

# Indo-Russian Strategic Cooperation: Implications for the Deterrence Stability of South Asia

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## **Abstract**

The Indo-Russian strategic collaboration is unique. Both states have had strong diplomatic, economic, and strategic ties since the 1950s. Their defence trade includes enhancing India's armoured, naval, nuclear and air strike capabilities as well as counterterrorism and surveillance exchange. Close collaboration in the nuclear field is also vivid. This overwhelming strategic partnership has long-term implications for South Asia. The induction of force multipliers by India would create conventional disparity vis-à-vis Pakistan, which may lead to an arms race, endanger conventional deterrence and create room for a limited war in the region. This article investigates the Indo-Russian strategic partnership from evolution to apex and how it would tilt the balance of power in favour of India, putting nuclear deterrence at risk in South Asia.

**Key words:** Deterrence, South Asia, Security Dilemma, India-Russia Defence Collaboration.

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## **Introduction**

India and Russia are strategic allies with significant defence collaboration, intelligence sharing and diplomatic ties. Both countries share a deep-rooted and time-tested friendship which has grown manifold over the last few years. After independence, India cultivated its diplomatic ties with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR). The USSR always supported the Indian stance over Kashmir at the United Nations. Both countries developed strategic ties and started joint manufacturing of defence technologies, mainly weapons and related equipment. As of today, India imports most of its weapons and equipment from Russia for instance, aircraft carriers, nuclear submarines, surveillance and reconnaissance aircrafts/helicopters, joint manufacturing of SU-30 MKI aircrafts, upgradation of Sukhoi aircrafts, T-90 Main Battle Tanks (MBTs) and refurbishment of different weapon systems. This study is divided in two sections of equal importance. The first part analyses Indo-Russian strategic ties and defence collaboration, emphasising joint development and induction of modern weapons and equipment by the Indian military. The latter part discusses the implications of this strategic collaboration for South Asian deterrence stability.

## **Historical Overview of the Relationship between India and Russia**

After its independence in 1947, India's relationship with Russia began to grow. It took a concrete turn in 1953 with the signing of their first trade agreement, followed a few years later by the 1958 bilateral trade agreement<sup>1</sup> which paved the way towards forging a synergistic

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<sup>1</sup> Agreement Between the Government of India and the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics on Delivery as a Gift to India from the Soviet Union of Equipment for the Indian Institute of Technology, Bombay, and on Rendering of Assistance by the Soviet Union to India in the Training of Engineers, India-USSR, December 12, 1958, <http://www.commonlii.org/in/other/treaties/INTSer/1958/15.html>.

defence and military-technical cooperative relationship.<sup>2</sup> The first trade pact had a clause in which both states agreed to exchange their scientists and technical know-how with each other.

Since then, the relationship has seen upward trajectory with Moscow providing entire production lines on military platforms – from aircrafts to tanks to New Delhi. India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru (1947-64) was keen to strengthen trust with the USSR and to achieve this goal he appointed his sister V. Pandit as the first ambassador to the Soviet Union in order to expand political and strategic ties.<sup>3</sup> In June 1955, Nehru visited the USSR on a three-week long official visit, and to reciprocate Soviet leaders Nikita S. Khrushchev<sup>4</sup> and Nikolai A. Bulganin<sup>5</sup> visited India in November 1955.<sup>6</sup> These historic visits not only connected India with the technologically superior country, but also consolidated Nehru's political standing.

Soon after, the Indo-Soviet Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation was signed in August 1971.<sup>7</sup> The Soviets aligned themselves with the Indians and not only supported the latter's position on East Pakistan (now Bangladesh), but also prevented any Chinese interference in the 1971 war between India and Pakistan.<sup>8</sup> Prime Minister of Pakistan Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's visit to China on November 07, 1971,<sup>9</sup> was misperceived by Moscow – the latter supported India with moral and material resources which contributed to the dismemberment of Pakistan. During the war of 1971, the Soviet Union sent a force of six vessels to the Indian Ocean to counter the United States (US) support to Pakistan, but

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<sup>2</sup> Paul M. McGarr, *The Cold War in South Asia: Britain, the United States and the Indian Subcontinent, 1945-1965* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 63.

<sup>3</sup> Hafeez Malik, *Soviet-Pakistan Relations and Post-Soviet Dynamics, 1947-92* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1994), 32.

<sup>4</sup> Editor's Note: First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (1953-64), and Chairman of the Council of Ministers or Premier (1958-64).

<sup>5</sup> Editor's Note: Minister of Defence (1953-55) and Premier of the Soviet Union (1955-58).

<sup>6</sup> Benjamin Zachariah, *Nehru* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 60.

<sup>7</sup> Editor's Note: A new treaty was signed in 1993.

<sup>8</sup> Santosh K. Mehrotra, *India and the Soviet Union: Trade and Technology Transfer* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 20.

<sup>9</sup> Eric J. Ladley, *Balancing Act: How Nixon Went to China and Remained a Conservative* (Lincoln: iUniverse, 2007), 149.

before the US or Soviets could engage each other, Dhaka fell, and Pakistani forces surrendered. After the war, the Soviet Union also supported India's stance at the United Nations (UN) and vetoed all the resolutions against Indian involvement in the East Pakistan conflict.<sup>10</sup> This political and military backing played a crucial role in consolidating India's position in the regional and global arena.

The Indo-Russian strategic partnership derives strength from many factors. First, both countries respect each other's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Second, Russia has been an able ally since the 1960s, providing uninterrupted supplies of crucial weapons and equipment to fulfill the requirements of the Indian Armed Forces. Third, both share a long history of diplomatic and strategic ties and have supported each other at global forums on many occasions. Russia and India are on the same page when it comes to the issue of militancy in Kashmir. Both states allegedly view that Pakistan is sponsoring militancy in the Indian Occupied Jammu and Kashmir (IOJ&K). In 2002, the Russian Foreign Minister during his visit to India said that 'Pakistan must dismantle terrorists' infrastructure on the territory under its control.'<sup>11</sup> Such views clearly show the Russian position on the Kashmir issue which considers the legitimate freedom struggle of the Kashmiris as militancy and takes a biased approach towards Pakistan in this regard. Fourth, both view each other as trusted allies and believe in their 'time-tested' friendship which despite its few differences (e.g. Soviet intervention in Afghanistan in the 1970s and differing views about the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons<sup>12</sup> continues to evolve, especially after President Putin signed the Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic Partnership during his state visit to India in October 2000. Reciprocally,

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<sup>10</sup> Sangeeta Thapliyal, "Indo-Pak Conflict and the Role of External Powers," *Strategic Analysis* 22, no. 7(1998), <https://www.idsa-india.org/an-oct8-8.html>.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>12</sup> Vidya Nadkarni, *Strategic Partnerships in Asia: Balancing without Alliances* (London: Routledge, 2010), 96.

the Indian PM Atal Bihari Vajpai also carried out a visit to Moscow in 2001 to foment their political and strategic ties.<sup>13</sup>

To improve regional connectivity, India, Russia, and Iran signed a deal in September 2000 (ratified by all three in May 2002) to develop the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).<sup>14</sup> The Corridor is going to connect India's economy with those of Russia, Central Asia and beyond.<sup>15</sup> India is also taking part in Russian oil and gas field exploration projects on the island of Sakhalin in the North Pacific Ocean. The Indian oil company ONGC Videsh Ltd., invested about USD 2 billion to get 20 per cent share in Russian far eastern offshore oil project.<sup>16</sup>

### Indo-Russia Defence Collaboration

Russia has re-emerged as a great power with strong economy and military muscle. In 2008, it launched a massive modernisation plan to revamp its overall military machine and induct latest technologies to be at par with the US.<sup>17</sup> Although, on some fronts India and Russia are not on the same page, for instance India's increasing strategic ties with the US and other

<sup>13</sup> V.D. Chopra, ed., *New Trends in Indo-Russian Relations* (New Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2003), 144.

<sup>14</sup> Editor's Note: The main ITC route begins on the west coast of India, passes along the sea to the Iranian ports of Chabahar and Bandar Abbas, and from there by land to Iran's Caspian Sea coast and beyond to Russia and northern Europe. Subsequently, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Bulgaria, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Oman, Syria, Tajikistan, Turkey and Ukraine also joined the project.

