

Pakistan's military security and conventional balance of power

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After the end of the Cold War and especially after the 9/11 terrorist incidents, the threats to a state's sovereignty, national security and territorial integrity have changed in terms of their dimension and magnitude. These range from the traditional security threats to terrorism and the growing role of non-state actors. As a result, in the 21st century, a strong and modern military force would be required for a state's survival and territorial integrity. In order to meet this wide spectrum of contemporary security threats and challenges, major power around the world are modernising their armed forces. States are emphasizing not only on production and acquisition of new and technologically advanced weapons system for their armed forces, but are also training their military personnel to meet current and future challenges. Military strength depends not only on size, but also on firepower, capability to launch operations in the shortest time, ability to fight in all weathers and terrains, standard of training, status of equipment in terms of capability, reliability, availability, and morale.

Pakistan is a developing country and has limited resources to meet the growing challenges of geo-strategic, political, social, economic, environmental and technological changes. On the one hand, Pakistan is facing its traditional rival and conventionally superior India, and on the other Pakistan has also become a victim of terrorism and is fighting the international "War on Terror". So, in order to meet internal as well as external security threats, Pakistan also needs strong, capable, and modern armed forces.

Conventional Balance of Power

After the Mumbai attacks, amid the rising tension between India and Pakistan, Islamabad announced to cut 20 per cent non-development expenditure of all ministries to meet the defence needs.¹ Pakistan's spending on defence during the last five years in comparison with India has, in any case, been very low:

Year	Pakistani defence budget	Indian defence budget
2004	232 billion rupees	812 billion rupees
2005	263 billion rupees	982 billion rupees
2006	287 billion rupees	1,102 billion rupees
2007	276 billion rupees	1,193 billion rupees
2008	295.5 billion rupees	1,056 billion rupees

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Source: data compiled from different open source material which includes SIPRI Year Book 2008, and relevant news items from national and international newspapers.

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), over the period 2003-2007, Pakistan's defence expenditure increased by 11 per cent and India's by 30 per cent.² It further states that from 2003 to 2007, Pakistan ranked at the 11th position among the recipients of major conventional weapons with a total volume of imports of \$2,347 million, and in the same period, India ranked at the 2nd position with a total volume of imports of \$9,105 million.³ According to SIPRI, the India and Pakistan's total share of global arms imports during 2003-2007 was 8 per cent and 2 per cent, respectively.⁴ Later on, *Dawn* reported on June 19, 2008, that according to SIPRI, Pakistan purchased arms worth \$6 billion in the last five years.

As far as conventional military balance is concerned, India has superiority over Pakistan. In terms of numbers, Pakistan is far behind India in many military categories.

Conventional Military Balance between India and Pakistan

	Pakistan	India
Active Total	619,000	1,288,000
Reserves	528,000	1,155,000
Army	550,000	1,100,000
Navy	24,000	55,000
Air Force	45,000	125,000
Paramilitary	304,000	687,821
Main Battle Tanks	2,461+	4,059
Artillery	4,291+	11,300+
Combat Air Crafts	360	565
Submarines	8	16
Surface Combatants	6	48

Source: "The Military Balance 2008," The International Institute for Strategic Studies

List of Indian Missiles

Missile	Range	Fuel Type	Version
Agni-I	850 km	Solid	Short-range ballistic missile (SRBM).
Agni-II	3,300 km to 4,450 km	Solid	Intermediate-range ballistic missile (IRBM).
Agni-IIAT	3,900 km	Solid	IRBM
Agni-III	5,500 km	Solid	IRBM/ICBM
Agni-IV	> 5,500 km	Solid	ICBM

Prithvi-I SS-150	150 km	Liquid	SRBM
Prithvi-II SS-250	250 km	Liquid	SRBM
Prithvi-III SS-350	350 – 600 km	Solid	SRBM
Sagarika (based on Prithvi-III, SS-350)	350 km	Liquid	SLBM, expected to be operational by 2010
Dhanush (based on Prithvi-II Prithvi-III)	250-350 km	Solid and liquid	SRBM (naval version)
Surya	8000-12,000 km	Solid + liquid	ICBM (expected to enter service in 2008)
BRAHMOS	300 km	Cruise/ two- stage/ solid- booster/ liquid- sustainer engine	Supersonic cruise missile, launched from submarine, ship, aircraft and land-based mobile autonomous launchers (MAL).
Akash	27 km	Solid + ramjet motor	Surface-to-air missile (SAM)
Trishul	9 km	Solid	SAM
Nag	6 km	Solid	Anti-tank missile
Astra	80 km head on, 20 km tail chase	Solid	Beyond visual range air-to-air missile (BVRAAM)

Source: Data compiled from different open-source material.

