

India's Increasing Defence Spending Under Modi Era: Impact On Regional Strategic Stability Of South Asia

By

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DEDICATION

With utmost devotions, I dedicate my whole work to my beloved and affectionate Parents, Brothers and Sister, My wife and Respected Staff of International Relations Department of NUML. They all have given me much confidence and whatever I am today is due to their prayers, and support. It is because of their efforts that I have been enabled to reach this point of success. I dedicate my research to my supervisor Dr. Attiq-ur-Rehman who has supported me throughout the process.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BRO	Border Roads Organization
CAIR	Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics
CRS	Congressional Research Service
DAIC	Defence AI Council
DAIPA	Defence AI Project Agency
DAP	Defence Acquisition Procedure
DDP	Department of Defence Production
DDR&D	Department of Defence Research and Development
DESW	Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare
DICs	Defence Industrial Corridors
DMA	Department of Military Affairs
DND	Draft Nuclear Doctrine
DoD	Department of Defence
DPP	Defence Procurement Procedure
DPSUs	Defence Public Sector Undertakings
DRDO	Defence and Research and Development Organization
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
iDEX	Innovation for Defence Excellence
IIOJK	Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu Kashmir
IISS	International Institute of Strategic Studies
ISRO	Indian Space Research Organization
ISSI	Institute of Strategic Studies
LCRA	Light Canard Research Aircraft
MEA	Ministry of External Affairs
MICs	Military Industrial Complexes
MSMEs	Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises
SIPRI	Stockholm International Peace Research Institute

SUPARCO	Space & Upper Atmosphere Research Commission
TNDIC	Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor
UAVs	Unmanned Aerial Vehicles
UCAV	Unmanned Combat Air Vehicle
UGVs	Unmanned Ground Vehicles
UPDIC	Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor
UUVs	Unmanned Underwater Vehicles

ABSTRACT

The arrival of Narendra Modi in Indian politics as the fourteenth Prime Minister has changed the main course of Indian defense policy by revisiting and improving the conventional foundations of Indian strategic thinking. Modi's way of managing the mainstream security challenges of traditional and non-traditional nature has generated a new debate in contemporary world politics in which the leading architectures of Indian national security policy and strategic planning have decided to improve the role of war-fighting capabilities of regular Indian armed forces. The government authorities under the leadership of Modi have accepted the significance of modern warfare technologies in the conventional and non-conventional defense domains. This objective has led the New Delhi-specific security establishment to allocate sufficient financial resources to the Indian armed forces and let the Indian defense planners upgrade the country's domestic defence industry. The quest for obtaining modern warfare technologies and integrating these advanced technologies with the conventional defense system of India has resulted in New Delhi's growing strategic engagements with the great powers. Parallel to signing various defense agreements and security deals with the great powers, New Delhi has started exploring the new domains of the international community for expanding its strategic engagement across the globe. Thus, signing strategic collaboration has convinced Indian leaders to focus on the scientifically advanced and technologically advanced nation beyond the great powers. Prime Minister Modi's strategic vision is important in this regard because the ultra-national agenda of Modi has brought various policy reforms in the fields of security and defense. The hardcore nationalist agenda of Modi has even improved the role of the indigenous defense industry by introducing various new programs in the defence sector. These developments are purely domestic matters of Indian politics. However, the impacts of these national-level developments cannot be separated from the ongoing strategic matrix between New Delhi and Islamabad. In other words, the impacts of Modi's decision to increase Indian defence spending on the scope of regional strategic stability cannot be marginalised in the South Asian intense security environment. The growing defense spending of New Delhi leaves worse impacts on the values of peace and stability in the South Asian region under nuclear shadows. Therefore, this research provides a comprehensive understanding of India's increasing military budgets under the Modi government and its relevance to the notion of strategic stability between the pair of South Asian nuclear weapon states.

Key Words:

Indian Military Spending, Modi's Defence Budget, Military Modernization, India-Pakistan Conflict, Strategic Stability.

INTRODUCTION

The defence spending of states generally refers to the portion of the financial resources a government allocates to its military for strengthening its strategic position in regional and extra-regional affairs. The strategic positions of the states in their home region and beyond define the strategic quests of their governments against their potential rivals. The defence budgets of the states are directly linked to the contrasting strategic interests of state governments against each other under various competing scenarios. The increasing defence spending of the states is mainly based on the contesting behaviours of their governments against other states, where India is not an exception. The debates of states with persistently increasing defence spending under different justifications can only be completed by discussing India's growing reliance on acquiring modern warfare technologies. The Indian increasing defence spending is inherited in New Delhi's strategic thinking, which mainly focuses on the contesting interaction against the territorially adjoining nations. The foundations of Indian strategic thinking are fundamentally based on an expansionist policy in its home region for the attainment of a regional hegemonic position. The principle of expansionism in the Indian political mindset has forced the leading state officials from New Delhi to improve and advance the position of its regular armed forces to overcome the mainstream security challenges. These challenges are mainly linked to the states that share territorial borders with India while having hostile interactions with New Delhi. The political authorities, from Jawaharlal Lal Nehru to Narendra Modi, paid particular attention to the upgradation of the Indian armed forces by allocating a sufficient portion of the budget to its defence industry. The distribution of specific financial resources to the various patterns of its defence industry has resulted in different formats of the Indian domestic weapon industry to the international weapon market. Indian domestic defence industry is rapidly developing collaborative solid connections with the international weapon markets. The increasing reliance of New Delhi on the advancement of its regular armed forces has introduced several strategic trends in the regional security environment of South Asia. The impacts of this scenario on South Asia have complicated a regional security environment of the nuclearised subcontinent in which Pakistan has unwillingly jumped into an unending strategic competition with New Delhi. Indian desires to undo the partition of the subcontinent and its transformation into modern New Delhi's policies always compelled Pakistan to update its weapon system under several defence measures.

Due to New Delhi's persistent focus on empowering its military forces, a significant shift in the South regional security environment occurred in 1998 when regional politics were placed under nuclear shadows. Indian decision to test its nuclear devices compelled Pakistan to announce its nuclear weapon status by conducting nuclear tests immediately after India. The increasing reliance on increasing defence budgets pushed the leaders of both hostile neighbours to acquire nuclear weapons. The confidence in nuclear weapon capabilities resulted from a security dilemma between neighbours in which New Delhi always remained an initiator of different military trends in its regular armed forces. Because of its consistent focus on increasing the main defence budget in the security and defence domain, Indian leaders always showed interest in modernising armed forces with the help of modern warfare technologies. The quest for acquiring modern technologies always led the Indian state authorities under different political administrations toward advanced military industries of the states around the globe. This factor shows a persistent trend of regular increments in New Delhi's defence budget for advancing its armed forces. The nature of persistency in New Delhi's military resource growth has dramatically changed with Prime Minister Modi's arrival in Indian politics. The Modi administration has decided to integrate modern warfare technology with the operational capabilities of Indian regular armed forces. Without estimating the impacts of these weapon developments and major advancements in the military's role in New Delhi's defence affairs on the other regional states, the Modi administration is taking revolutionary measures in allocating a major share of its country's budget to the domestic defence industry. The direct impacts of such national-level developments cannot be separated from the notion of strategic stability and its relevance to the nuclearised subcontinent.

The Modi government persistently undermines the concept of strategic stability in South Asian nuclearised politics due to the increasing reliance of New Delhi on the maximisation of its power in its home region. The pursuit of starching its strategic muscles over South Asia's territorial and maritime affairs is the fundamental factor behind Modi's policy of increasing the defence budget. An exclusive focus on the military finances in India has been measured by various independent research institutions and research organisations from around the globe. The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) analysis marked the Indian economy as one of the few leading weapon traders globally. The SIPRI data has included India in the list of five states with the largest military spending, and the governments of these states (India, China, United States, United Kingdom, and Russia) are determined to remain active in the global weapon

market.¹ The same analysis mentioned that Indian military spending ranked New Delhi third highest in the world, with 64% of outlay for the defence budget in 2021. A report from the International Institute of Strategic Studies (IISS) underscored that New Delhi's defence budget witnessed a hike of approximately \$ 4 billion in the last two years.² The IISS highlighted the Indian Defence Budget of \$ 73 billion during the financial year 2020-2021. As per the SIPRI yearbook 2022, the Indian defense budget will be more than 76.5 billion USD during the financial year 2022-2023 and is estimated to be the third largest in the world, only behind the United States and China with 773 billion USD³ and 229 billion USD⁴, respectively. Moreover, as the nuclear weapon state possessing a stockpile of 160 nuclear warheads, India aimed to deter the territorially adjoining nations, Pakistan and China.³ The official statements of Indian political authorities and the leading figures of its strategic community have mentioned the purpose of developing nuclear weapons, mainly linked to the emerging threats from territorially adjoining nations where China and Pakistan are the main targets of India's growing strategic capabilities. The Sino-Pak growing economic collaboration has seriously threatened New Delhi due to its historically antagonistic ties with Beijing and Islamabad. New Delhi has developed a multileveled anti-Chinese and anti-Pakistani approach in its mainstream defence policies. The Indian government has considered combining conventional and unconventional weapon systems as an essential feature of its defence against China and Pakistan. Indian leaders have considered that possessing nuclear has served the main objectives of Indian strategic thinking and enabled New Delhi to defend its borders, with an expansionist policy, against territorially adjoining China and Pakistan.

In the debate of South Asian politics, the immediate threat India considers is Pakistan, which has a counterbalancing position against New Delhi's regional hegemonic ambitions. The government of Pakistan always remained determined to oppose New Delhi's regionally hegemonic behaviour cemented in different offensive policies. The unresolved territorial issue of Kashmir is the fundamental clash between India and Pakistan, and the nature of this territorial clash has resulted in a permanent form of hostility between New Delhi and Islamabad. The status of the Kashmir issue under the Modi administration has been tarnished dramatically through the

¹ "World Military Expenditures Passes \$ 2 for First Time," SIPRI, April 25, 2022, <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2022/world-military-expenditure-passes-2-trillion-first-time>.

² Muhammad Ali Baig, "Analysing India's 76 Billion USD Defence Budget," Global Village Space, October 1, 2022, <https://www.globalvillagespace.com/analyzing-indias-76-billion-usd-defence-budget/>.

³ "India," SIPRI, <https://www.sipri.org/research/armaments-and-disarmament/nuclear-weapons/world-nuclear-forces/india>.

Kashmir-specific constitutional changes in New Delhi under the leadership of Modi. To enhance Indian regional influence in South Asia's territorial and maritime affairs, the Modi government has focused on designing revolutionary budgetary measures for military purposes while allocating more than sufficient budgetary sources to its domestic defence industry. The Modi government has also introduced different domestic-level programs for the allocation of financial resources to the domestic weapon industry of India, such as *Atma Nirbhar Bharat* and *Azadi ka Amrit Mahotsav*. Moreover, an exclusive engagement of the Department of Defence and Research and Development Organizations (DRDO) in the domestic weapon industry and the broader framework of *the Make in India* plan are significant developments in legitimating the increasing defense spending of the Modi government for non-peaceful purposes. In addition to these programs, New Delhi has encouraged the interaction of public-private sector linkages in domestic defence. These policy reforms have inflicted a sense of insecurity in Pakistan's strategic mindset parallel to disturbing the values of regional strategic stability in the nuclearised region. It is widely believed in Indian policy circles that attaining modern weapon systems and acquiring advanced weapon technologies are directly linked to the empowerment of New Delhi's position in its home region.⁴ In contrast, Pakistani leaders have always considered the unprecedented growth of Indian defence resources for military purposes as directly linked to the regional strategic matrix between the two nuclear powers. This scenario weakens the concept of strategic stability between the pair of nuclear weapon states in the nuclearised subcontinent while leaving worse impacts on the regional security environment under nuclear shadows.

The expansionist tendencies of Indian foreign policy under the Modi administration exclusively emphasised the objective of acquiring advanced weapon systems. A recent wave of sub-conventional level crises of New Delhi with Beijing and Islamabad on two different borders legitimates the support of advanced weapon systems to Indian aggressive foreign policy against the territorially adjoining nations. The situation in South Asia is worse in this regard, where the nuclearised hostility of New Delhi with Islamabad portrays serious threats to the regional strategic matrix between the two nuclear powers. In this way, India's increasing military budget under the Modi administration, although being a domestic matter, could not be separated from the regional politics of South Asia. An inseparable interconnectedness between the Modi government's quest

⁴ Bernard Brodie, "War in the Atomic Age," in *The Absolute Weapon: Atomic Power and World Order*, ed. Bernard Brodie (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1946), 120.

for allocating more financial sources to the regular arms forces and the multifaceted growth of the Indian domestic defence industry cannot be marginalised in the debates of South Asian regional politics. The impacts of this factor on the regional strategic matrix between two neighbouring nuclear powers with hostile interactions have become an undeniable reality and an irrefutable truth in the contemporary international system. Thus, the central theme of this research revolves around the concept of strategic stability and its nature under the intense regional security environment of the nuclearised subcontinent in which the Indian government under Modi government is consistently increasing its military budget. Intending to push Pakistan into a disadvantageous position, the Indian government under Modi's leadership is highly determined to increase its defence spending with the support of different economic programs. The descriptive nature of this study attempted to cover the increasing Indian defence budget and its linkage with the *Force Modernization Plan* of the Modi Administration. This research focuses mainly on Modi's quest for achieving New Delhi's strategic objective in South Asia, which challenges the conditions of regional strategic stability due to archrival relations between New Delhi and Islamabad.

Statement of the Problem

The arrival of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Indian politics has altered the nature and scope of Indian armed forces by allocating sufficient economic resources to the Indian defense industry. This scenario has led New Delhi towards a policy of massive weaponisation, which has worse impacts on the notion of strategic stability in South Asia's intense regional security environment in the Indo-Pakistan context.

Objectives of the Study

The core theme of this research attempts to analyse the strategic competition between New Delhi and Islamabad while focusing on the role of the Indian increasing defence budget in damaging the regional strategic matrix between two rival nuclear neighbours. An exclusive focus on this argument designed this study to achieve the following objectives.

1. To determine the nature of the Indian Defence Budget in the nuclearised South Asian region under the Modi Era.
2. To identify Modi's designs of "Force Modernization" and shaping of its defense budget to support Indian regular armed forces.
3. To ascertain the linkages of India's expanding defense resources with South Asian regional strategic stability.
4. To highlight the appropriate way forward for empowering the notion of strategic stability in South Asian regional security.

Research Questions

To achieve the abovementioned research objectives concerning the impacts of New Delhi's increasing defence budget on the South Asian region and Pakistan's security mainly. Thus, this study attempted to address the following research questions.

1. What is the nature of the Indian Defence Budget in the nuclearised South Asia under the Modi Administration?
2. Why is Modi shaping the Indian defense budget for its armed forces through his design of "Force Modernization"?
3. How is the regional strategic stability of South Asia directly linked with New Delhi's increasing defense spending?
4. What are the available options for improving the notion of strategic stability in the complex regional security environment of South Asia.?

Literature Review

A brief overview of the available literature on South Asian regional politics generally and its nuclearised dimensions particularly rarely addresses the question of the degrading concept of regional stability in the nuclearised subcontinent. Different authors from diverse backgrounds have always remained cautious about the intense security environment of South Asia in the presence of decades-long New Delhi-Islamabad hostility. The leading academic circles of the international

community generally maintain their intellectual positions on the various points of disagreement between the governments of both South Asian nuclear powers without highlighting India's increasing defence spending on conventional and non-conventional weapons systems. The discussion on the Indian defence budget and its application in specific fields has been focused on by a few authors, such as Ashley J. Tellis in *India's Emerging Nuclear Posture: Between Recessed Deterrent and Ready Arsenal* (2001), Bharat Karnad in *India's Nuclear Policy* (2008), Ali Ahmed in *India's Doctrine Puzzle: Limiting War in South Asia* (2014), and Stephen P. Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta in *Arming Without Aiming: India's Military Modernisation* (2010). These books touched on increasing the Indian defence budget to improve New Delhi's armed capabilities. The co-authored study of Cohen and Dasgupta is most relevant in this regard because both authors tried to examine the persistently augmented military capabilities of New Delhi and their impacts on the regional security environment of South Asia. The academic efforts of Tellis, Karnad, and Ahmed establish a major focus on the Indian objective of military empowerment against the potential threats emanating from territorially adjoining states. The improvement in the Indian armed capabilities has greater significance for changing the doctrinal attributes of the Indian army, which already has nuclear capabilities for meeting the strategic aspiration of New Delhi. The common point expressed by all these authors focuses on Indian strategic thinking and its association with advancing its armed forces in the territorial and maritime affairs of the nuclearised subcontinent. According to these authors, various other academic accounts of different authors highlighted the role of armed forces of nuclear weapon states with the support of sufficient economic resources of states.

Lawrence Freedman's *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* (2003), Neville Maxwell's *India's China War* (2013), and Stephen J. Cimbala's *The Past and Future of Nuclear Deterrence* (1998) discussed the role of strategic capabilities of states in defining their position in the strategic competition of the regional and global power politics. The book Freedman generally talks about the genesis and progress of nuclear strategy in the mainstream defence system of the state, whereas Maxwell specifically explains the greater reliance of Indian defence planners on global objectives while considering China as the potential competitor in international power politics. Cimbala has developed an academic account analogous to Freedom and Maxwell and attempted to forecast the future of nuclear deterrence in the changing strategic outlook of the international system. Enabling armed forces to overcome the potential challenges is the fundamental objective of New Delhi,

which has shaped the foreign relations with rival nations with offensive policies parallel to developing influential diplomatic forces of India in the world. The study of Strobe Talbott *Engaging India: Diplomacy, Democracy, and the Bomb* (2004) is important in this aspect because the emphasis of Talbott lies in evaluating New Delhi's political and diplomatic attributes under nuclear influences. Thus, the mainstream literature produced by most authors relatively ignored the important aspect in question and marginally touched on the growth of the Indian defence budget to the regional strategic stability. The academic account of mainstream strategic communities from inside and outside India discussed the Indian increasing military budget without developing a link between these military expenditures and the intense regional security environment. _

The Book *The End of Strategic Stability?: Nuclear Weapons and the Challenge of Regional Rivalries* (2018) by Lawrence Rubin and Adam N. Stulberg talks about the discourse of nuclear security in the South Asian region, opportunities and challenges in the present geopolitical and geo-economic environment; to include the rise of religious fundamentalism, strategic alliances/emerging partnerships between countries of the region and extra-regional powers. *India's Habituation with the Bomb: Nuclear Learning in South Asia* (2020) by Naeem Salik explains how India and Pakistan have stumbled through one crisis after another and have navigated their way through a weaponisation process. Salik's study is an overview of Pakistan's post-nuclear test experiences and their relevance to India's growing reliance on modern weapons. The co-authored study of Rubin and Stulberg primarily discussed South Asia's fragile regional security environment, in which the question of strategic stability is persistently becoming a major challenge for the region. Furthermore, a combined study of Pakistani authors Zulfiqar Khan and Zafar Khan, The book *India's Evolving Deterrent Force Posturing in South Asia: Temptation for Pre-emptive Strikes, Power Projection, and Escalation Dominance* (2021) is an important study in the discussion of South Asian regional security environment and its vanishing connections with the concept of strategic stability because both Pakistani authors presented a fresh picture of Indian quest for modernising its conventional weapon system with the support of modern warfare technologies is the actual threat to the regional strategic matrix between two nuclear rivals. The book's first two chapters engage in understanding the contemporary status of the South Asian security dilemma consisting of New Delhi's evolving strategic posture. The factors of preemptive strikes against nuclear Pakistan, power projection in regional and extra-regional affairs, and escalation dominance in case of any clash with Pakistan are the central points of discussion in the

book, which both authors treat as the key motivating forces in shaping Indian high defence budgets. This study concludes that India has embarked upon a comprehensive deterrence forces development program coupled with various other ambitious conventional military and strategic forces modernisation plans with several modifications of the Draft Nuclear Doctrine (DND) regarding preemptive counter-force strike strategies.