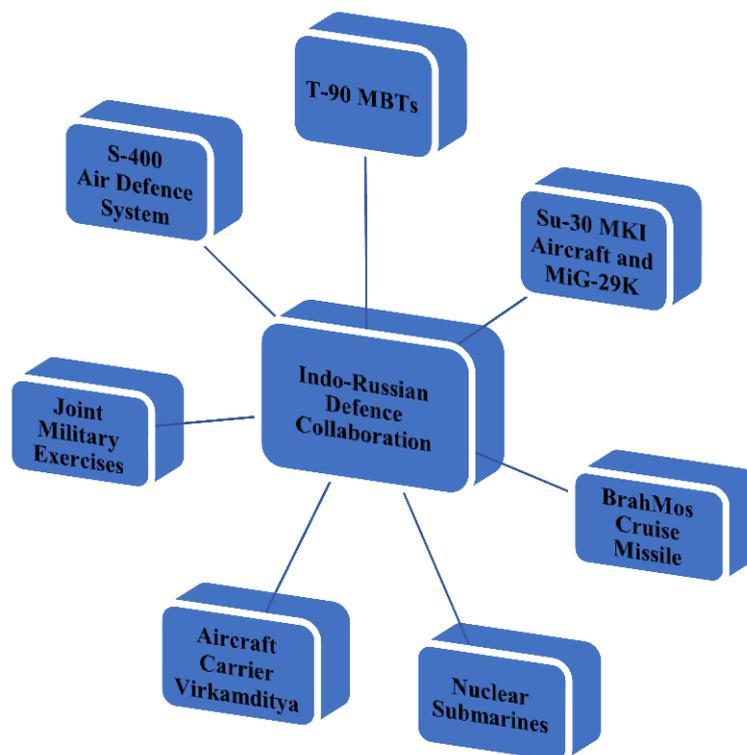
<sup>15</sup> R. Sidda Goud and Manisha Mookherjee, eds., *India and Iran in Contemporary Relations* (New Delhi: Allied Publishers, 2014), 142; Boris Volkhonsky, "North-South Transport Corridor Begins Functioning," *Russia Beyond*, December 12, 2016, [https://www.rbth.com/blogs/the\\_outsiders\\_insight/2016/12/12/long-awaited-north-south-corridor-close-to-launch\\_655489](https://www.rbth.com/blogs/the_outsiders_insight/2016/12/12/long-awaited-north-south-corridor-close-to-launch_655489); and "What the North-South Transport Corridor Means for Russia's Transport & Logistics Sector," *ITE Transport & Logistics*, May 12, 2017, <http://www.transport-exhibitions.com/Market-Insights/Russia/What-the-NSTC-means-for-Russian-transport-sector>.

<sup>16</sup> Andreas Wenger, Robert Ortung and Jeronim Perovic, eds., *Russian Business Power: The Role of Russian Business in Foreign and Security Relations* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 145.

<sup>17</sup> Richard Sokolsky "The New NATO-Russia Military Balance: Implications for European Security" (paper, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, D.C., 2017), [http://carnegieendowment.org/files/3-8-17\\_Richard\\_Sokolsky\\_Russia\\_Military\\_Balance.pdf](http://carnegieendowment.org/files/3-8-17_Richard_Sokolsky_Russia_Military_Balance.pdf).

European countries and improving economic ties with China,<sup>18</sup> despite all these developments, the defence collaboration between India and Russia has no parallel (Figure 1). Russia is still the largest arms supplier to the Indian military:

**Figure-1  
Indo-Russian Defence Collaboration**



Source: Author's own.

<sup>18</sup> Tanvi Madan, "Intertwined and Interacting: The Latest in India's Great Power Relationships," *Order from Chaos Blog*, October 28, 2016, <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2016/10/28/intertwined-and-interacting-the-latest-in-indias-great-power-relationships/>.

India-Russia military technical cooperation has evolved from a buyer-seller framework to one involving joint research, development and production of advanced defence technologies and systems. BrahMos Missile System as well as the licensed production in India of SU-30 aircraft and T-90 tanks, are examples of such flagship cooperation.<sup>19</sup>

### ***Procurement of T-90 MBTs***

It is noteworthy that the Indian Army is relying on the Russian T-90 MBTs<sup>20</sup> than on its indigenous Arjun Tank. This is because of the latter's greater manoeuvrability and superior firepower. Being lightweight, it ensures mobility in the desert (like Rajasthan) and plain areas (like Punjab). Moreover, the ability to fight without any time barrier and cheaper than homemade MBTs makes it an ideal choice for the Indian Army.<sup>21</sup> Similarly, Russia has also agreed to transfer the technology and under licensed production of the T-90 Tanks.<sup>22</sup> This partnership would improve India's indigenous defence industry and fill the gap in their armour capabilities. According to an agreement in 2001, India will have 310 T-90 tanks by 2020 to replace its ageing ones adding an offensive punch in the Indian Army.<sup>23</sup> In 2005 another deal worth USD 800 million was inked for the procurement of more T-90s.<sup>24</sup> The T-90 is one of the best tanks in the world with max speed of 65km per hour, 650km range, advanced features, night vision and lethal firepower.<sup>25</sup>

The Indian Army currently operates about 900 T-90 Tanks and most of them are deployed along the Pakistan border. India has recently

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<sup>19</sup> Saumitra Mohan, *Indian Policy and Development* (Chennai: McGraw-Hill Education, 2017).

<sup>20</sup> The most modern tank in service with the Indian Ground Forces.

<sup>21</sup> Swarna Rajagopalan, *Security and South Asia: Ideas, Institutions and Initiatives* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2014), 117.

<sup>22</sup> Kerry Bolton, *Geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific: Emerging Conflicts, New Alliances* (London: Black House Publishing, 2013), 89.

<sup>23</sup> Erich Reiter and Peter Hazdra, eds., *The Impact of Asian Powers on Global Developments* (Heidelberg: Physica-Verlag Heidelberg, 2004), 187.

<sup>24</sup> Andrew T. H. Tan, ed., *The Global Arms Trade: A Handbook* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 68.

<sup>25</sup> Robert Jackson, ed., *101 Great Tanks, The 101 Greatest Weapons of all Times* (New York: Rosen Publishing Group, 2010), 105.

concluded a deal with the Russians to import upgraded version of T-90 Tanks, which can fight at night with greater manoeuvrability and superior weaponry.<sup>26</sup> Such capabilities are clearly in line with the Indian Army's offensive Cold Start Doctrine (CSD). The Indian Chief of Army Staff, General Bipin Rawat, recently confessed publicly that the CSD still exists.<sup>27</sup> Highly advanced tanks, with greater flexibility and destructive firepower would be the backbone of swift military operations under CSD or 'proactive military operations' against Pakistan.

The Indian Army is in a close liaison with Russia to equip all its T-90 Tanks with night vision capabilities to enable them to carry out operations without any time barrier. India has placed an order for the procurement of about 1,400 uncooled thermal imager-based driver's night sight (DNS) for its T-90 MBTs.<sup>28</sup> These capabilities would fill operational level gaps and enable the Indian Army to carry out operations even at night to achieve the element of surprise. Currently, only 50 per cent of the Indian MBTs are equipped with night vision capabilities.<sup>29</sup>

At present, India operates 2,500 T-72 MBTs which are meant to retire by 2020. With 1,600 more T-90 MBTs ready for induction by then,<sup>30</sup> the Indian Army will be able to operationalise its aggressive limited war doctrine against Pakistan. To counter such an eventuality,

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<sup>26</sup> "India to Deploy Hundreds of Main Battle Tanks along Border with Pakistan," *RT World News*, January 22, 2017, <https://www.rt.com/news/374532-india-tanks-pakistan-border/>. The Indian Army has plans to arm its T-90 MBTs with a third generation missile system in order to achieve depth of penetration of 800-850 mm, with the capability of hitting targets up to a range of 8 km day or night using pre-flight programmed manoeuvres. "Army to Add more Teeth to T-90 Battle Tanks," *Economic Times*, August 20, 2017,

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/army-to-add-more-teeth-to-t-90-battle-tanks/articleshow/60142736.cms>.

<sup>27</sup> Bipin Rawat, "We Will Cross Again," interview by Sandeep Unnithan, *India Today*, January 4, 2017,

<https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/interview/story/20170116-lt-general-bipin-rawat-surgical-strikes-indian-army-985527-2017-01-04>.

<sup>28</sup> "Indian Army to Equip T-90 Tanks for Night Fighting," *Russia Beyond*, December 7, 2016, [https://www.rbth.com/economics/defence/2016/12/07/indian-army-to-equip-t-90-tanks-for-night-fighting\\_654231](https://www.rbth.com/economics/defence/2016/12/07/indian-army-to-equip-t-90-tanks-for-night-fighting_654231).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

Pakistan must upgrade its own MBTs and equip them with advance features, night vision capabilities, greater manoeuvrability, speed, and superior armaments along with advanced safety features. Pakistan Army must also add highly sophisticated anti-tank missile systems to offset the T-90's safety system to neutralise this threat in the battlefield.

### ***The S-400 Air Defence System***

Putin signed a deal for 16 defence projects with the Indian PM on October 15, 2016. The most important part of the deal was the S-400 Missile Air Defence System<sup>31</sup> which is considered a game changer in the region. It can simultaneously engage 36 targets and provide full protection from airborne threats.<sup>32</sup> India plans to buy five of these sophisticated systems for USD 5 billion - three to be deployed against Pakistan and the other two against China. The system would detect aircrafts, missiles, or drones at about 600 km and destroy them at 400km range, which means Pakistan's Air Force would be vulnerable against such a highly advanced air defence system.<sup>33</sup> Such a system would not only add offensive capabilities to the Indian military, but also protect sensitive civil or military installations, major cities, missile sites, nuclear facilities, and command and control centres (CCCs). Each S-400 battalion would be equipped with eight launchers, a control centre, radar and 16 missiles available as reloads. It would be close to impossible for an aircraft to evade the S-400 missile travelling at 17,000 kmh.<sup>34</sup> The induction of S-

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<sup>31</sup> Kallol Bhattacharjee and Suhasini Haider, "India to Buy S-400 Missiles from Russia," *Hindu*, December 1, 2016, <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/India-to-buy-S-400-missiles-from-Russia/article16072929.ece>.

