CHAPTER III

ARMED FORCES IN SOUTH ASIA

3.1 Introduction
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3.1 **Introduction:**

Armed forces are one of the essential ingredients for national security. The level of defence build-up in a country can be judged by measuring any increase or decrease in the number of three categories of forces - regular, paramilitary and reserve. The effectiveness of these forces for the defence of a country can be determined by a combination of quantitative and qualitative components. Quantity include the number of men in uniform, number of troops for the defence of each kilometer of territory and number of aircraft, ships, tanks, artillery pieces available for these forces. Concept of quality has both material and non-material dimensions. While the former stands for the quality and performance of weapons in comparison to that of the enemy, potential or real, non-material qualitative dimension includes discipline, professionalism, morale and training of the troops, defence planning, security doctrine and military leadership. Qualitative superiority appears to be the most decisive in short duration wars whereas, quantitative edge yields favourable results in a prolonged conflict. While discussing the armed forces in South Asia emphasis would be on both qualitative and quantitative dimensions, i.e. expansion as well as modernisation to assess their capability for the defence of the state. The scope of the present study is limited to a detailed discussion on regular troops only.

3.2 **India: Armed Forces:**

**Army**

Indian army is the fourth largest in the world. Over the years it has gained experience in all branches of army operations. As part of the British Indian army it was an effective participant in World War II, and even after independence, Indian army got engaged in three wars with

1. Only China, Russia and United States have larger standing armies.
Pakistan and a solitary border confrontation with China. Since the early 1960s two army divisions, approximately 36,000 troops, are deployed in the north-eastern region where secessionist guerrillas are waging a 'hit-and-run' war against the Indian state. Army has a tradition of conducting peace keeping missions abroad either at the behest of the United Nations or under bilateral agreements. The largest contingent of Indian troops ever deployed in a foreign country was the 50,000 strong Indian Peace Keeping Force (IPKF) that served in the northern and eastern provinces of Sri Lanka with the twin objectives of maintaining peace and of countering Tamil insurgency. Though the primary "task assigned to the army was to fight against external aggression, it had been, during the 1980s, frequently called upon "in aid to the civil authority".

The uniqueness of the Indian army is its tradition of political neutrality. To professor Stephen Cohen:


Not only does India have civilian control, but it has an almost crushing civilian dominance over a powerful and large military—a situation without parallel in the Third World. (6)

India's apolitical army "frees the government from worrying about the army and frees the army to worry about defence".

Independence marked the transition of the colonial armed forces to a national force. It also cut off its filial code when Muslim officers and men were separated to form the armed forces of Pakistan. Even during that transitional phase armed forces of India and Pakistan confronted each other in Kashmir in 1947-48. Despite the war, armed forces were neglected during the first decade and instead of increasing the army's efficiency and strength, it was governments' policy to cut it down. In the wake of the Chinese threat a decision was taken to add a few more divisions to the strength of the army. But, it was not carried out.


8. At the time of partition Indian army comprised 30 percent Muslims. In the Navy and Air Force the proportion of Muslims and non-Muslims was 40-60 and 20-80 respectively. Thus, out of a total of four hundred thousand men in the British Indian Army, India got 2,60,000 personnel as its share. See S.T. Das, Indian Military: Its History and Development (New Delhi: Sagar Publications, 1969), p. 162.


Lack of pragmatism in assessing India's security environment was evident from the fact that the 500,000 strong army of the early 1960s was entirely Pakistan oriented and so deployed. The low level of ammunition stocks and all types of equipments was brought to the notice of the Government on atleast six occasions in the first half of 1962. But the Government persisted in the political decision not to purchase large quantities of military requirements abroad" on the assumption that "there would be no major campaign in future".

After the 1962 debacle a new defence consciousness developed that military weakness has proved to be a temptation and a little military strength may be deterrent. The first five year Defence plan increased army's manpower ceiling to 825,000. Six new divisions were sanctioned to meet manpower requirement for high altitude warfare. Some existing divisions were converted into mountain divisions. 10,000 additional officers were recruited in November 1961. Both officers and men were given 'battle inoculation' i.e. training in high altitude mountain warfare and were trained in actual terrain condition in which they would fight a war in future.

During the Sino-Indian border conflict India first turned to the United States and other Western countries for military assistance. Both the U.S. and Britain came promptly to India's help with emergency

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aid. But the U.S. was unwilling to do any more than provide assistance worth US $60 million (primarily communication and transport equipment), with Britain sending another 5 million dollar worth of equipment. In the post-war period India's request was for 500 million dollar assistance spread over five years, which was by no means exorbitant. The U.S. had already provided Pakistan arms worth 800 million dollars during 1954-62. Not only that the US considered Indian request 'unrealistic' but also put pressure on India "to make concessions to Pakistan on Kashmir".

The 1962 and 1965 operations served as a backdrop to the continued efforts of reinforcing the army to meet the dual threat from China and Pakistan. Despite modernisation, balanced growth of the three wings of the armed forces and even within each service striking a balance between teeth (fighting units) and tail (supporting units) still remained a far cry. The supporting units were neglected. Army became fat with manpower but thin with equipment.

By the time the Bangladesh crisis blew-up in early 1971 Indian army had not completed its expansion and re-equipment programmes. Armoured units lacked their required strength. For the conduct of mobile warfare there was a shortage of transport and other logistic units. But during

16. Gopal, Jawaharlal Nehru, n.12, p.252; also see Michael Brecher, "Non-Alignment Under Stress: The West and the India-China Border War", Pacific Affairs, vol.52, no.4, Winter 1979-80, p.625; William J. Barndts, Indian, Pakistan and the Great Powers (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1972), p.323, and Stephen P. Cohen, "U.S. Weapons and South Asia: A Policy Analysis", Pacific Affairs, vol.49, no.1, Spring 1976, p.50. For Brecher, the total American assistance during that period was $65 million, for Barnds this figure was $85 million and for Cohen, the U.S. military assistance was worth $90 million.


18. Ibid.

the fourteen days' campaign army succeeded in clearing the shadow cast on its reputation in 1962. But the period 1972-78 was characterised by lack of decision-taking to meet urgent requirement of the armed forces. There was endless debate on force level and occasional inter-service wrangling.

Inaugurating the army commanders conference in April 1982, Indira Gandhi emphasised the desire to modernise the army. Conforming to the enhanced threat perception, the Defence plan for 1980-85 laid emphasis on improving its fire power, mobility and night fighting capabilities. A new perspective plan was implemented to meet their long term needs. Mechanisation of the infantry was undertaken at a rapid pace with the introduction of infantry combat vehicles into service. Armour was modernised with the procurement and subsequent production of T-72 tanks of Soviet origin and in artillery older generation guns were replaced by more sophisticated guns. Army got its air arm in mid-1980s when all Cheeta and Chetak helicopter units were transferred from the air force. It was also decided that in war situations army would exercise operational control over attack helicopters (an integral part of modern mobile warfare), for launching anti-tank missiles against enemy armour.

Army was trained and equipped to limit physical and psychological damage in the event of use of nuclear weapons by the adversary in the battle zone. Equal emphasis was given to force multiplier including the

22. See interview with the former chief of Army staff, Gen. K. Sundarji, Indian Defence Review (New Delhi), vol.1, January 1988, p.36.
introduction of sophisticated command, control, communication and intelligence system and electronic warfare capabilities.