An edited volume of Harsh V. Pant's *The Routledge Handbook of Indian Defence Policy: Themes, Structures, and Doctrines* (2020) describes that Indian Defence Policy brings together the most eminent scholarship in South Asia on India's defence policy and contemporary military history. It maps India's political and military profile in South Asia and the Indian Ocean region and analyses its emergence as a global player. This handbook encompasses canvasses over 60 years of Indian defence policy, its relation to India's rising global economic profile, and foreign policy shifts. It Discusses several key debates that have shaped defence strategies through the years: military doctrine and policy, internal and external security challenges, terrorism, and insurgencies. It also highlights the evolution of the Indian army, navy, and air forces; investments in professional military education, intelligence, and net-centric warfare; reforms in paramilitary forces and the Indian police; and the purposes of all these developments. The purposes of all these developments are linked with the projection of New Delhi's strategic interests against territorially adjoining nations such as China and Pakistan. Akin to the study of Harsh, Laxman Kumar Behera's *India's Defence Economy: Planning, Budgeting, Industry, and Procurement* (2020) argues that India has emerged as the fourth largest military spender in the world and has a colossal defence economy supported by a budget amounting to nearly \$ 67 billion in 2020–21. This book examines how well India's defence economy is managed through a detailed statistical exposition of five key themes – defence planning, expenditure, arms production, procurement, and offsets. This book is based on hardcore evidence collected from multiple governments and other credible sources, including the ministries of Defence, Finance, Commerce and Industry, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India, and the Reserve Bank of India. It discusses key issues such as the evolution of India's defence plan, the feasibility of increasing defence spending, India's defence acquisition system, and the recent reform measures taken under the 'Make in India' initiative rubric. Apart from all these books, a massive amount of literature consisting of various research papers and opinion articles have appeared from different parts of the world, containing the varying analysis of various writers on the South Asian nuclearised regional order and its unprecedented growth under the

nuclear shadows. The question of strategic stability and its degrading status in the India-Pakistan conflict has been addressed by many authors in their published research papers, monographs, and opinion articles. Despite having the focus of intellectual circles of the world on the regional strategic stability of South Asia, the produced research has marginalised the role of New Delhi's growing multileveled defence spending.

Research Gap

A comprehensive overview of existing literature on the central theme of the research remains mainly associated with the changing dynamics of South Asian regional politics under the nuclear shadows. An effort to establish a linkage between the persistently degrading regional strategic stability in South Asia and New Delhi's quest for allocating maximum funding to its defence industry under Modi's Era is a major voice in the existing literature published worldwide on India-Pakistan strategic competition. The intellectual efforts of different research institutes and independent think tanks also paid cursory attention to the role of New Delhi's growing defence spending in undermining the vision of stable strategic competition in the nuclearised subcontinent generally and Indo-Pakistan's context precisely. Even the critical circles of international communities located in different parts of the world generally, and Pakistan specifically, proved to be inept in producing sufficient literature on the adverse effects of the growing Indian Defence Budget on the security of a nuclearised region. The existing literature produced on the enduring strategic competition between New Delhi and Islamabad slightly touched on the role of New Delhi's growing defence spending in the defence sector. Pakistan-based intellectual communities in various academia and policy institutions have maintained comprehensive literature on Modi's aggressive domestic, regional, and international politics. The efforts of Pakistani authors generally evaluate the critical features of Modi's regionally belligerent policy and New Delhi's spreading strategic connections with the states with modern weapon systems as well as advanced military capabilities. Thus, India's strategic posture under Modi's epoch of "Force Modernization" and shaping of the defense budget for the support of its regular armed forces remained cursorily deliberated by research institutes and independent think tanks from across the world. Although the Indian quest for regional power has remained part of the literature, the rise in defence spending during the Modi Era for modernising weapons and its linkages with attaining such status remains

unmapped in the existing literature. The very dynamics of India's struggle to attain this benchmark (Regional Hegemon) through increased defence spending under the Modi Era and its implications on the regional strategic stability and nuclear politics of South Asia appeared as a main gap in the existing literature. While keeping in view the existing academic surveys and varying intellectual positions of different authors and research organisations on the degrading regional strategic matrix between India and Pakistan, the central theme of this research is based on a rational and impartial overview of New Delhi's increasing reliance on the allocation of maximum budget to Indian Armed Forces under the broader framework of defence budget during Modi era; India's design of "Force Modernization" and shaping of its defence budget for its armed forces thereby developing linkages of New Delhi's increasing defence spending with the regional strategic matrix of South Asia and suggesting appropriate way-forward for empowering the notion of strategic stability in the nuclearised subcontinent.

Core Argument

South Asia's regional security environment is mainly dependent on the increasing defense spending of New Delhi under the Modi administration because the increasing reliance of the Indian government on modern warfare technology is the main driver behind the growing military expenditures of Indian regular armed forces. The strategic tendencies of the Modi government are directly linked to the strategic aspirations of New Delhi in its home region, where Pakistan is determined to counterbalance India in its domestic region. The enduring rivalry between both South Asian nations has led their respective governments towards nuclearisation and placed the regional security environment under the nuclear shadows. The arms race between neighbours has created a security dilemma in which the Indian government has started taking revolutionary measures under the Modi government to support regionally offensive policy against the territorially adjoining nations. In contrast, the Pakistani government is highly determined to keep creating a strategic balance in the region with the support of its defensive position in the regional nuclearised politics of South Asia. This scenario directly impacts South Asia's regional strategic stability due to the Indian offensive and Pakistan's defensive positions in the nuclearised

environment.⁵ New Delhi's quest for devoting more economic resources to its defence industry is a matter of domestic Indian politics. However, its impacts on the regional intense security environment of South Asia generally, and regional strategic stability particularly, cannot be marginalised. In other words, an interconnection between Modi's plans for modernising conventional weapon systems with the support of massive financial resources and the concept of strategic stability of the nuclearised subcontinent has become a serious question in the contemporary international system. The leading political authorities of the Modi government are convinced of the role of the military budget in empowering the role of Indian armed forces in regional politics. Therefore, this research is an academic endeavour to explain Increasing Indian Defence spending under Modi's Administration, its linkages with Modi's "Force Modernization" plans, and its implication on the strategic stability of South Asia.

Theoretical Framework

To understand the conceptual foundations of this study, it is essential to comprehend the nature of global power politics in which the realist-driven principles of international power politics define the strategic positions of different states in their respective regions. The principles of power politics in the international system always convinced the leader of states to emphasise the objective of power maximisation because the structural studies of the international system treat the state governments as power maximisers. According to the theoretical explanations of world politics, the leaders of states always focus on gaining as much power as possible to achieve their strategic goals and to support their standing in regional and extra-regional affairs. The quest for attaining maximum resources of power leads the political authorities of states towards acquiring power in the anarchical structure of the international system with the belief that the acquisition of a powerful status will serve their strategic objectives in the world. The permanent anarchical situation in world politics is the main driver behind the objective of power maximisation of states because every state has its own way of managing anarchy in realist-driven international power politics. All states have accepted the unavoidable forces of anarchy in the international system and their unstoppable pressures on the strategic mindsets of state governments. In other words, the permanent forces of anarchy in the international system push the state governments toward possessing sufficient defence resources against their rival nations. The anarchical structure of the international system

⁵ Lawrence Freedman, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* (New York: St. Martin's, 1981), 180.

compels states to remain highly cautious about the unexpected behaviours of their rivals, which could create unimaginable uncertainty in the international system. The theoretical attributes of world politics generally call the states with power maximisation tendencies as the rational actors in the international system, which could be understood with the help of structural realism. The structural forces of the international system make states uncertain about the behaviours of other states while keeping in mind the permanent presence of conflict and competition in world politics. The combination of conflict and competition results from the anarchical nature of the international system and its unstoppable influence on the states. Both attributes of realism mainly shape the behaviours of the states and compel their leaders to act in a particular direction by adopting specific policies. The structural forces of the international system also push the state governments to redefine their strategic interests and keep revising or updating their foreign policies against constantly changing strategic features of the international system.

Thus, structural realism (commonly known as neorealism) is an appropriate theoretical dimension to conceptually comprehend the main argument of this study, which deals with India's increasing reliance on an exceptional growth of its defence budget. Persistent growth of New Delhi's defence expenditures is a response to Indian perceived threats from the territorially adjoining nations. The structural dimension of realism has departed the realism theory from its classical domain and highlighted the role of structural forces in the world, making states take specific decisions in specific directions. The neorealist thoughts describe the state behaviours as the reaction to the anarchical structure of international and the irresistible influences of this uncertain structure on the state governments are the unquestionable realities of the world. The offensive patterns of structural realism, defined by John Mearsheimer, explain the aggressive nature of states as a response to the uncertain pressures of an anarchical international system in which states try to achieve their primary goals. These goals belong to the survival of the states because the ultimate aim of the state in the international system is to secure its survival. This mindset demands that states formulate effective defensive strategies for enhancing their survival parallel to diminishing the role of their competitors in the world.

Mearsheimer's arguments emphasised the role of power in world politics and the unstoppable impacts of an inevitable power competition on the strategic posturing of states in different regions. In Mearsheimer's world, the states are the power-maximising entities in the

international system because the leaders of the states always think about the relative distributions of power across the globe. When the mainstream security planners of states try to increase their security by building their military and increasing their economy, other states feel insecure, and the governments of other states prefer to match their defence capabilities with other nations while emphasising the objective of obtaining a hegemon status in world politics. This development increases tensions between states and pushes the leaders of states to invest their full potential in keeping the global power balance in their favour. This scenario emerges from international power politics, whereas regional politics follow a similar trend in different regions due to the regional hegemonic ambitions of the states in their respective regions. The state aspirants of regional hegemony ultimately try to become influential actors in global politics while believing that the anarchical nature of the international system shapes the offensive behaviours of states, which are generally called by the strategic circles of the international community aggressive behaviours. The offensive traits of structural realism are mainly defined in Mearsheimer's academic account, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. The book formulates a comprehensive account of offensive realism depending upon the main features of realism consisting of anarchy and its permanent presence in the international system. The defensive capabilities of the states having offensive orientations, the undeniable presence of uncertainty in the world, states' goals of survival in the international system, and the element of rationality in the strategic mindsets of states located in different regions mainly shaped the power-maximising ambitions of states. The applications of these views of Mearsheimer on the contemporary international system proved that the states are the rational actors in the international system, and the governments of states always think about the relative distribution of power across the globe. The power-centric calculations of the states develop a complex security environment of global power politics and its undeniable connections with the conflicted politics of different regions.

An appropriate reflection of this scenario can be assessed in the case of South Asia, where India-Pakistan enduring rivalry has intensified the regional security environment of the nuclearised subcontinent. Indian desire to maximise the power of New Delhi initially was inherited in the regional hegemonic ambition in the South Asian region due to the strategic vulnerabilities of India against China. New Delhi always tried to invest its economic resources in the Indian mainstream defence industry against Pakistan while having a defensive position against China in the broader Asian power balance. America's increasing geo-economic interests in the Asian region led

Washington to recognise India as a close strategic partner against China. This factor altered the conventional designs of New Delhi's strategic calculations by providing leading Indian defence planners with multileveled strategic incentives to overcome its asymmetric strategic balance against neighbouring China. American strategic support to India has let the Indian government depart from its defensive approach against China because the growing defence industry of India started to surpass the Chinese defence preparedness. This scenario could more appropriately be understood with the help of ongoing geo-economic competition between New Delhi and Beijing. Chinese signing multifaceted trading cooperation with Pakistan further augmented Indian worries and convinced the New Delhi-based defence planners to counter Pakistan and China with the support of its persistently modernising defence industry. In this way, contemporary Indian defence preparedness has adopted an offensive approach against Pakistan and China while having a greater strategic reliance on American supplies. The Indian power-maximising behaviour is primarily inherited in certain Indian objectives such as border security, ensuring economic growth, and maintaining stability in the broader Asian region.

Anarchy defines the ordering principles of the international system and then forces states to remain cautious about the distribution of power in the world, parallel to having an accurate relative distribution of power in the world. The pursuit of maximising power against other states mainly shapes the offensive behaviours of state governments and convinces the leaders of their governments to protect their sources of power against others. In this way, the Indian government always remained cautious about the presence of other states in the South Asian region while paying substantial attention to the principles of the relative distribution of power. To avert the emerging threats from its territorially adjoining nations, the Indian mainstream leadership under different political administrations always preferred to contain and sustain regionally hegemonic status while undermining the positions of other regional states in the region. The objective of dominating the regional politics of South Asia has dictated the Indian leaders to acquire maximum defence resources against other states by acquiring multileveled counterbalancing potentials in the territorial and maritime domains. In the debate of states in the quest to obtain counterbalancing potentials, the status of Pakistan in South Asian regional politics cannot be overlooked. The objective of downgrading Pakistan's role in South Asian regional politics has convinced New Delhi to adopt modern warfare technologies to empower its regular armed forces. The acquisition of modern warfare technologies is directly linked to India's military budget and its efforts to

allocate maximum financial resources to military budgets. The allocation of more resources for defence spending has been revolutionised in the Modi administration because the arrival of Narendra Modi in Indian politics has introduced various dramatic changes in New Delhi's mainstream defence policies. An altered version of India's defence planning under Modi has shown New Delhi's renewed determination to empower the role of Indian armed forces in the region with the support of heavy defence spending.

Applying the **international relations theory** of hardcore realism, neo or **Structural Realism** (Kenneth Waltz) propagating the role of power politics in International Relations, which sees competition and conflict as enduring features, the study uncovers hegemonic and offensive designs of Modi reflected through increased defence spendings for a "Force Modernization" (Power Politics), developing the linkages of India's expanding defence resources with South Asian Regional Strategic Stability (competition and conflict as enduring feature / Power Politics), suggesting appropriate way-forward for empowering the notion of strategic stability between two archrivals in the nuclearised subcontinent.

Research Methodology

This qualitative research concerns the inseparable connection between India's increasing defence spending and South Asian regional strategic stability. The qualitative nature restricted this study to the stated research questions while adopting a combination of descriptive and analytical research methods. The application of both research methods has proved, in this research, an interconnection between New Delhi's growing military defence spending and the notion of South Asian regional strategic stability. The pursuit of conducting this research on an impartial and rational basis has focused on the involvement of both sources of data, primary and secondary. The secondary resources used in this research consist of various opinion articles, academic books, research papers, and different monographs concerning the ongoing patterns of New Delhi-Islamabad strategic competition under a strict security dilemma. In order to maintain a balance between both data sources, access to various online sources, including official websites of different government departments and ministries, policy statements of various politicians, and available online policy documents of the India-Pakistan governments, are considered the primary sources.

Significance of Study

The research tried to explain an undeniable relationship between Indian increasing defense spending and its impacts on the degrading South Asian regional strategic stability under the nuclear shadows. While explaining the growing military expenditures of New Delhi and the determination of the Modi government to turn the dreams of Indian regional hegemonic status into reality, the main argument of this research attempted to study the degrading regional security environment of South Asia in which the strategic competition between New Delhi and Islamabad is persistently intensifying an unending arms race in the region. Thus, the findings of this research could be appropriate feedback to the people involved in strategic decision-making circles of India and Pakistan. For academic circles of international intellectual communities, this research could be treated as a fresh outlook on South Asian nuclear politics and its relevance to the deteriorating regional security environment, thereby providing adequate input for the formulation of different strategies and policies aimed at supporting peace, stability, and security in the broader South Asian region.

Delimitations

Many actors are fracturing the notion of strategic stability in the South Asian region; this study focused on the India-Pakistan nuclear rivalry, one of the most important points of international power politics. In the discussion of persistently damaging the values of strategic stability between New Delhi and Islamabad, this research emphasised increasing Indian defence spending and the constantly growing focus of New Delhi on the modernisation of its regular armed forces. An exclusive focus on New Delhi's increasing reliance on the allocation of massive financial resources to the military budget and specific emphasis on the modernisation of Indian regular armed forces is the main theme of this research, which is linked to the increasing Indian defence budget mainly. Thus, a specific focus on the Modi administration tried to keep the main analytical portion of this research to a specific era of Indian politics, which started with the arrival of Modi in Indian politics as prime minister. Moreover, this research remained restricted to the dramatically increasing Indian defence spending and its exclusive focus on modernising the Indian Armed Forces. The study also underscores the key focus on the impact of increased defence

spending on South Asian regional stability concerning ongoing nuclear politics between India and Pakistan. With the help of these delimitations, this research could be treated as an updated picture of India-Pakistan nuclear hostility in which India had adopted an offensive policy, whereas Pakistan has decided to remain defensive. This research attempted to prove the Modi government's determination to keep the whole regional politics under Indian dominance by stretching its strategic muscles over South Asia's territorial and maritime affairs. The focus on Modi's way of managing the Indian defence budget and keeping the modernised role of Indian armed forces against Pakistan, thereby affecting the strategic stability of South Asia, has legitimated the core argument of this research.

Organisational Structure

While considering the principal research questions and stated objectives, the central part of this research is divided into the following four chapters. In addition to preparing the introduction and conclusion of this research, the central part of this research is divided into the following four chapters, where every chapter focuses on a separate theme of the study. Every chapter also discussed various arguments aligned with the stated main objectives and certain mentioned research questions.

The first chapter of the thesis underlines the increasing defence spending of New Delhi under the Modi Era. The main theme of this chapter revolves around the different attributes of the Indian defence industry and its unprecedented growth with the support of sufficient budgetary resources. This portion of the research attempts to maintain an account of several patterns of growing Indian defence spending at domestic and international levels. While analysing the role of increasing defence spending in India, this part of the research tried to legitimate an inseparable connection between the Modi government and the rapidly swelling Indian defence industry.

The second chapter of the study revolves around Modi's designs of Force Modernization and the shaping of India's defense budget for its Armed Forces against potential security threats. This portion of the research endeavoured to maintain an account of increasing defence expenditures leading to rapid modernisation and swift transformations of Indian military postures under Modi.

The third chapter focuses on the linkages of India's expanding defense resources with the regional strategic stability of South Asia in the Indo-Pakistan context. This chapter underlined the increasing defence spending of New Delhi and impartially marked it as the responsible factor in undermining the role of stabilising forces in the complicated nuclear politics between two archrivals in South Asia.

The fourth chapter exclusively emphasises the way forward to empower the role of stabilising forces for improving the notion of Strategic Stability in the nuclearised South Asian Region in the Indo-Pakistan context. This final stage of the research led the whole debate towards a concluding dimension and tried to summarise the whole debate of the study on constructive lines. The main focus of this chapter is on the role of several actors in the India-Pakistan strategic competition for supporting the notion of strategic stability instead of various actors responsible for damaging the strategic matrix between New Delhi and Islamabad. This section endeavoured to provide a conceptually well-defined and practically well-applicable way forward to energise the concept of strategic stability between India and Pakistan in the South Asian region in a positive direction.

CHAPTER ONE

Nature of Indian Defence Budget in the Nuclearized South Asian Region under Modi's Era

1.1 The Evolution of New Delhi's Defence Spending

The enduring rivalry between New Delhi and Islamabad has become a permanent feature of South Asian nuclear politics under the nuclear shadows. The hostile relations between both neighbouring states started from the partition of the subcontinent when the British colonial forces left the subcontinent by declaring India as an independent state and Pakistan a newly created Muslim state. The partition ended the colonial rule from the subcontinent and started an unending rivalry between India and Pakistan. The persistent evolution of this rivalry throughout history shaped different defence postures of both contestants and compelled the governments of both states to empower their defence capabilities against each other. The quest for strengthening their position against each other in regional politics led both states' governments towards several weapon modernisation trends. In the debate of evolving India-Pakistan competition cemented in contrast strategic behaviour, it can easily be maintained that the Indian government always remained the primary actor in introducing different weapon trends in its home region without calculating its impacts on other nations. The weapon modernising interests of New Delhi are directly linked with the Indian defence budget and the objective of allocating maximum budgetary resources to its domestic defence industry. The financial support to the Indian weapon industry has made New Delhi a trendsetter in the South Asian region, where the intense security environment of the region is already a major hurdle in ensuring the values of peace and stability.⁶ The Indian government is highly determined to empower its conventional defence mechanism against potential threats. The potential threats of New Delhi consist of the position of China and Pakistan in the broader Asian power balance. In contrast to the Chinese position in Asian power politics, the status of Pakistan is slightly different as Pakistan has more significance in the South Asian region.

⁶ Sumantra Bose, *Kashmir at the Crossroads: Inside a 21st-Century Conflict* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2021), 118.

