *The Week*, January 7, 2020, accessed October 30, 2020, <https://www.theweek.in/news/india/2020/01/07/lt-gen-pn-hoon-hero-behind-army-capture-of-siachen-dies.html>.

<sup>40</sup> Shaikh Aziz, *A leaf from History: Target: Pakistani Nukes*.

calculated time for the strike corps to reach the Western border was three weeks. Five days after the attack, India initiated troop mobilization for Operation Parakram along its western border. Pakistan responded by counter-mobilizing its military forces near the border. India's eagerness for war was reflected in its Army Chief's statement that "the Indian military was mobilized and waiting for the directives from the Indian political leadership to attack."<sup>41</sup> India blatantly ignored Pakistan's offer of cooperation; General Musharraf assured to crack down on the militants and stated that Pakistan would not allow any organization to spread terrorism by using the Kashmir cause.<sup>42</sup> Pakistan struggled to diffuse the conflict between the two nuclear-armed rivals. In contrast, India stuck to the notion of war. The *Kaluchak* attack on May 14, 2002, exacerbated this commitment. India lashed Pakistan for the attack and reinforced the idea of war with Pakistan. The situation alarmed the world, and the international community intervened to diffuse the conflict as the potential for an escalation was visible. The US leadership remained divided regarding the intentions and objectives of India behind Operation Parakram. US intelligence hinted at the possibility of a war. The regional bureaus believed India intended to coerce Pakistan and increase US pressure on Islamabad.<sup>43</sup> The US timely intervention prevented South Asia from any disaster.

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<sup>41</sup> See Polly Nayak and Michael Krepon, "US Crisis Management in South Asia's Twin Peaks Crisis," *Stimson Center*, (2011), 143-186, [https://www.stimson.org/wp-content/files/file-attachments/Twin\\_Peaks\\_Crisis.pdf](https://www.stimson.org/wp-content/files/file-attachments/Twin_Peaks_Crisis.pdf).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

Operation Parakram highlighted the loopholes in the Sundarji doctrine. The holding corps at the border were not provided with the offensive power to thwart any attack. Their task was to prevent an adversary's attack during a war or conflict. The strike corps with massive offensive power was located deep within India. Their huge size and distance from the international border took three weeks to reach the border. This time, international actors proved to be a catalyst for mitigating the conflict. As a result, the conflict diffused before escalating into a full-fledged war. In parallel, the size of the strike corps hindered speedy mobilization. Also, the size facilitated Pakistan's analysis of where and how to thwart Indian aggression effectively.

### **Indian Offensive Limited War-fighting Doctrine; The Cold Start**

India failed in compellence and coercive diplomacy after the 2001-2002 military standoff with Pakistan. In parallel, Operation Parakram highlighted the significant shortcomings in the Indian military strategy. This event made the Indian strategist re-think the Indian offensive approach towards Pakistan, as India aspires to indulge Pakistan in a limited war at a sub-conventional level. It is imperative to understand the concept of a limited war. Robert Osgood defined a limited war as "The decisive limitations upon war are the limitations of the objectives of the war."<sup>44</sup> These limited objectives are primarily Political. The aim is not to defeat the adversary, but to drag them into a position to accept the terms and conditions of the victor. Retired Indian COAS Deepak Kapoor noted that a limited war under a nuclear umbrella is possible in South Asia.<sup>45</sup> The Indian author's writing authenticates India's willingness to exploit the space of war beneath Pakistan's nuclear threshold. India aims to execute swift, quick, and joint operations with the Indian Air Force and some elements of the Indian Navy to achieve shallow territorial gains.

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<sup>44</sup> Harold Stein, "Limited War: The Challenge to American Strategy," By Robert Endicott Osgood (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957)," *American Political Science Review* Vol. 52, No. 2 (1958), 533-535.

<sup>45</sup> "Possibility of Limited War in South Asia: Indian Army Chief," *The News*, November 24, 2009, accessed on October 31, 2020.

