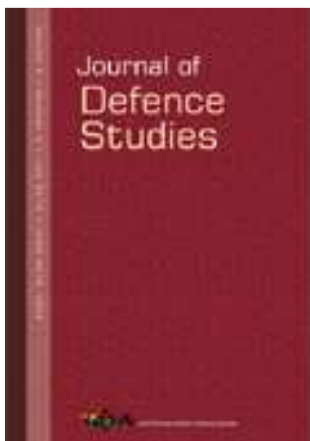


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# The Kargil War and India's Security Environment

*Jayant Prasad\**

*The Kargil conflict presented an opportunity for a relook at India's national security environment in terms of defence preparedness. The Kargil Review Committee report pointed to the deficiencies in India's security management system and gave a call for course correction especially in terms of integration of the armed forces, defence modernisation, and optimum defence budgeting and expenditure. Against this backdrop, the article undertakes a discussion of India's national security environment by examining its long-term foreign policy and security goals as well as its possible strategic behaviour in the future. A prescriptive angle is provided by discussing the strategic options available to India in the short to medium term. The article also stresses on a greater push to domestic defence industry and manufacturing, renewed focus on maritime affairs, and the need to integrate and restructure the defence ecosystem.*

Kargil was no exception to all the post-1947 military conflicts between India and Pakistan in Pakistan failing to achieve its war objectives. Although not as spectacular from India's standpoint as the 1971 war, the Kargil War was significant as the first protracted military conflict between India and Pakistan upon both countries becoming nuclear weapons states in 1998. It resulted in important learnings about nuclear deterrence between India and Pakistan.

The Kargil incursion by Pakistan was based on the assumption that by using stealth and surprise, Pakistan could alter the conventional status

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quo by seizing Indian territory, without inviting an Indian riposte due to India's imagined restraint, international intermediation and above all, because the two countries were by then nuclear weapons states. The Pakistani leadership believed that both countries going to war was so fraught with risks that India could not afford to let the situation escalate. Further, Pakistan assumed that nuclear weapons had given it the margin to take advantage and engage in adventurism conventionally. This was a well-ingrained view amongst the Pakistan elite and not something that was imagined by the few Pakistan Army officers who planned and executed the operation in the Kargil–Dras sector. Almost two decades prior to the Kargil War, Stephen P. Cohen, an American scholar who knows Pakistan well, wrote that according to several Pakistanis he met, a Pakistani nuclear weapons capability would:

provide the umbrella under which Pakistan could re-open the Kashmir issue; a Pakistani nuclear capability not only neutralises the Indian nuclear decision but also Indian conventional forces and a brash, bold, Pakistani strike to liberate Kashmir might go unchallenged if the Indian leadership was weak or indecisive.<sup>1</sup>

Even the United Nations (UN) Security Council Resolution 1172, that condemned the Indian nuclear weapons tests of 11 and 13 May 1998 and the Pakistani ones of 28 and 30 May 1998, urged both countries to resume dialogue on all outstanding issues and encouraged them to find mutually acceptable solutions 'that address the root causes of those tensions, including Kashmir'.<sup>2</sup> The unmistakable signal to Pakistan's establishment was the (false) linkage between nuclear weapons and Jammu and Kashmir (J&K). This was reinforced in June 1998 by the joint declaration in Beijing by President Bill Clinton and President Jiang Zemin on closely working together to, inter alia, promote the peaceful resolution of differences between India and Pakistan, including the issue of Kashmir.<sup>3</sup>

Proceeding on the assumption that nuclear weapons states do not fight directly against each other, Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee went to the Minar-e-Pakistan in Lahore in February 1999 and signed, with Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif, the Lahore Declaration, which stated their joint resolve to resolve all bilateral issues, including the issue of J&K. Moreover, a memorandum of understanding concluded between the Foreign Secretaries of the two countries committed them to engage in consultations on security concepts and nuclear doctrines, to develop

measures for confidence building in the nuclear and conventional fields, aimed at avoidance of conflict.<sup>4</sup> At the banquet organised in his honour by the host, Prime Minister Vajpayee conveyed a singular message from India: 'There can be no greater legacy that we can leave behind than to do away with mistrust, to abjure and eliminate conflict, to erect an edifice of durable peace amity, harmony and co-operation.'<sup>5</sup>

Despite these moves, the Kargil War followed soon thereafter. The first reports of Pakistani infiltrators having occupied Indian posts vacated routinely during the winter months became known by 3 May 1999. What happened next was instructive.<sup>6</sup> Although India did not cross the international border and threaten an all-out war, it showed its resolve in winning back the lost territory. When the international community—the United States (US) specifically—intervened, it did so not to mediate, but to get a commitment from Pakistan to vacate the territories occupied.<sup>7</sup> Pakistan could neither achieve its objective of gaining strategic ground in the Kargil–Dras sector of the Line of Control (LoC) in J&K, nor did it gain in internationalising the issue of J&K. There has not been a major military conflict between the two countries since then.<sup>8</sup>

Besides deterrence, there were lessons learnt from the Kargil War concerning conventional war. Soon after the war, the Government of India (GoI) appointed the Kargil Review Committee (KRC) to 'review the events leading up to the Pakistani aggression' and 'to recommend such measures as are considered necessary to safeguard national security against such armed intrusions.'<sup>9</sup> Although the KRC Report said that 'India was militarily not well-prepared' and there were 'hard lessons to be learnt',<sup>10</sup> it focused on suggesting improvements for the future. Since the report had highlighted 'many grave deficiencies in India's security management system', the government established a Group of Ministers (GoM) to implement its recommendations;<sup>11</sup> however, some of the principal suggestions made by the KRC Report, especially those related to the Ministry of Defence (MoD), were never fully acted upon.<sup>12</sup> A Press Information Bureau (PIB) handout of 2012, claiming that 63 of the 75 recommendations made by the GoM had been implemented, ignored the fact that most important of the suggestions made about integration of the three services and jointness of approach on questions of national security were not implemented.<sup>13</sup> The situation remains the same even today, when India is commemorating the 20th anniversary of the Kargil War. Given the uncertainties of India's security environment, this is a good opportunity to outline India's foreign and security policy objectives

and to list out specific medium and short-term measures necessary for India's defences.