The territorial border of both states with India serves as a common point that has provided a hostile realisation to New Delhi.⁷

Indian decision-making government circles have always treated the regional positions of China and Pakistan as a potential threat to the strategic aspirations of their country. The strategic aspirations of New Delhi have instructed the Indian leaders to uphold the position of their country in regional and international affairs. The efforts to become an influential actor in regional and extra-regional affairs have become a primary goal of Indian strategic thinking, which facilitates New Delhi to stretch its strategic muscles on the territorial and maritime affairs of its South Asia.⁸ In other words, Indian strategic thinking is very much linked with the territorially adjoining nations where the mainstream political leaderships have adopted anti-Indian positions. Indian decision-makers strongly believe that the positions of China and Pakistan are serious threats to Indian strategic objectives. New Delhi's consideration of China and Pakistan as potential rivals of India is primarily inherited from its vision of becoming an influential actor worldwide. According to the neo-realist explanations of the international system, the status of India can easily be examined with the help of neo-realist explanations of the international system. The neorealist explanations emphasise the international system's structural forces in shaping states' behaviours in world politics as rational actors.⁹ The structural compulsions of the international anarchical system compelled New Delhi to respond to China's increasing reliance on the modern weapon system. These weapon developments threaten the Indian position in the broader Asian power balance, in which New Delhi has always tried to become an influential player. The objective of becoming a strong state against China has pushed Indian leaders towards a policy of massive weaponisation to counter Chinese influence in the South and Southeast Asian regions. In both sub-regions of the Asian continent, Chinese and Indian contesting behaviours leave direct impacts on the position of Pakistan in its home region. New Delhi's policy of attaining substantial strategic potential for containing threats of China leaves worse impacts on Islamabad's strategic calculations.¹⁰ This scenario undeniably complicates the regional security environment of the nuclearised subcontinent.

⁷ Sreeram Chaulia, *Crunch Time: Narendra Modi's National Security Crises* (Haryana: Harper Collins, 2022), 128-129.

⁸ Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, "Modi's Approach to China and Pakistan," *European Council on Foreign Relations*, https://ecfr.eu/special/what_does_india_think/analysis/modis_approach_to_india_and_pakistan

⁹ Prasanta Sahoo, "Narendra Modi's Anti-Terrorism Strategy and India's Islamic Neighbors," *World Affairs* 01, Vol. 21 (January – March 2017), 123.

¹⁰ Rohit Srivastava, "A National Security Strategy," *World Affairs* 04, Vol. 23 (October – December), 97-99.

In this way, the central theme of this chapter revolves around the nature of the Indian increasing defence budget. New Delhi-based strategic community's decision to allocate adequate budgetary resources to its regular armed forces under different political administrations generally, and Modi's administration mainly, is the main focus of this chapter.

1.2 Genesis of India Defense Budget

The negative considerations of India about Chinese and Pakistan's growing strategic capabilities and emerging bilateral collaborations between both states have instructed Indian leaders to emphasise their strategic capabilities. The mainstream policymakers of India believe that formulating a robust defence system will enable India to project its position in its home region. The projection of national interests in the home regions has been identified by the leading policy circles from New Delhi as the viable option for addressing the potential threats emerging from neighbouring nations.¹¹ The persistent growth of these threats has compelled Indian leaders under different political administrations to uphold the national vision of security and defence. This factor has raised the indigenous defence industry in India and focused on integrating the domestic weapon industry with external supplies. The quest for keeping its domestic defence industry updated and advanced has led Indian state officials to develop various bilateral strategic partnerships with different states. The main patterns of New Delhi's foreign relations always focused on cultivating strategic collaborations with the states with modern weapon systems. They adopted a policy of creating multileveled strategic alignments across the globe.¹² The leading policy circles of government decided to focus state authorities on modernising the weapon system by allocating various budgetary resources.

In the debate of increasing Indian reliance on modern warfare technologies and their appropriate application in security and defence, the role of the Indian increasing defence budget cannot be marginalised. The persistently growing defence budget of New Delhi is actually dependent on its constantly changing threat perception cemented in classical maxims of strategic thinking. The dependency on the defence budget has witnessed various phases of qualitative and

¹¹ Bharat Karnard, "India's Strategic Dilemma," *European Council on Foreign Relations*, https://ecfr.eu/special/what_does_india_think/analysis/indias_strategic_diffidence

¹² Prakash Menon, *The Strategy Trap: India and Pakistan under the Nuclear Shadows* (New Delhi: Wisdom Tree, 2015), 115.

quantitative improvements, which diversify various weapon systems. The increasing role of the defence industry in domestic developments, with the help of appropriate financial support from the government, has remained a central point of every government in India.¹³ In other words, it can be said that the change of government brings qualitative or quantitative developments in the Indian force structure.

The regional security compulsions demand that New Delhi not compromise on its defence budget under any political administration. The increasing defence budget is primarily linked with the changing regional security environment of South Asia, where the presence of great powers has become an essential feature of regional politics. The evolving regional political order of South Asia's nuclearised politics is presently witnessing China's increasing role in the nuclearised region. China's increasing role in South Asian regional politics is based on Pakistan, which provides Beijing with a favourable environment for intervening in South Asia. The multidimensional cooperative ties between Beijing and Islamabad are a significant development for New Delhi, where the government has accepted both China and Pakistan as potential security threats. The increasing cooperative ties between both states augment New Delhi's hostile policies regarding both territorially adjoining nations, China and Pakistan. The increasing economic collaboration between China and Pakistan and China's increasing role in the South and Southeast Asian regions fundamentally demand that India strengthen its defence capabilities to address the security challenges emerging from both regions.¹⁴ The security demands provide Indian defence planners with an appropriate reason for increasing defence spending at the national level. Without calculating the impacts of its dramatically growing defence capabilities in qualitative and quantitative terms on the South Asian regional nuclear order, the Indian strategic community is strong-minded in diversifying its mainstream security system with the support of appropriate financial and political support.

1.3 Nuclearisation of Indian Defence Budget

The major change in Indian domestic politics occurred when government officials started taking an interest in defence matters and encouraged the Indira government to announce the

¹³ Masood ur Rehman Khattak, "Indian Military Modernization: Implications for Pakistan," *Strategic Studies* 01, Vol. 39 (Spring 2019), 22.

¹⁴ Mahwish Hafeez, "The Anatomy of the Modi Phenomenon – How Should Pakistan Deal with it?" *Strategic Studies* 04, Vol. 35 (Winter 2015), 110.

nuclear capabilities of India in the international system.¹⁵ The nuclear tests with the coded name "Smiling Buddha" by the Indira government significantly impacted New Delhi's defence expenditures. The Indira government justified the increase in military expenditures with the logic of essential security needs. The defence budget was increased with the rise of defence priorities, which were a combination of security and prestige. The conceptual logics of security and prestige were the key logics behind Smiling Buddha, and both logics tried to serve the Indian government in the post-1974 scenario. The nuclear tests added another chapter in the history of the subcontinent, where Pakistan and China were deeply concerned with the position of India in the regional security apparatus. The next phase of "Smiling Buddha" was started in 1998 when the nature of the nuclear program changed and the Vajpayee government conducted nuclear explosions. The detonation of nuclear devices in May 1998 was a strategic move of the Vajpayee government because Prime Minister Vajpayee averted international pressures and conducted a nuclear test. The nuclear tests upgraded the role of Indian armed forces in the Indian defence system against China and Pakistan.¹⁶

The nuclear choice of India was linked with China, as the formal sources from New Delhi described in various official documents. Vajpayee's government was convinced of the need to make the Indian defence industry self-reliant in its defence matters. It allocated a major portion of the state budget to the nuclear program. The budget for the nuclear efforts was inherited to modernise the weapon system with the support of a high-level culture of research and development in the nuclear dimension. In response to the inevitable structural pressures of the international system, state authorities of different nations take every possible measure, including the possession of nuclear weapons, to defend their sovereign positions in the world.¹⁷ The case of India is an appropriate study in this regard because New Delhi-based decision-makers changed their strategic calculations in reaction to China's advancement in weapon systems. This defensive move of New Delhi leaves offensive impacts on Islamabad's position in its home region and compels Pakistani state authorities to take possible defensive measures against India's increasing reliance on military modernisation.

¹⁵ Kanti Bajpai, "Modi's China Policy and the Road to Confrontation," *Pacific Affairs* 02, Vol. 91 (June 2018), 246-247.

¹⁶ Richard Writz, "Promoting U.S.-India Defence Cooperation: Opportunities and Hurdles," *Strategic Studies Institute* (2017), 12-14.

¹⁷ Yogesh Joshi, "Between Concern and Opportunity: US Pivot to Asia and Foreign Policy Debate in India," *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs* 03, Vol. 02 (December 2015), 315-316.

The modernisation of the weapon system and their adequate integration into the doctrinal attributes of India showed that the Indian government is persistent in bringing numerous changes to strengthen its defence system. This factor gained significant attention from the international strategic community. It forced the academic and political authorities of different nations to study the nature of India's increasing defence budget under the nuclear shadows. The arrival of nuclear weapons in South Asian regional politics has changed the nature of the India-Pakistan conflict. Establishing deterrence between rival neighbours has made the war scenarios less relevant to the South Asian region.¹⁸ In the attention the international strategic community, in the post-1998 attention, has attempted to address the nature of deterrence between India and Pakistan in the presence of their multiplying contesting points. The debates on the changing nature of the India-Pakistan conflict after overt nuclearisation mainly focused on the effects of nuclear deterrence on South Asian security. Such academic debates highlighted the position of different authors on the stabilising effects of nuclear weapons, a complex regional security apparatus. In this way, the question of strategic stability has been recognised as one of the leading discussions by different scholars due to the deteriorating status of the regional security environment. The central theme of this study also tried to verify the role of nuclear deterrence in stabilising the regional political order of the South Asian region, where India's increasing emphasis on weapon modernisation has been identified as the key factor in damaging the regional strategic matrix between India and Pakistan.¹⁹ International strategic circles have recognised the increasing defence budget as the primary force leaving impacts on the regional security environment, parallel to intensifying the conflicting points of India and Pakistan.

1.4 Contemporary Indian Defence Budget – Modi's Era

Before highlighting the impacts of India's increasing military spending on India's modernisation, it is essential to review the contemporary trends of the Indian defence budget under the Modi administration. The object of increasing the defence budget is to keep aligning New

¹⁸ Bharat Karnad, "Modi's Visit to America: Springing India from a Trap, or into One," *Security Wise*, June 18, 2023, <https://bharatkarnad.com/category/indias-strategic-thinking-and-policy/>

¹⁹ Abhijanrej and Rahul Sagar, "The BJP and Indian Grand Strategy," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, April 04, 2018, April 04, 2019, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2019/04/04/bjp-and-indian-grand-strategy-pub-78686>

Delhi's determination and emphasise maintaining a high level of operational capabilities of the Indian Armed Forces. The upgradation in the Operational Preparedness of the Defence Services against the potential challenges and future contingencies with the help of Non-Salary Revenue allocation of Rs. 27,570 Crore for 2023-2024. This budget is designed to improve the "Weapon Systems, Platforms including Ships/Aircrafts & their logistics; boost fleet serviceability; emergency procurement of critical ammunition and spares; procuring/hiring of niche capabilities to mitigate capability gaps wherever required; progress stocking of military reserves, strengthening forward defences, amongst others".²⁰ The Government of India, under the leadership of Modi, increased the operational allotments of the budget during a governmental-level process of Mid-Term review and jumped the budget with 42% more allocation.²¹ This increase in the Revised Estimates of 2022-2023 is as per the increasing security demands of the state surrounded by hostile neighbours, as claimed by official sources of New Delhi. Thus, the increased budget is outlined to cater for the needs of technical training of the Indian Defence Forces. The share of Capital Allocations for the modernisation and improvement of mainstream infrastructural development of the Defence Services allocated Rs. 1,62,600 Crore for 2022-2023, which was Rs. 59,200 Crore in 2019-2020.²² The increasing share of military expenditures showed the determination of New Delhi under Modi's leadership to bring modernisation and infrastructural development to the country's Defence Services. Moreover, the funds increased by 43% to boost the infrastructure of borders and develop them strategically important while increasing the border connectivity through tunnels such as Sela Tunnel, Nechipu Tunnel, and Sela-Chhabrela Tunnel. With an increase of 43%, the amount of Rs. 5,000 Crore has been allocated for the fiscal year 2023-2024, which was Rs. 3,500 Crore in 2023-2023 under the Capital Budget of Border Roads Organization (BRO).²³ In the quest for improving the performance in production capabilities of DRDO, the budget has been enhanced by 9% for the fiscal year 2023-2024 with the allocation of Rs. 23,264 Crore.²⁴ The aim of boosting the role of public-private partnership led the Modi government to allocate a total of Rs. 116 Crore to Innovation for Defence Excellence (iDEX) and increased their budget as compared to

²⁰ Manoj Kumar, "India Rises Defence Budget to \$ 72.6 bln Amid Tensions with China," *Reuters*, February 01, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/india/india-raises-defence-budget-726-bln-amid-tensions-with-china-2023-02-01/>

²¹ Ibid.

²² Karl Dewey, "Personnel VS. Capital: The Indian Defence Budget," *Military Balance Blog – IISS*, April 14, 2023, <https://www.iiss.org/en/online-analysis/military-balance/2023/04/indian-defence-budget/>

²³ Anil Ahuja and Arun Sahgal, "India's Defence Budget: Beyond the Numbers," *Delhi Policy Group*, February 10, 2021, <https://www.delhipolicygroup.org/publication/policy-briefs/indias-defence-budget-beyond-the-numbers.html>

²⁴ Ibid.

previous year budget 2022-2023. This economic incentive is outlined in the annual budget to support the Ministry of Defence's determination to provide sufficient financial incentives to the bright minds of youth across Indian society. These reforms are announced in the Union Budget of 2023-24, which became a public document supporting the countrywide research and development culture.²⁵ The Union Budget 2023-2024 introduced a new initiative titled National Data Governance Policy to support innovative ideas from different start-ups and leading circles of academia. It aims to boost the iDEX scheme and the start-ups related to Defence Production. Figure 01 shows other allocations of the Indian defence budget 2023-24

Other Budget Allocations



Figure - 01

Source: Indian Aerospace and Defence Bulletin

Based on these figures, a glimpse of the Indian defence budget has validated that the budgetary reforms under Modi have once again revised the allocation of financial resources to the defence industry while raising it by 13% in the fiscal year 2023-2024.²⁶ The Indian government under Modi has continued the policy of increasing military spending, which has been constantly increasing for the last ten years. A decade analysis of Indian defence spending shows a substantial increase starting from the year 2013 when it was 2845.97 billion in Indian currency, which has reached now at 5935.38 billion in 2023-2024 with an increase of approximately 108% in the last

²⁵ Satish Kumar, *India's National Security: Annual Review 2015-16* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 110-112.

²⁶ Briony Harris, "These Countries Spend the Most on Defence," *World Economic Forum*, May 04, 2018, https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/05/india-worlds-biggest-defence-military-spender/?DAG=3&gclid=EAIaIQobChMI9fOa8ZDd_wIVEQCLCh1wegK4EAMYASAAEgJFWfD_BwE

ten years.²⁷ These analyses are mentioned in a report of Islamabad-based independent research organisation Institute of Strategic Studies (ISSI), which was published in February 2023. The recently published report of ISSI *Indian Defence Budget 2023-2024: An Assessment* mentioned various fascinating sets of information consisting of several statistics and shreds of evidence.²⁸ The budget released in February 2023 has augmented the existing levels of the Indian defence budget with a rise of 13% as compared to the previous year.²⁹ There are several other reports of various independent institutions of different states validating that the military spending of New Delhi is substantially increasing and making significant progress in the strategic domain. Analysis of Indian defence spending shown in graph 01 clearly indicates a substantial increase under the Modi era starting from the year 2014 when it was 49 billion US dollars, which has reached now at 73 billion US dollars in 2023-2024 with an increase of approximately 25 billion US dollars in last 09 years of contemporary Modi administrations.

Indian Defence Budget Under Modi Era

(Period 2013-14 - 2023)

Graph showing decade analysis of Indian defence spending - Increased from 2845.97 billion in 2013-2014 reached 5935.38 billion in 2023 - An increase of approximately 108% in the last ten years.

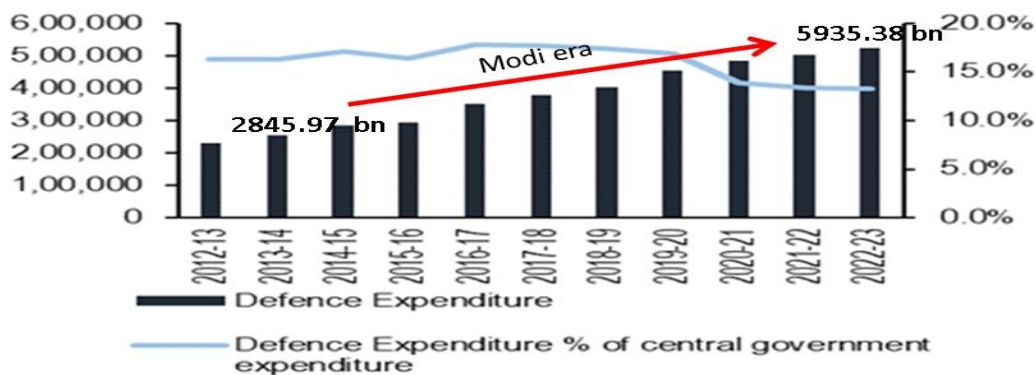


Figure -02

Source: Union Budget documents; PRS.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Mustafa, op, cit.

²⁹ Ibid.

A comparison of defence spending under the Modi era with the last 40 years before Modi's era in Figure 03 clearly shows that the budget increased from 7 billion US dollars in 1974 to 47 billion US dollars in 2013, with an increase of 40 billion US dollars in 40 years. Whereas under the Modi era of just 09 years, the budget increased from 49 billion US dollars in 2014 to 73 billion US dollars, with an increase of 25 billion US dollars in 09 years. This figure showed the increase in the Indian defence budget because Modi arrived in Indian politics as the fourteenth Prime Minister of India.

Comparison of Indian Defence Budget (Period 1974-2023)

The graph below shows the comparative analysis of Indian defence spending in the last 40 years (1974-2014) with a decade analysis of the Modi government (2013-2023). The figures in the graph show that the increase in the last 40 years was 42 billion dollars, whereas the period of 1913-2023 witnessed 25 billion dollars with certain qualitative improvements.

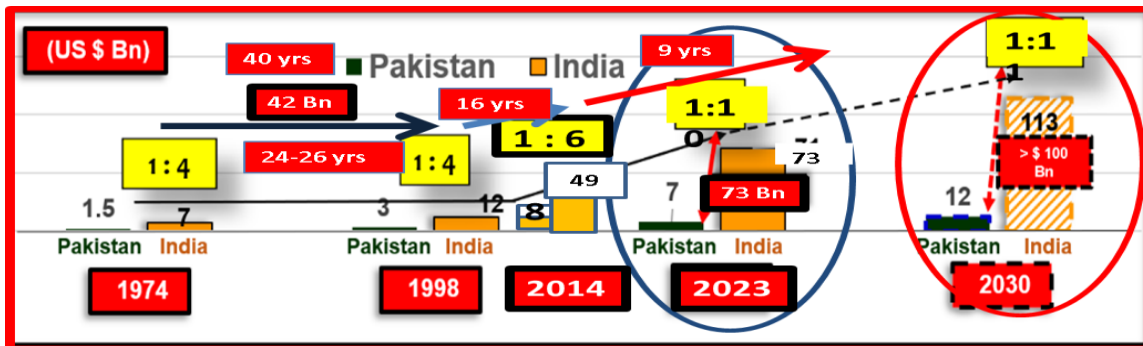


Figure - 03

Source: A-story-told-by-defence-spending-of-india-pakistan-and-china-over-the-decades.

1.5 Indian Defence and Modi's Reforms

The arrival of Narendra Modi in Indian politics as the fourteenth Prime Minister of India changed the main course of Indian domestic politics and introduced various revolutionary measures in different departments, including defence. The change of leadership in New Delhi altered the nature of the Indian defence system by introducing various structural reforms parallel to revising the statistical calculations of the Indian defence budget. The trend of the defence budget under Modi's leadership witnessed an increase with a specific focus of the government on the

modernisation and enhancement of New Delhi's defence capabilities.³⁰ The Modi government's ultranationalist ideology rooted in the nature of its party Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s ideology fundamentally convinced the Indian government under Modi's leadership to meet the nation's strategic objectives by taking various revolutionary measures. In the field of security and defence, substantial efforts have been made by the Modi government to increase the defence spending of the country by allocating sufficient funds to the formal armed forces of the country. The efforts are made under different national-level programs for acquiring new military equipment and improving domestic defence capabilities with the support of modern technologies. This factor expanded the areas of defence procurement for improving the indigenous manufacturing of armed devices and advanced weapon systems. Modi has introduced various initiatives with adequate government support to encourage the nation to contribute to the mainstream security planning of the government.³¹ A countrywide culture of research and development to increase the engagement of the scientific community in the defence procurement industry has become a prime objective of BJP's regime. The government has actively integrated the supporting role of the Ministry of Finance and Defence in shaping the future for a militarily strong India capable of addressing future challenges. Numerous policy reforms under different legislative circles of the Modi government in various Departments and Ministries have supported the DRDO and enabled this forum of the scientific community to serve the nation. An exclusive focus of Modi's government has remained on the integration of the defence procurement infrastructure of the country with innovative technologies. The DRDO has been empowered for this purpose, and its governing bodies are economically authorised to take various initiatives for bringing innovative technologies into the defence field.³² The detail of the major initiatives of the Modi government is given in the next chapter, which will try to provide a comprehensive summary of the Indian defence budget under the Modi government for meeting the essential security demands of the country. It will emphasise the bilateral and multilateral strategic support from other nations to the Indian defence indigenous industry.