List of Pakistani Missiles

Missile	Range	Fuel Type	Version
Hatf-I	60-80km	Solid	Battlefield range ballistic missile (BRBM)
Hatf-IA	100km	Solid	BRBM
Hatf II (Abdali)	180 km	Solid	BRBM
Hatf III (Ghaznavi)	290 km	Solid	Short-range ballistic missile (SRBM)
Hatf-IV	700-	Solid	Intermediate-range ballistic missile

(Shaheen-I)	800km		(IRBM)
Hatf V (Ghauri I)	1500 km	Liquid	IRBM
Hatf V (Ghauri II)	1800 km	Liquid	IRBM
Hatf-VI (Shaheen-II)	2500 km	Solid	IRBM
Shaheen 3	3600+ km	Solid	IRBM
Hatf VII (Babur)	500 km	Cruise turbo-fan engine	Subsonic cruise missile

Source: Data compiled from different open-source material.

The balance of major conventional weapons system clearly favours India, placing Pakistan in a disadvantageous position. India is spending heavily on modernisation of its armed forces. *Daily Times* reported on October 14, 2004, that the Indian defence ministry is planning a massive investment in the next five years on conventional weapons to give it an edge over Pakistan, revealed by a ministry document. In 2004, India ordered Phalcon airborne radar systems from Israel in a deal estimated at \$1.1 billion to pry deep into Pakistani air space. The Indian Air Force (IAF) is also actively focusing on purchasing 126 fighter jets within the next four to five years from the international market. India has set out to configure its own ballistic missile defence on the basis of Prithvi missile and the Israeli Greenpine radar.

However, both the states have different aspirations regarding their military build-ups. Pakistan has a defensive posture, whereas India aspires for global power status. That does not mean that Pakistan should not secure itself militarily, but it is also a fact that due to its limited resources, Pakistan cannot afford to engage its larger adversary India. Therefore, Pakistan should embark on a force modernisation plan within its available resources, based on the strategy of credible security assurance. The following section will focus on the role of Pakistan's armed forces and their level of preparedness.

Pakistan Army

The Pakistan army, with the close support of Pakistan Air Force and security agencies, is actively playing its role to bring internal stability in FATA regions, by rooting out militants and extremist elements. However, in this "War on Terror", the Pakistan army is facing many constraints, and has suffered many losses. The Pakistan army has also played a very significant role in coming to the

help of the nation at times of such natural calamities as floods and earthquakes, besides securing law and order in various parts of the country as and when required to do so. It is also very active in UN peacekeeping operations. In order to come up to these diversified responsibilities, the Pakistan army should be reformed in such a way that it should be able to deter external aggression and ensure internal security and stability.

It needs improved and high-tech equipment to fight this war on terror. Although the U.S. has been providing financial and defence aid to Pakistan, the country still has a large deficiency of items the army needs in the war on terror – including precision laser-target designators for F-16 fighters, helicopters and infantry to minimize collateral damage from strikes against militant hideouts; laser-guided bombs and ammunition for use with the targeting devices; and night-vision aviation goggles; jamming equipment to protect military vehicles from improvised explosive devices; and electronic eavesdropping equipment to find and monitor Taliban communications.⁵

There is a need to reform the role of Pakistan army so that it should be able to perform internal security and stability operations effectively without compromising the country's external defence. Pakistan does not lack human resources. However, there is a need to utilise these resources. According to some open-source estimates, Pakistan has available military manpower of 75,807,598, of which 57,820,634 are fit for military service with an average increase of 3,818,309 per year.

Pakistan Air Force

According to the vision of Pakistan Air Force (PAF), it aspires to become the most respected air force of the world, "To provide in synergy with other services, the most efficient, assured and cost effective defence of Pakistan."⁶ Currently, PAF is assisting security forces in their mission to fight against militants in the Fata region and NWFP. In the wake of the Mumbai terrorist attack in November 2008, which has again sparked the Indo-Pak tension, the PAF's responsibility has increased and it is ready to deter any Indian aggression. However, due to the economic turmoil, PAF lacks access to modern technology.