Infantry troops, because of their numerical superiority and specialised task, are the cutting edge of any army. During the 1971 Indo-Pak war out of army's total manpower strength of 8,60,000 (see Table 3.1), infantry's share was 13 divisions along with 10 mountain divisions and a few other independent brigades. After two decades its strength had gone up to 19 infantry divisions, 11 mountain divisions and 7 independent infantry brigades which together consisted of 332 battalions. Up to 15 infantry divisions were facing Pakistan either in frontline or reserve capacity. Mountain divisions were all deployed along the Sino-Indian border.

In small arms Indian infantry had progressed from 303 vintage rifles at the time of 1962 war to 7.62 mm indigenous Ishapore rifles in Indo-Pak confrontation in 1971 and after two decades army is currently switching over to comparatively lighter 5.56 mm assault rifles. For short, intense and close quarter war Pakistan army is also shifting over to the same family of small arms.

Infantry troops were also equipped with anti-tank guns, missiles and rocket launchers. In 1987 each battalion was authorised eight 106mm RCL.

and twelve 84 mm Carl Gustav guns for anti-tank operations. Introduction of SS-11-B1 and MILAN missiles and few RPG-7 rocket launchers had considerably enhanced the anti-armour capability of infantry brigades.

India maintained a large army to simultaneously place units in all the strategic theatres because there was lack of facilities for speedy mobilisation and transportation of a unit from one theatre to another. Army received the first lot of Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs) in 1964 and the first ICV mounted infantry battalion was formed in 1977. In 1971 army had approximately twelve mechanised infantry battalions playing supportive role in armoured formations. India's only mechanised division took shape in the mid-1980s. Her two main adversaries namely, China and Pakistan in recent years, were going in for greater mechanisation.

Throughout the seventies mechanised troops were mounted on BTR-60, Skot CT-62/64 and Topaz APCs. With the procurement of BMP-1 ICVs from former Soviet Union and licence production of BMP-2 since 1984 India's emphasis seemed to be mobile warfare in a future battlefield. But in 1990 army had only 1250 APCs and ICVs (see Fig 3.1 and Table 3.2) and less than 5 per cent of the troops out of a total strength of 1.1 million were mechanised in the real sense. Majority of Indian infantry units had

FIGURE 3.1

APC/ICV

Numbers

Years

India

Pakistan
"foot-slugging and rifle-yielding troop".

The mountain divisions were broadly organised in line of an infantry division except that their artillery components and transport were more lighter suitable for mountainous terrain. With readjustment in medium and field artillery and with more transport these divisions could be operationally deployed in the plains. But so long as Sino-Indian relations continues to remain strained India cannot afford to shift the mountain troops to the plains of western theatre in the event of another Indo-Pakistan war.

The penalty for such a move would likely to be the entry of China into the conflict either to protect the Karakoram Highway with its own troops or an attack from China into India to exploit the absence of Indian mountain troops opposing them. (37)

Each armoured division in the Indian army had three brigades with the latter having two regiments each. Independent armoured brigades had three tank regiments. There was similarity between Indian and Pakistani armoured formations. In 1980 the armoured regimental strength of Indian army was 23 compared to Pakistan's 20. By 1990 this figure increased to 29 and 26 respectively.


The mountain divisions were broadly organised in line of an infantry

36. Palit, The Lightening Campaign, n.19, p.44.

37. Cordesman, "Western Strategic Interests and India-Pakistan Military Balance", n.35, p.129. thus, the argument that in Indo-Pak war the former could transfer as many as five mountain divisions within one to six weeks appears highly unlikely. See Singh, "India's Defence Perspectives", n.29, p.14; G. Jacobs, "India's Army", Asian Defence Journal, September 1985, p.6.


40. These figures exclude the tank regiments (one each) attached to each infantry division in both India and Pakistan.
In 1990 India's tank inventory comprised around 3150 tanks compared to 1900 in 1980 (see Fig 3.2 and Table 3.2). In the 1965 war Sherman and Centurian were the Main Battle Tanks. After nearly two decades of creditable service these were phased out and their place was taken over by Soviet designed T-54/55 and indigenously manufactured Vijayanta MBTs. Nearly 700 T-72 Soviet tanks were procured and locally produced to fill up the gap during the transitional phase in the 1980s and possibly in the 1990s until the Indian designed tank 'Arjun' enters into service. Nearly 700 T-72 Soviet tanks were procured and locally produced to fill up the gap during the transitional phase in the 1980s and possibly in the 1990s until the Indian designed tank 'Arjun' enters into service.

There was deficiency in light tanks that could be used in the rugged mountain terrain in the eastern sector and the north-eastern region of Kashmir. The one hundred amphibious PT-76 light tanks and the 500 T-54/55 Soviet tanks of the 1950s are increasingly becoming obsolete.

The 1965 and 1971 Indo-Pak wars saw increasing use of armour by both countries. The border from Madhopur to Rann of Kutch is open terrain suitable for large-scale tank and mechanised infantry operations. The Amritsar-Firozpur sector is infested with canals which restrict manoeuvre. But the Fazilka-Bhawalpur sector and the Thar desert makes such operations possible. The much publicised Indian army exercise 'Brasstacks' in 1986 emphasised on 'combined assault', a new concept in warfare executed by the Israeli army in the 1973 Yom Kippur war with astonishing success. In that concept tank formation were supplemented


FIGURE 3.2

Tanks

Numbers

Year


India

Pakistan
by mechanised infantry, self-propelled artillery and assault engineers.

But the major problem of armoured formation in India was that they lacked adequate reserve to back up any offensive operations. Though India held a slight edge over Pakistan this was not enough to tilt the balance in India's favour.

Artillery constitute the largest supporting arm of the Indian army. From eighteen regiments at the time of partition in 1947 its strength has gone up to 164 regiments after a period of forty years. In 1962 war Chinese mortars outgunned the Indian artillery as the latter was handicapped by mobility and fire power. Obsolete Indian guns and mortars could not be transported to rugged Himalayan region, scene of the Sino-Indian clash.

Till the mid-1970s standard weapon of the field artillery regiments was the World War II vintage British 25 pdr (88mm) guns. Its place was taken over by 105mm Indian Field Gun MK-I. The mountain artillery used the Light Field Gun MK-11 of the same calibre. Artillery units attached to armoured brigades used self-propelled (SP) guns. The older 25 pdr guns mounted on Sherman tank chassis were supplemented by the 'Abbot' 105mm SP British guns of the 1960s. In early 1980s around 100 Soviet supplied 130mm M-46 guns were mounted on the chassis of Vijayanta tank. Because the emphasis today is on mobile and complete warfare Indian army require more self-propelled guns for supporting the armoured and mechanised infantry formations.


45. These includes one heavy, five multiple rocket launcher units, fifty medium (including eleven SP), sixty nine field and thirty nine mountain artillery regiments. See Military Balance, 1990-91 (London); Sainik Samachar, vol.32, no.3, June 1985, p.13.


In medium artillery regiments the 130mm M-46 and 152mm D-20 guns of Soviet origin were supplemented by 400 Swedish Bofors FH-77B 155 mm howitzers. The light regiments were equipped with 120mm mortars while the heavy artillery units used the Soviet 180mm S-23 guns and American M-115 howitzers. In India anti-aircraft artillery system has both light and heavy units. The light regiments used Swedish 40mm L-70 and L-60 guns. The mobile units used the Soviet supplied 'Shilka' that provided excellent defence against low level air attack. Heavy air defence regiments had the obsolete British 3.7 inch guns. In early 1970s small quantity of British Tiger Cat anti-aircraft missiles were obtained which were later supplemented with Soviet SA-6 surface to air missiles.