³⁰ Siddharth Kaushik, "Jawaharlal Nehru and Narendra Modi," *World Affairs* 03, Vol. 25 (July – September), 68.

³¹ Khurshid Khan and Pervaiz Iqbal Cheem, "Modi's Kashmir Policy: The Probable Consequences for the Security of South Asia," *Strategic Studies* 03, Vol. 37 (Autumn 2017), 08-09.

³² Muhammad Mujeeb Afzal, "Pakistan-India Defense Spending – A Comparison," *Hilal*, <https://www.hilal.gov.pk/eng-article/detail/NTY0.html>

1.6 Rational Behind Reformed Defence Spending

The decision of the Modi government to increase the defence spending of India and uphold the role of the indigenous defence industry is due to various factors like the evolving strategic considerations of New Delhi, the changing geopolitical features of the international system, the altering designs of regional power politics, and the contemporary transition in the global power structure in which the unipolar dimensions of world politics have been challenged. Indian leaders under Modi's leadership have accepted the changing nature of regional politics of the nuclearised subcontinent and its ongoing reliance on great power politics. It has been accepted internationally that the regional political order of South Asia cannot be separated from the great power politics in which the South Asian strategic contestants always remained ambitious to gain the support of great powers against each other with the belief that the acquisition of extra-regional support will enable their respective governments to meet their strategic objectives.³³ In response to the changing patterns of global power politics and its undeniable impacts on the regional security environment of South Asia, Indian leaders under the Modi government have decided to meet the strategic aspirations of New Delhi. These strategic aspirations have compelled Indian leaders to cultivate cooperative ties with great power by formulating multileveled strategic partnerships with different nations across the globe. The formulation of cooperative ties with the outside world has enabled New Delhi to improve its domestic defence industry, parallel to getting the support of extra-regional power in the South Asian regional issue. The South Asian regional issues revolve around Pakistan's regional standing and the growing relations of Islamabad with Beijing, which is another contestant of India. The leading security architectures of India have preferred to strengthen the position of New Delhi against the emerging potential threats from the territorially adjoining nations. For this purpose, the mainstream defence planners of the Modi government have decided to obtain modern warfare technologies that could improve the traditional war-fighting capabilities of regular Indian armed forces.³⁴

Indian government under Modi preferred to introduce the weapon modernising trends in India's regular armed forces with the belief that the improvements in the war-fighting capabilities

³³ Smruti Pattanaik, "Assessing Modi Government's Foreign Policy," *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal* 03, Vol. 09 (July – September 2014), 218-220.

³⁴ Amrita Nayak Dutta, "Be Ready to Tackle New & Emerging Threats: Modi to Military Commanders, Tasks Stock," *The Indian Express*, April 02, 2023, <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/tackle-threats-modi-military-commanders-takes-stock-8532837/>

of New Delhi would let the Indian strategic thinkers achieve the core values of Indian strategic thinking. The aim of modernising military capabilities against potential security threats is only possible with the help of advanced information technology, parallel to diversifying the conventional patterns of Indian defence planning. It is widely believed in Indian policy circles that integrating new technologies with the regular military forces of India will improve their operational readiness while improving the efficiency of the armed forces against potential security threats.³⁵ The improved role of the Indian armed forces will let New Delhi overcome the vulnerabilities of its armed forces against potential security threats linked mainly with the border management mechanism of India. For this purpose, the Indian government has preferred to focus on advancing its conventional power in its domestic region. A recently published formal declassified document of the Ministry of Defence has cleared New Delhi's vision of force modernisation.³⁶

1.7 Concluding Analysis

The main debate in this chapter has tried to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Indian increasing defence budget, which is directly linked with the India-Pakistan unending hostility. Indian mainstream leadership is highly motivated to denounce the independent and sovereign status of Pakistan in its home region by taking various offensive measures. Akin to various other nations, the defence budget of India tries to meet the security demands of the country without ignoring the hardcore economic realities of the country. Formulating an annual defence budget always remained under unavoidable pressures of the country's economic conditions and the government's strategic preferences. The Government of India is keen on observing the changing patterns of South Asian regional and global power politics while keeping New Delhi's role in regional and international power politics active and influential. This factor has led the Indian mainstream defence planners always to remain cautious about the Indian defence system to meet the country's strategic aspirations, parallel to protecting the Indian nation from aggression by territorially adjoining nations. In other words, the New Delhi-based strategic community always

³⁵ Anil Sigdel, *India in the Era of China's Belt and Road Initiative: How Modi Responds to Xi* (London: Lexington Books, 2020), 110.

³⁶ "Transforming India: Leveraging an Ocean of Opportunities....Scaling New Heights....Expanding Horizons," *Ministry of Defence – Government of India*, July 2016, [Untitled-1 \(mod.gov.in\)](#)

remained concerned about the changing attributes of the international anarchical structure and its unavoidable pressures on Indian strategic priorities. The strategic community of New Delhi consistently followed the core strategic objective of the Indian nation under different political governments throughout the history of the post-partitioned subcontinent. From pre-Modi to the current era, the Indian government focused on providing adequate financial support to the indigenous defence industry. Thus, the main theme of this chapter focused on the evolution of the Indian defence budget and its changing attributes under Modi's Administration. The leading defence planners of India under different political administrations remained consistent with their objective of upholding the vision of Indian military modernisation with the help of sufficient economic resources. This chapter has provided a glimpse of the Indian defence budget generally and its nature under the Modi administration, in which New Delhi has diversified its mainstream weapon systems. The diversification of India's defence economy primarily consists of the development of the domestic weapon industry and the formulation of collaborative connections of the domestic weapon industry with the state of advanced weapon industries. In short, it is pertinent to mention here that the advancement of weapons systems aligns with the question of obtaining a modern weapon defence system, which has become a permanent attribute of Indian strategic thinking and a dominant factor in the Modi government qualitatively.

CHAPTER TWO

Modi's Designs of "Force Modernization" - Shaping of India's Defence Budget for its Armed Forces

2.1 Indian Defence Planning under the Modi Government

The contemporary defence planning of the Indian Government under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi is witnessing various unprecedented trends of weaponisation in which New Delhi has introduced various policy measures and programs. The main focus of New Delhi is on the allocation of appropriate budget to the Ministry of Defence because this Ministry is formally established to frame policy directions for the implementation of resources of the nation in an appropriate direction while communicating the status of the country's threat perception under evolving regional security environment.³⁷ The Ministry is engaged in receiving the allocated budget from the government and keeping updated the Services Headquarters, Inter-Service Organizations, Production Establishment and Research & Development Organization about the execution of various approved programs with the help of the allocated budget. The functions of the Ministry are divided into further departments such as the Department of Defence (DoD), Department of Military Affairs (DMA), Department of Defence Production (DDP), Department of Defence Research and Development (DDR&D), and Department of Ex-Servicemen Welfare (DESW). These principal departments are the primary recipients of government funding and are constantly busy taking dramatic measures to uphold the strategic vision of Prime Minister Modi. The strategic aspiration of the Indian nation under the Modi government has attached the Ministry of Defence with the Ministry of Finance because it is widely believed in India that Modi's ideas of reforming the mainstream defence infrastructure and its diversifications in the specific domains are crafting the strong future of the Indian nation.³⁸ The strong future of a nation is highly dependent on the effective role of Indian regular armed forces and their improved warfighting capabilities. The dimension of Indian armed forces demands the Ministry of Finance to keep the defence needs of the nation in its top priorities. The government authorities of the Finance Ministry are strictly

³⁷ Sandhya Jain, "Narendra Modi: Striving to be a Pillar in a Multipolar World," *World Affairs* 04, Vol. 18 (October-December 2014), 11.

³⁸ Manjeet Negi, "PM Modi's Strength in the Defence Sector! Power of 9," *India Today*, May 30, 2023, [PM Modi's strength in The Defence Sector! Power Of 9 - India Today](#)

attached to the Finance Division of the Defence Ministry. Moreover, the Defence Ministry communicates the demands of the increasing security environment of the region and their unavoidable impacts on New Delhi's strategic calculations.³⁹

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has altered the main course of Indian defence policy and revised the military spending of his country by taking various initiatives. The emphasis of the Modi government is on modernising and strengthening of the role of the military in defending the nation against foreign aggression, parallel to carrying its strategic ambitions for becoming a dominating actor in its home region.⁴⁰ Different authors, such as Harch V. Pant, have studied the prevalence of Modi's ideology in Indian politics. Pant has clearly articulated the dominating trends of Indian defence planning under Modi in his work published on the themes, doctrines, and structures of Indian defence.⁴¹ Akin to Pant, various authors from different regions have studied the shifts in Indian defence planning under Modi and New Delhi's altered way of managing its strategic engagement at the domestic and international levels. The government of Narendra Modi primarily showed its determination to meet the strategic interests of India by enhancing the role of the military in the regional affairs of Asia. The focus on the broader Asian power balancer generally and the South Asian sub-region was particularly the factor pushing the Modi government to continue increasing defence spending. Thus, the Indian government, under the leadership of the fourteenth Prime Minister, designed significant measures for allocating funds to the security and defence fields to empower regular armed forces through modern and state-of-the-art weapon Systems. In the debate of Modi's vision for increasing military spending, the role of New Delhi's foreign relations cannot be ignored because the exclusive focus of New Delhi on signing various security deals and defence trading agreements with other nations is a prime element supporting Modi's objective of keeping the defence system of his country efficient and robust.⁴² The growing strengths of New Delhi's strategic bilateral engagements provide a concise account of different states willing to support the Indian indigenous defence industry through different bilateral

³⁹ Nitin A Gokhale, *Securing India the Modi Way: Pathankot, Surgical Strikes and More* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017), 22.

⁴⁰ Ranjeet Kumar, "Where India Stands in World Arms Bazar As Defence Exports Reach All-Time High and \$100 BN Orders Likely in Next Decade," *ABP News*, April 09, 2023, [All-Time High Defence Exports 16000 Crore India Position World Arms Bazaar PM Narendra Modi Rajnath Singh MoD Indian Defence Sector \(abplive.com\)](https://www.abplive.com/news/where-india-stands-in-world-arms-bazar-as-defence-exports-reach-all-time-high-and-100-bn-orders-likely-in-next-decade-2023-04-09)

⁴¹ Harsh V. Pant, *The Routledge Handbook of Indian Defence Policy: Themes, Structures and Doctrines* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 08.

⁴² C. Raja Mohan, *Modi's World: Expanding India's Sphere of Influence* (Haryana: Harper Collins, 2015), 108.

agreements. The recent trends of strategic engagement with the advanced states across the globe have led India toward several models of multilateral strategic initiatives, mainly emerging from the Pacific Region, where China is a strategic contestant of India. Apart from the Southeast Asian region, the confrontational ties between Beijing and New Delhi have witnessed several conflicting developments in the South Asian region. Pakistan's decision to announce its nuclear weapon status in response to the Indian nuclear weapon program was a defensive move by introducing the concept of stability in the nuclearised region. New Delhi's nuclear program has been formally proclaimed by its security establishment as a defensive move against China without estimating its impacts on South Asian regional security.

In other words, the Indian decision to make its armed forces capable of defending the country with the support of nuclear weapon capabilities was a defensive move of New Delhi in broader terms. However, it inaugurated an unending arms race in the South Asian region and complicated the regional security environment in South Asia. Pakistan's decision to match its defence capabilities with India was an effort to stabilise the politics of the nuclearised subcontinent. The arrival of the nuclear race in the South Asian subcontinent, initiated by India and followed by Pakistan, placed the entire regional politics of the subcontinent under the debates of stability.⁴³ The possession of weapons by Pakistan was an attempt by Islamabad to keep regional politics balanced and stable; several factors proved to be active in undermining the scope of stability in the nuclearised subcontinent. The academic debates started in different parts of the world on the changing patterns of Indian defence spending to keep the strategic position of New Delhi strong enough to guard against potential challenges. The increasing defence budget has undergone various phases during the contemporary Modi administration. Modi government is highly ambitious to bring several weapon modernising techniques to the domestic defence industry. With the belief that weapon modernisation will enable New Delhi to defend its borders against external aggression, parallel to empowering the role of conventional armed forces in the broader Asian power balance, the Indian government is focusing on strengthening its overall preparedness of armed forces by providing them advanced training, infrastructural development, and hi-tech logistics termed as ‘ Force Modernization Plan’.⁴⁴ The objective was to attach New

⁴³ Ian Hall, *Modi and the Reinvention of Indian Foreign Policy* (Bristol: Bristol University Press, 2019), 128.

⁴⁴ Dost Muhammad Barrech and Arhama Siddiq, “Indian Military Modernization under the Modi Regime,” *BTTN Journal* 01, Vol. 01 (2022), 03-04.

Delhi with the advanced nations and let the defence planners of the country gain strategic benefits from the defence industry of the advanced nations. In this way, the domestic defence industry has been attached to advanced Military Industrial Complexes (MICs) of the world and allowed formal security advisors of the government to integrate the advanced weapon systems with the conventional armed forces of the country. Therefore, this chapter attempts to provide an overview of India's increasing defence spending under the Modi government and her goals of "Force Modernization". In this way, the central theme of this chapter revolves around the nature of India's increasing defence budget, intending to introduce various models of force modernisation in its mainstream defence system.

2.2 Shaping of Indian Defence Budget – Modi's Vision

The Indian Government terms budgetary reforms introduced during Modi's Administration in the defence sector as the strategic vision of Modi. The focus of the Modi government on defence production has enabled the Indian indigenous defence industry to manufacture modern military equipment for economic and strategic purposes. The combination of economic and strategic interests of New Delhi has preferred to use its indigenous defence industry as a source of strengthening foreign relations, parallel to placing India in the list of advanced nations.

The Indian government under Modi has continuously increased military spending for the last ten years. Analysis of Indian defence spending during Modi's Era clearly shows a substantial increase starting from the year 2013, when it was 2845.97 billion (Indian Currency), which has reached now at 5935.38 billion in 2023-2024, with an increase of approximately 108% in the last ten years.⁴⁵ The increasing military spending is consistently boosting the Indian domestic defence industry and ranking India fourth among the world's leading top five military spenders, according to the recent reports of the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). Figure 04 shows the top 15 Countries of the world with the highest military expenditure.

⁴⁵ Malik Qasim Mustafa, "Indian Defence Budget 2023-24: An Assessment," *ISSI Issue Brief*, February 23, 2023, [Issue Brief on "Indian Defence Budget 2023-24: An Assessment" | Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad \(issi.org.pk\)](https://www.issi.org.pk/issue-brief-on-indian-defence-budget-2023-24-an-assessment/)

Top 15 Countries Of The World With Highest Military Expenditure

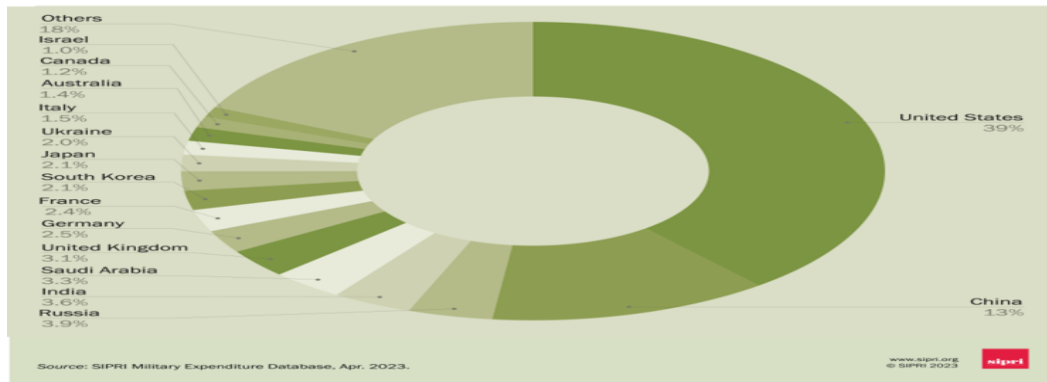


Figure -04

Source: SIPRI Military Expenditure Database, Apr 2023

The SIPRI report says that the Indian government has ranked at the top in the list of major arms importers of the world due to the rising demands of Indian formal security apparatus. The Indian government has retained this position from 2013 to 2022.⁴⁶ Figure 05 shows 10 top arms importers in the world

World 10 Top Arms Importers



Figure -05

Source: SIPRI ARMS Transfer Database, March 2023

⁴⁶ "States Invest in Nuclear Arsenals as Geopolitical Relations Deteriorate," *SIPRI*, June 12, 2023, [States invest in nuclear arsenals as geopolitical relations deteriorate—New SIPRI Yearbook out now | SIPRI](#)

According to the reports of SIPRI, the published data of various other independent institutions has confirmed that the Indian government is presently in a race of armed buildup with the aim of upgrading and modernising its conventional weapon system. The domestic weapon industry of India has already marked momentous progress in building advanced means of delivery systems comprising different missile systems such as hypersonic. In this way, all these steps of the Indian government to support the domestic defence industry through adequate financial support fundamentally originate from Modi's strategic vision. This vision has defined a path of achieving major steps in the domestic weapon industry to serve the greater strategic ambitions of New Delhi. A report by the Indian Research Institute has acknowledged the growing defence demands of the country and the efforts of the Indian government in achieving landmark steps in the defence sector.⁴⁷ The studies of leading Indian policy research institutions have also admitted that the Modi government has revised the mainstream security structure of the states and introduced various policy reforms to achieve Modi's strategic vision.

The annual budget outlines the economic incentives to support the Ministry of Defence's determination to provide sufficient financial incentives to the bright minds of youth across Indian society. These reforms are announced in the Union Budget of 2023-24, which became a public document supporting the countrywide research and development culture. The Union Budget 2023-2024 introduced a new initiative titled "National Data Governance Policy" to support innovative ideas from different start-ups and leading circles of academia. It aims to boost the iDEX scheme and the start-ups related to Defence Production. These budgetary reforms introduced the ideas of Modi in the defence sector, which the Indian Government terms as the strategic vision of Modi or "Force Modernization Plans".⁴⁸ The focus of the Modi government on defence production has enabled the Indian indigenous defence industry to manufacture modern military equipment for economic and strategic purposes. The combination of economic and strategic interests of New Delhi has preferred to use its indigenous defence industry as a source of strengthening foreign relations, parallel to placing India in the list of advanced nations.

⁴⁷ Gurmeet Kanwal and Neha Kohli (ed), *Defence Reforms: A National Imperative* (New Delhi: Institute of Defence Studies and Analysis, 2018), 28-29.

