



INDIAN LAND WARFARE DOCTRINE & RECENT DEVELOPMENTS: IMPLICATIONS FOR PAKISTAN

By
Ahmad Ali
Intern

Arms Control & Disarmament Centre (ACDC), ISSI

Edited by
Malik Qasim Mustafa

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(Views expressed in the brief are those of the author, and do not represent those of ISSI)



In the past two decades, the Indian Army has made several doctrinal shifts. From Sunderji doctrine to Cold Start Doctrine (CSD) and then to the latest one, the Land Warfare Doctrine (LWD) in 2018, which is a supplement to the 2017 Joint Doctrine Indian Armed Forces. The LWD came in December 2018, which discussed the role of emerging technologies in future warfare.¹

The key tenets of LWD are that the Indian military's focus would be on modernisation.² Future warfare would be quite different so equipping the Indian military with technology is of great importance. Countering and waging multidomain warfare i.e., Hybrid Warfare (HW) is another important feature of the LWD. Upgradation of existing Cyber Warfare (CW) capabilities, developing capabilities to dominate adversary in Information Warfare Domain (IW) and developing Electronic Warfare (EW) capabilities are some important features of LWD.³ Along the western border, the Indian army would be prepared for a swift military response for ensuring security so Integrated Battlegroups (IBGs) would be deployed and operational capabilities would be strengthened to increase punitive response options. For continuous surveillance of borders, new satellites would be

¹ Joy Mitra, "India's Land Warfare Doctrine 2018: Hoping for the Best, Preparing for the Worst," *The Diplomat*, January 03, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/01/indias-land-warfare-doctrine-2018-hoping-for-the-best-preparing-for-the-worst/>

² "The Official Home Page of the Indian Army," www.indianarmy.nic.in, accessed July 16, 2021, <https://indianarmy.nic.in/Default3.aspx?MenuId=zehIBGQotMOBtFh2dckf4g==>

³ Ibid.

developed and employed as well as for Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR), technology would be upgraded.⁴ Domestic defence capabilities would also be enhanced.

Keeping in view the LWD, India is in a quest to modernise its military and has fast-tracked purchase and domestic production of weaponry. In 2019, the Indian government planned to spend US\$130 billion for the modernisation of its armed forces in the next five to seven years.⁵ Indian official reference report stated that a large number of armaments would be acquired including fighter jets, missiles, drones, surveillance equipment and architecture for artificial intelligence. In late 2020, the Indian government approved US\$5.55 billion projects to upgrade and acquire military equipment.⁶ In 2019-2021, India has finalized 38 foreign deals to acquire new military equipment.⁷ India's recent deals with different countries include acquiring Apache Helicopters; MH-60 Helicopters; Guardian drones; MK-45 gun System; Apache AH-64 E attack helicopter; S-400 air defence systems; Kalashnikov rifles; Kamov helicopters; Ka-226 helicopters; Negev 7.62x51 mm light machine guns; SWATHI weapon locating radars; Rafale jets; Tejas Light Combat Aircraft engines; T-90- Tanks; K9-Vajra 155 mm/52 Artillery Guns; Barak-8 air defence system; SU-30MKI aircraft; C-130J Hercules aircraft; C-17 Globemaster-III Aircraft and Chinook helicopters.⁸

The LWD also talks about hybrid warfare and it is being practically implemented by India against Pakistan. India is trying to engage Pakistan on conventional as well as other fronts. India recently admitted that the Indian government ensured that Pakistan remains on the grey list of FATF.⁹ India is now involved in activities on a sub-conventional level. India supports separatist groups in Balochistan as an Indian spy, who was arrested by Pakistani authorities from Balochistan, admitted this. India tries to engage Pakistan on LOC by hitting military check posts on the border. India is also trying to deteriorate the image of Pakistan on the international level. The CPEC is another target of India as the recent attacks on the Chinese consulate in Karachi and ambassador in Gwadar were backed by India.¹⁰