The nature of threat that India perceived demanded a large standing army. With a 15,000 kilometer long border to defend India, had a 1.1 million strong army in a population of 850 million. Compared to this, the Chinese army was 3 to 4 million strong in a population of 1000 million and Pakistan's .5 million strong army had to defend one-fourth less territory and one-eighth less population. While India had one soldier out of 674 Indians, for Pakistan there was one soldier on every 200 people and there was one soldier in every 469 Chinese. The ratio of military personnel per kilometer of border was 70:1 for India compared to 69:1 for Pakistan and 109:1 for China. In keeping with the manpower to arms ratio of Pakistan, India could have an army five times its present size. Pakistan's attempt to get military parity vis-a-vis India is


"defiance of geographical reality".

The ratio of force between India and Pakistan was 2:1 during the first war over Kashmir. In 1965 the ratio was 3:2 and in 1971 on the western border it was 7:6. By 1985 Pakistan had not only closed this gap but "on a one-to-one basis Pakistan's forces probably had the edge on the ground. The former Indian Chief of Army Staff, General A.S. Vaidya observed:

It is wrong to believe that the overall strength of our armed forces gives India a favourable military balance vis-a-vis Pakistan. Because of our commitment along the Himalayan frontiers the number of combat divisions which can be fielded by both sides is more or less the same.(54)

Indian Air Force

From a fleet of just seven obsolete fighter (Tempest) squadrons and a single transport (Dakota) squadron at the time of independence, Indian air force with its present strength of some 833 combat aircraft


53. Jane's Defence Weekly, vol.3, no.6, February 9, 1985, p.216. Even in 1982 the Reagan Administration acknowledged that the forces facing each other across the India-Pakistan frontier were "approximately equal". It argued that one country (India) had effective reserve and the other (Pakistan) did not. That factor had to be taken into consideration in warfare. James L. Buckley, Under Secretary for Security Assistance, see Hearings before the Subcommittee on Asian and Pacific Affairs, Committee on Foreign Affairs, US House of Representatives, Security and Economic Assistance to Pakistan (Washington, 1982), p.309.

54. India Today (New Delhi), November 15, 1985, p.85.

and manned by over 110,000 personnel has turned out to be world's fourth largest air arm.

In the 1962 war, the combat and strike elements of the air force were kept out of the conflict arena. Indian pilots lacked serious training in tactical support of land battles in the rugged terrains of NEFA and Ladakh. Also, air force never thought of building an adequate ground based air defence against China. It was used to lift men and material by the transport fleet. During the 1965 war role of the air force was restricted to tactical air support to ground operations, rather than conducting any deep strike inside Pakistan territory. In 1971 air force reached the pinnacle of glory by its outstanding show in diverse aspects of aerial warfare from interdiction and strategic bombing against enemy targets to interception of invading aircraft and also providing offensive ground support to the Indian army. During the first six


FIGURE 3.3

Combat Aircraft

Numbers:

- India
- Pakistan

Years:

years after the war (1972-78) air force modernisation programme was completely neglected. This was reflected in the sharp decline in its share from the capital expenditure on defence. Apart from launching the indigenous production of Ajeet (improved version of Gnat fighter), no significant decision was taken to improve the air force strength. The period 1978-88 witnessed a major modernisation programme which replaced most of the earlier generation obsolete aircraft with new aircraft types and weapons systems.

India's defence decision-makers assessed the strategic air balance in the region by evaluating air defence and deep strike capability of Pakistani air force. Against China IAF never envisaged any air attack because most Chinese cities, industrial centres and air bases were far away from the range of Indian bombers. It could only hope to penetrate the Chinese force deployment in Tibetan region, adjacent to Indian territory, by long range surface-to-surface missiles. Air operational planning vis-a-vis China emphasized deployment of SAM batteries at strategic points and maintaining a sizable fleet of interceptors and tactical ground attack aircraft as deterrent against any aerial strike by the adversary.

In 1949 the policy to maintain a balanced force of twenty squadrons was revealed in the Indian Parliament. To replace the older fighters, air force procured British designed Vampire and an agreement was signed

60. **Air International**, n.56, p.271.
64. Ibid.
with that country in 1960 to produce under licence Folland Gnat interceptors. To reduce India's exclusive dependence on Britain for aircraft and spares French Ouragan jet fighter bombers were purchased in 1953.

But in 1954 the United States initiated military aid to Pakistan. During 1954-65 Pakistan received B-57 light bombers and Sidewinder air-to-air missiles along with Sabre jets and supersonic Starfighter. To counter the immediate danger of sophisticated weapons in the hands of Pakistan, purchase of foreign aircraft could not be avoided. Indian air force inducted to its service B-1 Canberra fighter-bombers and F-56 Hunters, both from Britain, along with the French Mystere fighter ground attack aircraft.

A clear bias towards import of western aircraft and other military equipment reflected the pro-western approach of Indian leadership. In 1962 India made the initial attempt to acquire combat aircraft from Soviet Union when its request for three squadrons of F-104s was turned down by the United States. Even talk with Britain, to procure Lightening interceptor failed presumably because of the British reluctance to permit the manufacture of the aircraft under licence in India. Soviet Union


67. SIPRI, Arms Transfer to the Third World (Upsala: Almqvist and Wiksells, 1971), pp.475-76.


69. Chari, "Indo-Soviet Military Cooperation", n.15., p.234; See also S. Nihal Singh, "Why India Goes to Moscow for Arms" Asian Survey, contd.
agreed to set up plants in India for the manufacture of MIG-21 and the first Soviet made MIG-21 was handed over to India in September 1964. The Indo-Soviet military collaboration in the formative phase had latent anti-Chinese overtones. India could perceive the advantages inherent in the symbolic value of "Soviet Union underwriting Indian defence against China. "Economic consideration, transfer of technology and supply of equipments and spare parts even during war were some of the other factors which weighted heavily in favour of Soviet Union becoming India's largest armament supplier in subsequent years.

The first defence plan formulated in 1964 in the light of Chinese aggression envisaged a 45 squadron air force, replacement of ageing aircraft and building up of the air defence system. However, the modernisation programme was disrupted because of the 1965 war. Thus, during this war, to match the effectiveness of Pakistan's superior fighters, IAF was deployed in tactical air support to the ground troops.

During 1966-70 MiG-21 strength had gone up to seven squadrons and an agreement was signed with the Soviet Union for delivery of around 100 Sukhoi Su-7B supersonic jet fighter bombers. During 1971 war India's 625 combat aircraft were organised into thirty squadrons with seven MIG,


71. In March 1963 a committee was appointed under J.R.D. Tata to survey and report on the requirement of aircraft for IAF. This committee recommended for 45 squadron air force. See Annual Report 1964-65 (New Delhi: Ministry of Defence), p.39.

72. See Achuthan, n.69, p.456; also see Asian Recorder (New Delhi), vol.xxiv, no.9, February 26-March 3, 1968, p.8199.
seven Su-7, seven Gnat, six Hunter, three Canberra and two indigenously manufactured Marut HF-24 fighter squadrons. The IAF, for the first time, performed its strategic and tactical missions with professional skill.

The five basic missions of air force are: first, aerial protection to strategic areas like military bases, nuclear and space complex, offshore oil installations, cities and industrial centres. For this air force is equipped with ground based surface to air missile (SAMs) batteries along with interceptors and air superiority fighters. Second, for deep penetration strike and interdiction it require long range bombers. Third, to provide close air support to the army and shore based tactical air support to the navy, air force require fighter ground attack aircraft. The fourth mission is to provide strategic as well as tactical transport support to the army for which light, medium and heavy transport aircraft and helicopter are required. Finally, air force is to carry out aerial reconnaissance of enemy force deployment and movement.