⁴⁸ Mrinal Suman, "Private Sector in Defence Production," *Indian Defence Review*, June 04, 2014, [Private Sector in Defence Production - Indian Defence Review](#)

2.3 Modi's Strategic Vision "Force Modernization Plan"

The vision of Modi for allocating appropriate economic resources to the defence industry is termed the "Force Modernization Plan".⁴⁹ It was initially introduced when Modi became the Prime Minister of India and presented his way of managing the defence industry formally. In his formal statements on various occasions, he made clear to the whole nation his strategic vision for restructuring and revising the defence policy of India and introduced different state-level platforms for the qualitative growth of the defence industry. The continuation of efforts in the proper direction initially highlighted the Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) status in the defence industry. Moreover, the role of DRDO was also refined through different policy reforms announced for the government's formal support to the country's mainstream defence industry. The improvement in the defence industry introduced several advanced technologies for the upgradation of regular armed forces. The policy of self-reliance was introduced and promoted by the Indian government in the post-1998 scenario and continued by the subsequent political administrations. The continuation of this policy under the Modi government has cleared the vision of placing the improvement in the defence system as the leading priority of the state. Prime Minister Modi stated in a public statement, "Goal of self-reliance in the Indian defence forces is very important for India for the 21st Century".⁵⁰ Akin to this statement, various other policy statements of Prime Minister Modi have been added to the formal website of the Indian Prime Minister to communicate the vision of the Indian Prime Minister to the Indian nation and the outside world. Modi's aim of liberalising the defence economy through more open policies has invited private companies to support the mission of the Indian government to increase defence production. A recently published report given to the Indian upper house of the parliament communicated to the government that the arrival of Modi in Indian politics has witnessed a substantial increase in defence production and export. It is mentioned in the data provided to the government's legislative circles that the country's defence export has risen and recorded 700 % in the last two years.⁵¹

⁴⁹ N. C. Bipindra, "Rigid Rules Trip Modi's \$ 250 Billion Plan to Modernise India's Defence," *The Economic Times*, July 13, 2018, [China: Rigid rules trip Modi's \\$250 billion plan to modernise India's defence - The Economic Times \(indiatimes.com\)](https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/News/International/China/Rigid-rules-trip-Modi-s-250-billion-plan-to-modernise-India-s-defence-The-Economic-Times/indiatimes.com)

⁵⁰ "Goal of Self-Reliance in Indian Defence Forces Important for 21st Century India: PM Modi," *Narendra Modi*, [Goal of self-reliance in Indian defence forces important for 21st century India: PM Modi \(Narendra Modi.in\)](https://www.narendramodi.in/goal-of-self-reliance-in-indian-defence-forces-important-for-21st-century-india-pm-modi)

⁵¹ Rahul Singh, "India Clears Defence Buys Worth ₹ 70,500 Crore," *Hindustan Times*, March 17, 2023, [India clears defence buys worth ₹70,500 crore | Latest News India - Hindustan Times](https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-clears-defence-buys-worth-70500-crore-latest-news-india-hindustan-times/)

The formal position of Modi has highlighted to the Indian nation the threats to the national security of New Delhi, which has become widespread due to the changing nature of warfare. These statements shaped the behaviour of New Delhi in managing the matters of security with the outside world under the strategic vision of Mod. This vision continued the strategic journey of India in world politics by investing in various efforts for establishing India's active role on the global stage while addressing the constant challenges of traditional and nontraditional nature.⁵² It has explained the government's approach to making India self-reliant, parallel to defending the nation in critical times. The mission of creating India as a self-reliant nation in the evolving global power politics can be measured with the help of the following points.

Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan: It is one of the leading initiatives of the Modi government, which attempted to inflict a sense of confidence in the nation under the broader framework of self-reliant India. The formal websites of the Indian government have listed the purpose and vision of this initiative by taking different policy measures at the national level. This initiative of the Modi government is linked with the economy and defence while recognising both domains as essential features of a nation's role in the world.⁵³ The connection between economics and defence became a foundational stone of self-reliant India and its domestic manufacturing capabilities with the belief that the impact of economic development is great on the defence industry. The Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan focused on the development of domestic defence-related manufacturing capabilities with the help of innovative technology. The main goal of this national-level initiative is to reduce the dependency of the country's defence on foreign supplies, parallel to improving the domestic defence production capabilities of the government. It is widely believed that this initiative has shown the aim of the government for modernising the Indian armed forces with the objective of keeping them self-sufficient in defence matters.⁵⁴ This trend could lead the government to decrease the reliance of the armed forces on foreign military equipment. Thus, emphasising this dimension of the country's security system is expected to lead the Indian government towards sufficient savings from military expenditures. The allocation of a specific budget to the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan program has developed a collaboration between the country's indigenous industries and

⁵² Amir Khan, "Country's Defence Budget Allocation Mere Pennies Compared to India," *Express Tribune*, June 06, 2022, [Country's defence budget allocation mere pennies \(tribune.com.pk\)](https://tribune.com.pk)

⁵³ "Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan-Self-Reliant India," *Invest India*, [Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan | Self-reliant India Campaign \(investindia.gov.in\)](https://investindia.gov.in)

⁵⁴ "Self-Reliant India (Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan)," *IBEF*, [Self-reliant India \(Aatm Nirbhar Bharat Abhiyan\) | IBEF](https://www.ibef.org)

the mainstream defence sector of the government. This collaboration has promoted a nationwide culture of public-private business partnerships and increased the involvement of the private sector in the military industry of the country for greater economic purposes. The formulation of this synergy between public-private investments is further aligned with the fastest technological trends in the world. Thus, this program of the Modi government is non-static in nature and has a greater reliance on the overall security needs of the governments and its dependence on the modernisation plans and the changing fiscal preferences of the state authorities.⁵⁵ Various government officials from New Delhi have highlighted and accepted the progress of the defence industry under the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan. This program has created a multi-pronged approach for New Delhi to keep the focus on exporting multiple defence products abroad. This feature of the Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyaan directed New Delhi towards the "Make in India" initiative. Indian policy circles widely believed that the "Make in India" program is actually "Make for the World".

'Make in India' Initiative: This initiative was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014 with the objective of starting a countrywide campaign to transform India into an international business hub and promote India as a global manufacturing platform by advancing indigenous manufacturing capabilities. "Make in India" aims to attract the maximum rate of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) towards Indian manufacturing potential.⁵⁶ It seeks to exhibit the Indian market as an attractive and appropriate place for investment parallel to highlighting internationally the country's high strengths in various fields. This initiative diverted a specific portion of the budget to the defence industry by allowing the FDI in 100 different sectors. Under the "Make in India" Initiative, Prime Minister Modi conducted official visits to different states and invited the FDI in various fields.⁵⁷ In 2015, a formal meeting of Modi with Russian authorities resulted in the signing of various collaborations in the defence manufacturing field under the "Make in India" program. This deal increased the bilateral manufacturing collaboration between India and Russia in the naval field and facilitated Indian naval modernisation aims. The subsequent years of Modi's leadership revised the budget of the Indian Army and made it to 6.3 billion dollars in 2018 and allowed 11 private companies to manufacture and supply different military weapons such as tanks, rockets,

⁵⁵ Vaishali Jain and Somvir Gill, "Atmanirbhar Bharat: India's Quest for Self-Reliance in Post-Covid-19 World," *Journal of Policy and Society* 02, Vol, 14 (2022), 110.

⁵⁶ "Make in India," <https://www.makeinindia.com/KABAQ&scient=gws-wiz>

⁵⁷ "Make in India," IBEF, [Make In India Programme, All About The Manufacture in India Initiative \(ibef.org\)](https://www.ibef.org/industry/india)

and several logistics for the air defence system.⁵⁸ This budgetary reform aimed to decrease the dependency on foreign supplies and maintain a specific level of ammunition to let the Indian Armed Forces survive for at least 30 days of war. The increasing rate of military spending was not purely linked with reducing imports but to increasing the export rate of several security equipment under economic and strategic interests. In this list, Jordan, Armenia, Vietnam, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar appeared as the recipients of Indian-manufactured military equipment. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are also the major beneficiaries of the Indian defence industry, which is trying to produce advanced weapons systems to meet the market demands. The progress in the defence industry introduced different other platforms as well for the promotion of domestically produced military equipment, which are the Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP), Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs), Defence Excellence (iDEX) scheme, and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs). These steps witnessed significant improvements in the production of fighter aircraft, missile systems, helicopters, submarines, radars, and communication and surveillance infrastructures.⁵⁹

Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav: This is a broader program introduced recently by the Government of India to celebrate 75 years of independence by recalling the major achievements and future plans of India. The Indian nation accepted this initiative of the Modi government as the Grand Festival of Freedom, intending to celebrate the unforgettable sacrifices of national heroes and their services in different fields.⁶⁰ This initiative has allowed the Indian government to calculate its achievements in the defence sector, parallel to designing the scope of the defence industry in the country. This program has highlighted the progress of domestic defence production capabilities and their association with innovative technologies with the aim of contributing to the broader theme of national security. This Grand Festival of Freedom has mentioned several milestone developments in the defence industry under the Modi government, from providing 606 Industrial Licenses to 369 different defence-related firms. The nature of *Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav* is primarily linked with recalling the history of Indian success stories, parallel to adopting a clear vision of the future with

⁵⁸ "Make in India Initiative," [Make in India Initiative.pdf \(mea.gov.in\)](https://mea.gov.in/Make-in-India-Initiative.pdf)

⁵⁹ "Mainstreaming Public-Private Partnership in India," Asian Development Bank, <https://www.adb.org/countries/india/public-private-partnerships>

⁶⁰ "Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav," <https://amritmahotsav.nic.in/>

specific planning for the next 25 years.⁶¹ These plans define the future paths of Indian nations under the theme of *Amrit Kaal*. In military terms, the Defence Minister, Shri Rajnath Singh, mentioned the allocation of Rs. 5.94 lakh Crore, which is 13.18 % of the allotment of a total budget of Rs. 45.03 lakh Crore for the Defence Ministry. The Minister of Defence gave this statement during a cultural celebration at the Bandhan Ceremony in Bengaluru.⁶² It was the formal ceremony of the 14th Aero India when the formal state authorities of the Modi government publically mentioned the strategic vision of New Delhi. The mentioning of the budget for the year 2022-2023 enhanced the Indian vision under Amrit Kaal for the diversification and strengthening of the defence industry with the aim of reducing the dependency on foreign goods. To encourage the people engaged in the defence industry, the Indian Minister said, "If you take one step, the government promises to take ten steps forward. You spoke of land to run on the development path, we are providing you full sky". Earmarking three-fourths of the capital procurement budget for the local industry is a step in that direction."⁶³ This statement cleared that the Modi government is strong-minded with an adequate level of confidence that the defence plans prepared in New Delhi are suitable for Indian national interests while closely relevant to New Delhi's strategic values. Analogous to the Defence Minister, various other state officials of the Modi government have cleared to the Indian people their mission for putting efforts in the defence field. To keep the public-private partnership active and efficient in the defence sector, the Indian government has developed 266 partnerships and integrated the domestic defence industry with various foreign partners, including 201 MoUs and 53 different announcements in the mentioned partnerships, which increased the significance of advanced weapon technologies for New Delhi under Modi government.⁶⁴

Defence Industrial Corridors: The Indian government has developed a pair of Defence Industrial Corridors (DICs) in the areas of Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu. The Uttar Pradesh Defence Industrial Corridor (UPDIC) is responsible for researching innovative technologies and their

⁶¹ "75 Years of India's Independence – Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav," Swami Shraddhanand College-University of Delhi, <https://ss.du.ac.in/azadi-ka-amrit-mahotsav.php>

⁶² "Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav," Aligarh Muslim University, <https://www.amu.ac.in/miscellaneous/azadi-ka-amrit-mahotsav>

⁶³ "Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav," Smartnet-Government of India, <https://smartnet.niua.org/azadi-ka-amrit-mahotsav>

⁶⁴ "Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav," Shri Ram College of Commerce, <https://www.srcc.edu/Public-corner/azadi-ka-amrut-mahotsav>

application in defence production.⁶⁵ The government has also published its mainstream Aerospace and defence policies for the information of the business community and to attract different private companies to collaborate with their foreign counterparts. The investment of Rs. 2,242 crore and Rs. 3,847 crore have occurred in the UPDIC and the Tamil Nadu Defence Industrial Corridor (TNDIC).⁶⁶ The TNDIC aims to achieve remarkable progress in essential defence areas like aerospace, naval systems, electronic warfare, and high-end engineering. Both industrial corridors are planned by the government to support defence-related existing manufacturing infrastructure, along with increasing technical expertise with the help of skilled labourers in the areas of DICs. The purpose behind establishing DICs is to promote the defence-related practical reforms of the Modi government under the broader theme of the "Make in India" initiative.⁶⁷ Thus, the "Make in India" initiative has supported both corridors to participate in the growth of the indigenous defence industry while providing employment opportunities to skilled labour and promoting the export of advanced military equipment. The creation of both corridors has marked certain achievements in defence procurement with the support of adequate budgetary reforms. In this way, the domestic procurement increased to 54% in 2018-2019 and further jumped to 59% in 2019-2020. This continuous progress in the defence industry further raised this figure to 64% of total procurement in 2020-2021⁶⁸. The year 2022 witnessed an increase of 68% in defence expenditures for domestic procurement with the support of private companies. In this way, the focus of the government on the improvement of domestic industry under a broader indigenisation plan for defence production has decreased the foreign sources from 46% to 36% from 2018-2019 to 2021-2022.⁶⁹

The purpose of the initiatives mentioned above was to diversify the indigenous defence industry in making commendable progress in designing, developing, and producing major military

⁶⁵ Alok Mathur, "Defence Technology and Test Centre: A New Initiative of DRDO," *Indian Defence Review*, January 05, 2022, <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/defence-technology-and-test-centre-a-new-initiative-of-drdo/>

⁶⁶ Arpit Gupta, "UP Defence Corridor to Give Push to Indigenous Manufacturing of Military Goods: UPEIDA CEO Awasthi," *ET Government*, April 19, 2022, <https://government.economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/governance/up-defence-corridor-to-give-a-push-to-indigenous-manufacturing-of-military-goods-upeida-ceo-awasthi/90925858>

⁶⁷ Suchitra Karthikeyan, "What are the Key Defence Projects under 'Make in India' Scheme," *The Hindu*, April 26, 2022, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/make-in-india-defence-manufacturing-push-projects-need-explained/article65348645.ece>

⁶⁸ Raghuram Rajan, "Key Projects under Make in India Initiative", *The Hindu*, April 30, 2023, <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/make-in-india-defence-manufacturing-push-projects-need-explained/article65348645.ece>

⁶⁹ Laxman Kumar Behra, *Indian Defence Industry: An Agenda for Making in India* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2016), 18-22.

equipment for the nation's armed forces. Based on the reforms of the Modi government, the Prime Minister has mentioned that the Indian government has taken various practical measures for delicensing, deregulations, export promotion, and foreign investment liberalisation in the areas of security and defence, parallel to defining a future path of the nations in the same.

2.4 Alarming Future under Artificial Intelligence (AI)

The journey towards innovative technologies and their application in the fields of security and defence has provided a realisation to the leading state officials of New Delhi to integrate the domestic defence industry with modern technological trends. In 2018, a defence-related broader infrastructure was launched under iDEX with the objective of boosting a culture of research and development in the defence generally and Aerospace particularly. The iDEX is designed to engage different industries, start-ups, and potential individuals to support the country's broader research and development vision.⁷⁰ iDEX provides them grants/funding and other support to carry out innovations/R&D, which has the potential for future adoption for Indian defence and aerospace needs. Under iDEX, 233 programs have been opened, 310 Start-ups have been engaged, and 140 contracts have been signed. 'iDEX Prime' framework under iDEX has been launched in 2022 to support Start-ups with Grant-in-Aid up to Rs 10 crore to enable the development of high-end solutions.⁷¹ The major developments in the domain of AI technology are dependent on the performance of DRDO because the DRDO plays an essential role in acquiring modern warfare technologies mainly supported by AI. The engagement of the scientific community on the DRDO platform has started the efforts in research and development. The official of DRDO has explored various dimensions of modern warfare technologies and applied their technologies in the desired directions. The DRDO is currently emphasising the formulation of different types of autonomous weapon systems for military purposes and has provided various advanced weapons to the Indian Armed Forces, such as Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), Unmanned Ground Vehicles (UGVs), and Unmanned Underwater Vehicles (UUVs).⁷² AI has been recognised as an essential dimension of the Indian defence industry, and it has witnessed various AI-specific organisational-level

⁷⁰ Kumar Gandharv, "Top Three AI Initiatives for Indian Defence Forces in 2022," *India AI*, May 24, 2022, <https://indiaai.gov.in/article/top-three-ai-initiatives-for-indian-defence-forces-in-2022>

⁷¹ Rebecca Bundhun, "How Artificial Intelligence Can Transform India's Economy," *The National News*, April 03, 2023, <https://www.thenationalnews.com/business/2023/04/03/how-artificial-intelligence-can-transform-indias-economy/>

⁷² "Centre for Artificial Intelligence & Robotics (CAIR)," *DRDO*, <https://www.drdo.gov.in/labs-and-establishments/centre-artificial-intelligence-robotics-cair>

developments, such as the creation of the Defence AI Council (DAIC). In 2018, the Department of Defence Production introduced various AI-specific initiatives to secure the future of regular armed forces in the domain of modern warfare technologies. The subsequent development witnessed the creation of the Defence AI Project Agency (DARPA) in 2019, parallel to the creation of DAIC.⁷³ The Ministry of Defence decided to provide a budget of Rs. 100 Crore, equal to 12 billion US dollars for a five-year plan to boost AI-related projects in the defence. The debate on AI can only be completed by mentioning the progress of DRDO in developing various semi-automated weapon systems.⁷⁴ The DRDO has established a specific laboratory, the Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics (CAIR), to conduct essential research in the targeted areas of AI technology.

2.5 Concluding Analysis

The central theme of this chapter revolves around the aim of New Delhi to keep its defence procurement capabilities updated and advanced to enhance the defence posture of New Delhi. The increasing defence spending is New Delhi's effort to ensure the Indian national security apparatus and its projection in the appropriate directions. The consistently increasing defence spending has highlighted Modi's India in world politics by providing certain budgetary measures for the improvement of its indigenous defence industry. The objective of modernising the armed forces is linked with Modi's vision of enabling his country to obtain robust defence capabilities against potential security threats. With the support of its indigenous defence industry and foreign supplies of major strategic partners, New Delhi has made progress in manufacturing different military equipment such as aircraft, naval vessels, tanks, and artillery systems. The domestic weapon industry has produced several advanced military equipment with the support of modern military technologies. The quest to acquire and implement modern warfare technologies has led New Delhi towards technologically advanced nations and instructed the government authorities to sign different collaborations in the IT sector. This journey of technology acquisition has led the Indian IT industry towards AI technology, which has already granted armed forces different semi-autonomous weapon systems. The DRDO is engaged in applying modern warfare technologies in

⁷³ Ralph Alex Arakal, "DRDO Develops Artificial Intelligence Algorithm to Detect Covid-19 Presence from Chest X-Rays," *The Indian Express*, May 07, 2021, <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/drdo-develops-artificial-intelligence-algorithm-to-detect-covid-19-presence-from-chest-x-rays-7305758/>

⁷⁴ Manish Kumar Jha, "DRDO is Taking New Challenges in AI and Robotics that will Act as Force Multipliers," *Business World-BW*, May 09, 2018, <https://www.businessworld.in/article/-DRDO-Is-Taking-New-Challenges-In-AI-And-Robotics-That-Will-Act-As-Force-Multipliers-/09-05-2018-148714/>

the appropriate directions to develop a fully autonomous weapon system to increase the operational capabilities of Indian regular armed forces. Apart from DRDO, other state-level organisations are formally entitled to continue research on various dimensions of advanced technologies and their application in the defence sector. In this way, this chapter has discussed increasing the Indian defence budget to meet the strategic aspirations of New Delhi in regional and extra-regional affairs. The determination of New Delhi for the role of its armed forces against the potential security threats has intensified the regional security environment of the nuclearised subcontinent.

Modi government has taken various initiatives at the domestic and international levels to integrate its indigenous weapon industry with the prevailing modern technological trends of the world. The dramatic change in Modi's approach to keeping the Indian defence system updated and efficient has turned another chapter in the history of Indian weapon modernisation due to the fact that the international strategic community has noticed the rise in the Indian defence budget in the Modi government. The qualitative improvements under a revised defence planning of the Modi government have validated an undeniable connection between the Modi government and the dramatically changing Indian defence industry. In this way, this chapter has tried to maintain a concise account of New Delhi's increasing focus on allocating national funds to the defence industry and increasing the portion of the defence budget in the Indian annual budget. This chapter has provided a glimpse of the nature of the Indian defence budget under the Modi administration, in which New Delhi has diversified its mainstream weapon systems. The diversification of India's defence economy primarily consists of the development of the domestic weapon industry and the formulation of collaborative connections of the domestic weapon industry with the state of advanced weapon industries. In short, it is pertinent to mention here that the advancement of weapon systems aligns with the question of obtaining a modern weapon defence system, which has become a permanent attribute of Indian strategic thinking and qualitatively a dominant factor in the Modi government.