The Indian Army in 2004 crafted a plan known as the Cold Start. The Cold Start was an offensive war-fighting plan by India to retaliate against any alleged Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in India.<sup>46</sup> The CSD provided the holding corps or pivot corps with limited offensive power capabilities, including armor and artillery support. The defensive pivot corps could execute offensive operations. The CSD divided the offensive power of the Indian Army into eight smaller division-sized Integrated Battle Groups (IBGs). Possessing modern equipment, the IBGs were to operate “T-90 MBT and T-72 M1 tanks with close air support and artillery fire assault.”<sup>47</sup> The reduced size enhanced the mobility, efficacy, and ambiguity of the attack. India, under Cold Start, seeks to employ Network Centric Warfare and electronic warfare capabilities of the Indian Army and Air Force. Moreover, integration and synergy operations remain at the core of CSD. The increased number of offensive IBGs stretched Pakistan’s response options and encircled Pakistan’s intelligence regarding the Indian intrusion, ultimately disrupting Pakistan’s decision-making cycle. Furthermore, the time was significantly reduced from three weeks to 96 hours by the IBGs. India reduced its response time to cater to two problems previously faced by India. One, restrain Pakistan’s counter-mobilization time. Two, prevent international intervention during times of crisis in South Asia. Instead of dividing Pakistan, the Cold Start aimed for small territorial gains of 50-80 kilometers. This territory was to be used by New Delhi in post-conflict concessions to Islamabad.<sup>48</sup> Hence, the purpose of the CSD is to fight a limited war without triggering Pakistan’s nuclear response. However, India’s confidence in escalation control is skeptical, as

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<sup>46</sup> Masood Ur Rehman Khattak, “Indian Military’s Cold Start Doctrine: Capabilities, Limitations and Possible Response from Pakistan,” *SASSI Research Paper* 32, (2011), 7-8, [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312174708\\_Indian\\_Military's\\_Cold\\_Start\\_Doctrine\\_Capabilities\\_Limitations\\_and\\_Possible\\_Response\\_from\\_Pakistan](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/312174708_Indian_Military's_Cold_Start_Doctrine_Capabilities_Limitations_and_Possible_Response_from_Pakistan)

<sup>47</sup> Muhammad Aslam Khan Naizi, “India Toying with Dangerous Cold Start War Doctrine – Analysis,” *Eurasia Review*, October 29, 2011, accessed on October 31, 2020, <https://www.eurasiareview.com/29102011-india-toying-with-dangerous-cold-start-war-doctrine-analysis/>.

<sup>48</sup> Ladwig, “*A Cold Start for Hot Waters? The Indian Army’s New Limited War Doctrine*”, 165.

controlling the ends is nearly impossible when the conflict or a war escalates. The cold start favored India unconditionally. Nevertheless, there were constraints on India's execution. First, the challenge was setting the political objectives. It was a challenge for policymakers to craft an efficient strategy that could achieve the military objectives without triggering a nuclear response. Second, there is the challenge of Pakistani misperception; the conventional asymmetry between India and Pakistan is visible. Any limited aggression by India may not be interpreted as "limited" by Pakistan. Pakistan's misperception may compel Pakistan to follow an "offensive-defense strategy" by the Pakistan Army, which will be disproportionate. Third, the agency's challenge is that even a well-crafted strategy with limited objectives may not be enough to control the ends of a conflict. The situation can prompt military leaders to go beyond their limited objectives, deteriorating the situation. Finally, it is the challenge of geography, as the geography of South Asia favors India. If exploited, Pakistan will have to respond excessively to punish Indian aggression.<sup>49</sup>

Executing a limited war is more challenging than it is perceived to be. For this purpose, the state must have clearly defined objectives without any suspicion. To craft these objectives, the civilian and military leadership must view the situation through the same prism. Any difference in their understanding of the conflict or issue can exacerbate dangers. Is India capable of executing the "Cold Start" doctrine? Pakistan has keenly observed Indian defense spending and procurements. Since the inception of the Cold Start, the Indian military budget has increased from \$20.24 billion in 2004 to \$66.51 billion in 2020.<sup>50</sup> This continues to increase manifold yearly. As a result, India has also invested in tri-services to improve operational efficiency. For this purpose, the Indian military conducted a series of military exercises; "exercise Divya Astra-2004, Vajra Shakti-2005, Desert Strike-2005, Sanghe Shakti-2006, Ashwamedh-2007, Shatrunash-2007, Brazen Chariots-2008, Hind

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<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 165.