<sup>32</sup> "India to Buy Game Changer S-400 Air Defence System from Russia," *Economic Times*, October 15, 2016, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-to-buy-gamechanger-s-400-air-defence-system-from-russia/printarticle/54866386.cms>.

<sup>33</sup> Pranab Dhal Samanta, "Russian S-400 Triumph Gives India an Edge against Pakistan, China," *Economic Times*, October 17, 2016, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/russian-s-400-gives-india-an-edge-against-pakistan-china/printarticle/54893457.cms>.

<sup>34</sup> Naveed Ahmad, "Analysis: Will India's S-400 Missiles Checkmate Pakistan?" *Express Tribune*, April 29, 2016, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1094168/analysis-will-indias-s-400-missiles-checkmate-pakistan/>.

400 means that India would have advantage even in the air space of Pakistan<sup>35</sup> and any aircraft, Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV), missile, or helicopter would be on its radar. Similarly, an early detection would give the Indian military adequate time for countermeasures. This new weapon would seriously challenge the balance of power in this region, especially vis-à-vis Pakistan.

### ***The BrahMos Cruise Missile***

India and Russia are jointly developing the medium-range anti-ship BrahMos supersonic cruise missile. BrahMos is a highly sophisticated cruise missile with greater manoeuvrability, reliability, accuracy, formidable speed, and minimal cost of maintenance. BrahMos could be launched from a submarine, ship, aircraft, and land-based mobile launchers. It is considered as an anti-ship missile, but it could also be used against land-based targets. BrahMos has a speed of Mach 2.8 and can take out targets with greater precision and accuracy.<sup>36</sup> It is also a stealth cruise missile with the capability to evade radars. The successful tests of BrahMos suggest that this missile is very precise and works on a principle of ‘fire and forget’ which means once it is launched, it would destroy the intended target. It has the potential to carry a payload of 200kg which makes it one of the most lethal and fastest weapons in the world. In March 2017, the Indian military carried out a successful test of the advance version of BrahMos-II cruise missile, with an effective range of about 450km which makes it a real threat for the security of Pakistan. The managing director and CEO of the BrahMos programme, Sudhir Mishra was quoted as saying:

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<sup>35</sup> Petr Topychkanov, “Where Does Pakistan Fit in Russia’s South Asia Strategy?” (Moscow: Carnegie Moscow Center, 2017), <http://carnegie.ru/2017/01/16/where-does-pakistan-fit-in-russia-s-south-asia-strategy-pub-67696>.

<sup>36</sup> Ashok Kumar Singh, *Science & Technology for Civil Services Examinations* (New Delhi: Tata McGraw-Hill Education, 2007), 530.

With this new version, all three forces, Army, Navy and IAF will have the capability to strike deep into the enemy's territory... This is a first for the world – a supersonic cruise missile with such a high range.<sup>37</sup>

Subsequently, on November 22, 2017, India test fired the nuclear-capable cruise missile:

The Indian Air Force successfully fired the BrahMos air version anti-shipping missile from its frontline Su-30 MKI fighter aircraft off the Eastern Coast.<sup>38</sup>

India is also working on the advance hypersonic version of BrahMos which would have a range of about 800km and a formidable speed of Mach 7 or 8,575km per hour.<sup>39</sup> Such capabilities would augment the Indian military's strike options against Pakistan's underground defence-related facilities, arms depots, and other strategic installations.

### **Overhaul of the IAF**

The IAF is largely dependent on the Russian Su-30 MKI aircraft, which is a multi-mission fighter jet with competency to deliver different types and sizes of nuclear warheads. The Indo-Russian defence collaboration has played a great role in the refurbishment of the IAF. On December 28,

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<sup>37</sup> Smriti Jain, "BrahMos: India-Russia Create History with Successful Test of Longer Range 450-km Version of Supersonic Cruise Missile," *Financial Express*, March 11, 2017, <http://www.financialexpress.com/india-news/brahmos-india-russia-create-history-with-successful-test-of-longer-range-450-km-version-of-supersonic-cruise-missile/583856/>.

<sup>38</sup> Franz-Stefan Gady, "India Test Fires Nuclear-Capable Cruise Missile from Fighter Jet," *Diplomat*, November 22, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/11/india-test-fires-nuclear-capable-cruise-missile-from-fighter-jet/>; and Franz-Stefan Gady, "India-Russia 5th Generation Fighter Jet Program: Road to Nowhere?" *Diplomat*, January 30, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/01/india-russia-5th-generation-fighter-jet-program-road-to-nowhere/>.

<sup>39</sup> Rahul Singh, "India Successfully Test-Fires BrahMos Supersonic Cruise Missile," *Hindustan Times*, March 11, 2017, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-successfully-test-fires-brahmos-supersonic-cruise-missile/story-B3ERwFWxKpQAsgOxmho7I.html>.

2000, Russia and India signed a landmark deal to jointly manufacture 140 Su-30 aircrafts to fulfill the requirements of the IAF.<sup>40</sup> Both countries also decided co-development and production of the Sukhoi/HAL Fifth Generation Fighter Aircraft (FGFA), also known as the Perspective Multi-role Fighter (PMF) in 2007, although a final contract is yet to be finalised<sup>41</sup> to overcome future challenges of Indian military modernisation.<sup>42</sup>

Between 2002 and 2004, India received 72 Su-30 MKI aircrafts from Russia which are the main workhorses of the IAF. Many of the Russia-designed jets are built locally now, with many of the initially purchased planes getting continuous upgrades given improvements Russia has made. The level of defence partnership between the two states could be ascertained by the fact that Russia not only transferred technology, but also gave India license to produce 140 Su-30MKI aircrafts in India by 2014.<sup>43</sup> As of 2017, the IAF has 200 Su-30MKI aircrafts,<sup>44</sup> which is a multirole aircraft with lethal fire power, advanced avionics, and superior manoeuvrability. This aircraft is equipped with a 30mm Gsh-30-1 cannon with 1500-1800 rounds per minute of ammunition. The Su-30MKI will also be equipped with the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile test fired in November 2017.<sup>45</sup> In addition, this is an air-superiority aircraft with an effective range of about 3,000km, but with refueling option, it could cover an area of about 8,000km.<sup>46</sup> While the IAF is still negotiating

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<sup>40</sup> Jeanne Wilson, *Strategic Partners: Russian-Chinese Relations in the Post-Soviet Era* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 107.

<sup>41</sup> "India Wants Out of 5th Generation Fighter Jet Program with Russia," *Diplomat*, October 23, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/10/india-wants-out-of-5th-generation-fighter-jet-program-with-russia/>.

<sup>42</sup> Sumit K. Majumdar, *India's Late, Late Industrial Revolution: Democratizing Entrepreneurship* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 156.

<sup>43</sup> Richard Weitz, *Global Security Watch--Russia: A Reference Handbook*, Praeger Security International (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010), 26.

<sup>44</sup> Zachary Keck, "India could Become a Military Powerhouse Thanks to Russia and Israel," *The National Interest Blog*, January 6, 2018, <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/india-could-become-military-powerhouse-thanks-russia-israel-23959>.

<sup>45</sup> Gady, "India Test Fires Nuclear-Capable Cruise Missile from Fighter Jet."

<sup>46</sup> "Su-30MKI Multirole Fighter Aircraft," *Airforce-Technology*, accessed February 13, 2018, <http://www.airforce-technology.com/projects/su-30mki-multirole-fighter-aircraft-india/>.

with Russia for a fifth-generation aircraft as discussed earlier, the IAF is in dire need of replacing the Soviet era MiG-21s and refurbish other aircrafts.

### ***Surveillance and Reconnaissance Capabilities***

The Airborne Early Warning and Control System (AEWACS) is considered an eye in the sky for a country. It detects incoming aerial threats and provides adequate time to decision-makers for appropriate response and countermeasures. A major defence deal was marked in 2004 for the supply of three Phalcon Radars and Il-76 transport aircrafts from Israel and Russia, respectively.<sup>47</sup> The Russian Il-76 transport aircraft was used as a platform to place the Israeli Phalcon Radars for surveillance and reconnaissance at long range.<sup>48</sup> The induction of the AEWACS boosted the Indian military's surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities vis-à-vis Pakistan. In the same year, the military introduced a limited war doctrine called CSD in case any terrorist attack occurs in India.<sup>49</sup> The timing of the procurement of this force multiplier is very important. The Indian military required such capabilities to detect any potential incoming Pakistani missiles, aircrafts or UAVs to take countermeasures. As far as this system is concerned, the Indian military is weaker as compared to Pakistan and China. The Chinese military possesses more than 20 AEWACS, whereas Pakistan has eight Chinese and Swedish AEWACS for surveillance and reconnaissance.<sup>50</sup> In lieu of this, India's Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) approved the purchase of two more aircrafts from the same suppliers in 2016.<sup>51</sup> The IAF can use these surveillance aircrafts to detect

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<sup>47</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, *SIPRI Yearbook 2005: Armaments, Disarmament, and International Security* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 426.

<sup>48</sup> Chandra Rekha, *India-Russia Post Cold War Relations: A New Epoch of Cooperation* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 37.

<sup>49</sup> Stephen P. Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming: India's Military Modernization* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2010), 61.

<sup>50</sup> Rajat Pandit, "India Trails Pakistan on AWACS Front, as Delays Plague Projects," July 25, 2016, *Times of India*, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-trails-Pakistan-on-AWACS-front-as-delays-plague-projects/articleshow/53371140.cms>.

