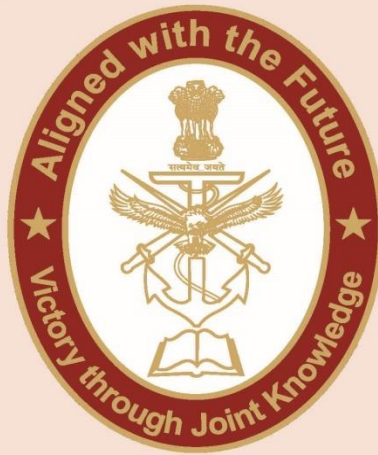


# CENTRE FOR JOINT WARFARE STUDIES



## CENJOWS

**RETHINKING  
MILITARY  
CAPABILITY AND  
FORCE  
STRUCTURING**



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### Introduction

1. India is probably the only country which faces multiple threats along our land borders which has been a consistent historical trend since ancient times. While threat from the Western border has been in perpetuity, manifestation along the northern border has been a recent phenomenon. Further, if we consider the Chinese effort to isolate India along its maritime boundary, threat to India appears not only dangerous but ominous.



Figure 1 Hemming India Along its Maritime Boundaries

Chinese activities in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean Region such as development of a \$1.5 billion gas and oil pipeline from Kyaukpyu port in Myanmar in the Bay of Bengal to

Yunan in China, development of CMEC (China Myanmar Economic Corridor), establishment of a Naval Base in Bangladesh, purchase of two submarines from China by Bangladesh, seizing control of Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka, presence in Gwadar and development of CPEC in Pakistan and establishment of military bases in Djibouti, Maldives and Seychelles have not only enlarged the presence of China globally but also added the maritime dimension of maritime threat to India. Maritime threat to India has further magnified due to Chinese effort to gain access to Iranian Chabahar and Jask ports in the Persian Gulf. Chinese effort while aiming to overcome the Malacca Dilemma also enables it to encircle India. China has also been testing waters against the US, Japan, Australia and ASEAN countries such as the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam by gradually pushing for its interests in the South and East China seas.

### **Multiple External and Internal Threats**

2. Security situation of India is assuming greater seriousness due to China – Pak nexus disregarding existing bilateral and international treaties and laws. In this process the smaller neighbours of India are also under constant influence of China to adopt an unfriendly approach towards India. Although some of the blame for such a situation lies at the door step of India, the need today is to find a way to deal with collusive threat of China and Pakistan. In addition, India also need to take the rest of the neighbours on board before they are completely poached by China.

3. Internally too, the three prime trouble spots remain active i.e., Jammu & Kashmir (J&K), North East (NE) and Left Wing Extremism (LWE). This diverts considerable economic and human resources away from productive sectors of our economy. Disturbed internal security besides affecting the growth of our economy also adversely impacts on our conventional military capability development. **Given the budgetary constraints due to pressing need of investments in other sectors of National Security such as economic, food, health, water and social security,**

**we need to develop military capability that is able to respond to current and emerging challenges smartly and intelligently without depriving in any way our ability to effectively deal with the external and internal security threats.** The way possibly lies not in playing the catch up game with China in conventional capabilities but improvise our doctrine, strategy and force structuring in a manner to negate the conventional advantage enjoyed by China against India. The capability gap between our adversaries may be appreciated from the tables 1 to 4 given below.

### Inter Se Capability

4. **Comparative Data of Military Strengths.** To get a comprehensive picture, capabilities of the leading defence force has also been listed in the Tables. The comparative data has been taken from Global Firepower (GFP) Website. The GFP ranking of 138 countries is based on values related to manpower, equipment, natural resources, finances, and geography represented by 50+ individual factors. The tables below list the comparative capabilities on salient parameters of India (ranked 3<sup>rd</sup>), China (2<sup>nd</sup>), Pakistan (15<sup>th</sup>) and USA (1<sup>st</sup>).