<sup>50</sup> "Indian Military Spending/Defense Budget 1960-2020," *Macrotrends*, accessed on October 27, 2020, <https://www.macrotrends.net/countries/IND/india/military-spending-defense-budget>.

Shakti-2009, Vayu Shakti-2010, and Yodha Shakti-2010.”<sup>51</sup> These military exercises were aimed at enhancing India’s pre-emptive strike capabilities against Pakistan, inculcating modern technologies for operational effectiveness, increasing mobility and synergy in operations, practicing surgical strikes, and executing swift, quick, and offensive maneuvers against Pakistan. Besides, India has also developed capabilities to execute day and night operations, improve reconnaissance and surveillance, enhance air and land forces synergy, and improve the mobility of mechanized armor, artillery, and infantry.

Pakistan retaliated dynamically in response to the offensive Cold Start. Undoubtedly, the Cold Start could provide India with an opportunity to fight an offensive, limited war against Pakistan, consequently disrupting South Asia’s strategic stability. The security dilemma generated for Pakistan enabled Pakistan to consider various response options, thus, it introduced tactical nuclear weapons to counter the Cold Start doctrine. Pakistan smartly analyzed the situation and tested *Nasr* in 2011. "Nasr is a surface-to-surface tactical ballistic missile with a range of 70 kilometers that can carry nuclear warheads.”<sup>52</sup> As a result, Pakistan moved from “credible minimum deterrence” to “full spectrum deterrence” to cater to the Indian threat and re-establish regional strategic stability. However, as perceived, full-spectrum deterrence functions under the ambit of credible minimum deterrence. Thus, ensuring its survival and deterring Indian aggression. *Nasr* is referred to by Pakistan's leadership as a stabilizing factor in South Asia. Three critical observations regarding *Nasr* are first, the introduction of tactical nuclear weapons has restrained India from operationalizing the doctrine. Second, the goal of tactical nuclear weapons is to deter war, not to fight it. Third, Pakistan needs to have a centralized command-and-control system for tactical nuclear

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<sup>51</sup> Khattak, *Indian Military’s Cold Start Doctrine: Capabilities, Limitations and Possible Response from Pakistan*, 14-19.

<sup>52</sup> Rajeswari Pillai Rajagopalan, “Pakistan’s *Nasr* Missile: ‘Cold Water’ Over India’s ‘Cold Start’?” *The Diplomat*, January 31, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/01/pakistans-nasr-missile-cold-water-over-indias-cold-start/>.



weapons to avoid any misadventures.<sup>53</sup> Thus, Nasr is a catalyst for thwarting India's limited war threat and restoring strategic stability in South Asia.

### **Joint Doctrine Indian Armed Forces; A Quest for Synergy Operations**

The Indian armed forces crafted a combined doctrine in April 2017; this is the first de-classified doctrine of the Indian tri-services. Prior, the doctrines were centered on the Indian Army. The comprehensive doctrine is divided into six chapters, elaborating on Indian national security, the spectrum of conflict, the military instrument of power, higher defense organization, integrated and joint structures, and tech orchestration and capability development.<sup>54</sup> Indian perception of national security follows the broad definition of security, military, and non-military threats inclusive. The defined national security objectives in the doctrine include credible deterrence, defending territory, airspace, maritime zones, trade routes, and cyberspace, securing the internal environment; and productive relations with other nations to promote regional and global stability. The CSD aimed at a land offensive against Pakistan; in this doctrine, India explicitly mentions conducting a *surgical strike* against any alleged Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in India. *The Future of Air Power in The Aftermath of The Gulf War* reflects that a surgical strike is a military attack that focuses solely on military targets while causing minimal collateral damage to infrastructure and the population.<sup>55</sup> Air Marshal Shahzad Chaudhry from PAF further explained the term; “a surgical strike is

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<sup>53</sup> Sannia Abdullah, Pakistan's Evolving Doctrine and Emerging Force Posture: Conceptual Nuances and Implied Ramifications, 80.

<sup>54</sup> Headquarters Integrated Defense Staff, “Joint Doctrine Indian Armed Forces,” *Ministry of Defense, Government of India*, September 9, (2017), [https://bharatshakti.in/wpcontent/uploads/2015/09/Joint Doctrine Indian Armed Forces.pdf](https://bharatshakti.in/wpcontent/uploads/2015/09/Joint_Doctrine_Indian_Armed_Forces.pdf).