#### INDIA'S ABIDING, LONG-TERM FOREIGN AND SECURITY POLICY GOALS

India's security environment continues to be fragile. Although the major challenges are internal, and relate foremost to development, in the following analysis, I shall focus necessarily on the external environment, which remains even less supportive than it was two decades ago. Both regionally and globally, international relations have become not only more random and complex but also more unpredictable and conflictual.

In such a situation, India must promote its core national strategic interests by standing on its own feet. India's foreign and security policy objectives include safeguarding its own security and promoting the welfare of its citizens. The most important among them are:

1. Deterring the use or threat of force against India, including nuclear blackmail and conventional, terrorist or cyber attacks, and maintaining operational readiness against current and potential adversaries.
2. Developing all aspects of comprehensive national power, keeping it as the foremost national objective and outside of partisan politics.
3. Preventing the convergence of adversarial forces and powers against India. As the strategic challenges facing the Indo-Pacific and the world cannot be met by a single country, ensuring the stability of the regional and global commons through increased cooperation with others is essential.
4. Working towards a secure and stable Indo-Pacific and world, which operates within a rules-based global order (for instance, in which the sea lanes of communication are regulated by the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea).
5. Preventing non-traditional (relating to the impact of climate change, demographics, energy, environment, food and water) and asymmetric threats to India's security, especially through the hybridisation of war.

With regard to defence, India shall have to concentrate on the following objectives:

1. Deter, deny and defeat attacks on or threats to India and its national interests.
2. Prepare the military for full-spectrum warfare, including hybrid and high-technology warfare, in respect of both Pakistan and China ('to hedge all bets, and to cover all contingencies'<sup>14</sup>).
3. Acquire adequate capacities and capabilities by bridging the gaps in military preparedness, in order to promote India's foreign and security policy goals.
4. Attain self-sufficiency of at least 75 per cent in the production of critical weapons systems, ancillaries and logistics to guarantee their availability in times of crisis.
5. Synergise the capabilities of the MoD and the service headquarters through systemic organisational reforms.
6. Secure the external environment in India's immediate neighbourhood.
7. Emerge as a reliable and preferred security provider in the Indo-Pacific region through a leading role, in cooperation with other partners.

India continues to face a full spectrum of security challenges in a difficult neighbourhood, due to unresolved border issues with both Pakistan and China. Regionally, too, there is increasing state fragility (Afghanistan, Maldives, Myanmar and Pakistan). Pakistan, as a hub of terrorism and proliferation, has remained a particular concern. Besides, India is confronted with the larger challenge flowing from the unravelling of Afghanistan and Islamist terrorism in West Asia. The country, therefore, has to be prepared simultaneously for conventional and hybrid conflicts. Added to these are the challenges of defence modernisation, institutional deficits and financial constraints. Thus, the challenges, both regionally and globally, include: competing territorial claims; increasing military modernisation (especially in the domains of nuclear weapons, their delivery systems, space and cyberspace); and a possible deficit of international leadership on global issues, especially on disarmament and the environment.

India's strategy must straddle several possible contingencies that could arise in a world transitioning through a period of acute flux: benign and cooperative, as also competitive and conflicting. Manifestations of ongoing uncertainties can be seen in shifting regional and global alignments, technological disruptions, identity-based conflicts and the rising aspirations of its own people. India's ability to overcome

these challenges will be predicated on the adaptability and mutual supportiveness of its internal and external policies. Notwithstanding such challenges, there are opportunities for India to position itself as a major player in a multipolar world.

The Indian Armed Forces need synergies within and across services so as to enhance preparedness through capability building. Crucial for this is a common vision, which would flow out of 'jointness' at the highest levels of the military decision-making process. The armed forces have to be more prepared and for this, the indigenisation of weapons and equipment needs to be speeded. The next section presents specific suggestions, together with their rationale, for implementation in the medium term, that is, the next three to ten years, followed by lists of those recommendations that warrant implementation most expeditiously (within two years).

#### A POSSIBLE MEDIUM-TERM STRATEGY, INCLUDING SHORT-TERM IMPERATIVES

##### **Capability Creation an Imperative**

The foremost security threat for India over the next decade is to prevent a collusive threat from multiple adversaries. While making efforts to avoid military conflict and concentrating on the ongoing economic transformation, India has to be ready to face any war imposed on it. It must prevent a two-front war through a combination of military deterrence, diplomatic efforts and economic measures. At the same time, in order to ensure a stable and integrated periphery, it must create capabilities to meet possible threats in the extended neighbourhood by being prepared, avoiding rhetoric, forging reliable partnerships, clearly articulating core national interests and developing abilities to deter aggression.

Since nuclear weapons provide the ultimate guarantee against blackmail or hegemony, India must continue to strengthen credible deterrence. Force structuring and signalling are essential elements of deterrence, and adversaries need to be convinced about a nation's red lines and its will to use force to safeguard its interests. Articulating a national security strategy and a military strategy, creating a suitable higher defence management structure, removing existing deficiencies of equipment shortages, funding the replacement of obsolete equipment, making up of reserves and ensuring that the human resource is skilled adequately to operate the sophisticated weapons systems, all are mandatory for creating

credible deterrence. To this end, India needs to prioritise acquisitions, and given the lean budgets and short time frames available, augment its delivery systems.