**Table1: Comparative Combat Power and Defence Capabilities**

Capabilities		India	China	Pakistan	USA
Combat Firepower Potential	Ranking	4 <sup>th</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>	15 <sup>th</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>
	Score Lesser number depicts higher capability	0.0953	0.0691	0.2364	0.0606
Active Defence Personnel		1,444,000	2,183,000	6,54,000	1,400,000
Defence Budget		USD 61 billion	USD 237 billion	USD 11 billion	USD 750 billion
Forex		USD 585 billion	USD 3.3 trillion	USD 13.9 billion	USD 3.1 trillion
Purchasing Power / GDP		USD 10.065/2.87 trillion	USD 24.81/14.34 trillion	USD 1.1 /0.28 trillion	USD 19.81/21.43 trillion
Borders		13888 km	22457 km	7527 km	12048 km
Coastal Boundary		7000 km	14500 km	1046 km	19924 km
Ports		13	22	2	35
Airports		346	507	151	13513
Economic Outlook		Negative. Bounce back in 2021. IMF estimate 8.1% Growth. Fastest growing in 2021 as per Nomura	Positive	Very Poor Performance	Slightly negative performance

**Table 2: Land Forces**

Capabilities	India	China	Pakistan	USA
Combat Tanks	4292	3500	2200	6289
Armoured Vehicles	8686	33000	7330	39253
Self-Propelled Arty	235	3800	429	1465
Towed Arty	4060	3600	1226	27110
Rocket Projectiles	266	2650	100	1366

**Table 3 : Naval Forces**

Capabilities	India	China	Pakistan	USA
Fleet Strength	285	777	100	490
Air Craft Carrier	1	2	0	20
Submarines	16	74	8	66
Destroyers	10	36	0	91
Frigates	13	52	9	0
Corvettes	19	50	2	19

**Table 4 : Air Forces**

Capabilities	India	China	Pakistan	USA
Total Air Crafts (ac)	2123	3210	1372	13264
Combat ac	538	1232	356	2085
Dedicated Attack ac	172	371	90	715
Transport	250	224	49	945
Trainers	359	513	314	2643
Special Mission	77	111	29	742
Helicopter	722	911	346	5768
Attack Helicopter	23	281	56	967

5. **Analysis of Relative Potential.** Salient deductions that can be drawn from the above data are:-

(a) Combat firepower of our primary adversary China (0.0691) is very high vis a vis India (0.091) and in fact it is fast catching up with the US (0.0606). Implying an urgent need for India to bridge the gap with China in order to deter China in the conventional domain.

(b) Economically both in GDP and PPP terms we are lagging behind China and in PPP terms China has already surpassed the US in 2016 and is rapidly increasing the gap. In comparison India is way behind and even if it wants to catch up it cannot do so in the near future. **Economic constraint**

**directly affects military capability building. Therefore, there is a need to find smart solutions to deal with the dual security threat. Answer lies in developing smart military security strategies and accordingly appropriate capabilities to deter our adversaries.**

(c) As far as land forces are concerned gap in mechanization should not unduly worry us as the theatre of operations along the Northern land borders comprises rugged, uncongenial mountainous, high altitude and super high altitude areas in which foot infantry, precision fire power backed by state of the art aero-space technologies will call the shots. Quantitatively the gap being large, Indian Land forces must become leaner, agile and capable of pre-empting the adversary's salami slicing operations such as its actions in Chumar, Depsang, Daulat Beg Oldie (DBO) sector, Sumdrong Cho, Galwan, Hotspring, and Pangang Tso.

(d) Despite reforms post Kargil war India has been consistently surprised. Even the Galwan incident is attributable to intelligence failure despite a number of indicators at the strategic level. There is a need to create a reliable intelligence gathering and information operations capability so as to become proactive rather than reactive in dealing with threats emanating from adversaries.

