



## The Impact of Diverging Security Perspectives on Indo-Pak Military Modernization and Asymmetry

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### **Abstract**

The relationship between India and Pakistan is a pivotal point in the turbulent terrain of South Asia, impacting regional stability, security dynamics, and global geopolitics. With a complex past marked by division, strife, and the development of nuclear weapons, the Indo-Pak relationship has strategic importance that goes well beyond national boundaries. This chapter highlights a thorough analysis of the historical military ties between India and Pakistan, exploring the nuances of their contacts and their significant influence on the region's security environment. It will also examine how India and Pakistan's military tactics are influenced by internal, regional, and external security concerns, which exacerbates military disparity and sparks an arms race. And how these dynamics (especially nuclear dynamics) threaten regional stability and add to the complicated security landscape in South Asia by analyzing historical circumstances, strategic reasons, and the current status of military capabilities.

**Keywords:** *Military Modernization; Conventional Asymmetry; Strategic Stability; Hybrid Warfare*

### **1.1 Overview of Indo-Pak Historical Military Relations**

The history of military ties between India and Pakistan begins with the 1947 division of British India, a historic event that will always be remembered.<sup>1</sup> India and Pakistan are the two independent countries that emerged from the partition, which was motivated by political and religious differences. Nonetheless, it also planted the seeds of long-lasting hostility and territorial claims that still influence Indo-Pak ties today. According to Ganguly, the two countries' nationalist agendas' underlying characteristics are the reason they are still at odds. The leadership of the Indian nationalist movement

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<sup>1</sup>Sumit Ganguly, "Conflict Unending: India-Pakistan Tensions Since 1947" (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), <https://cup.columbia.edu/book/conflict-unending/9780231123693>.

decided to hang onto this Muslim-majority state as evidence that minorities might prosper in a democratic, secular democracy. With equal vigor, Pakistani nationalists contended that Kashmir could not be relinquished as a piece of the country established for the Muslims of South Asia. Ganguly covers the two governments' dual road to overt nuclear weapons acquisition, the likelihood of war and peace in the region now, and his authoritative analysis of why enmity endures even after the purity of ideological visions of the two states has evaporated.<sup>2</sup>

Mass migration and extensive inter communal violence coincided with the partition itself, laying the groundwork for the first Indo-Pak conflict over the princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. The basis for a string of wars and military skirmishes that would periodically jolt the Indo-Pak relationship in the years to come was built by this conflict, which broke out right after independence. The Sub-continent has suffered as a result of this hostility, seeing four wars and several major interstate crises since the division. Pakistan had to contend with New Delhi's unwillingness to settle disputes based on the principles of justice and law on nearly all issues pertaining to relations with India.<sup>3</sup> The hostile nature of the relationship was further cemented by further conflicts, such as the wars of 1965, 1971, and the 1999 Kargil conflict, which heightened tensions and fueled an arms race between the two nuclear-armed neighbors. Conventional warfare, asymmetric tactics, and nuclear brinkmanship have all been used to characterize the Indo-Pak military dynamics. Both countries have adopted aggressive postures and deterrent policies to protect their respective interests. Their rivalry has been, and continues to be, steeped in long standing ideological, territorial, and power-political antagonisms.<sup>4</sup> The military relations between India and Pakistan are nevertheless tainted with mistrust, suspicion, and unresolved grievances despite periodic attempts at peace and reconciliation, including diplomatic initiatives and steps to foster confidence.<sup>5</sup> In particular, the war in Kashmir remains a constant source of tension, promoting insurgencies and cross-border terrorism while also sustaining the region's cycle of violence and instability.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the subcontinent has become more nuclearized, with Pakistan's 1998 nuclear tests and India's 1974 "Smiling Buddha" test adding a new dimension to the military dynamics between the two countries and raising the possibility of mutually assured destruction, which calls for a careful balance of power.<sup>7</sup> Although after the nuclear tests, deterrence emerged between both the states but the military standoffs still there that prevented these tensions into the escalation to war like situation. In December 2001, Gunmen attack India's Parliament, provoking a major Indian military mobilization against Pakistan, which ends in October 2002 after repeated U.S. intervention.<sup>8</sup>, and in November 2008 terrorist group Lashkar-e-Taiba gunmen attack multiple targets in Bombay, killing 166 people, resulting in the suspension of the composite dialogue.<sup>9</sup> Al-Jazeera reported that (2016: Less than two weeks after a 19-soldier attack on an Indian army post, India conducts what it terms "surgical strikes" on "terrorist units" in Pakistan-administered Kashmir in September 2011. Pakistan denies that the attacks happened).<sup>10</sup> And then