India needs to adhere to a plan for removing equipment voids while addressing the quality and quantity of various types of ammunition. Munitions factories must be upgraded to produce quality munitions in required quantities, including war wastage reserves. The deficiencies in weapons platforms, equipment providing mobility (such as rolling stock and fixed and rotary-wing aerial assets), infrastructure (strategic roads, bridges, railway lines and airfields), communication and surveillance equipment and protective gear (bulletproof jackets, helmets, nuclear, biological or chemical weapons protection and mine clearing equipment) must be plugged. The air force strength must be brought up to 45 squadrons and the navy's deficit of vessels be remedied by procuring progressively to reach the projected requirement levels by 2030.

The GoI needs to urgently address existing voids by:

1. Increasing the defence budget to 2 per cent of the gross domestic product (GDP) initially (excluding pensions), and adjusting it thereafter, depending on the evolving threat perception.
2. Having the Long Term Integrated Perspective Plan (LTIPP) for the next 12 years and the Services Capital Acquisition Plan for 5 years approved by the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) to bring rigour to the process and guarantee a commitment of budgetary support for the acquisitions that are necessitated as a consequence.
3. Rapidly strengthening the border infrastructure to ensure that work on all border roads and strategic railway lines in the North-East and in J&K are completed as per schedule.
4. Fully making up the equipment deficit of personal weapons, and half of the deficit for support and heavy weapons, communication and protection gear and ammunition.
5. Assisting the infantry of the Indian Army by providing it with medium-range battlefield support weapons.
6. Accelerating the integrated missile development programme, including ballistic missile defence.
7. Devising and implementing a national maritime strategy, including port development and shipbuilding for the navy and the merchant marine.

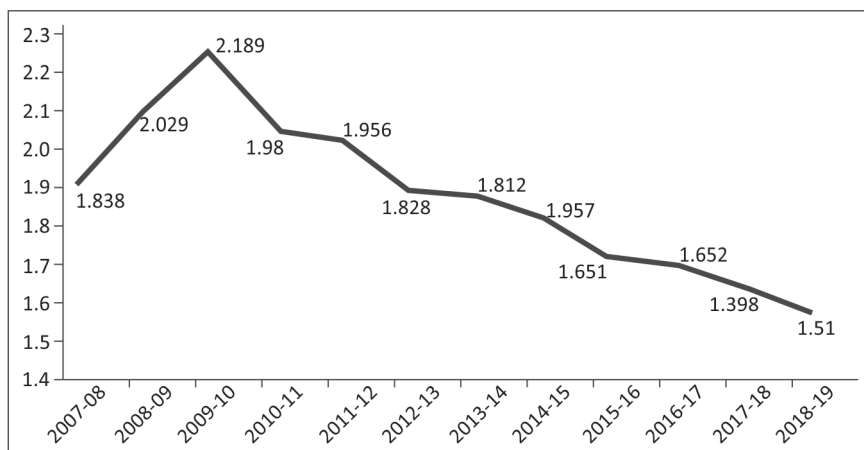


8. Expanding naval capabilities and nurturing closer ties with the Indian Ocean littoral countries.

### Optimum Defence Budgeting and Expenditure

According to the India's HQ Integrated Defence Staff (HQ IDS), over the past decade, the defence expenditure (excluding defence pensions) as a percentage of GDP has been falling consistently, hitting a record low of 1.51 per cent in 2018–19, as illustrated in Figure 1.<sup>15</sup> The Indian Armed Forces must necessarily undertake a thoroughgoing review of their manpower, since expansion of forces and modernisation cannot be simultaneously pursued.

Capital expenditure, most of which is meant for modernisation of forces, has also declined significantly, from 40 per cent in 2011–12 to 34 per cent in 2018–19. The acute pressure on defence modernisation is most visible in the share of new schemes in the capital acquisition budget. The 22nd Report of the Demand for Grants of the MoD for the year 2016–17 brings out that 'the Government's ability to spend has come under repeated pressure', with the MoD having surrendered Rs 35,000 crore of its capital expenditure budget over the four previous years.<sup>16</sup> Even after a modest increase of 12 per cent in 2016–17, it is well below the level achieved in 2011–12.<sup>17</sup> There is, thus, a need to provide for resources for capital acquisition pegged at 0.8 per cent of GDP within the overall



**Figure 1** Defence Expenditure as Percentage of GDP

Source: Available at <https://www.ids.nic.in/defence-acquisition.php>, accessed on 31 May 2019.

defence allocation.<sup>18</sup> Inflation and Rupee depreciation imply that in real terms, there has been a decline in capital procurement expenditure, even if the absolute amounts might be increasing.

Due to financial constraints, expenditure on defence will have to be managed prudently, without adversely impacting on defence preparedness. Savings on fuel, expenditure on personnel—particularly on pensions—and making maximum use of technologies and equipment already developed for civilian use should be explored. Savings on defence pensions could accrue if switched prospectively from a defined benefit to a defined contribution scheme. This assumes importance given the hefty increase in pensions in recent years: from Rs 37,569 crore in 2011–12, pensions have more than tripled to Rs 1,08,853 crore in 2018–19 (BE).<sup>19</sup> Jointness in training, logistics and procurement can also contribute to reducing defence expenditure.

Due to the partial implementation of One Rank One Pension (OROP) and the 7th Central Pay Commission recommendations, the manpower cost (salary of the armed forces and defence pension) has grown exponentially, from about 44 per cent in 2011–12 to 56 per cent in 2018–19 of the MoD's total expenditure. The growth in manpower cost has come primarily at the cost of capital procurement, whose share has drastically been reduced from 26 per cent in 2011–12 to 18 per cent in 2018–19.<sup>20</sup>

One way to reduce expenditure on security personnel for GoI would be to recruit the whole or part of the central police forces from amongst the retirees of the armed forces. Indeed, the KRC had recommended that in order to both reduce the age profile of the fighting forces and reduce expenditure, the armed forces personnel could join the central police forces. The held strength of the armed forces in 2017–18 was 14,37,639 (authorised strength: 15,02,114).<sup>21</sup> The strength of the Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), as in January 2017, was 9,87,497.<sup>22</sup> Typically, a soldier earns pension after only 17–18 years of service. The outgo from the public exchequer in case of recruitment of those who get their pension from the Consolidated Fund of India is substantially lower than that for an employee who is not a pensioner, because the salary paid to the pensioner is normally after the deduction of pension. Another way to restrict manpower cost would be to have compulsory service in the military, especially for those who benefit from subsidised higher education in public institutions.