<sup>51</sup> "CCS Clears Acquisition of Two more AWACS," *Business Standard*, March 1, 2016, <http://www.business-standard.com/article/news-ians/ccs-clears-acquisition-of-two->

Pakistani (and even Chinese) aircrafts, missiles, drones and be able to keep a close watch on troop movement near the International Border, Line of Control, strategic installations and deployment patterns.

### **Naval Cooperation: Dominance at Sea**

The Indian Navy is in close partnership with Russia for the procurement of aircraft carriers, nuclear submarines, stealth frigates, surveillance, and reconnaissance helicopters, along with other modern technologies necessary to maintain hegemony in the Indian Ocean, Bay of Bengal, and the Arabian Sea.

#### ***Induction of Russian Aircraft Carrier: INS Vikramaditya***

The most important collaboration between Russia and India is the transfer of aircraft carrier Admiral Gorshkov (later renamed INS Vikramaditya). Both countries signed an agreement in 2004 for the transfer of INS Vikramaditya and after many years of refurbishment, the aircraft carrier finally joined the Indian Navy in 2014.<sup>52</sup> It carries 26 MiG-29 fighters and ten helicopters. The Indian Navy is working on its first indigenously built aircraft carrier INS Vikrant with the help of Russian defence companies. This aircraft carrier is likely to be commissioned by 2020,<sup>53</sup> while its proposal for a third full-size carrier, INS Vishal is also on the radar for the next decade with 57 twin-engine fighter planes for which

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more-awacs-116030100750\_1.html; Anagha Unnikrishnan, "India Approves Purchase of Two Phalcon Warning System from Israel," *Air-Force Technology*, March 6, 2016, <http://www.airforce-technology.com/news/newsindia-approves-purchase-of-two-phalcon-warning-system-form-israel-4831275/>.

<sup>52</sup> Abhijit Singh, "INS Vikramaditya – Deployment Options for India" (brief, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi, 2014), [https://idsa.in/system/files/IB\\_INSVikramaditya.pdf](https://idsa.in/system/files/IB_INSVikramaditya.pdf).

<sup>53</sup> "India's first indigenous aircraft carrier Vikrant to be ready by 2020," *India TV*, January 19, 2018, <https://www.indiatvnews.com/news/india-india-s-first-indigenous-aircraft-carrier-vikrant-to-be-ready-by-2020-423151>. However, it will reportedly not be combat ready until 2023. Rajat Pandit, "India without Aircraft Carrier for 8 Months," *Times of India*, July 27, 2016, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/India-without-aircraft-carrier-for-8-months/articleshow/53407213.cms>.

American F-18 and French Dassault Rafales are in the race.<sup>54</sup> With these capabilities as envisioned in its *Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy (IMSS-2015)*,<sup>55</sup> the Indian Navy would emerge as an assertive force in the region, controlling crucial maritime trade routes, choke points and seriously threatening Pakistan's maritime interests in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea.<sup>56</sup> However, it has also been pointed out that:

The decision to opt for indigenous construction of both the new Vikrant and a third carrier ....suggests India places a higher priority on enhancing domestic shipbuilding capacity than immediately acquiring naval airpower projection capability.<sup>57</sup>

### ***Nuclear Submarines: Second Strike Capability***

The strategic significance of a nuclear submarine cannot be ignored. A nuclear submarine can spend more time under water than a diesel submarine which provides assured second strike capability, greater outreach and manoeuvrability.

The real strength of the Indo-Russian relationship lies in the depth of trust between Moscow and New Delhi which can be gauged by the lease of a nuclear-powered submarine by the Soviet Union to India during 1988-91 under Project 670 Shchuka-B (Skat-class) K-43. It was later renamed as INS Chakra-I in the Indian Navy with the purpose of

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<sup>54</sup> Ajit Kumar Dubey, "Indian Navy Plans to Acquire its Third Aircraft Carrier for a Whopping Rs 1.6 Lakh Crore," *India Today*, January 15, 2018, <https://www.indiatoday.in/mail-today/story/indian-navy-plans-to-acquire-its-third-aircraft-carrier-for-a-whopping-rs-1-6-lakh-crore-1144836-2018-01-15>.

<sup>55</sup> NS, *Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy* (New Delhi: Naval Strategic Publication, 2015).

<sup>56</sup> Ben Wan Beng Ho, "The Aircraft Carrier in Indian Naval Doctrine Assessing the Likely Usefulness of the Flattop in an Indo-Pakistani War Scenario," *Naval War College Review* 71, no. 1 (2018), <https://usnwc2.usnwc.edu/getattachment/26f57eb3-42ae-49b7-9fbb-3b33a9e4bcc1/The-Aircraft-Carrier-in-Indian-Naval-Doctrine--Ass.aspx>.

<sup>57</sup> Walter C. Ladwig III, "Drivers of Indian Naval Expansion," in *The Rise of the Indian Navy: Internal Vulnerabilities, External Challenges*, ed. Harsh V. Pant, Corbett Centre for Maritime Policy Studies Series (London: Routledge, 2016), 16-17, 33-34,

sharing expertise in the design, manufacture, and handling of a nuclear submarine.<sup>58</sup> The Indian Navy leased another nuclear submarine known as INS Chakra-II (an Akula-class submarine previously known as K-152 Nerpa) in 2011. India leased this submarine for a period of ten years for training purposes.<sup>59</sup> It was formally commissioned into Indian service in April 2012. It has been reported that India may lease another nuclear submarine from Russia – a second Project 971 Shchuka-B (Akula-class) nuclear attack submarine:

The two sides signed the deal - along with a host of other weapons purchase agreements - on the sidelines of the BRICS summit in the Indian state of Goa where Russian President Vladimir Putin met with his Indian counterpart Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Oct 15, 2017.<sup>60</sup>

The purpose of the third nuclear submarine would be training Indian naval officers and sailors for operations and maintenance at sea.<sup>61</sup> The Indian Navy's nuclear submarines are stationed at Visakhapatnam, covering the Bay of Bengal on the eastern side, and in Mumbai keeping close watch on Pakistan in the Arabian Sea on the western front. The Indian Navy is also deliberating on a new naval base at Karwar which is 650km south of Mumbai.<sup>62</sup> These naval bases are at striking distance from

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<sup>58</sup> G. M. Hiranandani, *Transition to Triumph: History of the Indian Navy, 1965-1975* (New Delhi: Lancer Publishers, 2000), 259.

<sup>59</sup> Gurmeet Kanwal, "India's Nuclear Force Structure 2025" (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2016), <http://carnegieendowment.org/2016/06/30/india-s-nuclear-force-structure-2025-pub-63988>.

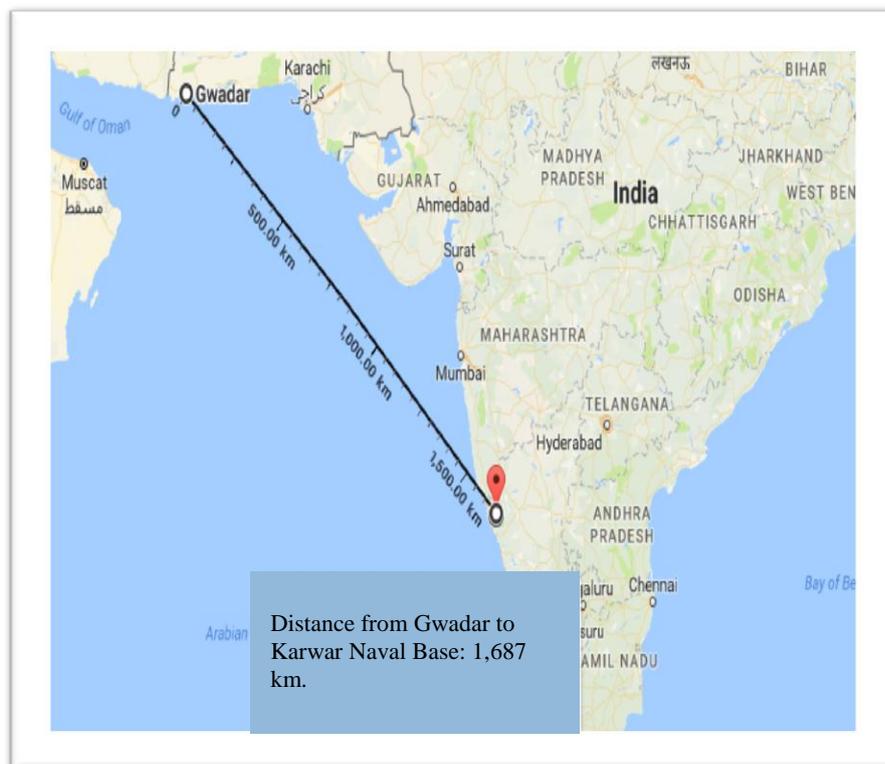
<sup>60</sup> Dave Majumdar, "Double Trouble: India to Lease Second Russian Nuclear Attack Submarine," *The National Interest Blog*, October 18, 2016, <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/double-trouble-india-lease-second-russian-nuclear-attack-18094>.

<sup>61</sup> A. P. Revi, "India's Nuclear Submarine Programme," *Indian Defence Review* 31, no. 1 (2016), <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/news/indias-nuclear-submarine-programme/>.