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<sup>2</sup> ibid

<sup>3</sup> Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, *Neither a Hawk nor a Dove* (Oxford University Press, 2015), pp 148.

<sup>4</sup> Ashley J. Tellis, "A Tangled Tapestry: The Interlocking Antagonisms Between India and Pakistan," in *Are India-Pakistan Peace Talks Worth a Damn? Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2017, accessed February 27, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep26912.7>.

<sup>5</sup> Husain Haqqani, *Pakistan: Between Mosque and Military* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> Mark Roberts, "Fighting to the End: The Pakistan Army's Way of War," *Journal of Strategic Security* 7, no. 4 (Winter 2014): Article 12, accessed March 8, 2024, <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/jss/vol7/iss4/12>.

<sup>7</sup> Ashley J. Tellis, *India's Emerging Nuclear Posture: Between Recessed Deterrent and Ready Arsenal* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2001).

<sup>8</sup> Ashley J. Tellis, "A Tangled Tapestry: The Interlocking Antagonisms between India and Pakistan," in *Are India-Pakistan Peace Talks Worth a Damn? Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2017, accessed March 8, 2024, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep26912.7>.

<sup>9</sup> ibid

<sup>10</sup> Al Jazeera. "Timeline: India-Pakistan Relations." March 1, 2019. Accessed March 8, 2024, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/3/1/timeline-india-pakistan-relations>.

the consequences of Pulwama Crisis, the 2019 Pulwama crisis received attention as the first outright military crisis between India and Pakistan in about two decades. It suggests several implications for the current status of overall deterrence stability between the two countries.<sup>11</sup> Now the first visit of Narendra Modi on Indian Held Occupied Kashmir since he scrapped its special status under Article 370 of India's constitution, Pakistan dismissed the move as "part of India's efforts to portray normalcy" in the disputed region. "We believe that these efforts to project normalcy are a facade and tourism cannot be promoted in a situation where local people are being intimidated and their rights and freedoms are being denied," Foreign Office spokesperson Mumtaz Zahra Baloch said in her weekly press briefing on March 7, 2024.<sup>12</sup> These tensions lead to the bitterness in Pakistan and India relationship but deterrence always prevent the escalation of tensions to a nuclear threshold.

## 1.2. Emergence of Military Asymmetry

India and Pakistan's military asymmetry has developed gradually over time, influenced by a number of historical, geopolitical, and strategic aspects. When both nations acquired independence in 1947, their initial military capacities were comparatively not equally divided. But this early problem since independence has evolved and as time has gone on, notable differences in military might and capability have surfaced, resulting in a discernible imbalance in their different defense strategies.

Military asymmetry has arisen as a result of several important circumstances, including:

### 1.2.1 Economic disparities:

Compared to Pakistan, India has been able to invest more substantially in its military infrastructure, procurement, and modernization operations because of its larger economy and greater resources. India has been able to sustain a military force that is both larger and more advanced in technology due to its economic advantage.

### 1.2.2 Defense Budgets:

India routinely spends more on defense than Pakistan does, which makes it possible to invest more in R&D, military hardware, and training. India's overall military capabilities are improved by the acquisition of cutting-edge weapon systems and platforms made possible by the increased defense expenditure.