In April 2008, Pakistan Air Force (PAF) said in a statement that it had achieved a landmark in the development of its Airborne Early Warning and Capability (AEWC) Programme with the unveiling of its first Saab 2000 AEWC aircraft in a ceremony at the Saab facility in Sweden. Such acquisition of the airborne early warning capability by the PAF will enhance its defensive capability which is an essential part of its modernisation efforts. Moreover, from 2005 to July 2008, Pakistan also received a total of 14 F-16 aircraft from the U.S. under the Foreign Military Sales Programme. In 2008, Pakistan also received eight JF-17 Thunder aircraft from China.

As far as cost effectiveness is concerned, Pakistan Aeronautical Complex (PAC) would soon start its serial production of multi-role fighter aircraft (JF-17 Thunder) in collaboration with China. On January 14, 2009, Pakistan's President, Asif Ali Zardari, and Prime Minister, Yousuf Raza Gilani, were briefed about JF-17 Thunder aircraft built jointly by Pakistan and China.⁷ They were informed that in terms of performance, cost effectiveness and availability, JF-17 jets are better when compared with Indian Light Combat Aircraft (LCA). Once the PAC gets the approval for the project, it would be able to manufacture 50 aircraft annually.

Pakistan Navy

Pakistan's overall maritime interests are dominated by its strategic considerations. Pakistan's trade and energy lifeline is seaborne and any disruption in it can severely hamper its development and economic growth. Pakistan's seaborne trade is almost 97 per cent of the total. Pakistan has three major ports, i.e., Karachi, Port Qasim, and Gwadar. To meet future challenges, there is a need to maintain maritime order. For Pakistan, the protection of its coastline, territorial waters, EEZ, and sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) is vital for its maritime security. The volume of seaborne trade is also expected to rise dramatically in future. Unfortunately, along with this rise in traffic, the variety and intensity of threats, including piracy, maritime terrorism, drug trafficking, gun-running, human smuggling, pollution, accidents and inter-state conflicts, are also expected to show an accompanying rise.

As far as threats to Pakistan's maritime interests are concerned, the most immediate is the growing Indian influence in Indian Ocean and its increasing naval strength. Unfortunately, there is no convergence of interests for maritime cooperation between India and Pakistan. The Indian Navy (IN) has a force of 55,000 sailors, 19 submarines and 153 surface ships which include missile destroyers, missile frigates, missile corvettes, frigates, patrol crafts and vessels, minesweepers, oil and survey tankers, training vessels, hospital ships, etc.⁸ India also maintains an aircraft carrier, and has a sizeable naval air arm. Another aircraft carrier is on order with Russia, and there are Indian plans to lease two Russian nuclear submarines. If we look at the Indian naval projection by 2010, it seeks to have around three aircraft carriers, six nuclear submarines, and hundreds of surface ships and aircraft.⁹

In order to safeguard Pakistan's jurisdiction over the Arabian Sea¹⁰ which is a part of Indian Ocean, Pakistan is equipped with the second largest navy in the South Asian region. In the post-Cold War environment, the role of the Pakistan Navy (PN) transformed dramatically and, especially after the 9/11 events, a new dimension of terrorism has been added to the concept of maritime security. Initially, the primary role of the navy was to be a strong fighting force, prepared all the time to safeguard the country's territorial waters. Now, with these developments, the responsibilities of the PN have increased manifold to meet these challenges.

After the full operation of the Gwadar port, Pakistan would become a hub for international sea trade by providing an outlet to Central Asian states, Afghanistan, Iran, and China and international SLOCs from Persian Gulf would become very close to it. In this regard, any threat to these SLOCs could severely disrupt trade and energy lifeline of Pakistan. During a war like situation with India, any blockade or harassment of ships or even destruction of one single ship could halt sea trade growth of Pakistan. By mining the navigations channels of Karachi port, India can also block SLOCs.

Similarly, Pakistan would not accept the interference of the India Navy in the Strait of Hormuz and within its continental shelf. Like other regional navies, Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore; which are in the process of building high-tech navies with missiles, subsurface and amphibious capabilities; Pakistan is also taking essential steps for its coastal defence.