Defence expenditure could be optimised in the short term by:

1. Making further progress in the efforts towards 'greening' of the Indian Army, particularly in the northern and the western sectors, to generate solar and wind energy at selected static formation headquarters and unit locations, in both peace and operational areas, to reduce transportation costs for fuel to hilly areas and to save the environment.
2. Procuring equipment available in the civilian sector, such as transport vehicles, engineering equipment and logistic support ships, to prevent duplication of effort by Ordnance Factories (OFs) and defence public sector undertakings (DPSUs).
3. Reducing manpower and large land forces by bringing in jointness in the armed forces, prioritising modernisation and preparing for hybrid warfare.
4. Outsourcing certain peacetime functions to the private sector and civilian agencies to shed redundant workforce in the armed forces.

The current defence acquisition structure, it is clear from the foregoing, has been inadequate to equip the armed forces within the stipulated budget and time frame. Surrender of allotted funds has been a recurring feature. In the last 10 years, between 2006–7 and 2015–16, a cumulative total of over Rs 51,000 crore has been surrendered from the capital acquisition budget.<sup>23</sup> Among the weaknesses exhibited in the current structure are: dispersed centres of responsibility among numerous stakeholders; lack of professionalism in acquisition matters; and short tenure of the personnel involved. Effective steps need to be taken to cut down on bureaucratic and procedural delays to give a thrust to acquisition so vital for the country's defence. Foreign direct investment in defence through the automatic route could be increased to 51 per cent, subject to compliance with licensing conditions spelt out in a special security agreement, such as done by many larger countries to cater to strategic concerns, including identifying countries to whom the equipment can be exported.

The defence acquisition structure and processes need urgent reform by:

1. Restructuring the Acquisition Wing of MoD, to be headed by a full-time Secretary-level officer, with the responsibility and accountability for all aspects of defence acquisition, including stipulation of system-wide policy guidelines, leading

international negotiations, exports, human resource development, indigenisation, licensing and acquisition procedures.

2. Establishing accountability in defence acquisition by creating an integrated and networked acquisition structure under one administrative head. Mandate a longer tenure (desirable up to five years) for any personnel involved in acquisition, including procurement, research, design and development, in line with international best practices.
3. Shortening the acquisition process for weapon platforms and equipment not considered cost-effective for production indigenously by directly shortlisting the best available variants of equipment, with a provision of life cycle spares and maintenance support.
4. Department of Defence Production (DDP) should be wound up and all functions, other than OFs and DPSUs, be transferred to the acquisitions department. The OFs and DPSUs may be brought under an Additional Secretary reporting to Defence Secretary, whose principal role would be to manage and restructure OFs and DPSUs.
5. Launch a major initiative for human resource development by identifying key acquisition positions in the system, stipulating QRs for each position, identify personnel and arrange training, to be led by Secretary Acquisition.
6. Restructure and rechristen the Defence Procurement Board, and widen its mandate to cover indigenisation, development of the industrial base and human resource policies.

### **Greater Push to Domestic Defence Industry and Manufacturing**

India's dependence on foreign arms is starkly illustrated by the fact that in five years, between 2013–14 and 2017–18, 82 capital acquisition contracts worth Rs 1,36,394 crore were signed with foreign companies.<sup>24</sup> Besides direct imports, India also spends a huge sum of foreign exchange on import of parts, components and raw materials by DPSUs and OFs. Between 2009–10 and 2015–16, DPSUs alone spent Rs 1,07,506 crore, representing 51 per cent of their turnover.<sup>25</sup> Even more important, taking into account both direct and indirect imports, India's self-reliance in defence procurement has turned out to be quite low, currently in the range of 40 per cent. India should, therefore, look at attaining a goal of minimum 60 per cent indigenisation. A database that captures India's

defence procurement (both revenue and capital) and the contribution of the domestic industry, including import content (both private and public), would be a vital monitoring mechanism in this regard.

The defence offset policy should focus on bringing in critical technologies and high-end manufacturing work for Indian industry. The policy also needs to be tweaked to demand specific offsets, as has been the practice followed by several other countries. Monitoring and supervision mechanisms for implementation of the offset policy need to be substantially augmented to ensure that the desired benefits flow to Indian industry in the quickest time.

Due to various reasons, the Indian private sector continues to be a marginal player in India's defence production system; and despite significant investments made over the past several years, no worthwhile contract has been awarded to it. It is therefore necessary for the government to look at state-owned entities and private companies impartially, and synergise the talent, experience and capabilities of both so that an optimum mix is achieved.

The DDP should not have the dual responsibility of managing DPSUs and, simultaneously, regulating defence production and promoting 'Make in India' in defence, since inherently it creates a conflict of interest and discourages participation by the private sector in defence production. The business model of underperforming OFs and DPSUs should be changed, and DDP divested of control over them. For this, the OFs need to be corporatized and all DPSUs listed on stock exchanges. Open competition for orders will prune the inefficient establishments and help in building an efficient domestic defence industry.

The 'Make' procedure, first articulated in 2006 with a view to developing design, development and manufacturing capability within the domestic industry, and particularly in the private sector, has made negligible progress. The Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) 2016 revamped the procedure. It is imperative that the projects identified under it are executed in a time-bound manner. It is also imperative that the identified lists are populated with a greater number of larger projects, to give the much-needed thrust to the 'Make in India' initiative and move the country towards self-reliance in defence manufacturing.