### 1.2.3 Technological Advancements:

India has acquired cutting-edge military equipment, including fighter planes, tanks, and navy vessels, as a result of major advancements made in domestic defense manufacturing and technological development. Pakistan although striving hard, has found it difficult to match India's rate of innovation and domestic production capability, despite investing in modernization as well.

### 1.2.4 Nuclear Factor:

The military asymmetry has taken on a new dimension as a result of South Asia becoming nuclearized, with both India and Pakistan having nuclear weapons. Because of its larger and more varied

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<sup>11</sup>Masahiro Kurita, "The 2019 Pulwama Crisis and India-Pakistan Deterrence Stability in the New Era."

<sup>12</sup>Baqir Sajjad Syed, "FO Flays Efforts to Portray 'Normalcy' in Held Kashmir," *Dawn*, March 8, 2024, Accessed March 8, 2024 <https://www.dawn.com/news/1819980/fo-flays-efforts-to-portray-normalcy-in-held-kashmir>.

nuclear arsenal, India has been able to maintain its conventional military dominance even while nuclear deterrence has averted major conventional confrontations between the two nations.

### 1.2.5 Regional Alliances:

India's strategic alliances with powerful nations like the US, Russia, and Israel have made it easier for the country to obtain cutting-edge military equipment, intelligence cooperation, and training. India's military might has been reinforced by these alliances, which have also given it diplomatic assistance abroad.

### 1.2.6 Geopolitical Dynamics:

India has been driven to modernize its military in part by its ambitions to become a great power and its influence in the region. Conversely, Pakistan encounters domestic security issues such as terrorism and insurgency, which draw resources and focus away from the development of conventional military capabilities.

## 1.3. India-Pakistan Nuclear Venture

After Indira Gandhi's death, nuclear development agenda was reversed by Rajiv Gandhi as Prime Minister, India restarted its nuclear development plans when Narasimha Rao became president in 1991. Rao was about to sanction a nuclear test in December 1995, but after being spotted by CIA spy satellite, President Clinton intervened. After the 1998 triumph of the Hindu Nationalist Bharata Janata Party, Prime Minister Atal Vajpayee gave instructions to Indian scientists to proceed with testing plans as soon as possible. As a result there were explosions in May and Pakistan in return reacted quickly and developed its own nuclear weapons. India carried out five underground nuclear tests between May 11 and 13, 1998, while Pakistan followed suit with six nuclear tests on May 28 and 30 of that same year. The extended US nuclear non-proliferation efforts in the region suffered a major defeat as a result of these tests, which sparked a torrent of criticism worldwide. As mandated under section 102 of the Arms Export Control Act (AECA), U.S. President Clinton placed military and economic sanctions on India on May 13, 1998. On May 30, Pakistan was subjected to the same sanctions. These sanctions were eventually eased, though, since they were unable to convince Pakistan and India to stop developing nuclear weapons.<sup>13</sup> Both India and Pakistan have developed nuclear weapons capabilities and are consequently regarded as de facto nuclear weapon nations outside of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). India and Pakistan both are expanding the size of their nuclear arsenals deliberately, at least in part to maintain a deterrent effect against one another. Both are continuing to produce and store weapons grade fissile material while simultaneously new delivery systems for their respective nuclear deterrents. According to Hans M. Kristensen, and Matt Korda of the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, tensions between India and Pakistan are "one of the most dangerous nuclear hotspot on the planet".<sup>14</sup>

## 1.4. Interplay between Conventional and Military capability

Their security dynamics have been characterized by a conventional military disparity between India and Pakistan. With respect to conventional warfare, India has a major edge over Pakistan due to its larger defense budget, more sophisticated military hardware, and a larger armed force. The superior air force, navy, and armored divisions of India highlight this asymmetry in particular. The wider economy of India, which permits higher defense spending, and its strategic alliances with important international powers,

<sup>13</sup>Mehraj Uddin Gojree, "The U.S. Interests and Policies towards South Asia: From Cold War Era to Strategic Rebalancing," *Research Journal of Language, Literature and Humanities* 2, no. 4 (April 2015): 5-12.

