



INDIA'S DEFENCE MODERNIZATION: CHALLENGES AND FUTURE POLICY

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Paper Received On: 20 JANUARY 2026

Peer Reviewed On: 24 FEBRUARY 2026

Published On: 01 MARCH 2026

Abstract

The study of defence and strategic studies is not limited to the development of military power or war strategies; it defines a nation's sovereignty, security, and its position in the international arena. India, as an emerging global power, has consistently adapted its defence policy and prepared itself to face new challenges over time. From independence to the present day, India has modernized its military structure and brought about strategic changes in its defense policy. This article is an attempt to discuss in detail historical evolution, current defense policy, the organization of military power, and future challenges.

Key- Words: *Defence, Security, Military technology, Make in India etc.*

Introduction:

India's defence system and strategic thinking have gradually evolved based on various experiences, wars, and international contexts. Immediately after independence in 1947, India felt the need to strengthen its defence structure. Although the first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru adopted the policy of peaceful coexistence, the 1962 Sino-Indian War made it clear that national security could not be protected without a strong military force. Following this war, a significant shift occurred in India's defence policy, with an increased emphasis on strengthening its military capabilities. The India-Pakistan wars of 1965 and 1971, the Kargil conflict of 1999, and several other military operations have redefined India's defence strategy. India has also made significant advancements in the field of nuclear power. Through the 'Smiling Buddha' nuclear test in 1974, India established itself as a nuclear power on the world stage. This capability was further strengthened by the Pokhran-II tests in 1998. Although

India's nuclear policy is based on the "no first use" principle, it has become a crucial component of the country's defence and deterrence capabilities.

Currently, the importance of technology in the defence sector is undeniable. India has undertaken various initiatives to modernize and achieve self-reliance in its military capabilities. The 'Make in India' initiative places special emphasis on indigenous arms production. Projects like the Tejas fighter jet, the INS Arihant nuclear submarine, and the Agni and BrahMos missiles are symbols of India's military strength. Simultaneously, India is striving to enhance its expertise in emerging fields such as artificial intelligence (AI), cyber defence, space defence, and drone technology. The primary objective of this book is to explain in detail the various aspects of India's defence policy and strategy, so that students, researchers, defence experts, policymakers, and general readers can easily understand the subject.

Make in India initiative: Policies for self-reliance in defense manufacturing:

The Make in India initiative is a crucial step in India's efforts to achieve self-reliance in the defence sector. Launched in 2014, this initiative aims to increase domestic manufacturing capabilities and reduce dependence on foreign technology. This project, launched under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, is working towards making India's defence sector self-reliant and modern, while also building a robust defence ecosystem.

Main Objectives of Make in India Initiative:

India is one of the world's largest arms importers. It has long been dependent on foreign suppliers. However, this dependence has created economic pressure and has become a hindrance to the country's strategic interests. The main objectives of the 'Make in India' initiative are:

- i. Increase indigenous production: To increase the rate of indigenous production in the Indian defence industry.
- ii. Reduce import dependence: To reduce dependence on imports of defence equipment and technology.
- iii. Achieve independence: To increase domestic capacity in manufacturing high-tech equipment and arms.
- iv. Increase exports: To expand the international market for Indian defence equipment and earn foreign exchange.

Framework of the Initiative:

Make in India has taken several policies and measures to encourage domestic and foreign investment in the defence sector. These include:

- i. Increase in budget for defence sector
- ii. Role of DRDO
- iii. Reforms in Defence Acquisition Procedure
- iv. Incentives for Domestic Production
- v. Privatization and Start-up's in the Defence Sector
- vi. Attracting Foreign Investment

Notable Achievements and major indigenous project:

Under the Make in India initiative, India has been able to produce several significant defence equipment and technologies. These include:

- i. Tejas Light Combat Aircraft (LCA).
- ii. Agni series missiles.
- iii. Dhruv helicopter: A multi-role helicopter.
- iv. INS Visakhapatnam: An indigenously built warship.
- v. Arihant Nuclear Submarine.
- vi. Strategic Partnership Model

Future Challenges and Opportunities:

Despite the 'Make in India' initiative, some challenges remain:

- i. Shortage of advanced technology.
- ii. Prolonged production times.
- iii. Funding and infrastructural limitations.
- iv. Facing international competition.