For two decades air force relied on MiG-21 for crucial air defence role. The MiG-21 FL was followed by MiG-21M and finally MiG-21 bis were inducted into service since mid seventies for air superiority role and formed IAF's prime interceptor force. Around 800 such aircraft, either imported or licence manufactured, served the air force. In 1980 twelve squadron of MiG-21 bis, seven squadrons of MiG-21FL and MiG-21 M, 


constituted around 55 per cent of the total combat strength of the air force. However, its share had come down to 30 per cent during the next decade because its production line was terminated in 1986 and earlier generation aircraft were gradually phased out of service. MiG-21 is a potential candidate for replacement by an indigenously designed and manufactured Light Combat Aircraft (LCA).

Qualitative improvement of air defence was accorded high priority in operational planning after Pakistan acquired 40 F-16 advanced fighters from the United States. This created both psychological and defence problems for India. The F-16 tactical aircraft, equipped with latest in computerised avionics, had clear technological superiority over India's fighter bombers - the Anglo-French Jaguar. The F-16 was much more maneuverable, precise in its targeting and could carry much bigger payloads. Its reach could cover up 60 per cent of the Indian territory thus threatening Indian airfields, oil installations and nuclear power stations. The use of this aircraft in the Israeli raid on the Osirak nuclear reactor of Iraq was still fresh in Indian mind. Its jamming device and other electronic counter-measures so thoroughly prevailed over the Iraqi radars that not a single missile could be fired by the Iraqi troops to prevent the advancing aircraft. The Reagan Administration provided arms that went beyond the legitimate defence requirements of Pakistan and in the process it undermined Indian security. The supply of these aircraft was enough to stimulate an Indian counter-reaction and the renewal of an arms race in the subcontinent.

India procured two squadrons of MiG-23 MF air superiority fighters, and from France 40 Dessault Mirage 2000 H multipurpose fighters were purchased in 1985. The Indo-French aircraft deal emphasized the Indian objective of arms diversification without any concomitant sacrifice of its economic interest. India got favourable terms in the Mirage deal: 10 per cent deposit on the first 40 aircraft and nine-year credit at 9.2 per cent interest with the promise of uninterrupted supplies even in a war situation. Equipped with advanced missiles and radars the versatility of this aircraft was displayed in June 1987 when they escorted IAF's medium transport aircraft on their supply dropping mission over the Jaffna Peninsula in Northern Sri Lanka. India's prime air defence/superiority aircraft are the two squadrons of MiG-29 'Fulcrum'. When India received this Soviet plane in 1986 it was not even supplied to the Warsaw Pact countries.

The 1980s also witnessed substantial increase in IAF's surface-to-air missile force. During the 1971 war there were around 20 batteries of SA-2 SAMs. By 1990 it had some 31 batteries of SA-2 Divina, SA-3 Pechora...


80. Former Indian Defence Minister R. Venkatraman assured the Lok Sabha that "the Mirage 2000 aircraft which was being acquired by India was the answer to Pakistan's F-16. The Mirage 2000 was being purchased to give a confidence to the air force that "we have something which is a match to what others have". See The Hindustan Times (New Delhi), April 6, 1983.


SAMs. In addition six army battalions were equipped with Soviet supplied SA-6 shoulder fired SAMs and further around 200 SA-8s were delivered during 1984-85 to make India's air defence system most formidable in Asia.

During the 1971 war it was experienced that medium range bombers like Canberra and Hunters, due to their slow speed became extremely vulnerable to modern air defence system. For their own survival these were used in night operations. Moreover, the successful launching of pre-emptive strike by PAF's Mirage fighters deep inside Indian territory and their safe return compelled India to search for a deep penetration and strike aircraft (DPSA). The offer of French Mirage, Anglo-French Jaguar and Swedish Viggen fighter bombers along with co-production arrangements were evaluated by the Janata government. The Swedish aircraft which carried an American engine was ruled out because of US refusal to authorise its sale to India. The British offer was the most economical of the three options and Jaguar had an edge over the other two. It was the only twin engine plane of the three that enhanced its chances of survival in the face of enemy attack. By mid-1980s five squadrons of the air force were equipped with this British aircraft.


85. See Nordeen, Air Warfare in the Missile Age, n.58, particularly chapter IV: Battle for Bangladesh: Indo-Pakistan Conflict 1971, pp.92-110.


87. Ibid. Also see P.R. Chari, "The DPSA Decision", Strategic Analysis (New Delhi), vol.11, no.7, October 1978, pp.233-35.


89. The Statesman (New Delhi), March 5, 1983.
Considering the fact that it replaced seven squadrons of Canberra and Hunters, instead of accelerating the air force strength Jaguar only made a qualitative improvement of the bomber fleet. For the whole of 1970s air force operated Su-7s, Hunters and the indigenously built HF-24 Marut and Gnat as offensive air support force. 1980s, however, gave it a complete new look with the induction of advanced MiG series aircraft from Soviet Union. The first to arrive was MiG-23 BN aircraft of which India received 90 to equip five squadrons. MiG-27, which supplemented MiG-23 BN, was optimised for low level high speed performance. The decision to licence manufacture 200 MiG-27 Ms implied that it would be the mainstay of tactical air strike force for the 1990s. While Su-7s were completely phased out of service, five squadrons of Ajeet and one squadron of Marut were still operational in the air force.

In the absence of a specialised aircraft for photo reconnaissance air force optimised a squadron of eight Canberra FR 57 and a few HS-748 freighters for that purpose. For ultra high attitude missions around ten MiG-25 Foxbat reconnaissance planes were acquired during the 1980s.

There was marked contrast between IAF's transport aircraft fleet of the 1970s and that of the 1980s. The entire range of aging aircraft such as World War II vintage C-47 Dakota, C-119 Fairchild, DHC-4 Caribou and light aircraft like Devon and Otters were grounded. Their place was taken over by modern heavy transport (HETAC), medium tactical transport (METTAC) and light transport (LITAC) planes. In 1983 the Indo-Soviet


defence agreement facilitated the delivery of 100 AN-32 multi-role medium
93
transports. It had been extensively used in supply dropping missions
over the 18,000 ft. Siachen glacier where forward posts were manned by
Indian troops after 1984. It played crucial role in ferrying troops to
94
Sri Lanka and Maldives. The heavy transport fleet revolves round the
Soviet designed IL-76 Gajaraj. That Indian air force was endowed with
strategic airlift capability was demonstrated in November 1988 when
within hours two airborne battalions were deployed in Maldives to foil
95
the coup attempt against President Gayoom.

The rotorcraft force had also undergone expansion during the last
decade. Few Chetaks, fitted with SS-11B wire guided missiles were
optimised for anti-armour role. However, such specialised task was
transferred to two squadrons of Mi-25 gunships received from Soviet
96
Union. The six squadrons of Mi-8 and Mi-17 were armed with rockets to
provide close air support to the ground troops. Cheetahs were the only
means for communication in the strategic Siachen glacier, "the highest
battlefield of the world" for transport, supply and evacuation of troops.
The gigantic Mi-26 helicopters, with its capacity to carry 70 combat
equipped troops, was a genuine 'force multiplier' in IAF's inventory.