<sup>14</sup>"Nuclear Notebook," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, accessed March 17, 2024, <https://thebulletin.org/nuclear-notebook/>.

which make access to cutting-edge military equipment and training easier, are some of the factors causing this difference. The confrontation between India and Pakistan has taken on a new dimension due to the nuclearization of South Asia, which has affected both military plans and security perceptions. Nuclear weapons are a deterrent against extensive conventional warfare that are possessed by both nations. But having nuclear weapons has also made citizens tensed and raised the possibility of nuclear escalation in times of crisis. Since both nations aim to maintain a credible nuclear deterrent in order to prevent adversary aggression, the concept of nuclear deterrence is vital in establishing military doctrines and decision-making procedures.

The idea of stability- instability paradox suits best here as illustrated further

According to the stability-instability paradox, although the threat of mutual annihilation that nuclear deterrence engenders may prevent full-scale wars between nuclear-armed states, it paradoxically increases the likelihood of smaller-scale conflicts and skirmishes because they are thought to have a lower chance of turning into nuclear exchanges. There seems to be a specific instance of Glenn Snyder's "stability/instability paradox" in South Asia due to the region's impending nuclearization.<sup>15</sup> This idea is essential to comprehending the dynamics between competitors with nuclear weapons, such as India and Pakistan, where the use of nuclear weapons has altered the type and frequency of conflict rather than abolished it. According to the stability-instability paradox, nations with nuclear weapons will attempt to stay safe from disaster by avoiding breaching the nuclear threshold as soon as they obtain the bomb. However, given an adversary's unwillingness to cross this threshold could give them permission to cause trouble below it, one or both competitors may see this intimidating barrier as both an opportunity and an insurance policy.<sup>16</sup> The best example of the stability-instability paradox may be found in the aftermath of the attack on the Indian parliament building by terrorists 2001. This attack led to a ten-month military standoff during which the armed forces of Pakistan and India were kept in high combat readiness. The relatives of Indian soldiers positioned at the front were the target of another major terrorist attack during this standoff. Still, the Indian government refused to go to war. Rather, it utilized the crisis management proficiencies of Secretary of State Colin Powell and Deputy Secretary of State Richard Armitage in an attempt to resolve the issue.<sup>17</sup> But successive Indian prime ministers, from Atal Bihari Vajpayee down to Narendra Modi, have shied away from even major conventional land force operations that could trigger a Pakistani nuclear response.<sup>18</sup>

### **1.5. Regional Responses to Indo-Pak Military Asymmetry**

#### **1.5.1 China's Strategic Partnership with Pakistan**

China's attitude to the military asymmetry between India and Pakistan in South Asia has had a major influence on military alliances and policies in the region, making it a crucial component of the dynamics of regional security. China has been an ally of Pakistan for a long time, and its strategic moves have influenced the military environment and heightened geopolitical tensions between India and Pakistan. China and Pakistan have a strategic cooperation that is based on China providing military aid to Pakistan in order to counter India's increasing military dominance in the region. China has extensively sold armaments and transferred technology to Pakistan, enabling Pakistan to acquire modern military

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<sup>15</sup>Sumit Ganguly, "Indo-Pakistani Nuclear Issues and the Stability/Instability Paradox," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 18, no. 4 (1995): 325-334, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/10576109508435989>.