While the 'Make in India initiative' is on the path to success, it faces several challenges like., technology transfer, lack of skilled manpower, and limited production capacity of domestic industries remain major challenges. However, the government's strong policies, increasing investment in the domestic defence industry, and international cooperation will further strengthen India's defence sector in the future. The Indian defence sector is on its way to achieving a significant position globally. The Make in India initiative has not only increased India's self-reliance but has also helped build a modern and well-organized defence industry.

India's Defence Challenges:

Internal Security Threats:

A major challenge in India's defence sector is internal security threats, particularly insurgent activities in the Jammu and Kashmir region. This region has long faced terrorist activities, insurgency, and political instability. The internal security situation in Jammu and Kashmir is

considered a crucial aspect of India's military and defence policy. This problem is not only at the local level; it affects India's overall security system.

Insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir:

The history of insurgency in Jammu and Kashmir is very old and has been ongoing since India's independence. Political instability in the region began to increase after the partition of India and Pakistan in 1947. Pakistan supported the demands for special status and independence for Kashmir and encouraged separatist movements there. In the late 1980s, insurgent activities in Kashmir intensified, especially as Pakistani organizations began conducting terrorist activities for the independence of Kashmir and its integration with Pakistan.

The internal security situation in Jammu and Kashmir should be addressed not solely through military operations or solutions, but through peaceful dialogue, respect for human rights, development plans, and the implementation of comprehensive social service programs in the region. Terrorist attacks, violence, and separatist activities not only threaten India's security but also challenge its sovereignty and territorial integrity. For the people of the region, particularly the Kashmiri Muslims, the situation has created a psychological and cultural crisis, which has contributed to the growth of separatist ideologies.

North- East Insurgency:

Since India's independence in 1947, separatist movements have emerged in this region. Various insurgent groups began fighting for their own cultural or ethnic rights, leading to an increase in terrorist activities and guerrilla warfare. Some states in the region, such as Manipur, Nagaland, Assam, and Mizoram, have become focal points of these insurgent groups' activities. Among the most significant insurgent groups in Northeast India are: The National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN), the United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA), various groups in Manipur, and other smaller insurgent groups. These groups are waging armed struggles to demand their own rights or independence, sometimes even receiving assistance from foreign powers. Their activities frequently involve terrorist attacks, kidnappings, bombings, sabotage, and attacks on the police.

Cyber Warfare

Cyber warfare is a conflict in which one state attacks another state's systems, networks, or critical infrastructure through information technology and cyber infrastructure. Cyber warfare can target a country's financial institutions, government databases, nuclear power facilities, and military-supported computer networks. Computer viruses, malware, DDoS (Distributed Denial of Service) attacks, spam emails, or hacking are used to carry out cyber attacks. Through this,

the attacking state or group can weaken or completely disable the target country's defense capabilities. Various countries around the world, especially the powerful nations, are spending significant amounts of money and technology to develop appropriate strategies and build cyber security capabilities for cyber warfare. Many countries, including the United States, China, Russia, and India, have developed their own cyber attack and defense strategies. The main objective of cyber warfare is to disrupt the enemy's communication systems, power and water supply systems, satellite networks, military communication systems, and economic infrastructure. Examples- The Stuxnet virus attack on Iran's nuclear program in 2010 and cyber attack by Russia on Tatarstan is noteworthy, where almost the entire country's internet infrastructure was rendered inoperable in 2007.

Space Warfare:

Space warfare is a conflict where space assets, satellites, and other equipment in space are used to launch attacks against a country. One of the main areas of space warfare is satellites and space-based technology. Satellites are currently indispensable for communication, data transmission, cellular networks, weather forecasting, security strategies, and especially military communication systems. By destroying or disabling an enemy nation's satellite network, a country's military power and capabilities can be significantly crippled. The world's powerful space technology nations, such as the United States, Russia, China, and India, have developed advanced capabilities in space warfare strategies and maintenance. China demonstrated its capabilities in space warfare by destroying a satellite in 2007. Russia and the United States are also conducting various researches on deploying weapons in space, particularly on powerful satellites and satellite-based weapon systems. Space Warfare Technology and Development: Currently, the main technologies for space warfare include anti-satellite weapons, weapon-carrying spacecraft, and other armaments. Significant financial investment and research are underway for off-world weapons, satellite destruction, and improving military security in space. Various nations are establishing their own space forces, such as the US 'Space Force' and India's 'Space Command'. United Nations and International Treaties: There are some international treaties and initiatives to control the proliferation of space and cyber warfare. The United Nations' 'Outer Space Treaty' of 1967 established a kind of international protocol for controlling the use of weapons in space and space warfare. Furthermore, the United Nations has a special initiative to consider cyber attacks as international security threats. More effective initiatives are urgently needed for international cooperation and deterrence in the areas of cyber warfare and space warfare.