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ "Recent Defence Procurement in India," Reference Note, accessed on July 16, 2021, http://164.100.47.193/Refinput/New_Reference_Notes/English/16122020_155303_1021205239.pdf

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ "India Admits it 'ensured' Pakistan Remained on FATF Grey List," *The Express Tribune*, assessed July 18, 2021, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/2311285/india-admits-it-ensured-pakistan-remained-on-fatf-grey-list>

¹⁰ Inam U. Shah, "Indian Hybrid War: Challenges for Pakistan," *Strafasia*, accessed July 19, 2021, <https://strafasia.com/indian-hybrid-war-challenges-for-pakistan/>

As cyber warfare is an important aspect mentioned in the LWD so India is trying to dominate South Asia in cyber capabilities. India has signed a deal with Israel recently to exchange cyber technology.¹¹ It is important to note that Israel's firm NSO has developed spyware named "Pegasus" which can access information on the mobile anytime and can be installed easily. Recently, India used this spyware to target the Pakistani Prime Minister and several other officials' in Pakistan for getting information which indicates that the Indian intelligence is using this spyware.¹² The Russian cybersecurity and anti-virus company Kaspersky Lab in 2019 stated that Pakistan is much vulnerable to cyber-attacks. Also, the US company Symantec stated that Pakistan is among the most spied country and is vulnerable to such kinds of attacks. The UK think tank stated in its report that the Indian offensive cyber capabilities are mainly focused on Pakistan rather than its other rivals. International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) has placed India in the third tier and the US is placed in the first tier which suggests that India has far better cyber warfare capabilities than Pakistan.

India is increasing its capabilities in the domain of information warfare as it is an important tenant of the LWD. In December 2020, the Indian government created the post of Director General Information Warfare in the Indian Army.¹³ The Indian government in 2019 already approved establishing the branch of information warfare in the Indian Army¹⁴ to counter-propaganda. It is a fact that capabilities once acquired and established for defensive purposes are later used for offensive purposes and India already has stated in its LWD to wage information warfare against Pakistan. The EU DisInfoLab recently exposed Indian backed network of fake websites which were involved in doing propaganda against Pakistan.

LWD also see electronic warfare, an important domain so India is increasing its capabilities in this area. India has developed Weapon Locating Radar to identify the location of mortar shells and short-range rocket sites within 50 kilometres. These are used by the army near LOC to have a closer eye on Pakistan and have an advantage in case of limited war. Samyukta Electronic Warfare System is

¹¹ "India's Quest to Dominate the South Asian Cyberspace," *Modern Diplomacy*, assessed July, 19, 2021, <https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2020/08/29/indias-quest-to-dominate-the-south-asian-cyberspace/>

¹² "Pegasus Project | India's Gandhi and Pakistan's Khan Tapped as Targets in Israeli NSO Spyware Scandal," *Haaretz*, July 19, 2021, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/tech-news/.premium-india-s-gandhi-and-pakistan-s-khan-tapped-as-israeli-nso-spyware-targets-1.10012729>

¹³ "Indian Govt Approves post of DG Information Warfare in Army to deal with Media Affairs," *Business Recorder*, December 03, 2020, <https://www.brecorder.com/news/40037237/indian-govt-approves-post-of-dg-information-warfare-in-army-to-deal-with-media-affairs>

¹⁴ "Defence Ministry Approves Information Warfare Branch for Indian Army," *The Economic Times*, March 09, 2019, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/defence-ministry-approves-information-warfare-branch-for-indian-army/articleshow/68329797.cms>.

another mobile system having the capability to listen and jam all communications and radar signals. It is developed by India indigenously.

India has stated in the LWD to go for punitive response in case of sub-conventional threat escalates. This signals that India can launch a limited action against Pakistan and later claim it a pre-emptive strike. Deployment of IBGs signal that India has plans to penetrate Pakistani territory and conduct operations which definitely will increase the threat of all-out war. Indian army has announced in June 2021 that IBGs would become operational soon.¹⁵ The initial lot of IBGs would be in service early next year.