<sup>16</sup>Michael Krepon and Polly Nayak, "Introduction," in *US Crisis Management in South Asia's Twin Peaks Crisis* (Stimson Center, 2006), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep11005.5>.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid

<sup>18</sup>Ashley J. Tellis, "Striking Asymmetries: Nuclear Transitions in South Asia," in *Nuclear Transitions and Strategic Stability in Southern Asia*, (*Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, 2022). Chapter 4

equipment such as airplanes, missiles, and navy vessels<sup>19</sup>. By maintaining the balance of power in South Asia and limiting India's dominance, this military cooperation advances China's strategic objectives. Additionally, China's military support for Pakistan strengthens its own security, enabling it to counter possible Indian and other regional threats. Furthermore, Pakistan's infrastructure and logistical capabilities have improved as a result of China's strategic investments made in the country under programs like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), enhancing Pakistan's military readiness. The primary project of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) seeks to strengthen Pakistan's military position against India by increasing strategic depth and connectivity. China has a major impact on the military dynamics and security environment of South Asia through its regional response to the military asymmetry between India and Pakistan, which highlights its strategic calculations and geopolitical ambitions. Furthermore, China's diplomatic support for Pakistan on international platforms contributes to 5th generation warfare tactics aimed at shaping global perceptions and narratives. By shielding Pakistan from criticism and sanctions, particularly on issues related to Kashmir and cross-border terrorism, China helps Pakistan wage a propaganda war against India (Yusuf, 2018).<sup>20</sup>

### 1.5.2. Afghanistan Security Cooperation with India

The way that neighbors react to the military asymmetry between India and Pakistan is directly influenced by the changing security alliance between Afghanistan and India. In the past, Pakistan's influence was countered by a strong Afghan security force supported by India.<sup>21</sup> But the NATO forces withdrawal in August 2021 and the Taliban takeover in August 2021 changed the game drastically<sup>22</sup>. There is now little security collaboration between India and Afghanistan due to the Taliban regime's consolidation efforts and a weakened Afghan security apparatus.<sup>23</sup> In particular, for neighboring nations like Bangladesh, this could provide Pakistan a strategic edge and increase concerns about regional security.<sup>24</sup> Pakistan may potentially take advantage of a security void in Afghanistan, which could spark a proxy war driven by Indo-Pakistani rivalry and destabilize the region. Other actors in the region will be greatly impacted by India's future interactions with the Taliban government. India's total disengagement would incite other nations to choose sides and further polarize the region as a whole. In order to keep Afghanistan from turning into a theater of conflict between India and Pakistan, the international community must play a crucial role in fostering peace there. Maintaining regional security will require fostering communication and collaboration between Pakistan, India, and the Taliban government.

### 1.5.3 Bangladesh's Pragmatic Approach

Bangladesh uses a strategic balance to protect its security interests and preserve friendly ties with both India and Pakistan in order to tackle the military disparity between the two countries. Even though Bangladesh and Pakistan have a long history together, Bangladesh has prioritized regional stability and economic development in its pragmatic foreign policy. Bangladesh has endeavored to enhance its defense capabilities by means of strategic alliances and varied military procurement approaches, in reaction to the

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<sup>19</sup>Dean Cheng, "China's Arms Sales to Pakistan: A Recipe for Conflict in South Asia," *Journal of Contemporary China* 27, no. 110 (2018): 821-837.

<sup>20</sup>Moeed Yusuf, "China's Political Support to Pakistan: A Sign of the Times," *Survival* 60, no. 2 (2018): 7-28.

<sup>21</sup>Hussain Haqqani, "Pakistan's Relationship with Afghanistan: Past Mistakes, Future Prospects," *Strategic Analysis* 32, no. 2 (2008): 185-200.

<sup>22</sup>International Crisis Group, *The Taliban's Neighbourhood: Regional Diplomacy with Afghanistan*, 2024, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/337-talibans-neighbourhood-regional-diplomacy-afghanistan>.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid*

<sup>24</sup>John Mohan Christensen, "The Security of South Asia," *International Security* 24, no. 3 (1999): 3-43.

military asymmetry between India and Pakistan.<sup>25</sup> Bangladesh has maintained close ties with India on a number of fronts, such as defense cooperation and counterterrorism measures, but it has also negotiated with Pakistan to advance regional peace and stability.<sup>26</sup> Bangladesh is committed to implementing policies that serve its national interests and promote peace and stability in the region, and this is reflected in its pragmatic approach, which acknowledges the complex security dynamics in South Asia.