In this regard, Pakistan Navy (PN) has also embarked on its modernisation plan. Most recently, in April 2008, PN added two Alouette helicopters from a private UK firm as part of a six helicopter deal, and a modified Fokker aircraft with new state of the art sensors and weapons to its aviation fleet.¹¹ During the same period, *Daily Times* reported on April 8 that Pakistan's Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Muhammad Afzal Tahir, inaugurated the first of four F-22P frigates at Hudong Zhonghua Shipyard in Shanghai that China is building for Pakistan. Addressing the ceremony at the Hudong Zhonghua Shipyard in Shanghai, the naval chief said that the occasion was "a great day for the Pakistan Navy and a great day for Pakistan-China friendship."¹²

Defence Production

Pakistan's defence production has started to mature, and Pakistan plans to double its defence exports in the near future. Pakistan's defence industry has the capacity to manufacture surplus products in order to earn foreign exchange for national development. Pakistan is mainly focusing on main battle tanks, *Al-Khalid* and *Al-Zarrar*, APC *Al-Saad*, *Al-Muhafiz* security vehicle, the *Baktar Shikan* anti-tank guided missile, Super Mushshak, K-8 trainer aircraft, missile boats, small arms and a wide range of artillery, tank and small arms ammunitions.¹³ Defence exports could increase dramatically by exporting *Al-Khalid*, along with JF-17 fighter, developing with China, which could be ready for export by 2008-2009. By selling these big items, Pakistan can achieve the \$1 billion export target over five or six years. Although it would be just a small portion of the international arms market, Pakistan could achieve parity with its imports expenditures.

Pakistan's defence products are not hi-tech, but are cost-effective and affordable. Many countries have shown interest in the indigenous production of the Pakistan Navy. Any deal in this regard would not only boost Pakistan's image

and credibility in the international market, but would also help in earning sizeable foreign exchange. Experts from different countries have also shown interest in POF and HIT equipment, especially the Al-Khalid tank. Experts maintain that Al-Khalid includes qualities of some of the best tanks in the world like targeting the enemy at night and auto-tracking of enemy tanks.

Recommendations:

Due to economic constraints, Pakistan cannot match India's conventional capability in terms of numbers. However, it can achieve a qualitative edge over India by modernising its armed forces with state of the art weapons systems; by enhancing its own indigenous defence production base; by enhancing professional capabilities, and operational preparedness and skills through advance trainings of its armed forces. The following are some of the recommendation to make Pakistan's armed forces strong enough to deter any potential attack internally as well as externally.

- A strong economy guarantees a strong defence.
- There is a need to restructure our defence industry so that we fulfil our armed forces requirement indigenously, and earn revenue by exporting the surplus equipment. Holding of IDEAS exhibition is a positive step in this regard. However, there is a need to adopt more modern marketing tools to address broad international audience.
- There should be more joint ventures with friendly states for specific defence projects.
- There is an urgent need to enhance cooperation with China in all defence-related fields to get cost effective weapons systems with transfer of technology.
- There is a need to encourage private sector to invest more in manufacturing of defence-related equipment to meet internal requirements and also allow them to export surplus items.
- Defence expenditures should be kept transparent, because higher transparency would result in public discussions which could aid policy making and decisions.
- Spend only that much which is sufficient to deter a potential adversary.
- Pakistan needs a unified military and a Tri-service Strategic Force Command which should be able to withstand nuclear, chemical and biological attack.
- Ground-based air defence system should be made more credible and up to the mark so that the enemy hesitates to enter into Pakistan airspace. The recent air space violation by fully-armed Indian aircraft should not be allowed to happen again.
- Resource limitations could be overcome through high professional training in armed forces, and their role in politics should be abolished.
- The role of security forces should be enhanced to such an extent that they do not require the engagement of Pakistan armed forces internally. For example, in the current India-Pakistan standoff, our military resources are diverted

towards internal operations against militants and it could become difficult for military to move back to borders if India attacks.