While India's air strategy in the early 1980s was to use MiG-21 bis
for air defence, MiG-23s to support ground troops and to engage Jaguar

93. See The Statesman, September 29, 1983; Asian Recorder, vol. xxxi,
no.35, 1985, p.18479.

94. Dipender Singh, The IPKF in Sri Lanka, n.4; Sardeshpande, Assignment
Jaffna, n.4.

95. Defence and Foreign Affairs Weekly (Washington) December 12-18,
1988; also see Simon Scott Plummer, "Indian Files Out Troops to Quell
Maldeve's Coup", The Daily Telegraph (London), November 4,
1988; Edward Giradet, "India to Remove Most Troops from Neighbouring

96. Indian Aviation, vol.11, no.3, April 1988, p.11.

as prime strike force, the situation has improved in the 1990s. In a future war MiG-21 bis would be supplemented by MiG-23 MF air superiority fighter and MiG-29s will be put in air defence role. Tactical support to the ground troops would be provided by MiG-23 BN and MiG-27s, while the task of bombing would be shouldered by both Jaguar and Mirage 2000. However, Indian air force would confront problems in spare parts for Soviet supplied aircraft (because of the complete disintegration of the Soviet Union) which had a share of 70 per cent of all type of aircraft.

Indian Navy

The Indian navy, considered as the "weakest link or the Cinderella of the armed forces" until 1971, has expanded to become the eighth largest naval force in the world. At the time of independence it was a one dimensional navy with just two frigates, one corvette, one light cruiser and a few mine sweepers, all capable of operating on the surface of the sea. In the early 1960s navy became two dimensional as the first aircraft carrier joined the fleet and consequently navy got its air arm as naval operations were extended to the sky above the sea. Finally, in the late 1960s navy became three dimensional when it acquired submarines for under water operation. From 58 all categories of ships in 1971 Indian naval fleet has expanded three times during the last two decades (see Fig 3.4). Naval personnel establishment had also gone up from 28,000 to 52,000 during the same period (see Table 3.1). Modernisation and indigenisation had become the basic objectives of

FIGURE 3.4

Warships

Years


Numbers

0 20 40 60 80 100 120 140 160

India

Pakistan
Indian naval expansion. The naval development plan of 1950s and 1960s envisaged a 'two ocean concept' based on Indian naval activities in the Bay of Bengal and Arabian sea. Since the early 1970s, it had yielded to a 'three ocean concept' with India facing threat to its maritime interest from the Indian Ocean.

In the context of protecting India's maritime interest the primary missions of the Indian navy were deterrence, coastal defence, regional sea control and limited power projection. In the words of a former Indian Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral S.N. Kohli:

Gunboat diplomacy is rife in the Indian Ocean, and the big powers are deploying naval task forces in furtherance of their political objectives. India, as the biggest country in the region with great deal at stake, must build up an adequate threshold of deterrence.(104)

By adopting the strategy of deterrence India did not aim at acquiring the ability to win over the big power navies in the Indian Ocean. Rather, the intention was to possess the "ability to influence the likely outcome of big power conflict over there". The navy's potential for power projection in the Indian Ocean has been

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over-emphasised and exaggerated in the absence of a cohesive strategic doctrine. The presence of outside navies ruled out any Indian domination over Indian Ocean because of its relatively modest naval strength. Indian naval build-up is still not commensurate with its national requirement and threat perception.

The Indian perception of the U.S. naval presence in the Indian Ocean as a threat mellowed down since the mid-1980s. Presumably the US was able to convince India of its strategic interests in the region. There was growing realisation in Washington that "American access to the Indian Ocean and to a lesser extent the Persian Gulf would require a compatible relationship with the Indian navy". The U.S. policy makers observed that despite Indian unwillingness to condemn Soviet action in Afghanistan, India remained a "strategic barrier to the Soviet expansion to the south". All these smoothed down the Indo-US friction over the Diego Garcia base and "set apart the U.S. and Indian sphere of interest in the Indian Ocean".

Even before the demise of the old international military order the growth of mutually beneficial relationship between India and the United States became discernible from such issues like the US endorsement of Indian military intervention in Sri Lanka, the US assistance in landing


110. Bratersky and Lunyov, "India at the End of the Century", n.107, p.933.
Indian paratroopers in Maldives to foil the attempted coup in 1988 and the reciprocal Indian action in granting refuelling for the US planes in India during the Gulf War. It is in that light the joint Indo-US naval exercise has to be seen. Justifying the exercise, India Defence Minister Sharad Pawar said that earlier Indian position against foreign navies in the Indian Ocean was to prevent super power rivalry, but now since there was only one super power there was no question of rivalry.

Indian navy’s 'sea control' strategy was viewed only in the context of 'sea denial' strategy adopted by the Pakistan navy. Such a strategy could be adopted vis-a-vis Pakistan in four different ways. First, by destroying the Pakistan navy at the sea; second, by blockading Pakistan navy at its base; third, by destroying the Pakistan navy at its base and fourth, by destroying their key naval installations. The first opportunity navy got to demonstrate its skill against Pakistan came in 1971. It was assigned three basic tasks: to slice the maritime link between western and eastern wings of Pakistan, to seek and destroy Pakistani naval ships and finally, it was asked to keep India’s sea routes open. While the eastern fleet proved its credibility in carrying out the first mission, the western fleet of Indian navy carried out daring attack with missile boats on Karachi harbour and destroyed the backbone of Pakistan navy.


In a likely war with Pakistan, Indian navy's major objectives would be gaining sea control in the Arabian Sea, protecting offshore oil installations, maritime trade and coastal defence, and providing support to the army and air force missions whenever necessary.

It is viewed that the present naval strength of India is sufficient to control the adjacent strategic water area and to protect India's national security. Its further build up within certain limits would create a reserve of naval strength. If India's naval build up is going to be extended further navy's sea control strategy could even be extended further north towards the strait of Hormuz and in the east towards the strait of Malacca not with any offensive design but only to ensure maritime trade. However, a strong sea-denial capacity will be India navy's immediate objective before it could endeavour to acquire sea control capability. India's former Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Nadkarni was of the view that:

There is plan to make the Indian Navy a total force. We have to ensure that we grow all round, sea control, sea denial and protection of Exclusive Economic Zone. Our plan for the future take care of all these areas.(118)

Naval modernisation was severely affected after independence due to government's emphasis on all round economic development. However, substantial expansion of naval strength took place during 1955-61 when eight anti-submarine and anti-aircraft frigates, four coastal mine

115. Tellis, n.103, p.1197.
118. See his interview in Asian Defence Journal May 1988, p.112.
sweepers and an aircraft carrier were acquired from Britain. Because of the land-oriented wars with China in 1962 and then with Pakistan in 1965, navy was again relegated to the background. The first Defence Plan (1964-69) envisaged replacement of all aging ships and development of navy's under water capability. Till 1965 Indian navy was predominantly oriented towards its British counterpart in terms of armament, training and strategy. British reluctance in meeting requirement for under water ships compelled India to look towards Soviet Union. During 1966-71 Soviet Union supplied Foxtrot class diesel submarines, Patya Class light frigates along with eight Osa-I class missile boats.