The scope of strategic stability has become a challenging task between India and Pakistan due to the growing New Delhi's reliance on the advanced weapon system. In this way, allocating an adequate budget to the indigenous defence industry and its growing collaborations with global

weapon manufacturers undermines the scope of strategic stability in the nuclearised regional politics of South Asia, which will be covered in the next Chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

India's Expanding Defence Resources Under Modi's Era – Effects on the Regional Strategic Stability of South Asia

3.1 The Question of Strategic Stability

The question of strategic stability cannot be separated from contemporary South Asian nuclear politics, where contesting patterns of New Delhi and Islamabad have created an international debate about regional strategic stability under the nuclear shadows. The possession of nuclear weapons by India and Pakistan has complicated the regional security environment, where the contesting traditional patterns of both states have already intensified the regional political orders. In this way, South Asia is a region commonly known for its complex strategic dynamics under the major challenges related to the stability of the whole region, in which the question of strategic stability has become a challenging question for the whole region. The persistently evolving hostile behaviours of both states against each other constantly multiply the factors complicating the India-Pakistan rivalry.⁷⁵ The increasing disagreements between two-sided hostile governments have raised various factors that have challenged the scope of strategic stability in the region. India's increasing defence spending, military modernisation, increasing strategic engagements with the international community, its quest for keeping its conventional and unconventional forces updated and advanced against the potential security threats originating from the territorially adjoining nations leave worse impacts on the notion of regional strategic stability in South Asia in Indo-Pakistan Context. The increasing Indian reliance on modern warfare technology has increased the defence spending of New Delhi, which is a matter of serious security concern, as per the logic of neorealism in which the structural forces of global power politics can be marked as the major motivating factor for New Delhi's decision for increasing its defence capabilities. The quest for modernising the existing security system with the support of adequate financial resources is directly linked with Indian strategic thinking and its continuation in the Modi government. The Modi government is strong-minded in keeping the Indian Armed Forces active and advanced against the potential challenges that originate from contesting patterns of great power politics because Indian leaders always considered the impacts of the structural forces of

⁷⁵ Praful Bidwal and Achin Vanaik, *New Nukes: India, Pakistan and Global Nuclear Disbarments* (Oxford: Signal Books, 2000), 12-13.

great power politics on New Delhi's strategic calculations.⁷⁶ In this way, the inevitable pressures of great power politics demand New Delhi improve its strategic muscles against the emerging structural forces of international power politics and their significant impacts on New Delhi's position in the broader Asian power balance.

In this way, this chapter attempts to provide a brief overview of India's increasing defence spending under the Modi government, its "Force Modernization Plans," and the relevance of this military preparedness of New Delhi with the regional security environment of South Asia. The relevance of increasing defence spending of New Delhi with the India-Pakistan regional strategic matrix can hardly be analysed beyond critical lines.⁷⁷ The main focus of this chapter is on the diversifying nature of Indian defence expenditures and the degrading strategic matrix between India and Pakistan. This chapter attempted to prove the status of strategic stability in South Asia under Modi's strategic vision, which has made regional politics complex and intense.

3.2 Modi's Strategic Vision and Concept of Strategic Stability

The decision to upgrade the main infrastructure of the armed forces with the help of modern warfare technologies is a national-level development that has great significance in the regional security environment of South Asia under nuclear shadows. The increasing defence expenditures are primarily meeting the security demands, such as supporting the large size of armed forces to fulfil the geostrategic pressures emerging from South Asia in the form of Pakistan and the threats of great power politics originating from China. These factors provide logical reasons for the Modi government to increase defence spending without estimating its impacts on the South Asian region, where the question of strategic stability is a centre of global attention.⁷⁸ In a nuclearised hostile regional political order, the strategic behaviour of the governments matters a lot in defining the status of strategic stability between the contesting states. South Asian nuclear politics is persistently witnessing various strategic developments in India and Pakistan, in which India's increasing reliance on military modernisation is the primary actor encouraging the Indian

⁷⁶ Bharat Karnad, *Staggering Forward: Narendra Modi and India's Global Ambition* (Haryana: Penguin Random House, 2018), 28-29.

⁷⁷ Bhumitra Chakma (ed), *The Politics of Nuclear Weapons in South Asia* (New York: Routledge, 2016), 12.

⁷⁸ Christoph Mumtaz and Uzma Bluth, *India-Pakistan Strategic Relations: The Nuclear Dilemma* (Ibidem Publishing, 2020).

government to allocate more economic resources to its defence industry.⁷⁹ In this way, it is more appropriate to maintain that the scope of strategic stability in the South Asian region is closely linked with New Delhi's defence budget, which reflects the Indian focus on military capabilities and modernisation with the help of advanced technologies. Therefore, the central theme of this chapter revolves around the concept of strategic stability and its relevance with the South Asian nuclear politics consisting of the India-Pakistan rivalry. This rivalry has undergone various phases of regional politics, in which the governments of India and Pakistan remained active in keeping the regional political order in their favour. This chapter attempted to provide a comprehensive picture of the South Asian regional security environment where the scope of strategic stability is deteriorating due to the rising Indian defence spending and Force Modernization.⁸⁰ The arguments in this chapter are mainly designed to maintain an account of various arguments to measure the worse impacts of New Delhi's growing association with Modi's strategic vision. This vision has introduced different strategic initiatives and announced various policies to improve the existing warfighting capabilities of the Indian armed forces. The multiplying tendencies of the Indian defence budget for the empowerment of Indian defence capabilities could be understood with the help of its unavoidable effects on the regional strategic matrix between both nuclear powers of South Asia.

3.3 Strategic Stability in South Asia

The South Asian version of the global arms race has resulted in the possession of nuclear weapons by India and Pakistan and the creation of a stability-instability paradox between both contestants of South Asia. The arrival of nuclear weapons in the hostile regional environment of South Asia made the probability of conventional war or limited war between India and Pakistan very low due to establishing a strategic equilibrium between both nuclear powers in the context of deterrence. The announcement of nuclear weapons capabilities in India by the Modi government and the reaction of Pakistan in similar manners established nuclear deterrence in the region with the aim of preventing conflicts between New Delhi and Islamabad, especially in nuclear terms. The nuclear weapon limited the chances of an India-Pakistan conventional war for maintaining

⁷⁹ Rajesh M. Basrur, *South Asia's Cold War: Nuclear Weapons and Conflict in Comparative Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 18.

⁸⁰ Sanjay Badri-Maharaj, *Nuclear India: Developing India's Nuclear Arms Race from Reluctance to Triad* (London: Helion Books, 2021), 28.

stable relations between both neighbouring adversaries.⁸¹ The possession of nuclear weapons by India and Pakistan has changed the regional security dynamics of South Asia and placed the entire regional security environment under the nuclear shadows. The post-nuclear scenario has intensified the hostile interaction between India and Pakistan by augmenting the conventional points of disagreement in the New Delhi-Islamabad strategic contest. The stabilising role of nuclear weapons under the deterring effects of nuclear weapons has placed regional politics under complicated regional security of the nuclearised subcontinent on the one hand. On the other hand, the persistently increasing India-Pakistan disagreements under the nuclear shadows and the growth of rivalry between nuclear powers in the form of sub-conventional warfare portray regional instability. Various factors hamper the stabilising role of nuclear weapons and their promotion in the doctrinal upgradations of both states under their particular defence needs. The security system of both states has equipped their conventional armed forces with strategic capabilities parallel to completing the nuclear triad by developing the nuclear capabilities of the three main forces of both states. Completing the nuclear triad has provided the opportunity for the India-Pakistan armed forces to launch nuclear strikes, under their specific doctrinal features, by three platforms of their armed forces. The three wings of their armed forces can now use sea-based, land-based, and air-launched nuclear weapons under critical circumstances.

The governments of both states are highly ambitious to actively maintain their triad capabilities by allocating adequate budgets to their three wings of armed forces. The capabilities in the triad domain were completed when the strategic communities of both states preferred to obtain their sea-based missile capabilities in the nuclear domain. The sea-based strategic capabilities have let the leading defence planners of India and Pakistan announce their second strike capabilities by empowering their naval muscles. The naval capabilities of Indian and Pakistani defence forces have resulted in the development of nuclear-capable submarines to avert the threats of nuclear war in the maritime domain. Apart from completing the nuclear triad, the security establishments from New Delhi and Islamabad are convinced of the continuation of their refined defensive mechanisms against each other. The completion of the triad has shown the high level of both states' increasing defence spending to ensure the credibility, survivability, and effectiveness of their contesting deterrent capabilities. Such behaviours of nuclear weapon states increase the value of deterrence

⁸¹ Eric Arnett (ed), *Military Capacity and the Risk of War: China, India, Pakistan, and Iran* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 18.

through communicating their strong defence planning with the support of a greater range of responsive capabilities in the situation of any armed conflict between them.⁸² Completing the triad provided enough confidence to the formal strategic figures of India and Pakistan to stand against each other and communicate their doctrinal alterations to respond to the increasing security demands of both states. The objective of obtaining the status of a nuclear weapon state with triad capabilities forced the financial decision-makers from New Delhi and Islamabad to allocate adequate defence budgets to their regular armed forces. The allocation of required budgetary resources to the regular armed forces unprecedentedly increased the military spending of New Delhi and Islamabad.⁸³

Possessing nuclear weapons and establishing deterrence in the region between two nuclear rivals have ensured stability in making warlike scenarios less likely in the nuclearised subcontinent. The prevailing stabilising effects of nuclear deterrence in the South Asian region cannot be spared from the role of destabilising forces between the pair of nuclear powers in South Asia. This scenario creates a complex regional security environment under the nuclear shadows in which the governments of contesting nuclear weapon states have adhered to the stabilising effects of nuclear deterrence in the region.⁸⁴ The leading state officials of both states from South Asia have accepted the vanishing status of conventional war or any limited armed conflict between them without settling their fundamental points of disagreement. This dimension of strategic competition between two nuclear powers can be called a stability-instability paradox. The concept of the stability-instability paradox explains the certain degree of stability in the presence of nuclear weapons between two contesting states at the strategic level without marginalising the increasing risk of conflicts at the sub-conventional level. Apart from the prevalence of sub-conventional warfare in South Asia, the Indian strategic community is preparing its conventional defence system for the achievement of escalation dominance in case of any future crisis. A combined study of Pakistan authors Zulfiqar Khan and Zafar Khan provide detail of growing New Delhi's strategic aspiration, including the escalation dominance.⁸⁵ The chances of escalation at the lower levels

⁸² Neil Joeck, "Maintaining Nuclear Stability in South Asia," *Adelphi Paper* 312 (1997), 12.

⁸³ Zubin Bhatnagar, *Strategic Stability in South Asia: Challenges and Implications for India* (New Delhi Vij Books, 2017), 35-37.

⁸⁴ Syed Muhammad Ali, "Nuclear Deterrence in South Asia: A Strategic Chain Reaction is Triggering an Arms Race in South Asia", *The Express Tribune*, December 09, 2022, [Nuclear deterrence in South Asia \(tribune.com.pk\)](https://tribune.com.pk)

⁸⁵ Zulfiqar Khan and Zafar Khan, *India's Evolving Deterrent Force Posturing in South Asia: Temptation for Pre-emptive Strikes, Power Projection, and Escalation Dominance* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 18.

hamper the stabilising role of nuclear weapons in the region while causing instability in a nuclear rivalry between the two states. In the South Asian context, India and Pakistan have limited incentives to exercise restraint in the conflict at the sub-conventional level with the belief that the possession of nuclear weapons has provided a certain level of confidence between New Delhi and Islamabad that any conventional conflict in the region will not escalate to the unthinkable scenarios of an all-out war. The confidence of not having an all-out war or even a limited war simultaneously creates a security environment, causing instability at the lower level.

3.4 Strategic Stability and Indian Military Spending

The question of strategic stability in the nuclearised subcontinent resolves around the concept of stability-instability paradox in which the regional security challenges create a perpetual cycle of recurring small conflicts, frequent escalations on borders, and multiplying disagreements on different geostrategic issues. The risks of unintended growing tensions at political and diplomatic levels frequently call the governments of both contesting states to adopt military standoffs on major strategic disagreements. Applying this situation to the India-Pakistan competition is appropriate because the stability-instability paradox has prevailed in the nuclearised subcontinent, where each strategic move of two neighbouring nuclear rivals defines the merits of the regional strategic matrix. The strategic moves of both states are inherited in their perception of regional power balance because the inflexible national standings of both states against each other continuously instruct their leaders to remain strict to their contrasting strategic objectives.⁸⁶ These objectives fundamentally belong to the conventional foundations of their hostility, which was shaped by the initial leaderships of both states in contrast dimensions. A persistent continuation of these military trends in India showed the similar behaviour of the Modi government and its ultra-nationalist agenda, which has instructed the government to take rational measures for the defence of the country. The Indian government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, has accepted the reasons for enhancing military spending for the achievement of their geostrategic interests.⁸⁷ The core values of Indian geostrategic interests are very much linked with New Delhi's apprehensions about the changing dynamics of regional power balance.

⁸⁶ Devin T. Hagerty, *Nuclear Weapons and Deterrence Stability in South Asia* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2020), 67.

⁸⁷ Syed Shahid Hussain Bukhari, *Pakistan's Security and the India-US Strategic Partnership: Nuclear Politics and Security Competition* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 20.

New Delhi's calculations about the changing dynamics of regional power politics demand Indian leaders to increase their defence spending in response to the geostrategic challenges. These geostrategic challenges are rooted in Indian strategic calculations about the regional power imbalance, which have led Indian strategic thinkers towards modernising Indian military capabilities. The decisions for modernising the armed forces compel Pakistan to take appropriate measures to counterweight New Delhi's determination to keep its armed forces active and advanced with the support of hi-tech weapon systems. The responses of Pakistan to India's increasing reliance on the acquisition of advanced weapon systems heighten the tensions in the region and undermine the scope of regional stability. The government of Pakistan is compelled to respond to India in taking possible security measures. The Islamabad-based strategic community always preferred to follow in Indian footsteps in managing their security affairs.⁸⁸ The case of the nuclear triad is appropriate in this regard because the Indian decision to declare its maritime-based nuclear capabilities forces Pakistan to obtain strategic naval capabilities. Indian decision to launch its first nuclear-capable submarine, *Arihant*, capable of launching a nuclear strike, compelled Pakistan to announce its strategic naval capabilities with the support of a Babur missile capable of performing underwater operations. It responded to Indian naval capabilities and communicated to the world the completion of Pakistan's nuclear triad, which was a response to New Delhi.⁸⁹ Apart from acquiring strategic naval capabilities, the quest for acquiring effective second-strike capabilities has led the mainstream security architectures of both states towards a space race where India is again taking the lead. Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) is taking various steps to validate Indian space capabilities, which could give an advantage to New Delhi against Pakistan while knowing the fact that the Space & Upper Atmosphere Research Commission (SUPARCO) of Pakistan is facing different economic difficulties. A Carnegie Endowment for International Peace *India's Regional Diplomacy Reaches Outer Space* report confirmed the prevailing trends of space technology in Indian security planning.⁹⁰ The Chinese help in empowering the role of SUPARCO has raised New Delhi's worries about Islamabad's increasing space capabilities with the support of China. In this way, there is no harm in saying that the naval and space capabilities of

⁸⁸ Lawrence Rubin and Adam N. Stulberg (ed), *The End of Strategic Stability: Nuclear Weapons and the Challenges of Regional Rivalries* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2018), 127-129.

⁸⁹ "Arihant Submarine," Ministry of Defence-Government of India, [Q 2. Why was the name Arihant chosen for India's first Nuclear Powered Submarine? | Ministry of Defence \(mod.gov.in\)](#)

⁹⁰ Shouk Set, "India's Regional Diplomacy Reaches Outer Space." *Carnegie India* (March 2017), [7-3-2017_Set_IndiaRegionalDiplomacy_Web.pdf \(carnegieendowment.org\)](#)

New Delhi are primarily based on the economic support of New Delhi, which leaves worse impacts on the strategic calculations of Pakistan and demands the government of Pakistan take measures for strengthening its defensive position against nuclear India. The combination of maritime and space capabilities has let New Delhi increase its defence spending against the neighbouring nations, and this trend has increased under the Modi government.⁹¹ The Modi government is highly determined to allocate a high budget to acquire second-strike capabilities. This heavy defence spending provides confidence to the Indian strategic community and encourages them to increase the defence budget of India to meet the strategic compulsions of great power politics.⁹²

3.5 Deterrence and Strategic Stability

The undeniable connection between deterrence and strategic stability has greater relevance to South Asian regional nuclear politics, where the consistently growing India-Pakistan rivalry has raised serious questions on the deterring role of nuclear weapons. Indian desires to improve its defence capabilities are strongly dependent on improving its conventional warfighting capabilities, which could let New Delhi boost the abilities of armed forces to defend its geostrategic interest while deterring the presence of potential rivals in the region. This objective has increased Indian capabilities to assert its strategic designs in its home region, where Pakistan is the main challenger.⁹³ To keep the potential rivals engaged in aggressive actions, New Delhi has always searched for appropriate defensive capabilities that could incentivise India to dominate any future crisis. The domination in the case of any escalation with its South Asian nuclear rival is the prime reason for making the Indian government reluctant to reduce its defence expenditure.

Pakistan's determination to keep the regional security environment politically peaceful, diplomatically cooperative, and strategically stable has convinced the Pakistan leaders to take every possible measure against India's increasing defence spending with the aim of stabilising deterrence and creating and making deterrence a prime source of ensuring strategic stability in the region. The efforts of Pakistan to support the values of strategic stability can be examined in the

⁹¹ Sumit Ganguly and S. Paul Kapur, *India. Pakistan and the Bomb: Debating Nuclear Stability in South Asia* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 25-27.

⁹² Rizwana Abbasi, "Deterrence Transformation in South Asia and Challenges to Regional Stability," *Pakistan Horizon* 02, Vol. 68 (April 2015), 67-68.

⁹³ Yogesh Joshi and Frank O'Donnell, *India and Nuclear Asia: Doctrines and Dangers* (Washington, George Town University Press, 2019), 110.

recent Pulwama crisis of 2019 when the Indian military aggression compelled Pakistan to launch a full-scale war against India with the help of all possible defensive means.⁹⁴ Indian attack on the area of Pulwama alarmed Pakistan's security and posed severe questions on the doctrinal attributes of Pakistan's strategic weapons. The conventional responses in the form of a wise retaliatory approach in the aftermath of Indian airstrikes on the areas of Pakistan re-established the role of deterrence in the nuclearised subcontinent. This episode has cleared India and the international community that the government of Pakistan is highly convinced of the deterring role of nuclear weapons in the region. Based on this Pulwama case, it can easily be maintained that Pakistan's contemporary military preparedness is purely in response to Indian increasing defence budget, with the objective of keeping the nuclear deterrence effective between two neighbouring nuclear rivals. The government of Pakistan has also mentioned in several formal statements that the nuclear weapons of Pakistan are purely for the purpose of maintaining strategic stability in the region, parallel to strengthening the role of nuclear deterrence in the region. The recently issued formal statements of Pakistan during the Shangri-La Dialogues 2023 made clear to the international community the desires and objectives of Pakistan for acquiring nuclear weapon capabilities for the defence of the country.⁹⁵ The formal state authorities of Pakistan in this international event mentioned in official statements that the government of Pakistan has pursued the nuclear option as a defensive move and tried to keep the regional strategic politics balanced. Akin to the Shangri-La Dialogues, there are various statements of the formal government authorities of Pakistan in clarifying the status and purpose of Pakistan's nuclear weapons, which are purely designed to counter Indian regional hegemonic ambitions. Indian apprehensions about Pakistan are indirectly critical of the role of China in providing sufficient confidence to Islamabad in managing its security affairs. In this way, the changing patterns of South Asian regional power politics cannot be separated from the role of extra-regional powers, where the involvement of China is a primary concern of Indian leaders.

3.6 China Factor

New Delhi-based strategic community strongly believe that the Chinese emerging trading influence in the South Asian region creates a power imbalance and poses serious questions about

⁹⁴ Happymon Jacob, *Line on Fire: Ceasefire Violations and India-Pakistan Escalation Dynamics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 12.

⁹⁵ "IISS-Shangri-La Dialogue," *IISS*, June 10-12, 2022, [IISS Shangri-La Dialogue 2022 - Asia's premier defence summit](#)

the position of India in its home region. Pakistan primarily provides a favourable environment to Beijing for increasing its influence in the South Asian nuclearised region. China's role in South Asian regional affairs is purely associated with constructing ports in Pakistan's maritime jurisdictions. The Indian government has already considered China an active rival and potential challenger in maritime affairs.⁹⁶ Thus, New Delhi's decision to modernise the formal structure of the Indian Navy with the support of a heavy defence budget has become an undeniable reality in the nuclearised region. Indian strategic decision-makers have accepted the need for increasing significant military expenditure to improve the traditional naval capabilities in the conventional and non-conventional domains. India's increasing reliance on the maritime affairs of the broader Indian Ocean upsets Pakistan's position in the Arabian Sea, where it is intended to introduce a new business hub under the Gwadar Port.⁹⁷ The mega seaport project was operational in 2016 with the formal inaugural ceremonies by the Pakistan government, where it started taking serious safety measures for the security of its mega economic corridor project with the support of China. In 2020, the government of Pakistan operationalised the Gwadar Port to facilitate Afghan transit trade and communicated to the whole international community about Islamabad's vision for using its oceans for trading purposes. The support of China to Pakistan's growing reliance on the Gwadar Seaport has raised serious apprehensions of New Delhi and the Indian government, translating the bilateral trading collaboration between Beijing and Islamabad as a serious threat to Indian regional standing. Indian strategic community has accepted that the support of China to Pakistan will augment Pakistan's India-centric counterbalancing potential. Indian strategic decision-makers have translated the emerging Sino-Pak economic cooperation under the broader corridor project as a major threat to their standing in the region because the Indian strategic community widely believe that the growing Chinese trading collaboration with Pakistan needs a serious response from New Delhi against the neighbouring countries.⁹⁸ New Delhi has accepted that the economic cooperation between Beijing and Islamabad will have strategic implications for New Delhi. The validation of this argument could be attained from the growing Indian naval modernisation in the surrounding oceanic waters.