In order to protect their own security interests, several regional entities have also adopted a strategy known as strategic hedging, in which they aim to remain equally distant from both Pakistan and India. Smaller South Asian nations like Nepal (Balancing Act)<sup>27</sup> and Bhutan, who aim to remain neutral on matters of regional security and avoid becoming embroiled in the Indo-Pak rivalry, are especially notable examples of this strategy. These nations seek to maintain their independence and sovereignty while reducing the possibility of being caught in the crossfire of any future confrontation between India and Pakistan by implementing a policy of strategic hedging.

In order to lower tensions and prevent escalation, regional responses to the military asymmetry between India and Pakistan also include initiatives that promote communication, steps that strengthen confidence, and systems for resolving disputes. Initiatives like the Composite Dialogue Process and organizations like the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) have been crucial in fostering diplomatic relations and peacebuilding efforts between Pakistan and India.<sup>28</sup> These programs seek to resolve underlying grievances, establish trust, and advance regional stability in South Asia through encouraging communication and cooperation.

### ***1.6. External Actors Involvement and Indo Pak Conventional Asymmetry***

One aspect of South Asian security that sets India and Pakistan apart is their conventional military disparity. This disparity has contributed to tension and been a factor in multiple military conflicts. It is highlighted by Pakistan's historical advantage in certain areas. Examining the roles played by external actors—not just the US but also other nations and regional organizations—is essential to understand its emergence.

There are many obstacles standing in the way of South Asia's strategic stability dynamics. Prospects for strategic stability in South Asia are being undermined by the US's foreign influence and the tense bilateral relations between India and Pakistan. As the Indo-US relationship deepens, India is becoming a more conceited regional actor, seeking to rule the region according to its own terms. Pakistan has been pursuing bilateral strategic restraints to enhance extensive confidence-building measures with India, while also adhering to unilateral strategic restraints in order to preserve a stable deterrent relationship. Pakistan is at threat from Indian hegemonic aspirations due to the US's discriminating and biased approach.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>25</sup>Ishtiaque Ahmed, "Arms Procurement in Bangladesh: Security, Policy, and Strategies," *Journal of the United Service Institution of India* 148, no. 609 (2018).

<sup>26</sup>Rezaul Karim Talukder, "Bangladesh-Pakistan Relations: Addressing the Legacy of 1971," *Institute of South Asian Studies*, December 30, 2020.

<sup>27</sup>Pankaj Hooda, "Nepal's Foreign Policy: Continuity and Change," *Vivekananda International Foundation*, December 18, 2018.

<sup>28</sup>Chintamani Mahapatra Joshi, "South Asia: The Interplay of Regional Integration, Geopolitics, and Security," in *Routledge Handbook of South Asian Security*, 2020.

<sup>29</sup>Malik Qasim Mustafa, "US and Strategic Stability in South Asia: A Pakistani Perspective," *Strategic Studies* 36, no. 4 (2016): 38–60, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/48535973>.