<sup>62</sup> NTI, "India Submarine Capabilities" (Washington, D.C.: Nuclear Threat Initiative, 2015), <http://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/india-submarine-capabilities/>.

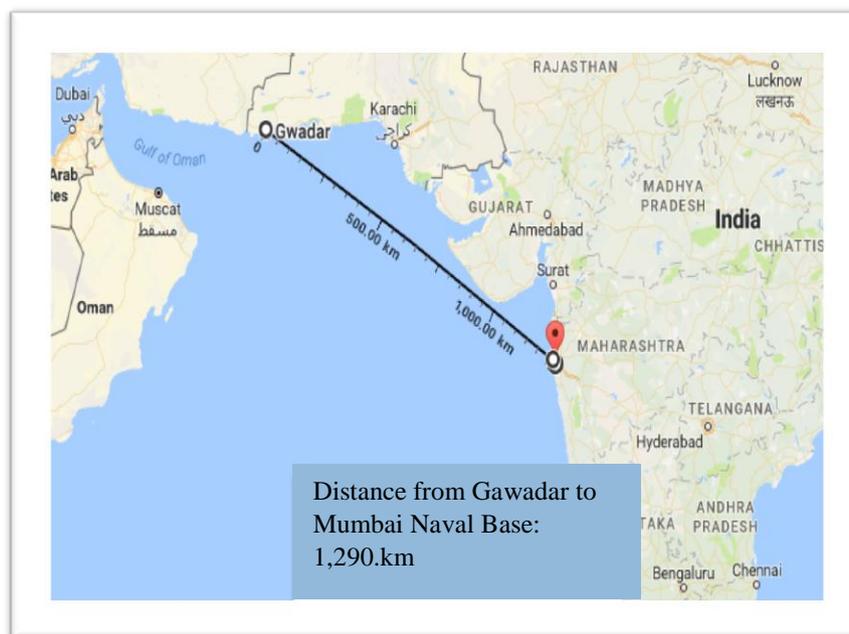
Pakistan's Gwadar port which is 1,687 kms away from Karwar and 1, 290 kms away from Mumbai (Figures 2 and 3).

**Figure-2**  
**Distance from Gwadar to Karwar Naval Base**



Source: "Gwadar, Pakistan to Karwar, Karnataka, India," *Google Maps*, accessed February 14, 2018, <http://bit.ly/2hQwAXF>.

**Figure-3**  
**Distance from Gwadar to Mumbai Naval Base**



Source: “Mumbai, Maharashtra, India,” *Google Maps*, accessed February 14, 2018, <http://bit.ly/2fRc1Gz>.

In 2009, the Indian government started work on its first indigenous nuclear armed submarine INS Arihant code named S-2 at Vishakhapatnam Building Centre. This is the first nuclear submarine which provides the Indian Navy with assured second strike capability at sea:

With the commissioning of INS Arihant in August 2016, India joined a select group of countries (USA, Russia, China, France and the UK) which builds and operates Ship Submersible Ballistic Nuclear (SSBN). The second SSBN under the project, INS Aridhaman, is undergoing sea trials.<sup>63</sup>

<sup>63</sup> “India’s Nuclear Submarine INS Arihant Back in Service after Repairs,” *Sputnik International*, January 8, 2018, <https://sputniknews.com/military/201801081060593821->

India is planning to add more nuclear submarines under this programme with the help of Russian defence firms. Two other submarines of Arihant-class known as S-3 and S-4 will be built at Vadodara. These nuclear submarines are designed to be equipped with 12 Sagarika (K-15) Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBM) with an effective range of about 700kms. In addition, the INS Arihant is also capable of carrying long-range (3, 500km) SLBMs, torpedoes and submarine launched cruise missiles (SLCM).<sup>64</sup> With these capabilities, the Indian Navy would be able to control strategic positions in the Indian Ocean, Bay of Bengal, and Arabian Sea. This is likely to put additional pressure on the Pakistan Navy, especially its maritime interests in Gwadar Port.

#### ***The Kamov Ka-226T Transport Helicopters***

The Kamov-226-T (or Ka-226T) is a multipurpose, highly sophisticated machine. Due to its modular construction, it can be adjusted for specific needs by adding special components, perfect for use in fields such as personnel and cargo transportation by means of an internal or external sling; medical aid and evacuation; police and patrol missions; and rescue and search operations.<sup>65</sup>

The helicopter's controllability, combined with its outstanding maximum rate of climb (11m/s), service ceiling (6,500 meters), the skill of operating in temperatures ranging from -50°C to +50°C and a host of other features make it indispensable for tackling the outcomes of natural and technogenic disasters. The durable and compact Ka-226T is ready for missions in adverse weather conditions, densely built-up urban areas, mountainous terrain and does not require hangar storage.<sup>66</sup>

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india-damaged-submarine-repaired/. Both the Russian leased Chakra II and the INS Arihant have reportedly undergone critical repairs following serious accidents in 2016 and 2017. Li Jie, "Mismanagement Hits Indian Navy's Ambitions," *Global Times*, February 6, 2018, <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1088479.shtml>.

<sup>64</sup> NTI, "India Submarine Capabilities."

<sup>65</sup> Vasilii Raksha, "Ka-226T: Shining Mirror of Russian Helicopters' Bright Future," December 6, 2017, *Sputnik International*, <https://sputniknews.com/military/201712021059633166-russian-helicopter-ka226t/>.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

This light helicopter can carry six people on board with their gear,<sup>67</sup> as well about one tonne of cargo with a maximum speed of 220km/per hour which makes it a critical induction in the Indian Navy,<sup>68</sup> especially since it can now be built completely using digital technology:

In a deal worth around USD 1 billion, India and Russia had signed an intergovernmental agreement (IGA) earlier this year, under which New Delhi will buy 60 choppers off the shelf – 40 will be assembled in India and the remaining 100 will be fully built in India.<sup>69</sup>

This deal is also part of Modi's 'Make in India' venture.<sup>70</sup> Such collaboration would boost India's indigenous defence industry, improve technical expertise and know-how in this field through technology transfer, and help overcome its deficiencies in multipurpose surveillance, logistics and transport helicopters. It could also be used for rescue missions and special operations. Since India will buy the multirole military version, the helicopter would improve the Indian military's ability to operate in mountainous regions, carry men, fuel, food, weapons and equipment to soldiers deployed at the Line of Control with Pakistan and the Line of Actual Control with China.

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<sup>67</sup> Shaurya Karanbir Gurung, "Explained: Kamov Helicopter Deal between India and Russia," *Economic Times*, October 17, 2016, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/explained-kamov-helicopter-deal-between-india-and-russia/printarticle/54868679.cms>.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Nayanima Basu, "India to Buy 60 Digitally Designed Kamov-226T Helicopters from Russia," *Hindu*, December 1, 2017, <http://www.thehindubusinessline.com/economy/india-to-buy-60-digitally-designed-kamov226t-helicopters-from-russia/article9979501.ece>.

<sup>70</sup> Gurung, "Explained: Kamov Helicopter Deal between India and Russia"; and Vivek Raghuvanshi, "India, Russia to Iron Out Defence Projects Worth \$10B," *Defence News*, June 22, 2017, <https://www.defensenews.com/global/2017/06/22/india-russia-to-iron-out-defense-projects-worth-10b/>.

### ***Induction of Krivak-III Class: Stealth Frigates and Conventional Submarines***

In 2003, the Indian Navy added three modified Krivak-III stealth frigates (INS Talwar, INS Trishul and INS Tabar) built in Russia worth USD 931 million. Given the use of stealth technologies and a special hull design, these frigates are equipped with thermal imaging attributes and a protective shield to safeguard from heat-seeking missiles. They are armed with anti-ship and anti-submarine warfare missiles, and can take out a wide range of targets in air, land, and sea.<sup>71</sup>

According to a 2006 agreement (worth USD 1.5 billion), three additional frigates, INS Teg, INS Tarkash, and INS Trikand were provided to India by Russia. The latter is equipped with eight BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles, advanced Kashtan Air Defence system and highly sophisticated torpedoes. These frigates are also equipped with anti-submarine missiles.<sup>72</sup> Similarly, in another deal worth USD four billion signed during Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to the country in October 2016, two frigates will be constructed at the Goa Shipyard, and equipped with the BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles, while two would be transferred by Russia.<sup>73</sup> It is expected that the delivery of these frigates would take place in the next six-eight years. These frigates are among India's most versatile and heavily-armed frontline warships. With these attributes, this frigate is a force multiplier in the Indian Navy and a serious threat not only to the Pakistani naval ships operating in the Arabian Sea and Indian Ocean Region, but also China. The Indian Navy's plan:

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<sup>71</sup> Anjali Ghosh, Tridib Chakraborti, Anindyo Jyoti Majumdar and Shibashis Chatterjee, eds., *India's Foreign Policy* (New Delhi: Pearson, 2009), 78.

<sup>72</sup> "India's Final Talwar-Class Frigate Completes Contractor Sea Trials," *Naval-Technology*, March 20, 2013, <http://www.naval-technology.com/news/newsindias-final-talwar-class-frigate-completes-contractor-sea-trials/>.

<sup>73</sup> Newton Sequeira, "GSL Eyes Guided Missile Frigate Deal," *Times of India*, March 7, 2017, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/goa/gsl-eyes-guided-missile-frigate-deal/articleshow/57503484.cms>.