India's Position:

India is striving to establish itself as a powerful and modern state in the fields of space and cyber warfare. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is implementing various projects to strengthen its satellite and space technology. Similarly, in the field of cyber security, India is adopting various projects and policies to enhance its capabilities and counter cyber attacks. India is working towards strengthening its cyber security forces, cyberspace management, and space defense strategies. Cyber and space warfare are considered emerging and crucial areas of conflict in the modern world. These have opened new dimensions for the security and military strategies of states. The possibility of cyber attacks and space-based armed conflicts can create new types of tensions among states, potentially leading to significant changes in international relations and security systems. Therefore, control, security, and cooperation in these areas at the international level are becoming extremely important to limit and control such conflicts in the future.

Economic Constraints: Balancing Defence Spending and Developmental Needs:

For a developing country like India, balancing defense spending with other crucial development sectors is a complex challenge. While a strong and modern military is essential for protecting the country's sovereignty, ensuring security, and maintaining regional stability, development, poverty alleviation, education, health, and social welfare programs are equally important. In India, where there is a large population and a significant portion of the population lives below the poverty line, balancing these two crucial areas is very difficult due to limited economic resources. The need for defence spending in India is extremely important and significant, especially due to ongoing or potential security challenges with neighboring countries. A huge amount of money is allocated annually to India's defense sector, which is used for military modernization, balanced power projection, and improving strategic capabilities. However, this massive expenditure puts pressure on the country's economic condition and spending on developmental sectors. India's overall development depends on economic growth, industrial development, increased agricultural productivity, social services, and meeting basic human needs. India's defense spending often constitutes a significant portion of its total budget. According to the 2023-24 budget, India's defence allocation was approximately 15-17 percent of the total budget, amounting to around 5 lakh core rupees or more. While this amount helps ensure the country's security, it also reduces the resources available for spending on social and developmental sectors. Especially in a country like India, where adequate funds are needed to meet the basic needs of a vast population, such a large

expenditure on defense, while beneficial in some ways, poses a significant challenge to long-term poverty alleviation and improving people's livelihoods.

Governance Challenges:

Politically, there can be disagreements among political parties regarding balancing increased defense spending with allocations for social development. Furthermore, long-term government planning is essential to address national security crises without compromising spending on development sectors and ensuring overall development for the entire country. Additionally, a large portion of the Indian government's national defence budget is spent on purchasing and developing foreign weaponry and technology, which poses a significant challenge in reducing dependence on foreign defense industries. During times of economic crisis, such increased spending can further strain resources for other crucial sectors of the country.

Defense Modernization vs. Development:

While India's defense modernization process is crucial for enhancing its military capabilities and strengthening regional defense power, a large segment of the country's population still lives below the poverty line, where providing them with adequate healthcare, education, nutrition, and basic amenities is paramount. To strike a balance between these two areas, the Indian government has pursued the "Make in India" initiative, stimulating domestic technology and defense manufacturing, which can benefit the country's economy and help reduce the long-term burden of defence spending. Through such initiatives, India can enhance its defense capabilities while also saving funds for social development sectors. In a country like India, where there is a continuous effort to balance economic constraints and developmental needs, maintaining a balance between defense spending and development sectors is crucial. With proper planning and strategic approaches, the country can successfully coordinate defence modernization and funding for developmental sectors. However, the government should maintain this balance so that, on one hand, the country's defence capabilities are enhanced, and on the other hand, adequate expenditure is ensured for social development sectors.

Shifting Global Power Dynamics: US-China Rivalry and India's Strategic Position:

The global balance of power is undergoing a significant transformation in the early 21st century, particularly due to the ongoing rivalry between the United States (US) and China. This rivalry is not limited to the economic sphere but has evolved into a broader competition encompassing military, technological, and regional influence. India's position has now become central to this global rivalry, as it needs to maintain relations with both China and the US to establish itself as a strong and influential nation. India now has to adopt a nuanced strategic

policy to protect its own interests in the world, balancing the development of relations with major powers while also considering regional security, economic, and geopolitical strategic priorities.