Considering that research and development (R&D) is at the core of a technology-intensive sector like defence manufacturing, the government must incentivise exponentially increased spending on it. It is also important that a competitive atmosphere is created for the industry,

Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and other science and technology (S&T) entities to bag R&D contracts on merit. In this regard, the office of the Scientific Advisor to the Defence Minister needs to be empowered with a dedicated budget to promote results-oriented R&D with the help of the wider R&D establishment, academia and industry. The DRDO should be tasked to concentrate only on cutting-edge, futuristic technologies. A suitable model may be set up on the lines of the highly successful models of Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) of the US or the Israeli Office of Chief Scientist (OCS). All three services must also have their design teams, for which the model being followed by the Indian Navy could serve as an example for the army and the air force. The three services must carry out minor improvements themselves.

The domestic defence industry needs strengthening in the short term by:

1. Corporatising the OFs to bring in greater accountability in their functioning as a first step towards public listing and equity disinvestment. Factories that have lost relevance due to high overhead costs be shut down or handed over to the private sector on public-private partnership (PPP) basis.
2. Listing the DPSUs not yet listed on the stock exchanges in a time-bound manner. Post-listing, the option of strategic sales may be explored to generate resources for modernisation of the forces.
3. Focusing DRDO's role on niche and futuristic technologies and strategic systems. The DRDO's non-futuristic and non-strategic mission mode development projects should be funded from MoD's capital budget and should, ideally, fall within the expanded acquisition framework. A DARPA or OCS-like model needs to be set up under the office of the Scientific Advisor to the Defence Minister to promote result-oriented defence R&D by leveraging the national-level expertise available.
4. Preparing an indigenisation plan on the lines of defence procurement and R&D plans (such as the 12-year Long Term Integrated Perspective Plan, and 5-year Services Capital Acquisition Plan and the Long Term Technology Perspective Plan of the DRDO), for the guidance of the Indian industry.
5. Expediting implementation of the revamped 'Make' procedure (DPP 2016).

6. Revising the defence offset policy with an unambiguous provision of demanding specific offsets (pertaining to advanced technology and high-end manufacturing).

### **Integrate and Restructure the Defence Ecosystem**

To maintain its influence in its defined strategic space, India needs to create overseas deployment capability of its armed forces, with the ability to deploy quickly (a maximum of 36 hours) in the area of interest.<sup>26</sup> India also needs to develop an intervention capacity in the region from where its migrant workers may need to be evacuated due to conflict. Preparation of contingency plans in this regard, therefore, becomes imperative in light of the experiences in Libya, Lebanon and Yemen. With its rising influence and as a responsible stakeholder, India will also need to be prepared to undertake out-of-area contingency missions at the invitation of friendly governments and to safeguard the global or regional commons. Strategic airlift, surveillance and amphibious and naval support capabilities assume particular importance for this purpose.

Given these emerging security imperatives and the key recommendations to improve the functioning of the higher defence management suggested by the GoM, following the reports of KRC and the Naresh Chandra task force, India needs to bring about a fundamental restructuring of the MoD and its affiliated organisations. For generating optimum military power, synergy in decision making, planning and execution at all levels of government, and particularly within the defence establishment, is a must. Currently, those responsible for strategic planning do not have the requisite training. India should take immediate steps to integrate the armed forces with the strategic decision-making process, by appointing a Chief of Defence Staff (CDS), besides a military adviser of two or three-star rank (preferably retired) in the office of the Prime Minister.

Among the core existing recommendations that must be implemented expeditiously, the following are the most significant:

1. Appoint a CDS, beginning at once with a Permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee.
2. Create independent commands for cyber, aerospace, and special forces. The Cyber Command should work in sync with other national organisations, such as the National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO).

3. Provide the military adequate exposure to external environment through deputation to neighbouring countries and to universities and think tanks overseas.
4. Position qualified service officers within the MoD and civilian officers in service headquarters and IDS to encourage mutual learning and improved decision making.
5. Articulate a national security strategy to set clear benchmarks for all stakeholders, which should be followed by a military strategy. Further, a defence white paper should be issued once in two years.
6. Prepare a five-year defence plan, to be duly approved by the CCS.

The CDS would have to be responsible for joint planning, including long-term perspective planning and doctrine and strategy pertaining to joint operations. This mechanism would assist more effectively in the acquisitions, logistics and infrastructure development processes embedded in other parts of the MoD. The CDS would also interface with all the tri-service commands and new ones proposed, such as cyber, aerospace and special forces. Such a specified mandate will assist the CDS in leveraging and synergising the assets of all three services. Simultaneously, a road map for the creation of theatre commands should be articulated.

The CDS mechanism could help enforce jointness across every level of the Indian Armed Forces. It could:

1. Afford senior military leaders experience of tri-service commands, experience in technology-driven environments and exposure to the full spectrum of challenges, from terrorism to strategic. After a transitional period of five years, make experience in a tri-service organisation one of the compulsory requirements for officers aspiring for a two-star rank in any service.
2. Put in place joint logistics supply for all three services in peacetime—this can commence with annual procurements of rations for the combined strength of the services.
3. Speed up jointness in communications being spearheaded by the Defence Communication Network of IDS, and extend connectivity down to functional levels.
4. Introduce jointness in training for specialised units of the three services having similar employment and holding common assets,



- such as the special forces (Marcos and Garuds), for optimising infrastructure and costs.
5. Evolve joint response mechanisms and training methodologies to combat hybrid threats, for which there are no boundaries; indeed, all three services and the CAPFs must work on this together.
  6. Initiate joint exercises by all three services with their counterparts in friendly countries, with the navy taking the lead in such engagement.

