



# *Indian* Military Policy and Strategy

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**M**ILITARY strategy and foreign policy are correlated aspects of national policy. In formulating military strategy, the strategic planner must investigate the assumptions underlying foreign policy and military strategy, test the various policies in action, and discover future contingencies and alternative means of action for achieving relevant national objectives. The final task of the military strategist is to develop a preferred policy and strategy in the light of the best means available. British Indian defense policy was based on the idea of a forward posture focused on Afghanistan and Tibet—with the USSR as the

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greater threat to peace both in Afghanistan and Tibet and with a weak Chinese Manchu power providing a presence in Tibet.

### Geostrategic Situation

After the withdrawal of British power from the Indian subcontinent in 1947, the geostrategic situation changed. A weak Chinese presence in Tibet was replaced by military rule in Tibet; the forward posture which had been advocated to protect the Indian "ramparts" was no longer available to Indian defense planners; and, although the Soviet threat and ambitions toward south Asia were to be replaced by an immediate Chinese military threat on India's northern borders, the proximity of the Soviet Union to the Indian subcontinent required constant attention.

The changes in the Indian military environment following World War II make close application of conventional European military practices to Indian conditions difficult. Unlike during the 19th century, India no longer has safe borders which are secure against great power intervention. In fact, India has

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a hostile frontier of 2,500 miles with China and about 1,500 miles with Pakistan which she must actively defend. Also, until recently, the Indian Ocean and the sealanes extending from the Mediterranean and the Middle East enjoyed the protection of the British and United States Navies.

With the announcement of British withdrawal east of Suez by 1970 and the Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean, Persian Gulf, and eastern Mediterranean, the security of the sealanes no longer can be taken for granted. A Red Chinese naval buildup could also threaten the Strait of Malacca and the South China Sea.

### Factors to Consider

An evaluation of Indian military strategy must take these factors into consideration:

- The Indian perception of the threat from Pakistan and China, including China's possession of nuclear weapons.

- The impact of United States-USSR policies upon the Indian subcontinent in view of their considerable economic and military investment and the political stakes involved.

The post-1947 Indian military theater, like the European theater, lacks depth. Any offensive into Indian territory would require a highly mobile Indian defense in a theater which does not permit a long, attritional defensive campaign. Consequently, the maintenance of an effective deterrent and mobile defense capability becomes a military necessity.

In light of the 1962 Chinese attack upon India, the 1965 Indo-Pakistan war, and India's security dilemma, highlighted by the nonproliferation treaty issue, what is India's own assessment of the strategic threat? What are the military requirements

Model I: United States versus China

Doctrine and Strategy	Military System	Military Environment Contingencies	Remarks
<p>Policy of flexible response.</p> <p>Politically build bridges with China.</p>	<p>Strategic offensive missiles; bombers; limited antiballistic missile system; and limited ground forces.</p>	<p>Fluid power situation in China and Asia.</p> <p>Problem of Chinese nuclear blackmail.</p> <p>United States unable or unwilling to commit ground forces in mainland China.</p> <p>Strategically, both the United States and China respect each other.</p> <p>China seeks development of intercontinental ballistic missiles and submarines which could conceivably threaten the United States and other Asian countries.</p>	<p>Chinese fear of US military threat to China mainland has progressively weakened over the years.</p> <p>Future pattern of China's military threat uncertain because of her internal problems.</p>

Model I

for meeting the threat potential?

Present Indian military capabilities are applicable only to the concept of a limited war. This is due to both internal and external factors. The internal factors concern the political inhibitions within India, the economic-technological-industrial restraints, and the problems of military geography which make general war problematic.

The external factors include the role of great powers, particularly the United States and the Soviet Union. The Tashkent precedent shows that neither of these powers desires an uncontrollable or unpremeditated conflict in the subcontinent. Thus, the question of Indian deterrence and defense system at the present stage can be considered only in the context of limited war.

<b>Model II: United States versus China Over India</b>				
<b>Doctrine and Strategy</b>	<b>Military System</b>	<b>Military Environment Contingencies</b>	<b>Credibility</b>	<b>Remarks</b>
<p>US military assistance and sales to help India's defense effort against China.</p> <p>Highly conditional "assurance" to India against Chinese nuclear blackmail.</p>	<p>Strategic bombers; US 7th Fleet; and Middle East Strike Command.</p>	<p>2,500 miles of hostile Sino-Indian frontier in inhospitable terrain.</p> <p>Possibility of Sino-Pakistan collusion against India.</p> <p>Long lines of communications.</p> <p>Inadequate radar complex in the Himalayan region.</p> <p>Problem of night deployments by Chinese forces in Tibet.</p> <p>Problem of airborne attacks by Chinese forces.</p> <p>Problem of Chinese submarine threats to India.</p>	<p>US assurance questionable because it is highly conditional.</p>	<p>India has capability to conduct holding operations in the Himalayan regions for a limited period.</p>

Model II

To evaluate Indian defense policy in its proper perspective, it is important to recognize that India is part of the Asian balance. As long as China and India remain antagonistic, India will need to gear her strategic posture to the Sino-Indian strategic model. As long as China remains a political and military problem, the interaction

between the United States and China and the USSR and China will constitute important factors in the current military situation in Asia.

Since the question of United States-USSR security assurances to India has been raised at various stages from 1962 onward, the interaction of the strategic models provides a picture of

the multiplicity of factors involved. Such factors include different, and often varying, national perceptions of the threat potential, the doctrine or strategy which guide a particular national response, the military systems which are in use or are likely to be used, the precise military environment at a given time, and the ratio of offensive-defensive forces. These foregoing themes are elaborated upon in Models I through IV.

