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Assessment: (Walter C. Ladwig III, “Indian Military Modernisation and Conventional Deterrence in South Asia,” *The Journal of Strategic Studies*, 2015)

India-Pakistan relations are entrenched with the legacy of their troubled past; ideological hostilities; territorial disputes; water disputes; terrorism; and the role of non-state actors. India, being the larger adversary, has always tried to dominate this region by coercing its smaller neighbour, Pakistan. Despite Pakistan’s repeated efforts, to improve regional peace and security and to maintain stability, there are greater risks that that India, once again, citing its insecurities, and to teach Pakistan a lesson, could launch a limited military offensive under its aggressive Cold Start Doctrine (CSD), also known as “Proactive Strategy.” Therefore, Pakistan, in order to bridge this growing conventional disparity vis-à-vis India, was left with no choice, except to develop low-yield battle-fielded nuclear weapons, which are commonly referred to as Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNW). Pakistan, being sensitive to the Indian conventional superiority and its hostile intentions, could retaliate with all possible means, including its TNW, to stop any advancing Indian military offensive. However, it is imperative that Pakistan view its TNW capability as a “weapon of peace,” which is solely aimed at deterring any Indian offensive by ensuring an assured destruction.

In this backdrop, Walter C. Ladwig III, represents a comprehensive analysis of India’s military modernisation drive; growing conventional imbalance in the region; comparative assessment of conventional military balance of India and Pakistan; and explores the possibilities of a limited war scenario in South Asia. It can be considered an important study for national security planners. It has identified weaknesses and strengths of India and Pakistan from national threat perceptions; role of political leadership; military planning; weapons systems imbalances; and exposed each other’s operational vulnerabilities. A careful review of this study can help defence planners to understand and devise a future course to strengthening Pakistan’s conventional military capabilities.

Ladwig, considering Pakistan’s unique geographical advantages and based on Mearsheimer’s conventional deterrence theory, has, to a large extent, ruled out possibilities of an Indian limited military strike against Pakistan. Based on his optimistic assumptions, Ladwig has argued that despite India’s military modernisation drive, it may not be able to perform as desired, and it is very difficult for policy makers to gain a strategic surprise over Pakistan. On this assumption, Ladwig has even questioned Pakistan’s justification of developing its TNW. This contradicts the fact that India is the world’s largest arms importer; its 2015-16 military budget is \$39.8 billion; it has started to spend around \$100 billion under its 15 years (2012-2027) Long Term Integrated Perspective Plan (LTIPP), to modernize its armed forces. According to a recent estimate, since 2004, India has increased its defence budget around 164.5 percent. Indian war-prone military strategies and its modernisation drive, in near future, will not only widen conventional asymmetry, but it will compel Pakistan to enhance its defensive strength to avoid being blackmailed by India. There is possibility that if, today, Indian policy makers are not confident over their ageing and antique armed forces, however, a constant focus on modernising and

enhancing their armed forces, might give them enough courage to wage a limited conflict against Pakistan.

Pakistan has always rejected a conventional or nuclear arms race with India, but it cannot compromise over its minimum credible and sufficient conventional and nuclear capability. Pakistan is not interested in maintaining a conventional parity with India, and it has always urged India to maintain a conventional balance to ensure regional peace and security. It is imperative that against India's growing conventional superiority, Pakistan's nuclear weapons capability ensures its survival.

Furthermore following guidelines for Pakistan's national security planners can be drawn from this study;

- There is a need to integrate advance military technology with military skill, in a network-centric capability, is a necessity to deal with potential large and small adversaries.
- There is a need to modernise armed forces along geographical features. Pakistan's unique terrain is already serving its interests. Therefore, any future modernisation and technical enhancements should be made according to these geographical features. An effective barrier system can help to prevent Indian limited military offensives objectives.
- Indian CSD's main thrust is to reduce armed forces mobilisation time and technological advancement of India armed forces is focused on this aspect. Therefore, Pakistan's military should be modernised in such a manner that it should be able to eliminate India's element of surprise.
- There is a need to improve military skills to increase qualitative superiority to overcome Indian technological modernisation. This requires an increase in per capita spending per soldier.
- Pakistan's naval blockade can help India to attain some limited advantages, and therefore there is a need to diversify sea routes for trade activity by developing Gawadar, Ormara, Jiwani, and Pasni ports as quickly as possible.
- There is an urgent need to focus on Pakistan's air power to eliminate quantitative superiority of Indian Air Force in a protracted conflict, and technological advancement of its air defence systems to deny India's limited war objectives.
- There is a need to prepare ground forces to counter multiple warfronts and even to counter ambiguous objectives of a full scale-war under a limited war disguise.

The study concludes that limited objectives cannot be achieved through limited use of force, and tensions could spiral into a larger conflict or an all out war. This argument itself justifies Pakistan's need to develop a full spectrum deterrence capability to ensure strategic stability. It is also incumbent on India to move towards the settlement of disputes and make efforts to ensure peace and security in this region.

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