.... is to deploy ‘mission-ready warships’ and aircraft along critical sea lanes of communications as well as ‘choke points’ ranging from the Persian Gulf and Gulf of Aden to the Malacca Strait and Sunda Strait.. on a 24x7 basis round the year, with the warships being sustained and turned around on station.<sup>74</sup>

Russia has also supplied conventional submarines to the Indian Navy to augment its subsurface war fighting capabilities and improve its defence in high seas. In this regard, the Indian Navy received *Sindhuvir*, *Sindhughos* and *Sindhuratna* submarines, which have subsequently been modernised by the Russians.<sup>75</sup>

### **Nuclear Cooperation**

India is expanding its nuclear programme which is going to create huge gaps between India and Pakistan in the field of nuclear energy, technical expertise, quality, and quantity of nuclear warheads. Russia played significant role in the development of nuclear installations and related infrastructure in India. Both countries carried out a deal for the construction of Kundankulam nuclear reactor in 1988.<sup>76</sup> Later, during the visit of Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Fradkov in March 2006, both states started discussion about Russian assistance in the construction of the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project (KKNPP) in Tamil Nadu and supply of nuclear fuel for the Tarapur nuclear reactor.<sup>77</sup> In 2008, Russia and India signed a deal worth USD 700 million for the supply of nuclear

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<sup>74</sup> Rajat Pandit, “Eye on China, India Expands Naval Footprint in Indian Ocean,” *Times of India*, October 25, 2017, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-expands-naval-footprint-in-indian-ocean-as-a-net-security-provider-with-an-eye-on-china/articleshow/61210011.cms>.

<sup>75</sup> “Russian Shipyard Repairs Indian Sub, in India,” *Russia Beyond*, April 6, 2016, [https://www.rbth.com/economics/defence/2016/04/06/russian-shipyard-repairs-indian-sub-in-india\\_582423](https://www.rbth.com/economics/defence/2016/04/06/russian-shipyard-repairs-indian-sub-in-india_582423).

<sup>76</sup> Ian Anthony, Christer Ahlström and Vitaly Fedchenko, *Reforming Nuclear Export Controls: The Future of the Nuclear Suppliers Group*, report no. 22 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 43.

<sup>77</sup> Nilofar Suhrawardy, “No Violation over N-Fuel to India, Russia Says,” *Arab News*, March 17, 2006, [http://www.arabnews.com/node/281902?quicktabs\\_stat2=1](http://www.arabnews.com/node/281902?quicktabs_stat2=1).

fuel. Russia ended India's nuclear blockade after it got the nod from the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) for future nuclear related cooperation.<sup>78</sup> This laid the foundation of the Indo-Russian nuclear partnership, and motivated the US and other Western powers to change their non-proliferation commitments/laws and open the gates for India to transfer nuclear fuel and technical know-how.<sup>79</sup>

India's first nuclear reactor at Tamil Nadu was successfully installed in 2013, with the first and second Russian units generating full power output of 1,000 MWe each from February 22, 2013 and late 2016, respectively. Work on reactor units three and four of 1,000 MWe each is also underway, while a deal for units five and six is also expected soon.<sup>80</sup>

Under a sovereign agreement, Russia will supply the fuel, enriched uranium, for the six units for their lifetime. The VVER units are Light Water Reactors (LWRs) that use slightly enriched uranium as fuel and light water as coolant. Kudankulam 1 and 2 have opened the line for the development of the LWR technology in India.<sup>81</sup>

This project is considered a landmark initiative between both states. It would not only develop India's civil nuclear capacity, but also help overcome its energy woes. The surplus nuclear fuel would be diverted to develop more nuclear warheads which may improve India's nuclear arsenal qualitatively and quantitatively. Such a development would

<sup>78</sup> Reetika Sharma, Ramvir Gorla and Vivek Mishra, *India and the Dynamics of World Politics: A Book on Indian Foreign Policy, Related Events and International Organizations* (New Delhi: Pearson, 2010), 182.

<sup>79</sup> Bharat Bhushan, "Russia Fuel as Bush Winks- Deal with Moscow before US Pact," *Telegraph India*, March 16, 2006.

<sup>80</sup> "Kudankulam nuclear reactors generated 22,800 million units," *Hindu*, January 28, 2018, <http://www.thehindu.com/todays-paper/tp-national/tp-tamilnadu/kudankulam-nuclear-reactors-generated-22800-million-units/article22539654.ece>; Jayant Singh, "The Indo-Russian Defence Partnership: A Framework for the 21st Century" (paper no. 224, Institute of South Asian Studies, National University of Singapore, Singapore, 2016), <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/195773/ISAS%20Working%20Paper%20No.%20224%20-%20The%20Indo-Russian%20Defence%20Partnership.%20A%20Framework%20for%20the%2021st%20Century.pdf>.

<sup>81</sup> T. S. Subramanian, "Kudankulam Ready for More," *Front Line*, November 11, 2016, <http://www.frontline.in/the-nation/kudankulam-ready-for-more/article9266675.ece>.

compel Pakistan to develop and test more nuclear warheads to maintain nuclear deterrence in South Asia. In 2010, during the visit of Prime Minister Putin, another pact was signed for the construction of nuclear power plants in the West Bengal region.<sup>82</sup> However, this project has yet to get underway.<sup>83</sup>

### **Counterterrorism and Intelligence Sharing**

Like many other countries, India and Russia are also facing the menace of terrorism and violent insurgencies, which has brought both allies closer to each other to explore ways to eradicate the same in their respective countries. India considers the Kashmir freedom struggle ‘militancy’ and takes it as a serious challenge for her national security.<sup>84</sup> In January 1948, when India took the issue to the UN, Moscow decided to remain neutral in view of its strategic and geopolitical compulsions; however, from 1955 onwards, its stance changed when the two Premiers visited each other and Prime Minister Khrushchev declared that ‘Kashmir is one of the states of Republic of India which has been decided by the people of Kashmir’ – a statement which has remained a cornerstone of the relationship. So much so that Russia’s 100th veto in the UN Security Council (SC) was in support of India’s position on this issue. To curb the so-called ‘insurgency’ in IOJ&K, India and Russia are closely cooperating in the field of intelligence sharing and counterterrorism.

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<sup>82</sup> Satish Kumar, ed., *India’s National Security: Annual Review 2010* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2010), 271.

<sup>83</sup> Sachin Parashar, “Russia Wants West Bengal Nuclear Plant Relocated,” *Times of India*, September 9, 2011, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/Russia-wants-West-Bengal-nuclear-plant-relocated/articleshow/9917196.cms>; “Nuclear Power Corp Wants to Renegotiate Haripur Plant with Mamata Bannerjee Government,” *Hindustan Times*, April 3, 2017, <https://www.hindustantimes.com/kolkata/nuclear-power-corp-wants-to-renegotiate-haripur-plant-with-mamata-banerjee-government/story-mGRujjuFNXcO4YjqTx5NaK.html>.

<sup>84</sup> James J. F. Forest, ed., *Countering Terrorism and Insurgency in the 21st Century: International Perspectives*, vol. 3, Praeger Security International (London: Praeger Security International, 2007), 517.

Apart from Kashmir, the common threat of terrorism emanates from the emergence of the Islamic State (IS). Many Russian<sup>85</sup> and Indian nationals<sup>86</sup> joined the IS and pose a serious threat to these countries. Secondly, the rise of Islamic State Khorasan Province (IS-KP) in Afghanistan has also threatened their interests in this region. With both countries having geopolitical interests in Afghanistan, any spillover effects of the IS militancy could destabilise Afghanistan and neighbouring states of Central Asia which may have direct impact on Indo-Russian security.

The strategic alliance between Russia and India to counter terrorism, extremism and armed insurgencies is not new. In 2000, both countries signed a declaration on strategic collaboration, which mainly focused on counterterrorism and extremism in the region and beyond.<sup>87</sup> Later in 2001, the Moscow Declaration was signed on fighting international terrorism,<sup>88</sup> in which, it was asserted that violent terrorist acts are taking place in both states under the name of self-determination.<sup>89</sup> Russia termed the freedom struggle in Kashmir as terrorism, which is a serious concern for Pakistan and the legitimate freedom struggle of the people of Kashmir. After 9/11, the Kashmir freedom struggle has faced huge setbacks. According to Brigadier (R) Feroz Hassan Khan:

On 9/11, 2001, when the twin towers fell, buried under the twin towers was Pakistan's Kashmir position.<sup>90</sup>

After 9/11, the US pressurised Pakistan to end its alleged support to IOJ&K.<sup>91</sup> In 2002, the Delhi Declaration directly blamed Pakistan for

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<sup>85</sup> Juri Rescheto, "Chechnya: Islamic State's Fertile Russian Recruiting Ground," *Deutsche Welle*, January 25, 2018, <http://www.dw.com/en/chechnya-islamic-states-fertile-russian-recruiting-ground/a-42311816>.

<sup>86</sup> Natalie Tecimer, "India and the Fight against Islamic State," June 14, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/06/india-and-the-fight-against-islamic-state/>.

<sup>87</sup> Amit Gupta, *Global Security Watch-India*, Praeger Security International (California: Praeger, 2012), 86.

<sup>88</sup> Keshav Mishra, *Rapprochement across the Himalayas: Emerging India-China Relations Post Cold War Period (1947-2003)* (New Delhi: Kalpaz Publications, 2004), 313.