US-China Rivalry: The Struggle for Global Influence:

The power competition between the United States and China primarily spans two major areas—economy and military strength. China's rapid rise and its emergence as the world's second-largest economy under its own leadership have posed a challenge to the US. China is seeking to expand its influence in global trade and power centers through its 'Belt and Road Initiative' (BRI) and increased military presence in the South China Sea. The US has adopted various strategies to counter China, including imposing trade barriers, technological sanctions, and taking preventive measures against China's military expansion. On the other hand, China has also responded by adopting its own foreign policy to reduce the role of the United States globally. China is using large infrastructure projects and economic influence to expand its influence in different regions of the world, which has become a major challenge for the US and its allies.

India's strategic position: the role of balance:

India's position has become an important mediator between these two powers. On the one hand, India wants to improve relations with its historical neighbor China, but India is wary of China due to border issues (such as the Ladakh and Doklam disputes) and China's relations with Pakistan. On the other hand, India's relations with the United States are strengthening day by day, especially to counter China's influence. India has maintained its traditional relations with Russia and is adopting a balanced strategy to emerge as a great power in the world assembly. India knows that taking sides between the US and China could harm its regional security and economic interests, so India wants to maintain strategic independence.

Developing Relations with the United States

The relationship between India and the United States has developed into a strong strategic partnership, particularly as a strong counterweight to China's hegemony in South Asia and the Indo-Pacific region. India and the United States stand side by side in security cooperation, military training and joint military exercises. In addition, cooperation is increasing in jointly defining strategies against China and Pakistan. India also cooperates with the United States, particularly in the areas of technology, trade, space research and regional security. This partnership helps India to create a security environment in which India can be in a strong and secure position.

Relations with China:

India's relationship with China is complex in many ways. While trade relations between India and China are very good, border disputes and China's role in various parts of the world, including the South China Sea, are of concern to India. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and its military relations with other countries, including Pakistan, pose challenges for India. However, both India and China know that an intense hostility could be detrimental to both the global economy and regional security. Therefore, both countries have tried to avoid putting pressure on each other through diplomatic discussions and business relations at various times. However, increased tensions in the border areas and China's growing influence in various regions, including Pakistan, have become a major security challenge for India.

India's Role in the Indo-Pacific Region:

The Indo-Pacific region is currently the focal point of the US-China rivalry, where China is increasing its military presence. India has emerged as a significant power in this region, particularly in maintaining security along the trade routes in the South China Sea. India is asserting its dominance in the region through its navy and is conducting numerous military exercises and training programs. India has established deep strategic ties with the 'Quad' countries, where the United States, Japan, and Australia support India. Through this partnership, India is building resistance against China's growing power and its disregard for international law. India's role is crucial in ensuring a proper balance of global power.

Strategic Autonomy and India's Future:

India seeks to maintain its strategic autonomy and adopt a neutral stance in international relations. This policy helps India protect its interests independently and is the cornerstone of India's long-term foreign policy. India has adopted a balanced policy between its regional security and international politics, which is conducive to power redistribution and regional stability. In the context of the US-China rivalry, India's strategic position is currently extremely important. India is trying to protect its security and economic interests by maintaining the right balance in its relations with China and the United States. India's active role in the Indo-Pacific region, strategic partnerships, and military preparedness are helping to establish it as a significant global power.

India's Future Defense Policy and Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Warfare:

The rapid advancement of technology worldwide and the progress in artificial intelligence (AI) are creating new possibilities and challenges in warfare. The Indian defense system is also being fully impacted by this change, and the use of artificial intelligence will play a crucial role

in future wars. Specifically, with the help of AI technology, India will be able to modernize and enhance the capabilities of its armed forces. As artificial intelligence technology is acting as a profoundly transformative force, it will bring about immense changes not only in the methods of warfare but also in military strategy and operations.

The Role of Artificial Intelligence:

The use of artificial intelligence, particularly machine learning and deep learning technologies, will strengthen various aspects of the Indian defense system. The main objective of AI is to reduce human error and increase efficiency in the weapons, vehicles, and other technological solutions used by the army, navy, and air force. AI can not only assist humans on the battlefield, but it will also help in space, cyber warfare, and the management of armed forces operations.

