India Background

Today the rise of India as a regional and global power is reinforced by its geostrategic weight. India now projects power, actively or passively, in a wide area, including the Indian Ocean, through which one of the world’s most important maritime trade routes runs. India’s power is also projected west, north and east into areas that were formerly part of the greater British India. To the west, Pakistan remains a key security concern. In its eastern sphere of influence Bangladesh remains an environmental and political powder keg. Burma, while not a major security concern, remains on the list of the world’s most secluded and problematic dictatorships. Burma also borders India’s problematic north-east territories, and the military regime’s alliance with China presents India with additional problems.

Mind-boggling ethnic, linguistic, religious, and social diversity has also brought significant internal security challenges to India, including the uprising in Kashmir that has been a bleeding wound for the past quarter century, the roughly 30 armed separatist groups operating in the country’s northeastern region, and the resurgent Maoist Naxalite rebellion that affects large sections of rural India and is now seeping into urban areas.

The recent launch of a nuclear-powered ballistic-missile submarine, S-2 or INS Arihant by the Indian Navy has been a major development in the Indian Ocean Region. The move has far-reaching implications not only for Pakistan but for all littoral states. The nuclear submarine, which completes the Indian nuclear triad encompassing land, air and sea based forces, is to be armed with 700km nuclear tipped Sagarika missile.

Relations with Other Countries

United States

- The transformation of U.S. ties with New Delhi over the past 10 years, led by Presidents Clinton and Bush, stands as one of the most significant triumphs of recent American foreign policy. It has also been a bipartisan success. In the last several years alone, the United States and India have completed a landmark civil nuclear cooperation agreement, enhanced military ties, expanded defense trade, increased bilateral trade and investment and deepened their global political cooperation.

- The United States and India are strategic partners with a shared interest in security throughout Asia. While the two countries are unlikely ever to become formal treaty allies, security ties between India and the United States already form a key pillar of the new relationship. Military-to-military ties have expanded significantly, counterterrorism cooperation has increased and dialogue on regional security issues has improved. The United States now holds more military exercises with India than with any other country.

- After some initial success, defense trade with India has fallen victim to bureaucratic inertia in both countries. Indian leaders believe that the U.S. export control system hinders India’s acquisition of American high technology goods, including defense items.

China
• Although India still perceives the rise of China as essentially peaceful, the view expressed by Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee in November 2008 that it is nevertheless a key security “challenge and priority” for India.

• Indian security officials are concerned by what they see as China’s recent assertiveness in the two countries’ long-standing border dispute, and by a change in policy towards India’s dispute with Pakistan over Kashmir, and they have reacted accordingly. They are also suspicious of China’s bolstered military presence in Tibet and of its involvement in infrastructure projects in South Asia with the potential for dual civil–military use. India sees these as an attempt to contain and encircle it strategically, while China gains permanent access to the Indian Ocean for the first time through the Chinese-built port of Gwadar on Pakistan’s Balochistan coast. This led Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh to note with uncharacteristic forthrightness in September 2010 that India should be prepared to deal with “a new assertiveness among the Chinese” and with China’s desire for a “foothold in South Asia.”

Pakistan

• Ever since the foundation of India and Pakistan following partition of British India in 1947, the relationship between the two countries has been complex. Territorial disputes and wars have dominated their relations. Consequently, diplomatic relations have been poor. The first war between the countries occurred in 1948 over Kashmir. It ended with a ceasefire and the status of Kashmir remained undecided, which led the two countries to fight another war in 1965. A third war was fought in 1971-72. During this war, Pakistan was forced to accept the separation of East Pakistan, which became Bangladesh. Tensions with Pakistan remain high over the divided territory of Kashmir (see below).

• Despite all its difficulties, Pakistan does not pose an existential threat to India. Although it has some superior tank formations, overall Pakistan’s Army cannot compete with the numerically superior Indian Army. The conventional Indian force thus has a deterrent value against Pakistan. India is not only militarily superior to Pakistan. India’s economy has grown rapidly the last 15 years. This gives India a competitive advantage that could be used to acquire more weapons.

• Although India downplays its interests in securing and retaining Afghanistan as a friendly state from which it has the capacity to monitor Pakistan, and even possibly cultivate assets to influence activities in Pakistan, it most certainly has such aims. Pakistan seeks to undermine India’s position in Afghanistan by supporting the Afghan Taliban, the Haqqani network, and even groups such as LeT, which has been increasingly active in Afghanistan since 2004. In turn, India has been accused of support rebel groups in Balochistan, Pakistan in their struggle against the central government.

Order of Battle

Army
• The Indian Army has a strength of 1,300,000 active personnel, which are broken up into 12 corps, each of which consists of about 60,000 combat troops and 30,000 support personnel.

• The current Indian army corps are shown below.

Air Force
• The Indian Air Force operates over sixty air bases and around 130,000 active duty personnel. The IAF has aircraft and equipment of Russian, British, French, Israeli, U.S. and Indian origins with Russian aircraft dominating its inventory.

• The IAF operates around 400 fighter and multi-role combat aircraft, although the recent order of 126 Rafale Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft is expected to be filled by 2014. Additionally, the IAF operates around 250 strike, attack, and close support aircraft.