⁹⁶ Muhammad Faisal, "CPEC and Regional Connectivity: Navigating the South Asian Politics," *Strategic Studies* 02, Vol. 39 (Summer 2019), 18.

⁹⁷ Muhammad Zahid Ullah Khan and Minhas Majeed Khan, "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Challenges," *Strategic Studies* 02, Vol. 39 (Summer 2019), 68-69.

⁹⁸ Madhumanti Debnath, *Strategic Implications of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor* (Munich: Grin Verlag, 2017), 18-20.

3.7 Concluding Analysis

The possession of nuclear weapons by three forces of India and Pakistan has completed their nuclear triad and compelled the governments of both states to empower the role of their three forces in the intense regional security environment. The two governments are committed to maintaining their nuclear triad capability to fulfil their essential security demands against potential security threats. The security threats of both states originate from the geopolitical compulsions of regional politics and their unavoidable pressures on the strategic positions of New Delhi and Islamabad against each other. This behaviour has complicated the deterring role of nuclear weapons and their projection in the military doctrines of India and Pakistan. The doctrinal changes consistently alter South Asia's regional security environment by allowing India and Pakistan's defence planners to incorporate the new weapon systems in their military inventory.⁹⁹ In addition to the mission of obtaining triad capabilities, the growing state-level initiatives of New Delhi for empowering its strategic standings against potential security threats contribute to the unending arms race between two nuclear powers. The military preparedness of India under several policies adopted by New Delhi emphasises the advancement of Indian formal armed forces, which has convinced the Indian official defence planners to allocate sufficient budgetary resources to the indigenous defence industry. This development contradicts the role of deterrence between India and Pakistan due to the fact that various actors are leaving worse impacts on the regional strategic matrix of the nuclear subcontinent. Akin to various previous governments, Modi's government has continued the policy of increasing Indian defence spending to bring innovative technology to the Indian domestic defence industry and make it capable of modernising the warfighting capabilities of New Delhi's conventional armed forces. The efforts to support this strategic vision of Prime Minister Modi have convinced the Indian government to introduce various countrywide programs and platforms for boosting the role of military and scientific communities in defending India against foreign threats.

⁹⁹ Aiysha Safdar, "The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Its Maritime Dimensions and Pakistan Navy," *Strategic Studies* 03, Vol. 35 (Autumn 2015), 10-11.

CHAPTER FOUR

Way-Forward - Empowering the Notion of Strategic Stability in South Asia

The notion of strategic stability in the nuclearised subcontinent is tied with New Delhi's ambitions for weaponisation and using these weapons against Pakistan in the case of any future armed conflict between India and Pakistan. The acquisition and development of nuclear weapons and then promotion of those weapons in their defence behaviours primarily pushed the whole regional politics under an intense security competition in which the security planners of both nuclear powers have decided to remain strict with their mainstream points of disagreement. The leading state officials of India and Pakistan introduced various patterns of their unending arms race without estimating the impacts of these weapon developments on the entire regional security environment. It is pertinent to mention here that the debates of an ongoing arms race between New Delhi and Islamabad cannot be separated from the formal behaviours of their respective government, which are always convinced of the hostile standards of their interstate relations. The unprecedented growth of hostile standards and this hostility between two neighbouring nuclear powers evolved the security environment of their region, which is surrounded by two main superpowers, China and Russia.

The evolution of rivalry between two neighbouring states has, in this way, provided sufficient opportunity for these superpowers to be involved in the South Asian region. The threats of emerging influences of China and Russia have alarmed the American security bells and compelled Washington to keep its South Asian policy active and progressive. Thus, the combination of the nuclear arms race and the changing tendencies of India and Pakistan to cultivate collaborative ties, the surrounding superpowers remained essential factors in hampering the notion of strategic stability in the nuclearised region. The role of India is important in this dimension because the Indian governments under different political administrations always remained ambitious for undermining the positions of its territorially adjoining nations in their respective regions. This development has resulted in the Indian overt opposition to Pakistan and China, together with the growing trading collaboration between Beijing and Islamabad. New Delhi-based strategic community has objectively translated the threats of growing Pakistan-China economic collaboration through developing a port in the Arabian Sea. In response to the

augmenting basis of Pakistan-China economic cooperation, Indian leaders have preferred to take defensive countermeasures to secure New Delhi's strategic positions in regional and extra-regional affairs. These countermeasures have facilitated New Delhi in creating multileveled strategic collaborations with different states worldwide. The cultivation of multiple strategic collaborations has also allowed the Indian government to improve its strategic muscles in the territorial and maritime affairs of its home region.

These developments appropriately justify the contemporary security planning of New Delhi under the present government of Modi. The present Modi government has dramatically changed the main course of Indian strategic thinking and altered the conventional foundations of the classical strategic maxims of India. The changes in Indian defence planning respond to the emerging structural pressures of regional and global power politics originating from South Asian and broader Asian power politics. The undeniable impacts of ongoing Indian defence preparedness reflect the Modi government's policy of overtly pursuing its strategic objectives by taking various rational measures, which different official defence papers of the Indian government have confirmed. The changes in the Indian strategic postures, in this way, are directly linked with the status of strategic stability in the region because the ongoing strategic matrix between two nuclear powers is practically dependent on New Delhi's evolving defensive behaviour and the translation of such type of security thinking in various practical measures. In this scenario, there is a need to identify and support the forces that could ensure strategic stability in the region while weakening the role of agenda spoilers in creating a strategically stable South Asian region. Pakistan's government has often proposed and initiated ideas for supporting the values of strategic stability in the region due to its defensive stance against Indian offensive defence planning.¹⁰⁰ Pakistani policymakers have repeatedly mentioned Islamabad's vision for keeping the region strategically stable and politically peaceful. In this way, the central theme of this chapter revolves around the values of strategic stability in the nuclearised region and trying to preserve the stable and peaceful regional values against strategically offensive New Delhi. The main debate in this chapter attempted to craft certain ways forward to the consistently evolving strategic competition between two nuclear powers under an intense regional security environment. The discussion mentioned above has just reviewed briefly the reasons for the degrading role of stable forces in the region,

¹⁰⁰ Rahul Bedi, "Why Indian Army is Buying Machine Pistols under Emergency Provisions," *The Wire*, January 20, 2023, [Why Indian Army Is Buying Machine Pistols Under Emergency Provision \(thewire.in\)](https://www.thewire.in/2023/01/20/why-indian-army-is-buying-machine-pistols-under-emergency-provision/)

whereas the main discussion started by evaluating the latest security trends of New Delhi at the national level and their impacts on the intense regional security environment.

4.1 Alarming Present Situation

The present security situation in the South Asian region and growing Pakistan-China cooperation can be traced to the arrival of Prime Minister Modi in Indian politics. After becoming the fourteenth Prime Minister of India, the Modi government started paying substantial attention towards the upgradation of Indian strategic thinking against the inevitable pressures of global power politics, which could not be separated from South Asian regional politics. Modi's government preferred to focus on the role of DRDO and ISRO by allocating more financial support to these two organs of the Indian state. The main objective of Modi is to empower a culture of research and development across the country by encouraging both DRDO and ISRO to craft new avenues of defence production.¹⁰¹ The improved progress of both government departments is primarily linked with the Indian indigenous defence industry and its commitment to providing various advanced defensive weapon systems to Indian regular armed forces. The role of the international community cannot be ignored in the discussion of improving the Indian domestic defence industry because the Indian Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has improved its role and expanded the role of its diplomatic forces for strategic purposes. The support of traditional diplomatic forces of India to the strategic ambitions of New Delhi has become an additional factor in support of the domestic defence industry of India because the cultivation of cooperative ties with different states from around the globe is the prime source of Indian mainstream defence planning. The formal officials of MEA have reiterated on various occasions the extension of Indian diplomatic forces around the globe under different programs, such as the *Bharat Ek Parichay* initiative, which got significant attention from the Modi government. This initiative was designed and launched in 2018 with the objective of promoting narrative in the world through spreading education services to various educational institutions internationally.¹⁰² Promoting Indian literature, philosophy, economy, and art under this program is primarily justifying the Indian ongoing political, diplomatic, and security affairs in the broader South Asian region.

¹⁰¹ Gautam Navlakha, "Arms and Men: Make in India or Make for India," *Economics and Political Weekly* 14, Vol. 50 (April 04, 2015), 13.

¹⁰² "Bharat Ek Parichay," Ministry of External Affairs, [Bharat Ek Parichay \(mea.gov.in\)](http://mea.gov.in)

Promoting the Indian narrative through different sources of literature is an attempt of the Indian government to cultivate the support of the international community in its domestic region against potential security threats. A study of Brookings India *India's Foreign Affairs Strategy* published in 2020 mentioned the contemporary attributes of Indian foreign relations and their strategic dimensions with the objectives of securing strategic autonomy through strengthening the Indian role in the international community.¹⁰³ Promoting Indian diplomacy to extend political communication between New Delhi and different advanced nations is primarily subject to facilitating India in strategic dimensions. On contrast lines, the government of Pakistan always remained ambitious and sincere to keep regional political order balanced and peaceful, a reflection of a defensive approach. Various state officials of the government have formally acknowledged this defensive approach from political and military domains. The determination of the formal governments of Pakistan and the positions of Pakistan's armed forces always remained committed to securing the balancing foundations of the South Asian nuclearised region. Pakistani authorities recently reconfirmed Pakistan's perspective on the regional strategic competition with India in the Shangri La Dialogue 2023. An issue brief prepared by the Islamabad-based independent research institute ISSI mentioned the position of Pakistan in the region competition with India in which the government of Pakistan always preferred to take essential security measures against Indian prestige-driven strategic planning.¹⁰⁴ The promotion of formal narratives of both states on different occasions could be accessed from the official statements of the two-sided government authorities. These statements could be treated as adequate primary sources for validating that the Indian government is committed to keeping regional politics in its favour through adopting various policy measures, whereas the government of Pakistan is still loyal to its agenda of supporting the balancing role of regional deterrence in the nuclearised region.

4.2 Way-Forwards

Based on the scenario mentioned above, it can easily be maintained that the South Asian regional security environment is heavily dependent on the changing patterns of the India-Pakistan strategic contest. The unending arms race between both contestants of South Asia defines the

¹⁰³ Shivshankar Menon, *India's Foreign Affairs Strategy* (New Delhi: Brookings, 2020), 14.

¹⁰⁴ Ghazala Yasmin Jalil, "Changing Global and Regional Security Dimensions: Pakistan's Perspective at Shangri La Dialogue, *ISSI Issue Brief*, [IB_Ghazala_June_12_2023.pdf \(issi.org.pk\)](https://www.issi.org.pk/IB_Ghazala_June_12_2023.pdf)

merits and demerits of regional strategic stability. In the debate of consistently damaging values of strategic stability, the contemporary ambition of Modi's leadership for bringing modernisation in the conventional and non-conventional capabilities of armed forces is one of the prime factors degrading the regional strategic matrix between New Delhi and Islamabad. In this way, support for the present status of strategic stability in the region has become an essential task for the Indian and Pakistani governments. The responsibility lies on both contesting governments because the governments of both contesting states are actively involved in an action-reaction-based arms race. More responsibility lies on New Delhi, where acquiring a regionally hegemonic status always remained a guiding principle of Indian strategic posture. While keeping in mind the central theme of this study, New Delhi's growing reliance on allocating more budgets to its defence industry has been identified as one of the leading factors undermining the value of strategic stability in the nuclearised subcontinent. The unprecedented growth of Indian domestic weapon production has been improved under Modi's strategic vision, which also needs the international community's serious responses. Based on the impartial and rational analysis of this research, the following way-forwards could be considered adequate to address the challenges of India's increasing interest in bringing modern war-fighting trends in its regular armed forces by allocating more economic resources.

5. The growing military spending of New Delhi has become an undeniable reality of contemporary world politics, and it has made India a prominent player in the international weapon market. The annual reports of SIPRI have frequently mentioned that India is securing a prominent position in the international weapon market with the help of its broader multileveled global strategic engagement.¹⁰⁵ Various other reports of international independent institutions and leading policy organisations have also confirmed the facts quoted by SIPRI in its annual reports about India improving ranks in the global lists of states with heavy military spending. The analysis in these reports has also provided the reasons behind New Delhi's increasing military budget and its appropriate implementation in the targeted areas. In this way, a pragmatic approach is required to convince Indian leaders of the worse impacts of their quest to modernise defence forces on the nuclearised subcontinent's entire security apparatus. The combined efforts of regional and extra-

¹⁰⁵ "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database," *Stockholm International Peace Research Institute-SIPRI*, [SIPRI Military Expenditure Database | SIPRI](#)

regional powers are needed to address this challenge because the increasing defence spending is purely a matter of Indian domestic politics.

6. From the South Asian region, the government of Pakistan is required to take appropriate security measures against the growing regional compulsion through keeping efforts for stabilising regional deterrence, parallel to proposing to the Indian government different bilateral measures for ensuring South Asian regional peace and security. The recent decision of Pakistan to open the Kartarpur Corridor was an appreciable initiative marked by the international community. However, this objective remained deprived of the reciprocal measures of the Indian government. A work by Iqbal Singh Sevea, *The Kartarpur Corridor: Symbolism, Politics and Impact on India-Pakistan Relations*, listed the positive messages attached to the Kartarpur Corridor.¹⁰⁶ The responses of the Modi government under its modern extremist agenda changed the legislative status of Kashmir in the Indian Constitution. The changed status by India in the occupied areas of Kashmir increased the security demands of New Delhi and allowed government officials to deploy more forces in Kashmir. Thus, the role of the international community is essential in this regard due to the fact that the diplomatic support of India in its regional standing is seeking serious responses from the international community.
7. The present patterns of Indian defence spending against territorially adjoining states are taking different measures to secure the geostrategic interests of New Delhi against Islamabad and Beijing. In South Asia, the issue of Kashmir is a bone of contention between two neighbouring rival powers equipped with nuclear weapons. The post-1998 politics of South Asia made Kashmir a nuclear flashpoint between India and Pakistan, and it is the gravitational point of the India-Pakistan decades-long rivalry. Indian formal security establishment has justified its military expenditures under the prevailing scenarios of sub-conventional warfare in South Asia concerning the Kashmir issue. The increasing security demands on the Kashmir issue force New Delhi to keep the Kashmir issue away from Pakistan while weakening the position of Islamabad on the Kashmir issue. In this way, the unresolved Kashmir issue is the prime source of Indian increasing military spending, which could be countered through diplomatic pressures of the international community. The

¹⁰⁶ Iqbal Singh Sevea, "The Kartarpur Corridor: Symbolism, Politics, and Impacts on India-Pakistan Relations," *ISAS Insight* 525, (December 2018), 1-5.

resolution of the Kashmir issue under the UN Resolutions and the creation of peace in Kashmir parallel to preventing massive human rights abuses in the Indian Illegally Occupied Jammu Kashmir (IIOJK). The active role of the international community is required to tackle this issue as India is getting prominent positions in various multilateral intergovernmental forums of the world.

8. The desire to join more multilateral platforms of the international community is dragging New Delhi towards the emerging power centres of the world, in which New Delhi has started taking different multilateral initiatives beyond the traditional bilateral and multilateral alliances. The rise of unilateralism in the Indian strategic dimension of Indian foreign policy has recently been discussed by Chietigi Bajpae in his book *China in India's Post-Cold War Engagement with Southeast Asia*. Bajpae explained that New Delhi's inclusion in the trilateral and quadrilateral strategic alliances of the Southeast Asian region is an appropriate example of Indian unilateralism in the world.¹⁰⁷ In this way, the greater responsibility lies on the states accepting Indian unilateral alliances or adding New Delhi in their respective unilateral alliances because the states constructing strategic ties are required to rationally evaluate the relevance of their supplied strategic assistance to India with the regional security environment of South Asian nuclear politics.
9. In the debate of New Delhi's growing strategic collaborations with the international community, the role of great powers cannot be marginalised because the conventional foundations of Indian foreign policy are heavily dependent on the changing nature of great power politics. The Indian leadership always remained active in securing multiple sources of strategic supplies without clearly announcing their rivalry with any specific state. The history of the Cold War, post-Cold War, and post-nuclearised South Asia are the appropriate validations that the Indian strategic community is active in keeping New Delhi aligned with the great powers. The work of Stephen P. Cohen can be considered valuable in this regard because a co-authored study of Cohen with Sunil Dasgupta narrated the New Delhi policy of massive weaponisation without declaring a specific enemy. This co-authored study, *Arming without Aiming: India's Military Modernization*, stated multiple sources of the Indian government for bringing advanced warfare technologies into the

¹⁰⁷ Chietigi Bajpae, *China in India's Post-Cold War Engagement with Southeast Asia* (New York: Routledge, 2022), 14.

domestic weapon industry.¹⁰⁸ In this way, the leaders of major powers needed to pay serious attention towards deploying their supplied weapons systems and advanced warfare technologies in target areas. Such responses of great powers should be free from their economic and strategic interests.

10. The efforts of the international community, free from their varying economic and strategic interests, could be sufficient to provide a realisation to the Indian government of the degrading role of the regional strategic matrix between New Delhi and Islamabad. The states having cooperative ties with New Delhi could play an effective role in securing the future of the South Asian region, where the Indian scientific community is growing its capabilities in the new domain of information and space technologies. The prevailing weaponisation trends of information technologies such as AI and the ongoing race of sending satellites into space fascinate the Indian strategic community, which could let New Delhi use both information technology domains for defence purposes.¹⁰⁹ Presently, the government authorities from New Delhi are introducing various plans for achieving remarkable developments in both domains to serve the strategic future objectives. The performances of DRDO and ISRO are appropriate to prove that the New Delhi-based security planners have started exploring AI and space technologies. The international community is required to address this challenge. Disruptive technologies could not be cost-effective for India, as they will initiate new trends in the regional arms race between New Delhi and Islamabad.¹¹⁰
11. The role of a multilateral, regional framework is an appropriate avenue for creating productive negotiations between New Delhi and Islamabad. An effective role of the regional multilateral framework of SAARC could be improved to counter regional security challenges in South Asia. In addition to SAARC, various other multilateral platforms of the international community could effectively reduce tensions between India and Pakistan by taking impartially rational measures.

¹⁰⁸ Stephen P. Cohen and Sunil Dasgupta, *Arming without Aiming: India's Military Modernization* (Washington: Brookings, 2013), 12.

¹⁰⁹ B. R. Guruprasad, "Understanding India's International Space Cooperation Behavior," *India Quarterly* 04, Vol. 74 (December 2018), 456.

¹¹⁰ Rizwana Abbasi and Muhammad Saeed Uzzaman, *Changing Patterns of Warfare between India and Pakistan: Navigating the Impact of New and Disruptive Technologies* (New York: Routledge, 2023), 10.

4.3 Scope of CBMs and Strategic Stability

With the help of the way-forwards mentioned above, the values of strategic stability could be empowered in South Asia parallel to encouraging the regional actors, India and Pakistan, to take positive measures to support the scope of stability under the nuclear shadows. The efforts for managing the paradoxical feature of regional strategic stability in South Asia have been introduced by Pakistan on various occasions. The international community has also shown a deep interest in improving the condition of the regional strategic matrix by introducing several confidence-building measures, multidimensional diplomatic engagement, and proposing crisis management strategies for the resolution of longstanding disputes.¹¹¹ Moreover, the efforts for initiating bilateral talks on the inflexible formal position of both nuclear powers have been suggested by Pakistan to mitigate the risks of any level of escalation. In this way, a brief history of various efforts can be maintained to ensure the values of strategic stability in South Asian nuclear politics. All these efforts were mainly proposed in different frameworks of strategic confidence-building measures to reduce the ongoing multifaceted tensions between New Delhi and Islamabad. It is widely believed that the objective of bringing flexibility in the inflexible political and diplomatic interaction of India and Pakistan could support the notion of strategic stability in the region. Existing measures for the empowerment of the notion of strategic stability in the South Asian Region have rarely remained the focus of academic and political communities. A Pakistan-based study independently conducted by Asma Shakir Khawaja discussed the scope of strategic stability linked with articulating strategic confidence-building measures. The study of Khawaja *CBM-Shaking Hands with Clenched Fists: The Grand Trunk Road to Confidence Building Measures between Pakistan and India* primarily explored the probable scenario of India-Pakistan CBMs generally and in strategic dimensions particularly.¹¹² Akin to Khawaja, few other authors slightly addressed the challenges to the CBMs between India and Pakistan and the formal inflexibilities and rising security demands of both states as the agenda-spoilers.

