

India's Cold Start: Arm Purchases and War Mongering

Cold Start Doctrine

The Cold Start is a “destabilizing doctrine”. It presupposes that India can cross the international border, temporarily capture Pakistani territory, and launch punitive military strikes on specific targets without initiating a general conflict. In January 2017, India’s army chief General Bipin Rawat stated in an interview that “the Cold Start doctrine exists for conventional military operations. Whether India have to conduct conventional operations for such strikes is a decision well-thought through, involving government and the Cabinet Committee on Security”. This statement clearly demonstrates that India aims at continuous negative military engagements and its operational strategy hints at serious military incursions – may be attacking villages and towns closed to LoC. His statement, “Pakistan must agree to return Jammu & Kashmir in a state like it was before 1989, or actions like surgical strikes will continue”. The implicit warning interlinks India’s increasing military power with the future strategic settings in which India seeks to exploit Afghanistan against Pakistan’s desire for peace, and continue to destabilize the South Asian region.



Pakistan's Response

Maintaining deterrence and credibility, Pakistan has remarkably responded and successfully neutralized the Indian Cold Strat Strategy. Chief of Army Staff, General Qamar Bajwa rejected India’s claims to carry out surgical strikes in Pakistan and cleared India that “Pakistan’s armed forces are fully geared to respond to any aggression”.

In this intense environment, when India experimented and test Agni-V and anti-ship missile, Pakistan also conducted test firing of Babur-III Subsonic Cruise Missile from an underwater mobile platform, giving the country a credible second strike capability. This test indicated Pakistan’s technological progress and self-reliance as ISPR called this quest “a manifestation of the strategy of measured response to nuclear strategies and postures being adopted in Pakistan’s neighborhood”.



Pakistan also successfully tested its surface-to-surface ballistic nuclear capable missile Ababeel. ISPR added that the development of Ababeel is intended to “enforce deterrence” and “ensure survivability” of Pakistan’s Ballistic Missiles. These advancements ensure that Pakistan’s nuclear doctrine is transformed from credible deterrence to full spectrum deterrence.

Defence Budget of India (2017-18)

Currently India increased its defence budget up to 6 % and has signed number of arms deal worth 200 billion Indian Rupees in last 2-3 months. These developments were done to ensure its armed forces’ preparedness for battle on short notices. After the Uri attack in September 2016, progress was made in signing new arms deal especially with Israel, Russia and France. According to Indian defence ministry, the aim of the deal was to guarantee that India’s armed forces are able to undertake at least 10 days of aggressive fighting without having worrying about ammunition, spares and other reserves.



Emergency Deals for Ammunition and Spares

Indian army has signed almost 10 contracts worth over Rs 58 bn with Russian companies for engines and 125 mm armor-piercing fin-stabilized discarding sabot ammunition for T-90s and T-72 tanks, Konkurs anti-tank guided missiles and Smerch rockets.



AMMO 125MM GUN 2A46 FOR T-64, T-72, T-80, T-90



On the other hand, Indian air force has concluded 43 contracts worth 92 bn INR for ammunition and spares for fighter jets such as Sukhoi-30MKIs, Mirage-2000s and MiG-29s, transport aircraft like the IL-76s, and mid-air refuellers like IL-78s and Phalcon AWACS.



Upcoming Schemes

Indian Finance Minister also announced a 10 % increase in the country's defence budget for upcoming fiscal year. According to Economic Times, the arms deals and increase in defence budget will help India to modernize their armed forces and overcome a 30-year lapse in weapon procurement program, as India prepares to counter potential threats from Pakistan and China.

Assessment

The nuclear weapons tests of India along with a growing number of arms deals, by the close assistance of US, Israel and other players puts Pakistan on a back foot. Pakistan is ambitiously working to counter

every move of India regarding development of nuclear arms that has yielded full spectrum deterrence capability to Pakistan. However, India is not focusing its attention on these regional developments and is still pursuing the practical implementation of Cold Start Doctrine. The urgent arms deal and controversial remarks by Indian army chief have raised questions whether the country has reasserted its controversial “Cold-Start” doctrine for any future stalemate with Pakistan. General Bipin Rawat made a claim that “not only has Cold Start been doctrinally embraced by India, but the country has the military capability to implement it if a political decision to launch such strikes is taken”. The statements by Indian army chief, illustrate that India is disregarding the fact that Pakistan is also a nuclear state and even if the Cold Start Strategy sounds intimidating, it does not mean that India can easily win any conquest against Pakistan. Such actions and development by India indicates that India is activating dangerous arms race in South Asia and has pushed Pakistan to lower its nuclear threshold while forcing it to introduce battlefield nuclear weapons. The reality is, Pakistan has considerable strength to safeguard its sovereignty and India should never ignore its nuclear weapons.

The significant point to be noted is that the spiral of arms race will only destabilize the South Asian strategic equilibrium. The growing conventional asymmetry will only lead towards escalation of tensions and crisis between two states. Therefore, it is necessary that US should leave behind the strategy of bilateralism and should assist in resolving the disputes between the two nuclear weapon states as only confidence building measures can restore strategic stability in the South Asian region. Most importantly, Pakistan should adopt proactive diplomacy for dealing with India in order to expose deeper Indian motives that would give direction Pakistan in making effective policies.