### 1.6.1 Cold War Alignments and Unequal Support (1947-1991):

#### 1.6.1.1 US Strategic Partnerships:

India and Pakistan were considered possible US allies in the Cold War against the Soviet Union. Pakistan was, nevertheless, a more desirable partner due to its advantageous location on the USSR's border. The details of this are found in the declassified 2023 Congressional Research Service Report. According to this Report "Between 2001 and the second Obama Administration, Pakistan was one of the top recipients of U.S. foreign aid; from FY2002 to FY2016, Congress provided \$11 billion in aid for economic, development, and humanitarian purposes as well as nearly \$8 billion for security-related purposes. During this time, Pakistan also got military reimbursements from the Pentagon totaling about \$14.6 billion. The Trump Administration sought and Congress drastically cut funding beginning in FY2017; the cuts reached a two-decade low of \$87 million in FY2021; also, the Administration started a sweeping suspension of security aid relating to terrorism in 2018 and it has mostly remained in place to this day."<sup>30</sup> This significant US military assistance, including cutting-edge fighter jets and tanks, was provided to Pakistan as a result of these stronger ties.

#### 1.6.1.2 Soviet Aid to India:

During the cold war Pakistan joined capitalist bloc but due to India non-alignment policy, which reduced US influence, India was forced to rely on its own domestic industry and Soviet assistance. India received T-series tanks, advanced missile technology, and MiG fighter jets from the Soviet Union.<sup>31</sup> Despite this aiding India's military-industrial complex development, Pakistan still had the initial advantage because of the amount of US funding received. On the other hand Sino-Indian Rivalry was threatening the India sovereignty and that leads to the military assistance from its ally USSR and US started funding Pakistan. Hence South Asian Region became hub of the political tussle between two power blocs.

#### 1.6.1.3 France and Israel:

Even during the Cold War, France and Israel emerged as significant arms suppliers to both India and Pakistan at different points in time, but their influence paled in comparison to the US and Soviet Union.

### 1.6.2 Shifting Priorities and the Post-Cold War Era (1991-Present):

#### 1.6.2.1 US Realignment:

The strategic rationale for substantial US support for Pakistan declined with the end of the Cold War.<sup>32</sup> US military funding shifted to counterterrorism equipment due to concerns about nuclear proliferation and Pakistan's ties to militant groups.<sup>33</sup> The main justification for aiding Pakistan became less compelling as Cold War concerns became less important, which led to a review of assistance distribution plans. U.S. interests and priorities in the region were reassessed as a result of notable changes in the geopolitical landscape. Furthermore, the United States took a more cautious approach as a result of worries about nuclear proliferation brought up by Pakistan's ascent to nuclear power status. The United

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<sup>30</sup>K. Alan Kronstadt, Pakistan and U.S.-Pakistan Relations, *Congressional Research Service Report R47565*, 2023, <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/R/R47565>.

<sup>31</sup> Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), *SIPRI Military Expenditure Database*, 2023, <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>.

<sup>32</sup>J. Christensen, *Post-Cold War Defense Policies of Pakistan and India: Implications for the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 1999).

<sup>33</sup>International Crisis Group, "Pakistan's Counter-terrorism Strategy: Separating Friends from Enemies" (Islamabad: International Crisis Group).

States and Pakistan's relationship was reconsidered, and aid programs were adjusted, in response to the possible dangers of nuclear weapons proliferation.<sup>34</sup>

#### 1.6.2.2 The Rise of US-India Partnership:

India's increasing economic and geopolitical importance has had a significant impact on the United States and India's burgeoning alliance, especially in reaction to China's growing influence in the area. Defense cooperation and technology transfers are two important aspects of this expanding partnership. For example, as part of a strategic strategy to challenge China's influence in the Indo-Pacific, Washington said during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's official visit to the United States in June 2023 that it will provide advanced F-414 jet-engine technology with India.<sup>35</sup> With the potential to have long-term effects on the cooperation, this transfer not only improves India's defense capabilities but also fortifies institutional linkages between the armed forces and defense industries of both nations. There have also been noteworthy attempts to reduce the asymmetry gap, with India investing \$18.4 billion in large-scale military modernization programs.<sup>36</sup> Cooperation projects like the essential technology transfer agreement and the creation of a defense technology fast-track roadmap highlight the dedication to strengthening India's modernization and self-sufficiency objectives. The strategic alignment of both countries in response to regional dynamics and security problems is driving the US-India alliance, which is a major driver of ongoing change in the Indo-Pacific region. But this has posed serious threat to Pakistan as this modernization strategy will highly impact over Pakistan military and will lead to the more sophisticated emergence of military asymmetry.