<sup>55</sup> Richard H. Shultz and Robert L. Pfaltzgraff, *The Future of Air Power in the Aftermath of the Gulf War*, (Alabama: Air University Press, 1992), [https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/AUPress/Books/B\\_0048\\_SHULTZ\\_FUTURE\\_OF\\_AIRPOWER.pdf](https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/AUPress/Books/B_0048_SHULTZ_FUTURE_OF_AIRPOWER.pdf).

a surprise attack with surgical efficiency. The targets are specific with no collateral damage.”<sup>56</sup>

The Indian leadership considered surgical strikes as the most appropriate response to their limited objectives. Pakistan’s efficient response to the offensive "Cold Start" compelled India to shift to surgical strikes. In 2017, India began using surgical strikes; however, India claimed a surgical strike in Pakistan-administered Kashmir in 2016. The credibility of this surgical strike is doubted as India has failed to provide any credible evidence. The Indian Army’s DG military operations stated, "The Indian Army has conducted surgical strikes against terrorist launch pads across the LOC."<sup>57</sup> However, the Indian government officials declined to provide the details of the claimed surgical strike,<sup>58</sup> further undermining the credibility of Indian claims. As noted by the BBC, India lacks evidence supporting its claims of targeting militants across the LOC.

On the other hand, Pakistan denied this fabricated surgical strike and referred to it as a mere LOC violation.<sup>59</sup> Pakistan’s Inter-Service Public Relations (ISPR) stated that Indian claims of conducting a surgical strike inside Pakistan-administered Kashmir are fabricated. India is labeling cross-border firing as a "surgical strike." Moreover, Pakistan has made it clear that it will not abstain from responding if India commits such a strike.<sup>60</sup> Indian claims were a political tool to calm the Indian public in the post-Uri attack

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<sup>56</sup> Quoted in, Atika Rehman, "What is a Surgical Strike?" *Dawn News*, September 29, 2016, accessed October 31, 2020, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1286893>.

<sup>57</sup> Devirupa Mitra, "As India Announces 'Surgical Strikes' and Pakistan Denies Claim, US Cautions on Escalation," *The Wire*, September 30, 2016, accessed on October 31, 2020, <https://thewire.in/external-affairs/india-loc-pakistan-dgmo>.

<sup>58</sup> Sanjeev Miglani and Asad Hashim, "India says hits Pakistan-based militants-escalating tensions," *Reuters*, September 29, 2016, accessed on October 31, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-india-kashmir-idUSKCN11Z0IJ>.

<sup>59</sup> Atika Rehman, "What is a Surgical Strike?" *Dawn News*, September 29, 2016, accessed on October 31, 2020, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1286893>.

<sup>60</sup> "ISPR denies 'surgical strikes' by India, says they was only cross border fire," *Business Standard*, September 29, 2016, accessed October 31, 2020, [https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/ispr-denies-surgical-strikes-by-india-says-they-was-only-cross-border-fire-116092900494\\_1.html](https://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ani/ispr-denies-surgical-strikes-by-india-says-they-was-only-cross-border-fire-116092900494_1.html).

scenario. Indian media acted to spread these fabrications and gain public support for the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

India and Pakistan encountered a similar situation in February 2019. This time, the IAF violated Pakistani airspace. However, India exaggerated the claimed victory; India claimed that the strike targeted the Jaish-e-Mohammad group's training camp in Balakot and killed many militants and commanders.<sup>61</sup> On the contrary, Pakistan denied India's claimed victory, and ISPR stated, "Indian intrusion took place to which PAF responded effectively with no casualties and damage."<sup>62</sup> Similarly, the international media remains skeptical of Indian claims of killing more than 300 terrorists. *The Strategist's* special report on the Balakot strike mentioned that the building claimed to have been damaged by the IAF was still standing a day after the airstrike. This analysis was based on the satellite imagery acquired by European Space Imaging a day after the airstrike. Moreover, Jeffery Lewis, a satellite image expert, stated, "The high-resolution images don't show any evidence of bomb damage."<sup>63</sup> Lastly, a *BBC* journalist who visited the site wrote that there were no signs of destruction caused by a 1,000 kg bomb as boasted by India.<sup>64</sup>