By the time of 1971 war Indian navy had one aircraft carrier, four submarines, two cruisers, three destroyers, nineteen frigates, nine minesweepers, six torpedo boats and fifteen seaward patrol craft. The war was a major turning point for the navy which demanded and received greater attention from the government. Describing the post-1971 naval build up the US State Department analyst, Walter K. Andersen wrote:

The Indian Navy prior to 1971, the stepchild of the services, has come to play an increasingly important role in defence planning. The 1971 Indo-Pakistani war, demonstrating the potential of missile armed fast patrol boats in future regional conflicts, gave the navy a mission. The need to protect India's growing external trade, its 200 mile Exclusive Economic Zone and its offshore exploitation of resources have given additional weight to arguments favouring the


121. Raju Thomas, "India's Naval Procurement Programme 1962-74", USI Journal, October-December 1976, p.343. During post 1962 period budgetary allocations for the navy sink to 3-4 per cent, the lowest outlay since independence.


123. Kohli, We Dared, n.114, p.151.
expansion of the navy. The future of bilateral and multilateral efforts to remove the naval forces of the super powers, the rising tide of instability in west and southeast Asia, and the uncertainty over future Chinese naval activities have further spurred on the defence planners to build up India's naval power to prepare it for any first case scenario.(124)

Naval build up was initially attributed to the presence of US carrier task force the Enterprise in the Bay of Bengal during the 1971 Indo-Pak war. Thus, the eastern approach to Indian Ocean was accorded primacy in naval planning. Development of Port Blair as an advance naval base was taken up in 1972-73. It was justified as being necessary to defend India's economic interests in the Bay of Bengal because of its proximity to strategically important Malacca Strait. The discovery of offshore oil at Bombay High in the mid-1970s became a national security concern and a specific factor in naval threat perception. As the long term naval modernisation programme was launched in 1978 a bitter controversy surfaced in the country regarding the future naval strategy. One school believed that navy should adopt a coastal defence strategy for which submarines, small missile equipped surface craft and escort vessels were essential. The other school attacked the first:

Coastal defence strategy will fail to achieve many of India's maritime security goals and further it would not be cost effective


since it require large number of small ships and aircraft to protect the vast Indian coastline.\(^{128}\)

Therefore, the latter favoured power projection/sea control capability for the Indian navy to best protect India's multifarious maritime interests. Commenting upon future naval strategy, the former Admiral of the Indian navy, R.L. Tahiliani said: "it should be based upon poverty and punch. We have to have poverty near the coastline and punch at sea". Coastal navy for a large country like India with many island territories would be expensive to build and operate. So, India required an ocean-going navy.

India's major surface ships included two ex-British aircraft carriers INS Vikrant and INS Viraat. While the former underwent a major overhaul and refit in the late 1970s to accommodate Sea Harrier jump jets and sea king anti-submarine warfare helicopters, the latter joined the navy in 1987. Commissioning the second aircraft carrier, Admiral Tahiliani announced that it would provide an ability to establish sea control in limited areas. But it was argued that in the specific context of Indo-Pak war the aircraft carrier has to remain 400 nm offshore to avoid the shore-based Pakistani Mirage armed with SAM. In such a situation the Sea Harrier with its striking range of only 250 nm would fall into a classic trap. Therefore, both the Carrier and Sea Harriers had limited role in offensive mission. For its own security


aircraft carrier would tie down a third of the navy's major ships. India's leading defence analyst, K. Subrahmanyam, argued that the aircraft carriers would be primarily used in anti-submarine role.

Navy had three frigate squadrons, one being an anti-aircraft squadron, the second an anti-submarine and the third comprised multipurpose frigates. All six indigenously built Leander class frigates and the twelve Patya class frigates were optimised for anti-submarine warfare. The three locally designed Godavari class multipurpose frigates were armed with Soviet Styx anti-ship missiles and British ASW helicopters. These 23 ships constituted a formidable force for surface warfare.

Besides these, other surface combatants included four Kashin II class guided missile destroyer, three Nanuchka II class missile equipped corvettes, three Kresta class missile cruisers and sixteen other OSA-I and II class fast attack craft.

Indian navy's underwater warfare capability revolved round one Charlie-I class nuclear powered submarine, INS Chakra that India had acquired on lease from Soviet Union which has since been returned to

contd.f/n.132


133. Personal interview with K. Subrahmanyam.


Besides that, there were eight Foxtrot class submarines that dated back to the 1960s. The Soviet built Kilo class underwater ships were acquired to replace the aging ships. Navy had also received two HDW Type-1500 West German submarines. In the event of hostilities with Pakistan, it was argued that Indian navy with its ten diesel electric submarines would be able to seal off sea lanes to and from Karachi, the only port of consequence for Pakistan.

Unlike major naval powers, India lacked specialised marine corps. The notion of amphibious warfare in a future India-Pakistan war is ruled out because with its 1000 strong marine force India cannot occupy any target of significance in Pakistan coast. Amphibious lift to its troops is provided by one heavy landing ship and nine Soviet Polnochny class medium landing ships, collectively capable of carrying 1460 troops and 66 tanks.

Naval air arm had three important missions: strike, anti-submarine warfare and both short and long range maritime reconnaissance. With the first aircraft carrier navy also acquired Sea Hawk strikers and French made Alize anti-submarine warfare aircraft. Since 1971 navy has been


141. International Defence Review, vol.15, no.1, 1982, p.92. Prior to this agreement with West Germany, Indian submarine fleet was entirely Soviet equipped. "Navy wanted a quieter submarine, and the Soviets did not have anything suitable to offer". There was no Soviet competition when decision was taken to acquire Sea Harrier Jump jets and Sea King ASW helicopters from Britain. See S. Nihal Singh, "Why India Goes to Moscow for Arms", n.69, p.715.

operating Sea King ASW helicopters, equipped with Sea Eagle long range 143
sea skimming anti-ship missiles.

During 1971 war maritime reconnaissance task was carried out by two
IL-14 Soviet supplied aircraft which was supplemented by a batch of three 144
IL-38s in 1977-79. Even this proved to be insufficient for a country with 7,693 kilometers of coastline. Therefore in 1988 eight Tu-142M long 145
range MR/ASW aircraft were acquired from Soviet Union.

In 1977 government took a decision to replace the ageing Sea Hawk, on board of aircraft carrier, with vertically short take-off and landing 146 (V/STOL) jump jets, the Sea Harrier. In 1987, the total number of Sea Harriers was thirty. Each aircraft carrier has a capacity of 18 Sea Harriers and 4 Sea King ASW helicopters. Naval air arm lacked long range interdiction strike (IDS) and airborne early warning (AEW) aircraft. A squadron of Anglo-French Jaguar aircraft were modified for 147 IDS role but they were being operated by the air force.

3.3 Pakistan: Armed Forces:

Military in Pakistan, like its Indian counterpart, was a second 148
generation force tracing origin from British Indian defence forces.

At the time of partition, Pakistan's share of the British Indian Army came to roughly 36 per cent or approximately 140,000 troops out of a


144. The Times of India, May 29, 1975.


146. The Tribune, November 1, 1977; also see Arun Prakash, "From Hawk to Harrier", Sainik Samachar, September 8, 1985, p.9; See "Strong, Sound Naval Air Arm", The Hindu (Madras), December 6, 1983.


148. For details on history of Pakistan armed forces, see Fazal Maqeen Khan, The Story of the Pakistan Army (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 1963).
total strength of 400,000. In the end Pakistan settled for 30 per cent of army, 20 per cent of air force and 40 per cent of navy. In August 1947, Pakistan army was organised into eight infantry regiments (India got fifteen), six armoured units (twelve for India), eight artillery units (eighteen went to India) and one mountain regiment (two for India). Similarly in air force, Pakistan got a share of two fighter and one transport squadrons.