#### 1.6.2.3. Russia's Persistent Role:

Russia, which was India's primary Cold War supplier, is still closely connected militarily and continues to give India cutting-edge weapons like India purchased five Russian S-400 surface-to-air missile systems in October 2018, with the first deliveries taking place in late 2021. The sale of the S-400s, which Russia has sold to only a handful of other governments, highlights the strength of Indian-Russian ties.<sup>37</sup> Though some observers contend that Russia's modernization efforts haven't kept up with the West, it is still unclear to what extent Russia's involvement counterbalances US backing for India.

### 1.7. The Regional Dimension:

Because of the political tensions between India and Pakistan, regional organizations such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) have mainly failed to address security challenges. On the other hand, organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which include Pakistan and India, provide a possible forum for communication and steps aimed at fostering confidence.

India was formerly a supporter of Palestine. Currently, it is in line with the genocidal Zionist government and claims to be US imperialism's right hand. Although India under Modi has autonomy in

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<sup>34</sup>S. Nishta, U.S.-India Defense Cooperation: Opportunities and Challenges (Washington, D.C.: *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 2018).

<sup>35</sup>International Institute for Strategic Studies, "US-India Defence and Technology Cooperation," *Online Analysis*, July 2023, <https://www.iiss.org/en/online-analysis/online-analysis/2023/07/us-india-defence-and-technology-cooperation/>.

<sup>36</sup>The Defense Post, "Indian Army to Boost Modernization with \$18.4 Billion Investment," January 26, 2022, <https://www.thedefensepost.com/2022/01/26/indian-army-modernization/>.

<sup>37</sup>Matthew Stein, "India Takes a Step Away from the Russian Defense Industry," *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs, Air University*, <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/3475660/india-takes-a-step-away-from-the-russian-defense-industry/>.

trade dealings with states such as Russia, the nation's former proud legacy of leading the Non-Aligned Movement is shamed. Regarding the relationship between India and Pakistan, Modi has emulated the reactionary elements that demonize the "other" in order to placate hawkish galleries.<sup>38</sup> Both India and Pakistan have extremely young populations, ecological problems, and divisive politics. They are not the same, but if enough of us on both sides unite around progressive alternatives that speak the language of a broader post-capitalist peace in South Asia, their unsettlingly similar trajectories will only begin to change. We are encouraged by popular, democratic impulses in the periphery of both countries. However, there is not much longer to create a critical mass of support in the mainstream.

Hence, due to ongoing tensions, intermittent hostilities, and the threat of nuclear escalation, the complex relationship between India and Pakistan is a pivotal point in determining the regional security dynamics of South Asia and has global implications. The military strategies and priorities of both countries are greatly impacted by internal factors, including the persistent threat of terrorism and insurgency, the complexities of ethno-nationalist politics, and the ongoing difficulty of striking a balance between military spending and socioeconomic development. This has thus led to the emergence of a fragile military asymmetry that is marked by instability and perpetual change. The apparent disparity not only increases the possibility of unintentional escalation but also takes important resources away from important areas like social welfare and infrastructure.

Furthermore, even conventional conflicts are always shadowed by the constant fear of nuclear war, which raises the stakes and consequences to an enormous degree. A comprehensive strategy that promotes continuous communication, steps to boost confidence, and regional cooperation is required to mitigate these issues. But establishing long-term peace and stability is hampered by deep-rooted historical hostilities, outside power struggles, and the changing nature of conflict due to the emergence of cyber, space, and hybrid threats. Forging a route towards a more secure and prosperous future for South Asia will take visionary leadership, unwavering dedication, and a sophisticated knowledge of the complexities involved in order to overcome these obstacles.

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