### Conventional Posture

From these models, it may be reasonably assumed that India's conventional military defense posture at present appears to be adequate to meet the limited conventional military threat which China or Pakistan pose to India. However, the emergence of China as a nuclear power, the decision of the United States to deploy a Chinese-oriented antiballistic missile (ABM) system, and the maintenance of a massive Chinese military posture in Asia are three elements in the military environment which reflect the uncertainty in the strategic balance in Asia.

Chinese nuclear capability is expected to grow rapidly in the next few years. By 1975, China could have between 400 and 575 nuclear and thermonuclear warheads available for delivery by a combination of manned bombers, submarines, and midrange ballistic missile (MRBM) delivery systems.

India does not have a solid defense against China's strategic threat. As of now, Indian air defense capability consists of a primitive radar system with fighter-interceptor jet aircraft as the mainstay of the air defense system. Three options are open to India for improving her air defense capabilities:

- The establishment of an early warning barrier consisting of a ground-based and airborne radar system in the Himalayan region, with the objective of overseeing about 150 miles across the Himalayas.

- The establishment of a forward-based air defense system with the use of fighter interceptors armed with air-to-air missiles for intercepting the intruder in the forward, sparsely populated areas.

- A short-range air defense system to defend key areas, military bases, and installations within Indian territory.

### Threat Patterns

The problem of an effective air defense system for India's northern borders is only one side of the picture. India's posture is the concern of the strategic aspect of Indian policy. It is impossible to isolate the many variables which will eventually shape India's strategic posture, but it is possible to identify some threat patterns based upon Chinese capabilities during the 1967 to 1975 period. It is then possible to project desired Indian strategic options.

In the 1969-70 timeframe, the Chinese threat can be countered by a strong conventional military posture and a strong political and diplomatic posture against China. India's strategic response options during this period include: reliance upon deterrence rather than a nuclear weapons system; achieving deterrence, keeping the nuclear option open, and continuing research and development in missile systems; conditioning the development of nuclear capability upon the Chinese strategic nuclear force and its threat posture; dependence upon fighter-interceptor aircraft with a fully integrated air defense system which in-

cludes surface-to-air, air-to-surface, and air-to-air missiles.

From 1970 to 1975, it should be assumed that Chinese MRBM's and intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM's) will pose a real threat to India. Chinese ICBM's also will be in a position to threaten US cities against which a thin ABM system will not provide a foolproof guarantee. Conse-

the achievement of security with the best available means and to the maximum extent possible. In the Indian context, the "means" are India's growing, although limited, base of defense production and military imports from friendly powers. Several factors impel India to a policy to prevent war:

- Because of political, military, and geographical conditions, the enemy

**Model III: India versus China**

Doctrine and Strategy	Military System	Military Environment Contingencies	Credibility
<p>Conduct conventional military holding operations on the Indo-Tibetan border.</p> <p>Develop a counter-offensive strike force.</p>	<p>Conventional armament.</p> <p>Offensive bomber capability limited to old <i>Canberra</i> bombers.</p>	<p>Same as in Model II. Presently, the threat is essentially conventional.</p>	<p>Indian credibility good for conducting conventional holding operations on the Indo-Tibetan border.</p>

**Model III**

quently, US assurances to India become less valid. Since India cannot field an ABM system because of political or technological reasons, she should develop an indigenous nuclear capability of a counter-city type. Nuclear mines could be used also to seal off Himalayan passes.

The traditional role of military power in foreign affairs is no less important today than it has been in past centuries. In fact, the enlarged role of military power in Asian politics has particular relevance for India. Total security at the optimum level is rarely possible. Military strategy is

probably would have the initiative in originating hostilities.

- Prolonged defense is not feasible because the Indian theater lacks depth.

- The possibility of a two-front confrontation with Pakistan and China must be taken into account by Indian planners.

- Because of restricted resources and difficult lines of communications, particularly in the Kashmir and Indo-Tibetan sectors, a military campaign would be limited.

Consequently, greater attention needs to be paid to deterrence planning.

Model IV: India versus Pakistan

Doctrine and Strategy	Military System	Military Environment Contingencies	Credibility	Remarks
<p>Conduct holding operations.</p> <p>Conduct counter-offensive strike aimed at Pakistan's capital and heartland.</p> <p>Modernized mobile warfare techniques required.</p> <p>Duration of war cannot exceed three weeks because of limited industrial base and possibility of great power intervention.</p> <p>Achieve air superiority over the subcontinent.</p>	<p>Conventional military forces with strong air support.</p> <p>Give attention to Pakistan's superior radar and communication facilities and air facilities.</p> <p>India's armor strength is smaller compared to Pakistan's armored forces in division strength.</p>	<p>1,500 miles of hostile frontier, including the cease-fire in Kashmir.</p>	<p>Good at present.</p>	<p>Long lines of communications—particularly in the Punjab-Kashmir-Ladakh sector which must be protected.</p> <p>Possibility of Sino-Pakistan cooperation.</p>

Model IV

Present Indian defense capability allows India to conduct a conventional holding operation against China and Pakistan. Although the use of armor in the central and eastern Indo-Tibetan sectors is out of the question due to geography, there may be areas where it might be feasible to achieve a decisive military breakthrough.

Considerable scope also exists in improving the performance of the Indian Air Force. In the 1965 war, according to official Indian estimates, the Indian Air Force achieved a fa-

vorable air situation. This, however, is not the same as air superiority. The Indian Defense Ministry has stated that the lessons from 1965 and conclusions from the conflict in western Asia have been, and are being, studied for use in training concepts. If this applies also to the Indian Air Force—and the lesson of Israel's use of airpower is quite evident—then one can visualize the possibility of creating a better deterrent or having a military campaign of even shorter duration in the future.

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