The Impact of Artificial Intelligence on Warfare:

1. **Autonomous Systems:** One of the main areas of application for AI is autonomous systems, which are capable of conducting unmanned operations in warfare. This can be used in various types of drones, autonomous ground vehicles (AGVs), and robotic systems. India is already using drones in certain areas, and will use more advanced autonomous systems in the future. This will enable more efficient management of logistics, surveillance, and offensive operations.
2. **Data Analytics and Decision Making:** Using AI, it is possible to analyze vast amounts of data and make quick decisions based on that analysis. In warfare, accurate and timely information is crucial for making the right decisions, which AI can analyze rapidly. The Indian defense forces can improve their battlefield decision-making process by using AI-based data analytics.
3. **Cyber security and Cyber Warfare:** Cyber warfare has become a significant challenge in today's world. Since AI is capable of processing large amounts of information at extremely high speeds, it can be used in both cyber attacks and defense. India can use AI technology in the field of cyber security to protect itself from various types of cyber attacks and take effective countermeasures against them.
4. **Smart Weapons:** With the help of artificial intelligence, weapons will become even more intelligent. This will enable weapons to identify targets and attack accurately on their own, thereby increasing the efficiency of warfare. India has already developed advanced missile systems like 'Agni' and 'BrahMos', and in the future, it will develop more advanced AI-supported weapon systems capable of achieving precise targeting.

5. Automated War Strategies: AI technology has the potential to revolutionize war strategies. It will help in coordinating the strategies of various army branches, including infantry, armored forces, and air force. In particular, AI will play a crucial role in rapidly analyzing statistics on the battlefield and determining strategies according to changing situations. With the help of AI, it will be possible to create extremely fast, accurate, and efficient war strategies.

Application of Artificial Intelligence in the Indian Army:

India has already started using AI technology in some areas. For example, the use of autonomous drones has increased in the Indian Army, and they have become helpful in various security tasks such as surveillance, monitoring borders, and identifying enemy positions. Joint AI-based exercises are being conducted among the Indian Army, Air Force, and Navy, where AI technology is being used for rapid decision-making and coordinated attack planning. In addition, with the help of AI, the Indian Army has been able to further improve its data collection and analysis capabilities. This is enabling the army to complete its operations more quickly and accurately. In the future, AI will help strengthen the army's defense systems and increase the use of unmanned equipment on the battlefield.

Challenges and Future Outlook:

Although artificial intelligence brings immense advantages to the Indian defence system, it also presents some challenges. Firstly, there are concerns about the security and safety of AI technology. The use of AI in critical military information and systems could increase the risk of hacking or cyber attacks. Furthermore, the accuracy and reliability of AI systems must be ensured, as any error or malfunction could lead to significant dangers. Additionally, the use of AI technology requires high-quality training and experts to ensure the proper application of AI technology and strategic operations within the army. This is a major challenge for India, as the number of experts in AI technology worldwide is limited, and India needs to bridge this gap. Artificial intelligence technology will bring about a significant advancement for the Indian defence system. This technology will help strengthen the capabilities of the armed forces and acquire new capabilities on the battlefield. However, the proper use of AI technology requires skilled training, appropriate security measures, and advanced research and development. If India can overcome these challenges, artificial intelligence will act as a revolutionary force in future warfare.

Conclusion:

The modernization of India's defense sector and the enhancement of its indigenous capabilities have not only strengthened India's position on the international stage but have also secured a crucial place in the country's security strategy. Key indigenous projects such as the Tejas fighter jet, INS Arihant, the Agni missile series, and the BrahMos missile have further augmented India's defense capabilities, playing a vital role in safeguarding and modernizing the country's military strength. The Tejas fighter jet, India's first indigenously developed fighter aircraft, is crucial for modern offensive and defensive operations in the country's airspace. It significantly enhances the Indian Air Force's capabilities and makes a substantial contribution to national air defense. Similarly, INS Arihant, India's first nuclear submarine, has further strengthened India's maritime security capabilities, elevating the country's naval dominance and defence strategy to new heights. The Agni missile series, a major achievement in Indian missile development, has established itself as one of the world's most powerful missile systems. It has firmly cemented India's nuclear deterrence capabilities and defense strategy. The BrahMos missile, a supersonic cruise missile, has enhanced India's offensive capabilities and is considered a crucial strategic asset in the defence sector.

All these indigenous projects have propelled India towards self-reliance in the defense sector and have showcased India's defence capabilities on the international stage by strengthening the Indian armed forces. In the future, these projects will further establish India as a more effective and competitive player in the global defence arena.

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