An inter-agency organisational structure with earmarked specific forces needs to be established for quick reaction to undertake contingency operations, either on India's borders or overseas. This must include a combined task force involving all three services for deployment overseas to support national interests, including responding to unacceptable provocation from across the borders in the shortest possible time.

### **Build a Maritime Focus**

All of independent India's wars, including Kargil, have been terrestrial. Hence, India's focus has been land oriented. Planning for the future must take also into account that India straddles, and is the fulcrum of, the region between Suez and Shanghai, between West Asia and East Asia, and between the Mediterranean and South China Sea. The Indian peninsula juts into the Indian Ocean. It therefore enjoys a strategic position in the Indo-Pacific region. This must be leveraged to ensure control over the near seas, and to keep open the sea lanes of communication. The importance of good relations with other littoral states, thus, gains added importance. Building a civil maritime infrastructure with a robust indigenous shipbuilding industry is another imperative. To cater for the options of power projection in the neighbourhood, adequate amphibious and airlift capability would be necessary. Simultaneously, friendly relations with other Asian maritime nations like Japan, Australia, Vietnam and Indonesia have become important, as also closer maritime exchanges with Sri Lanka, Maldives, Seychelles, Mauritius, Madagascar, Thailand, Singapore, Iran and Oman. These links should be further strengthened.

In addition, in order to maintain competitive advantage in the maritime sphere, India must complete the ongoing fleet modernisation plans in time and firm up maritime cooperation agreements with important regional maritime nations, such as Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore, Indonesia, Oman, Kenya and Tanzania. Similarly, it should

conclude naval cooperation agreements with friendly foreign countries, such as the US, Japan, Australia, Vietnam and South Korea, for cooperation during specific contingencies.

### **Stress on Futuristic Thinking and Planning**

To prepare for the future, including Kargil-type hybrid wars, the government needs to establish an inter-agency team consisting of defence and security planners, young thinkers, think tank representatives and scientists, to study the likely future developments in warfighting and recommend organisational, doctrinal and equipment requirements of the armed forces and other agencies to prepare for future wars. It should make the National Defence University functional within the next two years.

In the coming years, India must increase defence cooperation with its traditional partners, like Russia, the US, Israel and France, as well as with newer partners such as Japan, for transfer of defence equipment and technology. This will include expanding bilateral initiatives like the US–India Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) with other countries and promoting joint ventures in defence manufacturing. India should develop good military-to-military relations with all these countries and emerge as a security, economic and political partner of first choice. While India should continue to use military power prudently, it must develop its capacity to project power efficiently and for a sustained duration.

Future conflicts will be technology-driven and hybrid in nature. The rapid development of autonomous weapons systems, or weaponised robots, driven by the exponential growth of pattern recognition technologies associated with artificial intelligence will change the military equilibrium, unless India makes a determined effort to keep up with the emerging technology. Adversaries will supplement cyber, space and undersea warfare with psychological warfare and subversion. The Indian Armed Forces should be ready to prevail in an environment of full-spectrum warfare by upgrading their doctrines and training, for which 'jointness' and force structuring will be vital.

The technology challenge could be met by:

1. Starting 'Mission Engine' within a year to develop engine technology and manufacture engines of various types within the country.

2. Beginning an incentive scheme for developing indigenous substitutes for imported subsystems of major weapon systems and equipment.
3. Permitting companies, both the public sector undertakings and those in the private sector, to hire scientists and technicians from anywhere in the world at suitable levels of remuneration.
4. Getting the technology imported as part of the overall deal in the beginning of the project cycle, and commencing indigenous manufacturing simultaneously with the import of the equipment—with the foreign vendor obliged to make the domestic plant fully functional within an agreed time frame.
5. Identifying R&D start-ups worldwide and offering them collaboration in developing and manufacturing weapon systems, subsystems (for example, missile homing systems) or specialised equipment, like efficient storage batteries.

#### INDIA'S FUTURE STRATEGIC BEHAVIOUR

The manner in which India's leadership decided to handle the Kargil incursion by Pakistan and get its occupied areas vacated without crossing either the LoC in J&K or the India–Pakistan international border, as also India's restraint, particularly after the 2001 terrorist attack on the Indian Parliament and the 2008 terrorist attack in Mumbai by the Lashkar-e-Taiba, had lulled the Pakistan Army establishment to misjudge India's response to repeated instances of Pakistan-sponsored terrorist acts. The US government had commissioned 'a quick-turnaround study' by the Rand Corporation on the significance of the Kargil conflict and its implications for the future stability of South Asia. At that time, it reached the conclusion that despite the continued pursuit by Pakistan of low-intensity conflict against India, 'India will continue to exhibit restraint.'<sup>27</sup>

This has turned out to be wrong, evidenced especially by the retaliatory action targeting the Jaish-e-Muhammad camp in Balakot in Pakistan's province of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in response to the terrorist attack at Pulwama that killed 40 members of the Central Reserve Police Force. Conventional wisdom is that between two nuclear weapons-equipped neighbours such as India and Pakistan, a terrorist strike followed by a retaliatory conventional military response carries the risk of nuclear war.<sup>28</sup> However, after the Balakot attack and Pakistan's symbolic

conventional military response to it, both sides took care not to escalate the situation.

The governments in India and Pakistan are both rational actors, even if, in Pakistan, the finger on the nuclear trigger will move with the nod of the military and not the civilian leadership. There are varying estimates of the capability of both countries regarding the wherewithal to carry out a fully successful first strike of nuclear weapons against each other. What is sufficient, however, is the assumption of a second-strike capability, which is enough to assure restraint. Admittedly, escalation control will be difficult, even if in accordance with India's enunciated nuclear doctrine, nothing prevents India from a tailored or targeted nuclear retaliation. However, once a nuclear weapons exchange is underway, there is no telling where it will stop. The desirable outcome of nuclear deterrence is predicated on the presumption of a presumed rational behaviour of the adversary and of a psychological predisposition to reason. In case there is reason to believe otherwise, additional measures are required, besides sufficient retaliatory capacity with unacceptable damage potential. Just as the Kargil incursion and the continued use of cross-border terrorism compelled the Indian defence planners to evolve prophylactic and coercive conventional responses, Pakistan's nuclear first-strike posture and the recent announcements about its move towards full-spectrum deterrence and deployment of tactical nuclear weapons have resulted in India opting for missile defence, augmented intelligence capacity such as more eyes in the sky and multiplicity of response, including, if required, possible counter-force measures.