New satellites are being developed by India for surveillance and intelligence as indicated in the LWD. The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) planned to launch ten surveillance satellites in the years 2020 to 2021.¹⁶ India has launched two earth observation satellites and two communication satellites since 2020. ISRO is planning to launch two additional surveillance satellites till September 2021. Pakistan is lacking behind in surveillance through satellites. Recently China launched two earth-orbiting satellites for Pakistan but as compared to India these are not enough.

India is increasing its domestic defence equipment manufacture as it is given importance in the LWD. The Indian government has made 10 domestic defence deals since July 2020.¹⁷ It has made a deal with Israel Weapon Industry to get Tavor X 95 rifles and is now manufacturing them in India. Similarly, nine other deals were made with local arms manufacturing companies in India for the development and up-gradation of military equipment.

Implications for Pakistan

India's quest for modernisation has created uncertainty for Pakistan. This modernisation would incentivise India to go for misadventure which could lead to an all-out war as there exists a conventional asymmetry between India and Pakistan. Pakistan is already facing economic challenges at this time and India is trying to engage Pakistan in an arms race. With such aggressive actions by India, already existing territorial disputes can become flashpoints between the two rivals. Pakistan is already vulnerable to cyberattacks and India's increasing capabilities have made this threat more

¹⁵ "Indian Army to Create New Integrated Battle Groups," *Army Technology*, June 07, 2021, <https://www.army-technology.com/news/indian-army-integrated-battle-groups/>

¹⁶ "With India's Security in mind, ISRO plans to Launch 10 Surveillance Satellites in 2020-21," *The Times of India*, accessed February 17, 2020, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/with-indias-security-in-mind-isro-plans-to-launch-10-surveillance-satellites-in-2020-21/articleshow/74166548.cms>

¹⁷ "List of 10 latest Defence Deals that India has Signed in the last six Months," *Business Insider*, February 16, 2021, <https://www.businessinsider.in/defense/news/list-of-10-latest-defence-deals-that-india-has-signed-in-the-last-six-months/slidelist/80926534.cms>

imminent. Pakistan is also taking steps towards digital atomisation of cabinet proceedings which could be an insecure way under such circumstances. India is trying to go for limited war keeping it under the assumed nuclear red lines of Pakistan which would lead to an all-out war. LWD will undermine the security of Pakistan as it includes several fronts on which India is planning to engage Pakistan.

Recommendations

- Pakistan cannot afford an arms race with India so Pakistan would have to rely on superior training and learn from conducting military exercises.
- Along with nuclear deterrence, the conventional domain cannot be ignored so Pakistan would have to build necessary conventional capabilities to counter the threat of limited war from the Indian side.
- Pakistan needs to strengthen its deterrent threat which can be done by assured second-strike capability.
- Hybrid warfare is the most dangerous form of warfare as it is difficult to identify the targeted area. Pakistan needs to fill the vacuum existing inside Pakistan so that India cannot use those gaps to undermine Pakistan.
- Hybrid warfare can be countered with a balanced approach towards conventional and non-conventional techniques.
- Pakistan should increase its cyberspace capabilities by collaborating with its allies as it is a need for Pakistan to equip itself with capabilities in cyberspace because it is the only way to contain cyberattacks.
- In case India initiates a limited war against Pakistan, timely intelligence can only provide an edge to Pakistan so investment in advanced surveillance technology is very important.
- Policymakers should give importance to Pakistan's space programme and try to develop more earth observation satellites indigenously as it would create a less economic burden.
- Pakistan should devise domestic laws regarding space activities and spend a significant amount on the space programme which can also be helpful for peaceful activities.
- Also, Collaboration with its allies like China is another available option for Pakistan.

- Pakistan should invest in increasing the capacity of Pakistani media to counter negative propaganda and try to establish a renowned news channel that can help to promote Pakistan's narrative.