- The aviation arm of the Pakistan Army should be strengthened by induction of latest combat helicopters.
- Pakistani political and military leadership should take into confidence each other and conduct a true analysis of armed forces preparedness and their future requirements.
- Induction of state of the art electronic warfare equipment in Pakistan armed forces can bridge some of the conventional gap.
- The PAF should be equipped with surveillance UAVs and precision-guided munitions to attack militant hideouts while avoiding collateral damage.
- Since Pakistan was ruled many times by military dictators, there is a need to uplift the role and respect of Pakistan armed forces by a commitment to not to get involved in political affairs.
- To combating terrorism, Pakistan armed forces should be trained and equipped accordingly.
- The PN should train to survive in the nuclear, chemical, and biological warfare environment. Although adding a nuclear dimension to the PN would cost a lot that would enhance Pakistan's national security environment.
- The PN should have the capabilities of 3 R's, i.e., 'Readiness,' 'Responsiveness,' and 'Relevancy' to meet the requirements of a future navy.¹⁴
- The PN's war fighting capabilities should also be streamlined along the concepts of asymmetric warfare.¹⁵
- There is a need to achieve self-reliance in naval technologies. Indigenous construction of Agosta 90-B submarines, mine hunters, missile boats, and a recent deal to purchase F-22 P Frigates from China under transfer of technology agreement, are major steps towards achieving self-reliance.
- The PN should be able to control Pakistan's continental shelf to block enemy ships, if required, support land forces for defence in coastal areas and to provide maritime cooperation to friendly countries.
- The PN should be able to ensure sea-based deterrence, and arrange peacetime missions, disaster relief, anti-piracy, anti-terrorism, etc. Pakistan should interact and cooperate with all the littoral states of the region.
- As far as the Pakistan Army and Air Force are concerned, their presence is felt everywhere in the country. However, the role of PN and maritime awareness is a neglected field. There is a need to promote awareness in other parts of the country, as well as among decision making authorities. The PN should be given a reasonable share in the defence budget to help it meet its growing technological demands.

If Pakistan aspires to maintain its sovereign status, it cannot afford to neglect its military security. For sustainable national security, there is a need to address military and non-military threats to Pakistan's security. The present trends, changes and geopolitical situation imply that all challenges to Pakistan's armed forces should be dealt with accordingly.

Notes

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- ¹ “Non-development Expenses Cut to Meet Defence Needs,” *The News International*, January 10, 2009, http://www.thenews.com.pk/top_story_detail.asp?Id=19515
- ² “Military Spending and Armaments,” in *SIPRI Yearbook 2008: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security*, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), Oxford University Press: 2008, p.194.
- ³ Ibid. p.321
- ⁴ Ibid.
- ⁵ “Pakistan Needs Improved Gear to Fight Taliban,” *Daily Times*, December 15, 2008.
- ⁶ “PAF Core Values” Pakistan Air Force (PAF) official website.
- ⁷ “President, PM briefed on JF-17 Thunder Aircraft,” *The News International*, January 14, 2009.
- ⁸ For complete details and classification, see, Indian Navy Today: the Surface Fleet, <http://www.bharat-rakshak.com/NAVY/Surface.html>
- ⁹ Commodore Muhammad Anwar TI(M), ‘*Role of Smaller Navies: A Focus on Pakistan's Maritime Interests*,’ op. cit., p. 197.
- ¹⁰ The Arabian Sea is bordered by Yemen, Oman, United Arab Emirates, Iran, Pakistan, and India. It merges with the Gulf of Oman to the northwest, which through Strait of Hormuz flows into the Persian Gulf, and the Gulf of Aden in the southwest. The maximum width of the Arabian Sea is stipulated to be 2,400 km, and its maximum depth is about 5,000 metres. Arabian Sea, http://i-cias.com/e.o/arab_sea.htm
- ¹¹ *Daily Times*, April 13, 2008.
- ¹² *Daily Times*, April 8, 2008.
- ¹³ Interview, Major Gen. Ali Hamid, Director General Defence Export Promotion Organisation (DEPO), *Defence Journal*, Vol. 8, No. 2, September 2004.
- ¹⁴ Jack Spencer and Kathy Gudgel, ‘The Future of the Navy: A View from the Top’, at <http://www.heritage.org/Research/NationalSecurity/wm731.cfm>
- ¹⁵ ‘Asymmetric warfare’ is a military term describing warfare in which the two belligerents are mismatched in their military capabilities or their accustomed methods of engagement. In such a situation, the militarily disadvantaged power must press its special advantages or effectively exploit its enemy’s particular weaknesses if it is to have any hope of prevailing.