Pakistan retaliated against the Indian air offensive on February 27, 2019. A formation of twenty-four PAF fighter jets targeted areas close to Indian military installations; the military installations were deliberately not attacked to control the escalation ladder. Meanwhile, due to the negligence of the Indian Air defense, the Indian Mi-17 helicopter crashed, killing six IAF personnel on the same day. The IAF Chief accepted the fault and stated that the

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<sup>61</sup> "Balakot: Indian air strikes target militants in Pakistan," *BBC*, February 26, 2019, accessed October 31, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-47366718>.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Martin Howell, Gerry Doyle and Simon Scarr, "Satellite images show buildings still standing at Indian bombing site," *Reuters*, March 6, 2019, accessed October 31, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-india-kashmir-pakistan-airstrike-insi-idUSKCN1QN00V>.

<sup>64</sup> "Foreign journalists given access to madressah near site of Balakot strike," *Dawn News*, April 11, 2019, accessed October 31, 2020, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1475189>.

Indian missile downed the Indian chopper.<sup>65</sup> This incident reflects the panic and chaos the IAF faced while responding to Pakistan's retaliatory strike. Pakistan's airstrike downed two Indian fighter jets, and one pilot was captured, later released as a peace gesture by Pakistan that the world appreciated.<sup>66</sup>

This conventional doctrine has discussed a few nuclear aspects as well. Pakistan doubted India's no-first-use policy; India's shift cleared this ambiguity from "credible minimum deterrence" to "credible deterrence." From the Indian perspective, credible minimum deterrence has two elements: credibility and minimalism. Credibility comprises political will, capability, intelligence, survivability, effectiveness, and assured retaliation. Minimalism refers to the size, cost, posture, and eventuality of use.<sup>67</sup> The omission of minimum from the equation reinforced India's adherence to massive retaliation. Such ambiguity has further complicated the Indian nuclear doctrine and enhanced the possibility of misperception by Pakistan.

Moreover, this doctrine propagates integration, interdependence, interoperability, and compatibility within the Indian armed forces—the Indian Army struggles to fight future conflicts in synergy with other services. India aims to project conventional military power in the region. The Indian strategic thinking is centered on precision operations in collaboration with the IAF. In pursuit of this goal, India has upgraded its land, air, and sea forces. India seeks to project sea control and sea denial to dominate the Indian Ocean region. Sea control can be defined as the freedom to use any area of the sea while denying it to the enemy. In contrast, "sea denial" refers to denying an adversary access to the

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<sup>65</sup> "Shooting down our own chopper 'big mistake', says new Indian Air Chief," *Dawn News*, October 4, 2020, accessed October 31, 2020, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1508953>.

<sup>66</sup> "India Pakistan: Kashmir fighting sees Indian aircraft downed," *BBC NEWS*, February 27, 2019, accessed June 13, 2022, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-47383634>.

<sup>67</sup> Tanvi Kulkarni and Alankrita Sinha, "India's Credible Minimum Deterrence A Decade Later," *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies*, (2011), 2-4, [https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep09087?seq=2#metadata\\_info\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep09087?seq=2#metadata_info_tab_contents).

sea for an extended period.<sup>68</sup> Sea denial has a defensive posture as compared to sea control. In the aerial domain, India pursues counter-air, strategic air, and counter-surface force operations. Counter-air is defined as "a mission that integrates offensive and defensive operations to achieve and maintain the desired level of air superiority."<sup>69</sup> The concept of strategic air operations revolves around the conduct of independent air campaigns directed against the war-making capacity of the enemy. Counter surface or counter land operations are "airpower operations against enemy land force capabilities to create effects that achieve Joint Force Command (JFC) objectives."<sup>70</sup> Lastly, India envisions indigenizing defense production; this indigenization is a prerequisite for India's defense self-sufficiency. India aspires to achieve technological independence by 2035.<sup>71</sup>