However, unlike India, Pakistan confronted the real problem of indigenising its armed forces, particularly its officers rank. During the first four years after independence around five hundred British officers served the Pakistan armed forces and two British commanders were successively made the chief of staff in Pakistan army. Pakistan lagged behind India in military assets, because most of the defence industries, arms depots, and training centres fall inside Indian territory.

The disproportionate division of assets along with its growing hostility with India convinced the decision makers about the necessity of external support to bridge the existing imbalance in force ration.


152. For Pakistan's quest for external help to build up its armed forces, see Ayub Khan, Friends Not Masters (London: Oxford University Press, 1967); Z.A. Bhutto, Myth of Independence (Karachi: Oxford University contd.)
Under the terms of the Mutual Defence Agreement Pact, the United States committed itself to helping the Pakistan army enlarge and equip five and half divisions over a period of three years. The US military assistance worth US $1.3 billion between 1954 and 1965 had made subcontinental military balance favourable to Pakistan. The two armoured divisions were equipped with NATO's most modern Patton tanks. The navy was having submarines for subsurface warfare and the air force was armed with supersonic fighters. Compared to that India had one armoured division, the navy had no submarines, and all fighters were subsonic.

General Mohammed Musa, Chief of Army Staff in Pakistan during the 1965 war had commented:

The great disparity, in man and material, between the opposing forces was made up by our services with their superior professional skill, better equipment and spirit of defence. In other words, it was quality versus quantity. (155)

With that qualitative edge Pakistan planned to maintain 1:3 troop ratio as an ideal deterrent against India. By 1968 three new infantry divisions were added to the existing strength to maintain that ratio. When war broke out in 1971 Pakistan army had 14 infantry divisions contd.f/n.152


compared to India's 28. But, "when the deployable forces of both sides were taken into account, then the force ratio came nearer to 1:1".

India could field only 18 divisions against Pakistan's total military might which did not give India such a numerical superiority as was generally made out by Pakistan.

1971 was a year of failure for Pakistan army. They lost the war, failed to suppress their own rebellious population in East Pakistan and could not prevent the bifurcation of the country. Around 93,000 officers and men deployed in the eastern sector were held prisoners of war (POWs) in India till 1973.

This resulted in sharp decline in morale of the armed forces. Military leadership became the target of public criticism for involvement in civilian affairs that caused the decline in their professional skill. Unable to withstand the pressure, military rulers invited the popularly elected civilian leader Mr. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to run the government and to reorganise the demoralised armed forces.

Bhutto's intention was to build up the army into a professional force and to wipe out Bonapatic influence in the armed forces. He sacked some of the top brass for their lapses in defending the country against external threat. After bringing in persons loyal to him in top


158. Ibid.


positions of all three services he concentrated on making Pakistani armed forces "the finest fighting force in Asia". The defence white paper on armed forces reorganisation reflected Bhutto's intention of preventing future army intervention in politics which he wanted to do by keeping the army politically subordinate to him.

During Bhutto period (1972-77) strength of the Pakistan army increased by 70 per cent. To make up the manpower loss due to war and repatriation of Bengali troops, Pakistan raised two infantry divisions and an additional armoured brigade, the equipment for which was provided by China. He also struck an agreement with Gulf Sheikhdoms to station four additional division of its armed forces there with an agreement that the troops would be paid and equipped by the Gulf States but would rejoin the Pakistan army during emergency. Apart from that a huge reserve of 513,000 troops was raised during his time to supplement the regular armed forces.

Because of the US arms embargo, Pakistan sought arms from both east and the west. By 1974 it made up losses in tank and aircraft. Prior to


164. R. Rama Rao, "Pakistan's Armed Forces", Vikrant (New Delhi), September 1977, p.8; also see Brig. A.C. Cariappa, "1971-76: What Mr. Bhutto been Up to", Hindu (Madras), april 20, 1976.

165. The Times of India, June 9, 1975.
the war army had 825 tanks that by 1977 increased to 1050, mostly by the transfer of 500 T-59 tanks from China, free of cost (See Table 3.2). French assistance was sought to fill up the gaps in air force with financial support coming from oil rich gulf countries. Aircraft requirement was further supplemented by Saudi Arabia, Iran and Libya.

Despite the fact that Bhutto made sincere efforts to build up an effective defence capability, Pakistan armed forces faced some inherent difficulties. Artillery remained the weakest link within the army. Most of the artillery pieces obtained from either China or North Korea were copied Soviet weapons. There was acute shortage of both towed and self-propelled guns. Tanks, which were mostly Chinese, incorporated technology of the 1950s and 1960s. With only a few armoured personnel carriers (APCs) mobility of troops was restricted. Bhutto was handicapped due to the US arms embargo. India's peaceful nuclear explosion in May 1974 provided the appropriate weapon in his hand to bargain with the United States. He issued warning to the US that if


168. See Indian Express (New Delhi), November 1, 1975; also see Flight International (London), August 28, 1975.

169. Bhutto stressed the need for "integrated defence" meaning thereby not only the creation of efficient air, land and sea fighting units but also establishment of auxiliary services and supporting technical wherewithal. See Dawn (Karachi), June 25, 1976.


Pakistan was starved off conventional weapons then it might be left with no option but to develop a nuclear deterrent against the threat to its security. It was in that context the ban on arms supply was lifted in 1975.

While Bhutto confronted the problem of equipping the armed forces with modern weapons, the military regime of General Zia-ul Haq crossed that barrier with the resumption of American arms transfer in the aftermath of Iran and Afghanistan crises in 1979. As Pakistan under Zia became the protector of the US interest in the 'arc of crisis', Washington accorded highest priority to modernisation of the Pakistan armed forces.

In 1990 Pakistan had 1850 tanks and 800 APCs (see Table 3.2) The tanks were meant to equip two armoured divisions with six tank regiments each and seven independent armoured brigades with three regiments each. Since the 19 infantry divisions also had one tank regiment each, the total number of tank regiments in Pakistan army came to 52. But considering the fact that each tank regiment possessed 45 MBTs, Pakistan army did not have more than 40-42 tank regiments in 1990. It was during Zia's time armoured regiments were modernised with the induction of a significant quantity of M-48 battle tanks and limited quantity of M-


60s from the United States. Arrangement was also made with the western
countries to upgrade the fleet of 1,300 T-59 MBTs by replacing its 100mm
rifled gun with a 105mm gun.

During Zia period also Pakistan had succeeded in overcoming
deficiencies of the artillery regiments. By an agreement with the United
States in 1981 Pakistan acquired some 220 modern artillery pieces
including M-109A2 155mm self-propelled howitzers, M-198 155 mm towed
howitzers and M-110A2 203 mm self-propelled howitzers with an additional
1,000 improved TOW anti-tank guided weapons (ATGWs) under the Foreign
Military Sales (FMS) programme. This was supplemented in 1988 by a
second package of 150mm and towed howitzers.

The air defence units within the army were using Crotale surface-to-
air missiles supplied by France in the mid-1970s. Procurement of more
than 100 US made Stringer SAMs and 500 indigenously built Anza
missiles had considerably enhanced the striking capacity of air
defence units.

Infantry troops formed the backbone of Pakistan army. In 1990 there
were nineteen infantry divisions along with four independent infantry
brigades, equivalent to one more infantry division. Even when the Soviet
troops were firmly entrenched in Afghanistan, Pakistan had deployed only
four infantry divisions (two each at Peshawar and Quetta) in its western
border facing Afghanistan. The rest of the infantry divisions with all

177. Elkin and Ritezels, "The Indo-Pakistani Military Balance", n.29,
p.525; also see *Military Balance, 1984-85*, p.122.
181. See *Military Balance 1990-91*. 
armoured and artillery units were deployed in the border facing India. The Corps Headquarters located at Mangla, Lahore, Multan, Karachi and Rawalpindi were all directed against India. All this indicated that Soviet threat was considered as secondary and Islamabad utilised it as a convenient means to build up its armed forces with the US support.