• The IAF is broken up into five geographic commands, as shown below.
The Indian Navy is made up of around 60,000 active duty personnel. The Navy presently has one aircraft carrier in active service, the INS Viraat. The Navy will also induct the Russian-built INS Vikramaditya, expected some time during 2012. The Navy operates a fleet of 15 submarines, as well as a sizeable fleet of destroyers, frigates, and corvettes. Additionally, they operate 181 aircraft.

The Indian Navy is broken up into Western, Southern, and Eastern fleets. A map of naval bases is shown below.
Nuclear Command Authority

- India possesses an arsenal of nuclear weapons and maintains a policy of no-first use and non-use against non-nuclear nations. However, it does maintain a credible nuclear deterrence policy against nuclear adversaries. They have a fully operational nuclear triad that includes a variety of ballistic missiles. These include both SRBM’s (450 miles) and MRBM/IRBM’s (2,100 miles).

- In addition to their land-based ballistic missile capability, the Indian Navy controls both ship-based and submarine-based variants of these missiles. Finally, the Air Force is responsible for India’s strategic bomber force.

Special Issues

Kashmir

- Kashmir, officially referred to as Jammu and Kashmir, is an 86,000-square-mile region (about the size of Idaho) in northwest India and northeast Pakistan. The region has been violently disputed by India and Pakistan since their 1947 partition, which created Pakistan as the Muslim counterpart to Hindu-majority India. The lingering dispute has resulted in a perpetual state of hostilities between India and Pakistan and already led them to three wars. It is also responsible for a persistent atmosphere of belligerence along the Line of Control (LOC) in Kashmir, numerous military escalations, widespread regional impoverishment and severe bitterness in bilateral relations. It has also led to the massive arming of both sides and to the present nuclearization of South Asia. Certain Kashmiri independence groups believe that Kashmir should be independent of both India and Pakistan.
India considers Kashmir of immense strategic importance as it provides her leverage not only against Pakistan but also against China. India has officially stated that it believes that Kashmir is an integral part of the country and continues to assert its sovereignty over the entire region, while Pakistan maintains that it is a disputed territory. With regard to the ongoing militant activity inside Kashmir, it maintains that Pakistan is responsible for supporting this cross-border terrorism. Considering Kashmir to be a bilateral issue, India resists any foreign intervention or internationalization of the dispute.

In August 1947 when the Indian subcontinent became independent from Britain, all the rulers of the 565 princely states, whose lands comprised two-fifths of India and a population 99 million, had to decide which of the two new dominions to join, India or Pakistan. The ruler of Jammu and Kashmir, whose state was situated between the two new countries, could not decide which country to join. He was Hindu, but his population was predominantly Muslim. He therefore did nothing. Instead he signed a standstill agreement with Pakistan, which prompted the intervention of the Indian military in the region. The LOC today is largely the same as it was following this intervention.

India claims the entire state of Jammu and Kashmir and as of 2010, administers approximately 43% of the region, including most of Jammu, the Kashmir Valley, Ladakh, and the Siachen Glacier. India’s claims are contested by Pakistan, which controls approximately 37% of Kashmir, namely Azad Kashmir and the northern areas of Gilgit and Baltistan.

Cold Start
In April 2004, the Indian Army announced a new limited war doctrine that would allow it to mobilize quickly and undertake retaliatory attacks in response to specific challenges posed by Pakistan’s “proxy war” in Kashmir. This Cold Start doctrine marked a break from the fundamentally defensive orientation that the Indian military has employed since independence. Cold Start represents a significant undertaking for the Indian military as it requires combined arms to operate jointly with airpower from the Indian Air Force. This raises several questions about strategic stability on the sub-continent.

Cold Start is a mixture of myth and reality. It has never been and may never be put to use on a battlefield because of substantial and serious resource constraints, but it is a developed operational attack plan announced in 2004 and intended to be taken off the shelf and implemented within a 72-hour period during a crisis. Cold Start is not a plan for a comprehensive invasion and occupation of Pakistan. Instead, it calls for a rapid, time- and distance-limited penetration into Pakistani territory with the goal of quickly punishing Pakistan, possibly in response to a Pakistan-linked terrorist attack in India, without threatening the survival of the Pakistani state or provoking a nuclear response.

Defense Modernization & Diversification

India’s answer to the challenge of military modernization is to reach out to as many “friendly foreign countries” as possible to establish a balance of nonalignment with global multilateralism. The diversification of its defense supply base from the Soviet Union and later Russia to western suppliers resulted in a series of new agreements supporting its diversification, while also securing agreements with many of its smaller friends. Since 2000, India has increased the number of countries with which it has defense-specific agreements from seven to 26 by the end of 2008. Bilateral and multilateral exercises are also an increasing feature of India’s expanding defense relations as it seeks to find new technologies to transform its military from Cold War era weapons to 21st century capabilities through such opportunities.

A major part of India’s defense modernization has been the recent Medium Multi-Role Combat Aircraft (MMRCA). India’s force levels have reached an all-time low of 29 squadrons, which are expected to grow to 39.5 squadrons. This growing and dangerous hole in the IAF’s capabilities comes as India’s neighbors are aggressively modernizing their own air forces, making India’s need to expand its combat aircraft inventories all the more urgent. The Indian air force (IAF) recently completed the final stages of selecting a new MMRCA. At a cost of about $10 billion for 126 aircraft, the MMRCA competition has garnered high-profile attention for its sheer size, its international political implications, and its impact on the viability of key aircraft manufacturers. In January 2012, it was announced that French Rafale fighter had won the MMRCA contract, which is expected to be filled by 2014.