<sup>89</sup> Nadkarni, *Strategic Partnerships in Asia*, 92.

<sup>90</sup> Feroz Hassan Khan (research professor, Department of National Security Affairs, Naval Post Graduate School, Monterey), in discussion with the author, October 16, 2017.

alleged terrorist safe havens, with India and Russia forming a joint working group on combating terrorism.<sup>92</sup> This aspect of the Indo-Russian strategic partnership mainly focuses on three main areas:

- framework for intelligence sharing,
- training of the security forces for counterterror operations, and,
- capacity building of security forces involved in counterterror operations.

Both states are also part of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF)<sup>93</sup> at the UN to implement measures to freeze terrorist funds and stop terrorist financing.<sup>94</sup> The National Security Advisor and architect of India's counterterrorism strategies, Ajit Doval visited Russia on January 30-31, 2017 and held talks with the Secretary of Russia's Security Council for better cooperation and teamwork to counter terrorism and extremism.<sup>95</sup> Subsequently, in March 27, 2017, the Indian Home Minister Rajnath Singh held talks with Alexander Bortnikov, head of Russia's intelligence agency Federal Security Service (FSB) and discussed the issue of terrorism and agreed on joint action on counterterror efforts.<sup>96</sup>

India and Russia have also decided to organise a counterterrorism conference annually to share information, devise counterterror strategies and techniques in tackling terrorism and extremism in their respective

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<sup>91</sup> Mary Buckley and Rick Fawn, eds., *Global Responses to Terrorism: 9/11, Afghanistan and Beyond* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 198.

<sup>92</sup> Ibid.

<sup>93</sup> FATF, "Countries" (Paris: Financial Action Task Force), accessed February 14, 2018, <http://www.fatf-gafi.org/countries/#FATF>.

<sup>94</sup> FATF, "FATF Action on Terrorist Finance" (Paris: Financial Action Task Force, 2015), <http://www.fatf-gafi.org/documents/news/fatf-action-on-terrorist-finance.html>; and Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "India, Russia Working to Put in Place Extensive Counter-Terror Cooperation Pact," *Economic Times*, December 21, 2015, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-russia-working-to-put-in-place-extensive-counter-terror-cooperation-pact/articleshow/50261706.cms>.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid.

<sup>96</sup> Mikhail Nekrasov, "India, Russia Agree to Jointly Counter Terrorism" *Russia Beyond*, March 27, 2017, [https://www.rbth.com/politics/2017/03/27/india-russia-agree-to-jointly-counter-terrorism\\_728283](https://www.rbth.com/politics/2017/03/27/india-russia-agree-to-jointly-counter-terrorism_728283).

countries.<sup>97</sup> This platform would provide opportunities to both to learn from the expertise of officials, police officers, intelligence personnel and armed forces involved in counterterrorism operations. The Indian Security Forces (ISF) lack Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) or Communications Intelligence (COMINT) capabilities to intercept signals or communications between alleged militants.<sup>98</sup> The Russian military is equipped with these modern technologies.

Both carried out a counterterrorism exercise *Indra* in 2016, and practiced guerrilla warfare tactics in hilly, rugged and jungle terrain.<sup>99</sup> The exercise focused on securing assembly area, axis clearance, occupation of hindering location, segregation and lastly nullification of militants.<sup>100</sup> These exercises are significant because India is fighting what it claims are ‘armed insurgencies’ in IOJ&K which is mountainous, and in its Eastern parts where Naxalites are challenging its writ in jungles. These military exercises would revamp India’s irregular warfare capabilities and enable the ISF to meet these challenges with greater ease and efficiency.

### Implications for the Deterrence Stability of South Asia

While security interests drive Russia’s policy in South Asia, its defence collaboration with India will have far-reaching implications for the strategic stability of South Asia, especially Pakistan. Although Moscow concluded a 2015 deal with Islamabad and supplied four Mi-35 helicopters in 2017<sup>101</sup> paving the way for broader military ties;<sup>102</sup> and both

<sup>97</sup> “Indo-Russian Counter-Terrorism Conference” *Global Powers Blog*, April 8, 2017, [https://www.reddit.com/r/GlobalPowers/comments/64910x/diplomacy\\_indorussian\\_counterterrorism\\_conference/](https://www.reddit.com/r/GlobalPowers/comments/64910x/diplomacy_indorussian_counterterrorism_conference/).

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> “Indo-Russian Military Exercise in Counter-Terrorism Concludes after 11 Days,” *ndian Express*, October 1, 2016, <http://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-news-india/indo-russian-military-exercise-in-counter-terrorism-concludes-after-11-days-3060350/>.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> “Islamabad Moscow Sign Helicopter Deal,” *Nation*, August 19, 2015, <https://nation.com.pk/19-Aug-2015/islamabad-moscow-sign-helicopter-deal>; “Pakistan Receives 4 Military Helicopters from Russia, Talks for Purchase of S-400 Missile Defence System: Foreign Media,” *Times of Islamabad*, August 31, 2017, <https://timesofislamabad.com/31-Aug-2017/pakistan-receives-4-military-helicopters-from-russia-talks-for-purchase-of-s-400-missile-defence-system-foreign-media>.

had their first-ever joint special drills in 2016 and 2017, the military-technical cooperation between India and Russia continues to expand, with even greater cooperation in science and technology, and is unlikely to be impacted by any strategic Pak-Russian partnership.<sup>103</sup> It is pertinent to point out that in an article by Vladimir Putin, published in February 2012, on Russian policy in South Asia, he describes Russia's policy on China, discusses India, but there is no mention of Pakistan:

South Asia is viewed as a region whose 'integrational' processes are of interest to Russia and its economy. India is considered the main engine of growth in the region and seen as a 'privileged strategic partner'.<sup>104</sup>

### ***Conventional Disparity in South Asia***

The strategic balance in South Asia suddenly shifted on January 18, 2018, after India successfully tested its Agni 5 ICBM, demonstrating that it could hit targets along the densely populated East Chinese seaboard in the event of a military confrontation with the People's Republic, to say nothing of what it could potentially do to Pakistan.<sup>105</sup>

As stated by Andrew Korybko, the Indo-Russian defence collaboration would have negative consequences for the conventional balance of power between India and Pakistan given their adversarial relationship permanently changing the 'strategic landscape in South Asia

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<sup>102</sup> "Pakistan Considers Expanding Mi-35 Contract With Russia - Military Official," *Sputnik International*, February 15, 2017, <https://sputniknews.com/world/201702151050693154-pakistan-russia-mi-35/>.

<sup>103</sup> Petr Topychkanov, "Pakistan cannot Influence Russia's Strategic Partnership with India" (Moscow: *Carnegie Moscow Center*, 2016), <http://carnegie.ru/2016/05/25/pakistan-cannot-influence-russia-s-strategic-partnership-with-india-pub-63668>.

<sup>104</sup> Petr Topychkanov, "Russia's Interests and Potential to Contribute towards Peace and Reconciliation in Afghanistan," in *Evolving Situation in Afghanistan: Role of Major Powers and Regional Countries*, ed. Sarah Siddiq Aneel (Islamabad: Islamabad Policy Research Institute, 2016), <http://www.ipripak.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/es2792016.pdf>.

<sup>105</sup> Andrew Korybko, "3 Reasons Why Russia Should Sell S-400 Missiles to Pakistan," *Regional Rapport*, January 21, 2018, <http://regionallrapport.com/2018/01/21/three-reasons-russia-sell-s-400-missiles-pakistan/>.

and heralding ‘an offensive and defense missile race.’<sup>106</sup> There is strategic stability in South Asia right now because of Pakistan’s nuclear capability. The concern here is that if conventional deterrence continues to erode in coming years because of enhanced Indo-Russian defence collaboration, what options will Pakistan be left with to counter any misadventure by the Indian military. According to Ashley Tellis, Pakistan would counter Indian military modernisation, ‘with more nuclear weapons.’<sup>107</sup> So it could be argued that such defence collaboration would have direct bearing on conventional deterrence in South Asia<sup>108</sup> or what Tellis coined ‘ugly stability’ between India and Pakistan,<sup>109</sup> and invite countermeasures by the latter, which may include realignments with major powers, expansion of its nuclear arsenal or conventional arms race:

Indeed, a number of researchers at Washington DC think tanks, including the Carnegie Endowment, the Congressional Research Service, the Council on Foreign Relations, and the Hudson Institute appear to share the beliefs of the Stimson Center’s Michael Krepon that Pakistan’s recent embrace of the utility of tactical nuclear weapons and broader Pakistani efforts to enhance the quality and quantity of their nuclear arsenal is a result of ‘India’s growing conventional capabilities and its more proactive military plans.’<sup>110</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid.

<sup>107</sup> Ashley J. Tellis (senior fellow, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Washington, D.C.), in discussion with the author, November 4, 2017.

<sup>108</sup> Malik Qasim Mustafa, “Pakistan’s Military Security and Conventional Balance of Power,” *Strategic Studies* 29, no. 1 (2009): 35-44; and Rodney W. Jones, “Conventional Military Imbalance and Strategic Stability in South Asia” (paper no. 1, University of Bradford, South Asian Strategic Stability Unit, Bradford, 2005), [http://www.policyarchitects.org/pdf/Conventional\\_imbalance\\_RJones.pdf](http://www.policyarchitects.org/pdf/Conventional_imbalance_RJones.pdf).