(e) In the Aerospace domain too the quantitative gap is significant even if we compare the Sectoral forces likely to be available to China and India along the Northern borders. Qualitatively too the Chinese enjoy a marked edge. Numerical superiority of China has to be dealt by doctrinal changes based on new and emerging technologies ex import in short term and indigenous production in the medium to long term. India would also need to make up the gap by ramping up production of alternate firepower delivery

systems such as missiles and rockets in which it possesses decent indigenous capability.

(f) **Amongst the three services it is the Navy which can prove decisive in the future as Indian Navy enjoys tremendous indigenous development capability in Naval Systems such as Submarines, Aircraft Carriers and electronics.** Further given the shared threat from China to other leading nations in the Indo – Pacific provides a scope for alliances and partnerships for example Malabar and Milan Joint Exercise Platforms. **Mutual threats and interest also give an opportunity for strategic cooperation and partnerships such as QUAD.**

(g) Inadequate integration/ jointness results in lack of optimization of effects in warfighting. The institution of CDS has just been created with the task of raising Integrated Theatre Commands. However, the institution of CDS needs to be further empowered and the formation of joint structures need to be hastened and strengthened.

(h) **Ability to deal with grey zone threats remains grey.** Capability of Indian Defence Forces to deal with grey zone and hybrid threat needs to be further refined and developed especially in the information operations, cyber space, Special Forces and psychological warfare.

## **Recommendations**

6. Given the economic and technological differential between India and China innovative solutions will have to be found for our security problems. Salient capability recommendations to manage likely future security challenges are as follows:-

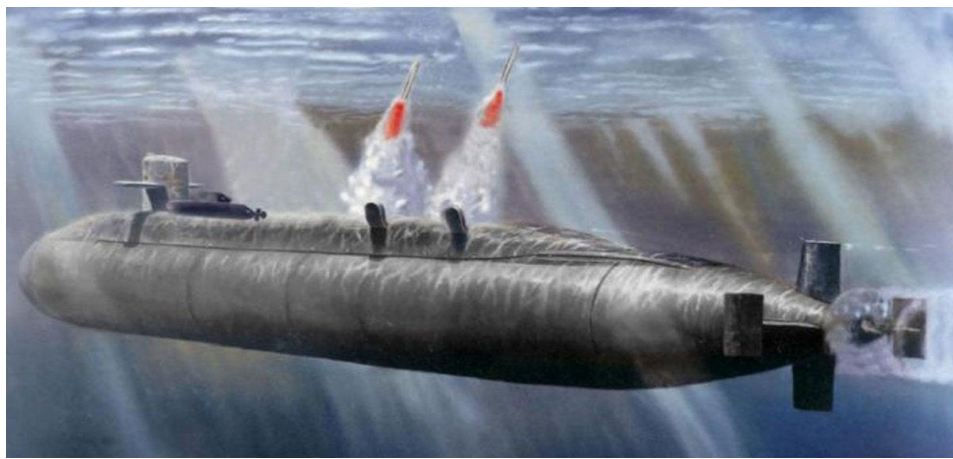
(a) India must focus on developing smart military security strategies and appropriate capabilities to implement the revised strategies to deter our adversaries. **Defence Alliances is not only desirable but essential to ensure military security against China. Defence alliance under an expanded QUAD with armed forces of US, Japan, UK, France and Australia standing at first, fifth, sixth, seventh and 9<sup>th</sup> spot respectively may offset our force differential.** For this India needs to develop its maritime capability rapidly to have a say in the proposed alliance. A logical step in this capability development would be formation of a Maritime Theatre Command. In conjunction with the proposed expanded QUAD members, the alliance would provide the necessary military impact to deter China. Also it will force China to look towards the Indo-Pacific to secure its maritime interests in the Indo – Pacific and IOR. India with a central position in the Indo – Pacific can provide the necessary pivot to dominate the region. However, while orchestrating such a strategy Russia will need to be managed carefully. It will have to be convinced that the expanded QUAD is a benign alliance as far as Russian interests are concerned. The other stumbling block could be Iran. India must use its influence with US and Iran to smoothen out the differences between US and Iran and ensure its neutrality if not support to the Expanded QUAD.