In addition to the lack of an effective mechanism for bilateral CBMs, the role of modern warfare technologies is an important factor, as is briefly discussed earlier. Both developments

¹¹¹ Raja Pandit, "DRDO Plans Star Wars-style Weapons for Battle of Future," *The Times of India*, September 14, 2020, [DRDO plans Star Wars-style weapons for battles of future | India News - Times of India \(indiatimes.com\)](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/DRDO-plans-Star-Wars-style-weapons-for-battles-of-future/articleshow/75484817.cms)

¹¹² Asma Shakri Khawaja, *Shaking Hands with Clenched Fists: The Grand Trunk Road to Confidence Building Measures between Pakistan and India* (Islamabad: National Defence University, 2018), 109.

jeopardise the status of the regional strategic matrix between New Delhi and Islamabad. Integrating modern technologies with the conventional war-fighting capabilities of the Indian armed forces is purely a domestic matter of India, which the Indian government justifies on rational grounds. New Delhi's ambitions for becoming an important player in global power politics and its contradicting positions to China in the broader Asian power balance is the actual factor that has convinced the Indian decision-makers on the strengthening of the country's strategic muscles in the territorial and maritime domains. The impacts of rising levels of Indian military preparedness are attached to the values of strategic stability in the nuclearised region where nuclear weapons have made war less likely, parallel to augmenting the strategic differences between New Delhi and Islamabad. The defensive moves of New Delhi against Beijing are logical in rising Indian defence standing, but its advancement against the territorially adjoin states adds Pakistan to the Sino-Indian confrontation. Indian military advancement is a response of New Delhi to China's growing military advancement as a major global power, this factor inflicts a sense of Pakistan's insecurity. It compels Islamabad-based defence planners to take reactionary measures to India's increasing reliance on allocating more economic resources to its military budget. The enduring rivalry between New Delhi and Islamabad and Pakistan's increasing economic collaboration with China is the prime force, adding Pakistan to the Sino-Indian competition and making India more hostile towards its neighbouring China and Pakistan. The Indian position in the South Asian region is important here because the role of India in the nuclearised subcontinent has great significance for South Asian security, which is under the intense debate of the stability-instability paradox.¹¹³ The paradoxical features of the South Asian regional strategic matrix between New Delhi and Islamabad have been translated by various scholars in their analysis. Sometimes, it is called ugly stability due to the growing confrontational politics of India and Pakistan in the presence of nuclear deterrence in the nuclearised region.

In this way, the efforts to stabilise the degrading status of the regional strategic matrix could be improved for the security and stability of the entire South Asian region. The degrading status of strategic stability has structural reasons linked to the conventional foundations of India-Pakistan strategic thinking. Indian leaders considered the positions of territorially adjoining Pakistan and India as the major security threats to New Delhi's strategic aspiration. The

¹¹³ Rajesh Rajagopalan, "What Stability-Instability Paradox? Subnational Conflicts and the Nuclear Risks in South Asia," *SASSU Research Paper 04* (February 2006), 04.

formulation of such complex security competition between India and Pakistan, in the presence of the United States and China, is dubbed by a few scholars the ugly stability. A publication of RAND *Stability in South Asia* called the stability-instability paradox of South Asia the ugly stability due to various reasons linked with the evolving defence postures of both nuclear powers.¹¹⁴ It is suggested in this published document that the continuation of such ugly stability contains substantial potential to divert the future armed conflict between New Delhi and Islamabad towards unconventional dimensions. In this way, the constructive engagement of the India-Pakistan strategic community could alter the responses of international strategic circles towards South Asia by improving the values of peace and stability in the region. With the support of international and regional multilateral frameworks, the ugly stability could be translated into improved stability on impartial and rational grounds.

4.4 Concluding Analysis

The debate in this final chapter attempted to evaluate the contemporary status of strategic stability in the nuclearised subcontinent, where the Indian defence planners are the prime hurdle in improving the degrading conditions of the regional strategic matrix in South Asia. The mainstream Indian defence planners are shaping different security policies under Modi's strategic vision and political manifestations. These manifestations persistently emphasise the stretching of New Delhi's strategic muscles over the territorial and maritime affairs of South Asia, where Pakis are the potential challenger of India. The increasing defence spending of India under the Modi government and the efforts of the Modi government to bring force modernisation into Indian regular armed forces pulled Pakistan from its defensive strategic behaviour. It compels Pakistan to follow India's suit, as revealed in the recent episode of the India-Pakistan conflict in 2019. The Pulwama crisis did not only alarm the security bells of South Asia, but it sensitised the advocates of peace and stability in the world.¹¹⁵ With grand strategic designs and desires, India acquired nuclear weapons and induced a security dilemma, which forced Pakistan to go for nuclear options as well. This development of 1998 has already turned regional politics more serious and challenging due to the prevalence of nuclear shadows in the regional security environment. In this way, India has always remained a trend-setter in South Asia by taking various practical measures

¹¹⁴ Ashley J. Tellis, *Stability in South Asia*, *RAND Document Briefing*, [Stability in South Asia \(rand.org\)](https://www.rand.org/pubs/docuements/tellis-stability-in-south-asia)

¹¹⁵ Moeed M. Yusuf, "The Pulwama Crisis: Flirting with War in a Nuclear Environment," *Arms Control Today* 49, no. 04 (May 2019), 07.

for the achievement of its strategic ambitions. The arrival of Modi has further complicated the situation because Modi's ultra-nationalist agenda weakens the value of peace and stability between the two nuclear powers of South Asia. Modi's efforts to revise its leading defence priorities with the help of domestically and globally manufactured advanced military devices are constantly changing the threat perception of Pakistan. This scenario eventually results in the continuation of an unending arms race in the region.

In this way, the future of South Asian regional politics portrays an awful picture of regional security in which the question of empowering the values of strategic stability is still unanswered. The lack of interest of New Delhi in supporting and stabilising the region strategically disturbs the entire security apparatus of the region. The way-forwards discussed above are the proposed ideas containing optimistic solutions to the problem, which are difficult to turn into reality due to the changing nature of global power politics. In other words, the application of the discussed way-forwards is purely linked with the decisions of the Indian government and the impartial role of the international community. The increasing strategic and economic interests of great powers in India are the prime reason that decreases the relevance of these way-forwards with reality. As mentioned in the neo-realist literature, the states are always cautious about the relative distribution of power in the international system, and state governments always prefer to remain strategically vigilant about the changing attributes of the global security environment, where New Delhi is not an exception.

Conclusion and Findings

This study is qualitative in nature and theoretically evaluates the notion of strategic stability in the South Asian regional nuclear politics to deconstruct the Indian aspirations for becoming a regionally hegemonic nation under Modi government's strategies. The main argument in this study tried to provide a comprehensive analysis of the Indian increasing defense budget under Modi government, which is directly linked with the India-Pakistan unending hostility. The defence budget of India tries to meet the security demands of the country while ignoring its security implications on the region in general and Pakistan in particular. Indian government under Modi Administration is continuously monitoring the changing South Asian regional and global power politics and accordingly aligning itself with the changing patterns of regional and global power dynamics with the objective of keeping New Delhi's vigilant and active against the growing structural pressures of international system. This aspect has kept the Indian mainstream defence planners to remain cognizant about the Indian defence system and keeping New Delhi capable of achieving the strategic aspirations of Indian nation. The leading state officials under Modi's leadership are highly determined to take sufficient security measure against the emerging threats from the territorially adjoining nation, China and Pakistan mainly. To achieve its desired strategic intent, contemporary Indian government has decided to provide adequate financial support to the indigenous defence industry while enabling its defence planners to develop various strategic collaborations with the leading Military Industrial Complexes (MICs) of the world. Accordingly the study has dilated upon the progress of Indian defence budget and its changing attributes under different tenures of Modi's Administration in which the formal Indian defence planners remained committed with the objective of upholding vision of Indian military modernization through sufficient economic resources. The Modi administration continued the objective of keeping New Delhi militarily powerful with the support of diverse financial resources. This development is primarily the outcome of New Delhi's growing alignment of its indigenous weapon industry with the states having advanced weapon industries. Under Modi's government, the advancement of defence economy for procurement and development of modern weapon system emerged as a dominant force in the conventional patterns of Indian strategic thinking. The fundamental aim of this pattern of strategic thinking is to keep its defence procurement capabilities updated and advanced to enhance the Indian defence posture against the potential security threats.

Modi's aim for the attainment of his strategic vision is linked with the regional and global positions of India which shapes the present face of Indian strategic thinking. The political manifestations of Modi's strategic vision have focused the economic strengthens of Indian defence capabilities and the increasing tendencies of New Delhi's policy of modernizing Indian armed forces. It has enabled formally the Indian Armed Forces to improve their conventional war-fighting capabilities with the help of the allocated financial resources. Through improving its indigenous defence industry and increasing foreign supplies, New Delhi has made progress in manufacturing different military equipment such as aircraft, naval vessels, tanks, artillery systems. The prevalence of these weapon modernizing trends in India have witnessed substantial improvements in the domestic weapon productions, which could broadly considered increasing interests of New Delhi in the security and defence affairs. The role of advanced technologies cannot be ignored in this regard because the modern military technologies have helped Indian domestic weapon industry in producing several advanced military equipment. Indian IT industry has moved towards AI technology which is in the process of further improving Indian conventional weapon systems with the support of different fully-autonomous and semi-autonomous weapon system. Indian biggest research and development organization, the DRDO, is fully devoted and committed for developing fully autonomous weapon system to increase the operational capabilities of Indian regular armed forces under the shadows of modern warfare technologies. The DRDO has produced different Unmanned Air Vehicles (UAVs) of different ranges. *Rustom* is one of the famous medium-altitude long-endurance UAV which is the Light Canard Research Aircraft (LCRA)¹¹⁶ and capable of serving the different operational objectives of Indian regular military operations. Akin to *Rustom*, the intense engagement of scientific community in the defence sector has let Indian armed forces to acquire various other unmanned military devices like the *Lakshya* (a Pilotless Target Aircraft), *NISHANT* (a Multi-Mission Unmanned Aerial Vehicle), and *Ghatak* an Unmanned Combat Air Vehicle (UCAV).¹¹⁷ These developments validated the argument in this research that the Indian government is highly ambitious in integrating the modern warfare technologies with the regular warfare capabilities of its armed forces. Besides numerous government initiatives, different other state-level organizations are also engaged by the government for conducting research on emerging technological trends in

¹¹⁶ "Rustom-1," Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO), *Ministry of Defence-Government of India*, accessed from <https://www.drdo.gov.in/rustom-1>

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

the weapon industry. The exploration and applications of advanced technologies in the defence sector ultimately has started leaving worse impacts on the regional security environment of South Asia. Therefore, this study attempted to provide a platform to the readers to understand the linkages between increasing Indian defence spending under the strategic aspirations of New Delhi in the regional and extra-regional affairs and the resultant intensification of this increasing defence spending on the regional security environment of nuclearized subcontinent.

In this way, it is appropriate to maintain that the contemporary Indian governments under Modi administration are fully committed for the uplift of Indian domestic weapon industry in line with the emerging technological trends around the world. This dynamic approach for keeping the Indian defense system updated and efficient has emerged as notable point in the history of Indian weapon modernization because the acquisition of developed weapon system mainly defines the strategic posture of New Delhi in its regional nuclear politics. The major transformation and modernization in Indian Armed forces is a reflection of irrefutable connection between Modi's vision and the vividly changing Indian defence industry and the connections of factors with the Indian changing defence posture against the territorially adjoining nations. In this way, this study has slightly analyzed the logics behind New Delhi's extensive focus on the upgradation of its regular armed forces and the development of more efficient and more active Indian Armed Forces against the potential security threats. New Delhi-based strategic community has considered the neighboring Pakistan and China the more serious threats to Indian geostrategic interests in its home region. The position of Pakistan in the South Asian regional affairs and Chinese standing in the broader Asian power balance are the main concerns of Indian contemporary strategic behavior which has further intensified with the development of more closed Chinese and Pakistani economic collaboration. The Indian strategic community has translated the rise of Sino-Pak economic collaboration as a major threat to New Delhi with the signing of mega economic corridor project between Beijing and Islamabad. Various formal positions of Indian leaders and the official policy documents of New Delhi have confirmed that the Modi government is actively engaged in taking various strategic initiatives for the strengthening of Indian defence against the rising potential security threats from China-Pakistan economic cooperation. The Indian leaders under Modi's governments have considered China and Pakistan separately and the emerging collaboration of both states mutually are the reasons of present defence posture of New Delhi, which is the structural factor compelling Modi government for consistently increasing its defence

capabilities. Different statements of Prime Minister Modi can also be considered the main supporting point for validating that the Modi's strategic vision is gradually taking various rational measures for Indian domestic weapon industry.

In order to address the security concerns origination from geopolitical compulsions of regional politics and its inevitable pressures on the strategic positions of New Delhi and Islamabad, the governments of both states have acquired the nuclear triad capabilities against each other. Pakistan's decision for announcing its naval strategic capabilities was a response to the New Delhi's decision of launching *Arihant* a nuclear capable submarine in 2009.¹¹⁸ The strategic developments in the maritime domain are the additional another confirmations to intensifying India-Pakistan arms race where India is a trend-setter and the prime state for taking Pakistan towards undesired directions in the defense affairs. The modernization of naval capabilities has updated the ongoing arms race between New Delhi and Islamabad while pushing both states towards the acquisition of advanced naval capabilities. *Arihant* is a purely a domestically developed submarine of India whereas the same other naval developments are taking place in Indian Navy with the help of foreign supplies. The *Kalvari* and diesel-electric submarine is designed with the help of France and *Shishumar* submarine is a joint project between Indian and German navies.¹¹⁹ Russia has also provided India essential technologies for the building of *Sindhughosh* submarine for enhancing the deep-sea operational capabilities of Indian Navy.¹²⁰ These naval developments hamper the strategic calculations of Islamabad and inflict a sense of insecurity in Pakistan's mindset, while forcing the government of Pakistan to take substantial measures for keeping the regional strategically matrix balanced. Islamabad's quest for maintaining its counterbalancing potential against Indian increasing reliance on the improved defense capabilities of its three armed forces wings. In this way, the militarization of Indian Ocean generally and the Arabian Sea particularly dragged the South Asian regional politics towards a maritime competition. The leading circles of international intellectual communities have started visualizing the future of India-Pakistan conflict in the surrounding oceanic waters where the New Delhi-based strategic thinkers has translated the construction of Gawadar Port under the shadows of Pakistan-China economic corridor project. Indian open opposition to the Pak-China economic

¹¹⁸ Joseph P Chacko, *Foxtrot to Arihant: The Story of Indian Navy's Submarine Arm* (New Delhi: Frontier India Publishing, 2018), 18.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

corridor project has convinced the Modi government for allocating more resources to the India regular armed forces.

The multifaceted naval developments are originally associated with the New Delhi's determination for strengthening its second-strike capabilities which could be attained from the space domain as well. The space development and explorations has already started in India for attaining landmark achievements with the help of Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) which is an Indian national space agency committed to conduct different space research programs parallel to providing a formal platform to Indian armed forces for having access to the space. The ISRO has sent various space missions for the purpose of flourishing the space capabilities of the country which could be used for the strategic purposes in future.¹²¹ The progress of ISRO with the allocation of more funding under Modi government has invited various private companies to work with the ISRO for the improvement of its existing space capabilities. In this way, the persistently swelling space capabilities of India with the support of improved role of ISRO is leading India towards improvement of its space capabilities, presently, for the peaceful purposes. The combination of naval and space capabilities are primarily pushing Pakistan to match its naval and space capabilities with India for keeping the regional strategic politics balance. The developments in the maritime and space domains are fundamentally aimed to improve the second strike capabilities of New Delhi parallel to completing its nuclear triad. These trends have constantly increasing the arms race between New Delhi and Islamabad and convinced the governments of both states to keep their strategic positions empowered and efficient. In this race, India always remained ambitious to take the lead in introducing new weapon trends in the South Asian region without calculating its impacts on the scope of regional strategic stability. Thereby, the complicating deterring role of nuclear weapons and their projection in the military doctrines of India and Pakistan intensified the regional security environment of South Asia. The doctrinal attributes of New Delhi and Islamabad have introduced certain doctrinal developments in the nuclearized region where leading state official are consistent with their strategic disagreements on various points.

Based on above mentions scenario, it is appropriate to maintain that the increasing defence spending by Modi government by enhancing military budget for modernization of India armed

¹²¹ Ramabhadran Aravamudan and Gita Aravamudan, *ISRO: A Personal History* (Haryana: Harper Collins, 2017), 22.

leaves wide impacts on the regional strategic matrix of nuclear subcontinent. The improvement in the indigenous defence industry and the acquisition of additional foreign supplies has led this study towards the notion of strategic stability in the nuclearized region which has turned the region into center of global arms control debates. The debates of global arms control and disarmament has started focusing the nuclearized regional order of subcontinent by analyzing the ongoing arms race as a potential factor in undermining the notion of strategic stability in the region. The rapid pace of modernization transcending from conventional to nuclear domain under Modi's Era has spiraled a nuclear arm race between New Delhi and Islamabad which has resultantly turned South Asian region into a global nuclear flash point. With grand strategic designs and progressive security desires, India acquired nuclear weapons and induced a security dilemma which forced Pakistan to go for nuclear as well. This nuclear race has resulted into stability-instability-paradox between regional arch rivals and affected the notion of strategic stability in South Asia. Contemporary Modi's Administrations have shaped the discourse of strategic stability in South Asia through rapid military modernization, deliberate maintenance of conventional asymmetry, application of sub-conventional warfare, regional dominance and global aspirations interlinked with containment of China under Indo-US strategic partnership. The study critically highlights this point that weakens the notion of strategic stability between the two regional powers of South Asia.

Indian efforts of bringing various modern trends in its military modernization under the Modi's strategic vision which compels Pakistan to take appropriate counter measures. An overwhelming wave multiplying military modernizing trends of Indian armed forces by allocating adequate economic resources pulls Pakistan to emphasize its defence planning through taking the following measures which could be treated as the core findings of this study

1. The government of Pakistan needs to adopt a pragmatic approach for the regional security environment by analyzing the Indian strategic behavior and the changing attributes of Indian defence spending. The combination of qualitative and quantitative improvements in Indian defence budget has showed that the Indian government is highly-ambitious to empower the role of its formal armed forces against the potential security threats. While keeping in mind, the conceptual understandings of the South Asian regional security environment and the Indian evolving strategic posture will enable the government of Pakistan to revise or improve its position in the regional strategic competition with the

neighboring state. In this way, the adaptation of a pragmatic approach consisting of various rational measures could be helpful for Pakistan which could let the government of Pakistan to calculate the actual strength of its armed forces. In other words, a comprehensive understanding of the prevailing security scenario of the South Asian regional security environment is required by Pakistan which could let the government authorities to understand the status of regional strategic competition under realities of new world.

2. In the emerging realities of new world, the role of information technology cannot be marginalized because the contemporary Indian military preparedness is rapidly increasing its dependence on the modern warfare technologies. The acquisition of modern warfare technologies has diverted New Delhi's defence planning towards the AI technology parallel to implementing it into security and defence. This development is intended to launch an AI-specific arms race in which Pakistan will be forced to take appropriate countermeasure. Thus, the quest for improving the operational capabilities of Pakistan armed forces requires the government of Pakistan to make remarkable achievements in the information technology. Presently, the formal documents of the government and various official statements of the leading policymakers have acknowledged the significance of AI technology in the defence sector. There is a need to take practical measures in converting the digital vision of Pakistan into a reality which will empower the defence sector of the country, by making it powerful enough to serve the strategic objectives of the nation.
3. While keeping in mind the Indian improving defence capabilities in the maritime and space domains, the Islamabad-based strategic community is required to produce adequate financial resources to support the strategic vision of the country which would refine the second strike capabilities of the state. The allocation of sufficient funding will let government to address the financial deficiencies of the maritime and space domains while believing the significances of both sectors in the country's defence planning. The achievements in the mentioned domains will let the government authorities to sustain the counter balancing potential of the nation against potential threats originating from India. In this way, the vision of Pakistan for stabilizing the regional strategic matrix will become a powerful source for keeping the regional strategic politics balanced.

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