<sup>109</sup> Ashley J. Tellis, *Stability in South Asia* (Santa Monica: RAND, 1997), 5.

<sup>110</sup> Michael Krepon, ‘Tac Nukes in South Asia,’ *Arms Control Wonk*, April 18, 2012, quoted in Walter C. Ladwig III, “Indian Military Modernization and Conventional Deterrence in South Asia,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 38, no. 5 (2015): 729-772, <http://www.walterladwig.com/Articles/Conventional%20Deterrence%20in%20South%20Asia.pdf>.

### ***Renewed Arms Race in the Region***

The presence of nuclear weapons in South Asia means total war is no longer a possibility.<sup>111</sup> Conventional deterrence, on the other hand, makes it costly and prevents a state from any aggressive manoeuvres, surgical strikes, or limited conflict against another country. Walter Ladwig points out at length that:

Indian strategic planners cannot have a high degree of confidence that their forces possess sufficient skill advantages over their opponents that they could leverage advanced military technology to overcome [other] disadvantages structural and environmental factors [such as the terrain, lack of strategic surprise, and the relative military prowess].<sup>112</sup>

However, in the future, the conventional balance would tilt in favour of India creating serious challenges for Pakistan's security:

The result of this growing divergence in the two states' conventional capabilities will be either a regional arms race - as Pakistan desperately attempts to keep pace with India so as to deter a preventive strike from India - and/or a lowering of the nuclear threshold for Pakistan.<sup>113</sup>

Former Ambassador Ashraf Jahangir Qazi opines:

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<sup>111</sup> Vipin Narang, "Posturing for Peace? Pakistan's Nuclear Postures and South Asian Stability," *International Security* 34, no. 3 (2009/10): 38-78 (64), <https://www.belfercenter.org/sites/default/files/legacy/files/Narang.pdf>.

<sup>112</sup> Walter C. Ladwig III, "Indian Military Modernization and Conventional Deterrence in South Asia," *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 38, no. 5 (2015): 729-772, <http://www.walterladwig.com/Articles/Conventional%20Deterrence%20in%20South%20Asia.pdf>.

<sup>113</sup> Peter R. Lavoy, "Islamabad's Nuclear Posture: Its Premises and Implementation," in Henry D. Sokolski, ed., *Pakistan's Nuclear Future: Worries beyond War* (Carlisle: Strategic Studies Institute, 2008), 129-165 (158-159).

India can sustain conventional war more easily than Pakistan because of its geographical and economic size. It also carries more diplomatic weight.<sup>114</sup>

Jumping into an arms race with an economically powerful India would mean diverting funds from socio-economic development to defence related procurement. Such a situation would not only hurt Pakistan's socio-economic scenario, it would prevent this region from regional connectivity and economic development. Hostilities would flare-up further at the border, putting regional security at greater risk.

### ***Risks of a Limited War: CSD, Surgical Strikes by India***

India is adding offensive weapons and equipment to operationalise proactive military operations or CSD against Pakistan. Both states have strategic parity as far as nuclear deterrence is concerned, but the possibility of a limited war cannot be overruled. Professor Pant, in an answer to a question affirmed the possibility of a limited war under CSD, surgical strikes or proactive military operations in South Asia.<sup>115</sup> On the same question another expert on South Asia, Professor Rajesh Basrur also opines that limited war is possible. 'Arguably, it has already occurred in 1999 (Kargil). More correctly, I would call it "marginal war."<sup>116</sup>

In case of any major terrorist attack on the Indian soil or IOK, the Indian military may carry out limited attack under CSD, proactive military operations or surgical strikes on Pakistani soil. Pakistan's reaction would be uncertain - if the Pakistan military responds in the same fashion, hostilities may break out and a limited war may escalate. Bharat Karnad argues that 'should conventional deterrence fail, Pakistan will have to deliver on its threat of first use on TNWs, and that will be an impossibly

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<sup>114</sup> Ashraf Jahangir Qazi (former ambassador to India, China, and United States), in discussion with the author, October 13, 2017.

<sup>115</sup> Harsh V. Pant (professor, International Relations, Defence Studies Department and India Institute, Kings College, London), in discussion with the author, October 11, 2017.

<sup>116</sup> Rajesh Basrur (professor, International Relations, Coordinator, South Asia Programme, S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore), in discussion with the author, October 13, 2017.

difficult decision for the General Headquarters to make considering the consequences for Pakistan.<sup>117</sup> Any nuclear exchange in South Asia would have far-reaching implications not only for regional states, but also for the US, Europe, and Middle Eastern economies, it is, therefore, advisable for the Indian and Pakistani policymakers to show restraint and resolve all outstanding issues in an amicable way. The route of confrontation would lead this region to further mayhem and turmoil which is not in the interests of either party.

#### ***Development and Deployment of Tactical Nuclear Weapons***

The conventional asymmetry between India and Pakistan and costly arms race has compelled Pakistan to develop tactical nuclear weapons (TNWs) to dissuade the Indian armed forces from any aggressive move under the nuclear umbrella. Former Chief of General Staff and Corps Commander of a Strike Corps/Commander Central Command, Lieutenant General (R) Muhammad Mustafa Khan rationalises the induction of TNWs by Pakistan:

India thinks they can fight a short-term/ limited war under the nuclear umbrella. But we say we have developed TNWs and conveyed to the Indians if you impose conventional war on us or cross the border, we will use TNWs. I think TNWs are a stabilising factor in South Asia with the sole purpose to deter a conventional war.<sup>118</sup>

The Indian military is aggressively practicing its offensive designs in military exercises close to the border with Pakistan. India is also modernising its overall war fighting capabilities and adding new force multipliers. Another senior Army officer, Lt. General (R) Naeem Khalid Lodhi, former Corps Commander of the XXXI Corps is of the view that:

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<sup>117</sup> Bharat Karnad (research professor, Center for Policy Research, New Delhi, national security expert), in discussion with the author, October 10, 2017.

<sup>118</sup> Muhammad Mustafa Khan (former chief, General Staff; corps commander, Strike Corps/ Central Command), in discussion with the author, October 25, 2017.

The Indians have been developing their doctrines and we have been developing answers to their doctrines. Since then, there has been no all-out war between the two countries, which means that our answers have been appropriate, and they have been a stabilising factor. In proactive military operations, there was a fear that they will opt for shallow manoeuvres. So, Pakistan forces developed TNWs in response to that. Their mere existence will inhibit Indian designs of going for shallow manoeuvres or limited objectives as we will use all resources at our disposal which means that we will not hesitate to use anything we have. So, the development of TNWs, in this context, has been a stabilising rather than destabilising factor.<sup>119</sup>

Over the past two decades, Pakistan lost billions of dollars in the War against Terror. After years of setbacks, the country's economy is growing slowly. Such a fragile economic situation does not allow for continuous arms race with India, ultimately, there would be a strategic disparity in the region compelling Pakistan to rely on its nuclear weapons to deter any limited aggression or major incursions by the Indian military under CSD or proactive military operations. The induction and deployment of TNWs in the region is a dangerous development because the Indian nuclear doctrine does not differentiate between a tactical or strategic nuclear weapon. Such a scenario is threatening for regional peace and security. Pakistani strategic thinkers believe that TNWs are a source of stability because they have deterred India from any conventional attack. On the other hand, according to Indian expert Gurmeet Kanwal, 'TNWs are inherently destabilising.' But at the same time, he holds the view that 'In India, we believe there is space for conventional conflict below the nuclear threshold.'<sup>120</sup> Such a scenario is dangerous and any nuclear exchange in this region would be devastating.

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<sup>119</sup> Naeem Khalid Lodhi (former corps commander, XXXI Corps; former defence secretary), in discussion with the author, October 22, 2017.

<sup>120</sup> Gurmeet Kanwal (fellow, Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, New Delhi), in discussion with the author, October 11, 2017.

## **Conclusion**

The defence collaboration between India and Russia is deep-rooted and increasing with the passage of time - from refurbishment and military modernisation to counterterrorism, surveillance and reconnaissance, transportation and logistical capabilities. This collaboration would revamp the overall capabilities of India's military and help them to operationalise their aggressive doctrines against Pakistan. Partnership in the latest MBTs would not only add offensive punch to the IAF, but also help them to operationalise the CSD. The air and naval defence uplift could also create serious challenges for Pakistan's military. In the nuclear arena, Russia is helping India overcome its nuclear fuel needs and uninterrupted supplies, material and technology transfer to revamp its nuclear industry, which may bring a huge qualitative and quantitative change in its nuclear weapons' programme. The induction of Russian nuclear submarines would help India to achieve assured second strike capability and greater outreach in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea taxing Pakistan's maritime installations, economic and strategic interests. In all likelihood, this defence collaboration would create serious strategic disparity vis-à-vis Pakistan. The failure of conventional deterrence may invite the weaker party (Pakistan) to rely on its nuclear weapons to deter any aggressive moves by India. Consequently, India's military modernisation along with aggressive doctrines and overwhelming reliance on nuclear weapons by Pakistan would create serious security problems for the peace and security of South Asia. It is imperative for both nuclear states to avoid confrontation, refrain from aggressive doctrines and resolve all outstanding issues (including Kashmir) through amicable negotiations, only then can there be long-term peace and stability in the region. ■