(b) As far as land forces are concerned answer lies in refocusing development of combat capabilities to deal with hybrid and grey zone warfare threats, while at the same time creating conventional capabilities capable of dissuading China from undertaking all out conventional operations against India. **Given the financial constraints and changing threat dynamics there is need is to create agile and lean Integrated Battle Groups rather than monolithic unwieldy Strike Corps. These forces must be backed by lethal, precision fire platforms from land and air under an integrated Theatre Command.** Emphasis has to be given to

enlargement of Special Forces capable of responding to threats of piecemeal territorial expansionism being practiced by China. **Further, the outdated concept of all-out war or no war as an option to salami slicing type of threats has to give way to dealing with such threats through special operations, non-contact warfare and war by other means.**

(c) In the Aerospace domain the Swarm Drone Attack concepts, Remotely Piloted Aircraft Systems, Armed Drones, utilizing Artificial Intelligence to target the enemy must become the norm. These systems need to be procured in the short term but developed in house in the medium to long term following the prototype development concept being followed by UK and other leading armies.

(d) As far as the Naval Forces are concerned they will prove decisive in any future confrontation as our Second Strike Capability will become more robust with commissioning of INS Arighat and induction of four more advanced SSBNs (S2 & S4) and six SSN of INS Chakra class into the Navy. A militarized expanded QUAD along with a robust second strike capability will provide the much needed maritime stretch to India in deterring a full blown conventional war with China. It must also quickly get its indigenous air craft carrier commissioned to extend its influence in the IOR and in combination with QUAD countries send a strategic message of caution and force it to operate in the maritime domain based on respect for international laws, bilateral treaties and not abrogate it unilaterally as it has done with





India, Hong Kong, Japan and countries in South China Sea.

**Figure 2: INS Arighat Second SSBN of India**

(e) The institution of CDS has to be strengthened with powers to orchestrate conventional war fighting at the Strategic Level through the Theatre Commanders. He should also be able to deal with hybrid and grey zone threats by utilizing Special Forces, technological, informational, legal and aerospace assets and resources. **India must have a well-developed Strategic Support Command. It must have an Information Operations Agency (IOS), Cyber Warfare Agency (CWA), Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA), and Special Operations Division (SOD) comprising Special Forces from Army, AF and Navy with both offensive and defensive capabilities.** HQ IDS could then get scaled down to provide Secretarial HQ of the CDS. Training command of the three Services too in the medium term should get integrated into a Joint Training Command till that happens TRADOC (Training and Doctrine Wing) of the IDS should manage joint and integrated training matters. The entire gamut of psychological warfare, media management, legal warfare and information campaign must fall under the purview of the Information Operations Agency. **The staffing of the Information, Cyber Operations and Intelligence agencies must also comprise professionals from the civil with passion to undertake such activities.** They must be the backbone of such organisations.

**In Conclusion**

7. The article by no stretch of imagination is suggesting that the era of all out conventional wars are over and we should only focus in the grey zone. However, the luxury of undertaking such wars more often than not will force countries to resort to system of warfighting that is just below the threshold of traditional wars of the past. **It is also true that a military must prepare for the worst but in so doing we should also not land up in a situation where we are left with only an option of either no military action or full scale war in response to situations**

**that are being faced by India along its Northern and Western Borders.** Moreover, economic constraints are also restricting our conventional capability development. **The answer therefore lies in redefining our doctrine of conventional war fighting with leaner, meaner and agile forces that are dynamic and capable of preempting an enemy action supported by real time and actionable intelligence backed by effect based operations.** At the same time the country must focus on harnessing new technologies to counter hybrid and grey zone threats. **Unless we innovate and become creative in our military warfighting doctrine we will end up developing capabilities that may not bear the desired results in a future confrontation with our adversary in any format of conflict.**

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