### **Land Warfare Doctrine; A Coercive Approach**

To supplement the doctrine above, India in 2018 introduced the Land Warfare Doctrine (LWD). The Indian military prepares to fight future conflicts in the "Grey Zone." In the contemporary era, conflicts occur in multiple zones; moreover, expanded dimensions of the conflict have complicated the situation. India aims to utilize all military and non-military resources to cater to traditional security threats. In this doctrine, India has characterized a two-and-a-half-front war, mentioning China and Pakistan as two fronts and internal security issues as a half-front.<sup>72</sup> Essential elements of Land warfare doctrine include force modernization, hybrid warfare, surgical

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<sup>68</sup> Alex Tewes, Laura Rayner, and Kelly Kavanaugh, "Australia's Maritime Strategy in the 21st century," *Department of Parliamentary Services* no. 4 (2004), 31, <https://apo.org.au/sites/default/files/resource-files/2004-12/apo-nid583.pdf>.

<sup>69</sup> "The Concept of Strategic Airpower," *Airpower Development Centre Bulletin*, (July 2017), <https://airpower.airforce.gov.au/APDC/media/PDF-Files/Pathfinder/PF291-The-Conceptof-Strategic-Air-Power.pdf>.

<sup>70</sup> "Role of Counter and Operations," *CURTIS E. LEMAY CENTER*, accessed October 31, 2020, [https://www.doctrine.af.mil/Portals/61/documents/Annex\\_3-03/3-03-D02-LAND-Role-Of-CL-OPS.pdf](https://www.doctrine.af.mil/Portals/61/documents/Annex_3-03/3-03-D02-LAND-Role-Of-CL-OPS.pdf).

<sup>71</sup> Pankaj Sekhsaria, and Naveen Thayyil, "Technology Vision 2035," *Economic & Political Weekly*, Vol. 54, No. 34 (2019), <https://www.anilkakodkar.in/assignments/Technology-Vision-2035.pdf>.

<sup>72</sup> Land Warfare Doctrine, "Indian Army," (2018), <http://www.ssri-j.com/MediaReport/Document/IndianArmyLandWarfareDoctrine2018.pdf>.

strikes, IBGs, military diplomacy, ISR capability, military exercises, joint operations, and multi-front scenario.<sup>73</sup> The presence of IBGs assures the India's willingness to launch a land offensive against Pakistan. Any such maneuver by India can sabotage South Asia's strategic stability.

India devised a strategy to fight at the Northern and Western borders. India will enhance deterrence at the Northern border and conduct force-centric operations through deployment, rapid mobilization, reserves application, force multipliers, and forces. Strike formations to mobilize for rapid application, and the Indian forces to be trained to fight in an isolated environment. Moreover, India shall maintain minimum deterrence, conduct force, and space-centric precision attacks based on credible intelligence and satellite imagery at the Western border. The IBGs conduct sharp/swift operations that aim to destroy the adversary's center of gravity and secure spatial gains. Elaborating on the *collusive threat* scenario, India mentioned dealing with the primary front with all resources while maintaining a solid defense on the secondary front.

India is committed to upgrading its military. The doctrine describes India's shift from a *threat-based* approach to a *capability-based* approach. India is working on upgrading the ISR, firepower, mobility, and precision-based capabilities of tri-services. In addition, improve surveillance through the development of microsattellites, lighter, and greater capacity transponders.<sup>74</sup>

India emphasizes the integration of artificial intelligence (AI) in the Indian military, especially the Indian Army, to facilitate network-centric warfare. It aims to develop "quantum computing, nanotechnology, high-energy lasers, directed energy weapons, and hypersonic weapons in techno-centric warfare."<sup>75</sup> These newer

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<sup>73</sup> Masood Ur Rehman Khattak, "The Indian Army's Land Warfare Doctrine 2018: A Critical Analysis," *Islamabad Policy Research Institute*, (2020), 111, <https://ipripak.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/Article-5-IPRI-Journal-XX-I-Ind-Arm-New-Lan-ED-SSA-FINAL.pdf>.

<sup>74</sup> Land Warfare Doctrine, "Indian Army," (2018), <http://www.ssri-j.com/MediaReport/Document/IndianArmyLandWarfareDoctrine2018.pdf>.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

military technologies significantly undermine the strategic stability of South Asia. In parallel, developing cyber deterrence capabilities are imperative for India. In electronic warfare, India is committed to creating an electronic warfare eco-system that will cater to a full spectrum of threats and seek electro-optical dominance in communication intelligence (COMINT), electronic intelligence (ELINT), interception, jamming, spoofing, and deception. The Indian armed forces have indulged in war games to test these capabilities. Exercise Kharga Prahar was conducted to enhance the synergy and coordination of the Indian Army and the Air Force. Exercise HIM VIJAY tried rapid mobilization in mountainous terrain. Exercise Winged Raider included day and night operations and tested capabilities of precision attacks.