India is hopeful that its progressively robust response to cross-border terrorism and low-intensity conflict will gradually persuade the Pakistan Army leadership that pursuing their traditional actions against India will not pay. After all, the Balakot strike after the Pulwama terrorist attack was part of an established pattern of Indian ripostes, though in earlier cases India had chosen not to publicise them. The Balakot strike was different from all the previous surgical strikes because of a couple of reasons: first, the Indian Air Force was used; and second, the targets hit in Pakistan were located in its western-most province (in all the earlier instances, the targets lay just across the LoC in J&K). It is, thus, evident that India is gradually but surely developing the capacity for a flexible conventional response to any level of provocation from Pakistan. With the technological superiority of the Indian Armed Forces and the development of stand-off weapons, India will have

the capacity for undertaking an asymmetric response without exposing its assets.

Another essential step to buttress security would be for India to pursue, with greater commitment, an internal solution to the issue of J&K. A former Indian High Commissioner to Pakistan, G. Parthasarathy, has written that while Pakistan exploits the situation there, 'we have ourselves allowed narrow political considerations and poor governance' to complicate matters. He further adds that rigged elections in the 1980s and 'polarizing people on communal lines' were a recipe for disaster.<sup>29</sup> As for Pakistan's role in the resolution of the J&K issue is concerned, the issue can be resolved as a function of an internal solution and, where Islamabad is concerned, the improvement of India–Pakistan relations; and not the other way around, by attempting to resolve the issue of J&K as a precursor to improved India–Pakistan relations.

'India will be the fulcrum of twenty-first century order,' writes Henry Kissinger, 'an indispensable element, based on its geography, resources, and tradition of sophisticated leadership, in the strategic and ideological evolution of the regions and the concepts of order at whose intersection it stands.'<sup>30</sup> This will be so if India develops at a faster pace and India's foreign and security policy objectives are underpinned by the effort required to transform its economy and military.

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#### NOTES

1. Stephen P. Cohen, 'Nuclear Issue and Security Policy in Pakistan', Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Association of Asian Studies, Washington, DC, March 1980, quoted in *From Surprise to Reckoning: The Kargil Review Committee Report*, New Delhi: Sage, 1999, p. 187.
2. Resolution adopted by the UN Security Council on 6 June 1998, available at <http://unscr.com/en/resolutions/doc/1172>, accessed on 21 May 2019.
3. Declaration of 21 June 1998, available at <http://www.acronym.org.uk/old/proliferation-challenges/nuclear-weapons-possessors/china/us-china-joint-statement-south-asia-june-1998>, accessed on 21 May 2019.
4. Available at <https://mea.gov.in/in-focus-article.htm?18997/Lahore+Declaration+February+1999>, accessed on 21 May 2019.
5. Available at <https://www.stimson.org/lahore-summit>, accessed on 21 May 2019.
6. There are other examples, apart from the Kargil War between India and Pakistan, that the presence of nuclear weapons in the hands of belligerents has not eliminated conventional war, such as the Egyptian–Syrian attack on Israel, the Chinese–United States (US) confrontation in Korea and the conflict between China and the former Soviet Union over the Ussuri River. See John J. Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2014, p. 128.
7. For a comprehensive account of the Kargil War, see Peter R. Lavoy (ed.), *Asymmetric Warfare in South Asia: The Causes and Consequences of the Kargil Conflict*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. As per the author, 'Pakistani planners assumed that the risk of escalation to general war was minimal because the presence of nuclear weapons might deter India, but in case would also ensure the involvement of the international community to pressure India against turning a limited high-altitude adjustment of the LoC into a full-fledged war' (p. 87). The Pakistani planners failed to anticipate a focused and localised Indian response, which won India credit from all quarters.
8. General Pervez Musharraf though has a completely different take on it, perhaps because it was primarily his handiwork. He contends that just as India took Siachen at a 'tactical level', the 'Kashmiri freedom fighting mujahideen occupied the Kargil heights that the Indian Army had vacated for the winter.' See Pervez Musharraf, *In the Line of Fire: A Memoir*, New York: Free Press, 2016, chapter 11. General Musharraf blamed Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif for a 'sudden capitulation' before President Bill Clinton in Washington, DC, on 4 July 1999. By then, the situation of the Pakistan Army in the remaining positions it occupied on the Kargil heights had become untenable.