## **Conclusion**

The fragile security of South Asia is dependent on the bilateral relations of India and Pakistan. However, the Indian limited offensive war-fighting doctrines has remained a constant destabilizer in South Asia. India's adherence to a limited war with Pakistan resulted in the formulation of these doctrines. These doctrines further complicate the security matrix of the region and compel Pakistan to respond accordingly to protect its territorial integrity, thus fueling an unprecedented arms race in the region. These conventional war-fighting doctrines have catastrophic repercussions for the South Asian region. These war-fighting doctrines have always sabotaged and will continue to jeopardize the security of South Asia. The doctrinal transformation of India reflects India's offensive posture in the region. From the Sundarji doctrine to the land warfare doctrine, all were aimed at launching an offensive against Pakistan. The Sundarji and Cold Start incorporated a land offensive; Pakistan effectively mitigated this threat after introducing tactical nuclear weapons. However, India's ambitious military modernization and innovative war-fighting doctrines to exploit its military advantage against Pakistan remain the main destabilizers in the region. The Joint Doctrine for Indian Armed Forces and the LWD shifted India's focus to precision-based attacks inside Pakistan that were not nuclear in nature. Thus, the evolution of Indian war-fighting doctrines reflects the Indian

offensive posture against Pakistan that jeopardizes the strategic stability of South Asia. The dynamics after the overt nuclearization of South Asia have more complications. Any aggressive act by India can ultimately push the entire region to the verge of destruction. Pakistan must lower its nuclear threshold to counter India's antagonistic military doctrines. Therefore, meddling in the conventional and nuclear domains is inappropriate. Pakistan has the right to defend its territorial integrity and survival under international law. Article 51 of the UN charter confers the right to self-defense on the states. It proclaims, "Nothing in the present charter shall impair the inherent right of states to act in self-defense."<sup>76</sup> Hence, Pakistan's response cannot be criticized or challenged. However, the response can escalate the conflict resulting in a nuclear war in South Asia.

India crafted the CSD that aimed at launching a limited offensive inside Pakistan's territory. Pakistan had to cater to the security dilemma; hence Pakistan inducted a low-yield nuclear weapon, Nasr. Nasr has successfully deterred India from operationalizing this proactive strategy. However, India has consistently devised novel strategies to exploit its military might and seek regional power projection. Similarly, the Joint Doctrine for the Indian Armed Forces and LWD encourage India to seek ambitious military modernization that increases the conventional military gap between these nuclear arch-rivals. Also, advanced conventional military equipment and technology jeopardize nuclear deterrence as well. In its pursuit to become a regional hegemon, India has significantly ignored the repercussions of limited war-fighting doctrines against a nuclear-armed state. Moreover, escalation control cannot be guaranteed during a crisis or a conventional war. The South Asian strategic equation is a hybrid of conventional and nuclear domains. This meddling in domains increases the chances of misperceptions and miscalculations in

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<sup>76</sup> Patrick Kelly, "Preemptive Self-Defense, Customary International Law, and the Congolese Wars," *E-International Relations*, September 3, 2016, accessed November 1, 2020, [https://www.e-ir.info/2016/09/03/preemptive-self-defense-customary-international-law-and-the-congolese-wars/#:~:text=While%20the%20United%20Nations%20\(UN,collective%20self%20defence%20if%20an](https://www.e-ir.info/2016/09/03/preemptive-self-defense-customary-international-law-and-the-congolese-wars/#:~:text=While%20the%20United%20Nations%20(UN,collective%20self%20defence%20if%20an)



future conflicts. Consequently, any pre-emptive measure by either side will be catastrophic for South Asia. Finally, the Indian limited war-fighting doctrine has always deteriorated and will continue to erode the South Asian strategic stability. The collapse of nuclear deterrence and strategic stability will have devastating consequences for the entire region.