9. *From Surprise to Reckoning*, n. 1, p. 25. The Committee was established on 29 July 1999 and comprised four members: K. Subhramanyam, the Chairman; Lieutenant General (Lt Gen) (Retd.) K.K. Hazari; B.G. Verghese; and Satish Chandra, who was designated Member-Secretary of the Committee.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 23.
11. *Report of the Group of Ministers on National Security*, available at <https://www.vifindia.org/sites/default/files/GoM%20Report%20on%20National%20Security.pdf>, accessed on 12 May 2019. The ministers of Home Affairs, Defence, External Affairs and Finance were members of the GoM and the National Security Adviser, Brajesh Misra, was a permanent Special Invitee of the GoM, with the National Security Council Secretariat providing its secretarial back-up. The GoM was established on 17 April 2000 and submitted its report in mid-February 2001.
12. 'India seldom acts on lessons drawn from previous wars and conflicts,' according to General V.N. Sharma. See Lt Gen (Retd.) Y.M. Bammi, *Kargil 1999: The Impregnable Conquered*, Noida: Gorkha Publishers, 2002, p. vii.
13. Press release of 14 May 2012, available at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=83711>, accessed on 12 May 2019.
14. Wayne Wilcox wrote over 45 years ago in a seminal *Survival* commentary that 'the present Indian defence posture is to hedge all bets, and to cover all contingencies presented by Pakistan and China...'; see Wayne Wilcox, 'Strategic Reinsurance for India', *Survival*, Vol. 14, No. 4, 1972, p. 182. This holds true even today.
15. For the share of the MoD expenditure in GDP, see Laxman Kumar Behera, 'Examining the Feasibility and Affordability of Raising the Share of Defence Expenditure to Three Percent of GDP', IDSA Issue Brief, 20 August 2018, p. 3, figure 1. Indeed, the Minister of State of Defence, Subhash Bhamre, said in the Lok Sabha, on 20 December 2017, that according to the budget estimates of 2016–17 and 2017–18, as a percentage of GDP, it worked out to 1.65 per cent and 1.54 per cent, respectively. See <http://164.100.47.190/loksabhaquestions/annex/13/AU783.pdf>, accessed on 31 May 2019.
16. Standing Committee on Defence (2015–16), 'Ministry of Defence Demand for Grants (2016-17) on Capital Outlay on Defence Services, Procurement Policy and Defence Planning', Presented to the Lok Sabha on 3 May 2016 and laid in the Rajya Sabha on 3 May 2016, Lok Sabha Secretariat, New Delhi, p. 12.
17. *Ibid.*
18. According to the oral deposition of the former Vice Chief of Army Staff, Lt Gen Sarath Chand, before the Standing Committee on Defence (2017–18) in March 2018, there was a shortage of about Rs 12,296 crore so far

as capital expenditure was concerned. Indeed, he said that the budget of 2018–19 had ‘dashed our hopes’, adding that the liquidation of committed liabilities would ‘hardly leave any funds for new schemes in 2018–19’. Chand also said that while all modern armed forces had a one-third share each of vintage, current and state-of-the-art equipment, 68 per cent of the Indian Army’s equipment is in the vintage category, with about 24 per cent in the current category and 8 per cent in the state-of-the-art category. He further stated that the allocation for modernisation in 2018–19 was insufficient to cater for committed liabilities, ongoing schemes, ‘Make in India’ projects, infrastructure development, the policy of strategic partnership of foreign and Indian companies and procurement of arms and ammunition. See [http://164.100.47.193/lssccommittee/Defence/16\\_Defence\\_42.pdf](http://164.100.47.193/lssccommittee/Defence/16_Defence_42.pdf), accessed on 4 September 2018.

19. Figures based on database compiled by Laxman Kumar Behera, Research Fellow, IDSA.
20. Laxman Kumar Behera, ‘Defence Budget 2018–19: The Imperative of Controlling Manpower Cost’, IDSA Issue Brief, 5 February 2018, available at <https://idsa.in/system/files/issuebrief/ib-defence-budget-2018-19-manpower-cost-lkbehera.pdf>, accessed on 3 March 2018.
21. 40th Report, Standing Committee on Defence, 16th Lok Sabha, 2018, available at [https://eparlib.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/762354/1/16\\_Defence\\_40.pdf#search=Defence%20Departmentally%20Related%20Standing%20Committees](https://eparlib.nic.in/bitstream/123456789/762354/1/16_Defence_40.pdf#search=Defence%20Departmentally%20Related%20Standing%20Committees), last accessed on 25 July 2019.
22. These include the border-guarding forces such as the Assam Rifles, the Indo-Tibetan Border Police, the Sashastra Seema Bal, as well as others such as the Central Industrial Security Force, the Central Reserve Police Force, the National Security Guard and the Railway Protection Force. See Bureau of Police Research and Development, Ministry of Home Affairs, ‘Data on Police Organisations’, available at <http://www.bprd.nic.in/WriteReadData/userfiles/file/databook2017.pdf>, accessed on 17 June 2019.
23. Figures based on database compiled by Laxman Kumar Behera, Research Fellow, IDSA.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid.
26. The *Indian Maritime Doctrine*, unveiled publicly for the first time in 2009, mentioned the area of interest seven times in the contexts of mobility, flexibility, the ability to influence events on-shore, seek control and anti-submarine warfare (pp. 83–112). See <https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian-Maritime-Doctrine-2009-Updated-12Feb16.pdf>, accessed on 7 September 2018. The more recent iteration of the *Indian Maritime Doctrine*, published in 2016, uses the words ‘area of interest’ only



once, in the context of presence: 'to display intent and commitment, gain operational familiarity, exercise maritime power, encourage good order at sea and adherence to applicable laws, promote stability and provide net maritime security' (p. 93). See [https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian\\_Maritime\\_Security\\_Strategy\\_Document\\_25Jan16.pdf](https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian_Maritime_Security_Strategy_Document_25Jan16.pdf), accessed on 7 September 2018.

27. See Ashley J. Tellis, C. Christian Fair and Jamison Jo Medby, *Limited Conflicts under the Nuclear Umbrella: Indian and Pakistani Lessons from the Kargil Crisis*, Santa Monica: RAND, 2001, pp. iii and ix.
28. Elizabeth Whitfield, 'From Terrorism to Nuclear War: The Escalation Ladder in South Asia', in Sarah Minot (ed.), *Project on Nuclear Weapons*, Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016, p. 73.
29. Humayun Khan and G. Parthasarathy, *Diplomatic Divide*, New Delhi: Roli Books, 2004, pp. 137–38.
30. Henry Kissinger, *World Order: Reflections on the Character of Nations and the Course of History*, London: Allen Lane, 2014, p. 208.