The standard infantry weapons included the 7.62 mm G-1 machine gun of West German design, Chinese Type-56 and Type-67 light and heavy machine guns, German G-3 and Chinese AK-47 assault rifles. Anti-tank units with the infantry division used the 106mm recoilless rifles, and Cobra and Chinese Red Arrow missiles. Infantry modernisation programme for the coming years envisages large scale production of 5.56mm standard weapons.

Pakistan army during Zia period was not only 'praetorian' but also 'mercenary'. It turned out to be the largest exporter of military manpower, after Cuba, in the entire Third World region. It had around 30,000 troops stationed in 22 Islamic countries of which around 10,000 troops were stationed in Saudi Arabia alone. Pakistan's refusal to


allow its Saudi-based troops to be used by the Saudies against Iran resulted in their return back home in 1988. China provided around 100 T-59 tanks to rearm these troops which were eventually deployed in the border with India.

Armed forces were often been criticised at home for their lack of national character. Around three fourth of the total armed forces came from Punjab. Only four districts in that province namely Rawalpindi, Jhelum, Chakwal and Attock contributed two-third of the total troop strength even if these districts represented a mere 9 per cent of the male population in the whole country. The second largest group in the armed forces comprised of the Pathans of the Frontier Province but again only two districts, Kohat and Mardan, provided bulk of the troops. Sindhis made up only 2 per cent of Pakistan's armed forces. The Sindhi and Baluch regiments were dominated by the Punjabis. This regional imbalance had resulted in indiscipline, ethnic group rivalry and over all decline in combat effectiveness of the armed forces. The East Pakistan crisis of 1971 clearly demonstrated the catastrophic effect of any policy of discrimination against ethnic communities in recruitment to the armed forces.


188. Husain Haqqani, "Punjabis and Pathans but few Sindhis", Far Eastern Economic Review, January 9, 1986, p.27. Another source reveals that Punjabis with a population of 55 per cent constitute 92 per cent of the total armed forces. See Pirzada, "Pakistan's Nemesis", n.185; also see Brig. A.C. Cariappa, "1971-76: What's Mr. Bhutto been Up to", The Hindu, April 20, 1976.


forces. Considering the nationalistic aspirations of Baluchis, Pathans and Sindhis, the loyalty and professional character of the armed forces would be put to severe test in the likely event of a future civil war.

Pakistan Air Force:

After independence Pakistan relied on Britain to meet its aircraft requirement. During 1954-65 period the United States took up that responsibility and equipped that country's air force with most modern combat planes. However, the policy of exclusive dependence on a single source for aircraft and spare parts backfired in 1965 when arms embargo was imposed. In the post-war period Pakistan diversified its aircraft procurement policy and looked towards other potential suppliers to modernise the air force. In 1966 Pakistan received the first batch of 75 Chinese F-6 (Soviet version of MIG-19) combat aircraft as donation and in 1967 made commercial purchase of French made Dessault Mirage III aircraft. Within four years after the 1971 war Pakistan succeeded in overcoming the losses sustained in the war, mainly due to supply from China and France.

During Bhutto period, the PAF was made a balanced force with the combination of fighter interceptors (Mirage III EP and Shenyang F-6), fighter bombers (Mirage V and F-86 Sabre jets), reconnaissance aircraft (Mirage III RP), bomber for distant target strike (Italian B-57 Canberra), transport squadron (US made C-130 and Hercules) and Saab


193. Ibid.
Scania MFI-17 Swedish trainers. Besides, the air defence units were supplied Crotale surface to air missiles.

With the resumption of US military assistance in 1981 the PAF's striking power, missile strength and air defence radar equipment had all been modernised. The combat aircraft ratio between India and Pakistan was 3:1 in 1982-83 but, the gap was reduced to 1.8:1 in 1990-91 mainly due to the supply of aircraft from the United States, France and China (see Table 3.2). During that period Pakistan had more than doubled the number of combat planes from 219 to 470 (see Table 3.2) and replaced all aircraft of the 1950s (F-86 Sabre, B-57 Canberra and F-104 Starfighter) with planes carrying latest technology.

With the induction of two squadrons of General Dynamic F-16 fighters from the U.S. Pakistan air force got qualitative edge over India in offensive strike capability. Fitted with AIM-9L Sidewinder air-to-air missiles, the 40 F-16 aircraft tilted the regional air balance in Pakistan's favour till the time India made its own purchase of Mirage 2000 and MiG-29 fighters. Pakistan air force also received 32 Mirage V planes in 1982, all equipped with Exocet anti-ship missiles to provide effective support to the navy. During the 1980s China provided two squadrons of Nanchang Q 5 and around 100 (to equip five squadrons) F-7M twin-engine fighters. The ground based air defence had been modernised with Stringer SAMS supplementing Crotale missiles. Pakistan's


desire to acquire two formidable Boeing E3A airborne warning and control system aircraft from the United States could not succeed due to the Soviet troops withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Pakistan Navy

For President Ayub Khan Pakistan navy was like a "pregnant duck". Till the beginning of 1970s security decision makers shared such a perception because Pakistan faced threat from across the land frontiers and accordingly defence strategy continued to be land oriented. Navy was assigned a subsidiary role in the security planning compared to the other two services.

It was during the 1971 war Pakistan was made conscious of its vulnerability to sea attack. This underlined the need for paying attention to naval modernisation. It was envisaged that a well equipped naval force apart from playing an effective role in national defence could protect Pakistan's sovereign right over territorial water, safeguard the economic resources in the Exclusive Economic Zone and would keep its sea lanes open for merchant ships since bulk of Pakistan's trade was seaborne.

The reorganisation of the armed forces and re-orientation of the defence strategy that Bhutto carried out after 1972 put emphasis on naval


201. Rizvi, Ibid., p.39.
modernisation. Pakistan navy acquired three French Daphne submarines, two Whitby frigates from Britain, two Gearing class destroyers and two minesweepers from the United States, and China provided 16 patrol boats, out of which twelve were missile boats. Naval air arm was created in 1972, with the purchase of three maritime reconnaissance aircraft (fitted with Exocet anti-ship missiles) from France, and six Sea King helicopters came from Britain. Bhutto also revealed his plan for expansion of Pakistan's ship building industry. The naval strategy was reoriented in the 1970s to prevent Indian navy from obtaining naval supremacy in the Arabian Sea.

Since the beginning of 1980s Pakistan navy has not only considerably strengthened its offshore territorial defence capabilities but has acquired powerful offensive punch. The use of two squadrons of Mirage V in anti-shipping role could keep the Indian navy away from Karachi port so also any Indian plan for amphibious assault could prove to be costly. For surface warfare Pakistan navy had eight destroyers - six of which were US Gearing class destroyers equipped with ASW aircraft and one British County class destroyer fitted with Sea Cat SAMs. In 1988-89 Pakistan acquired two British Leander frigates along with five Brooke class and three Garcia class frigates from the United States on lease.

basis to sufficiently strengthen its fleet for surface warfare. Commenting upon Pakistan's new naval acquisition a western defence expert wrote:

The magnitude of Pakistani naval expansion, although still modest, is highly significant. How many navies today can talk of a programme to acquire 10 new frigates in a single year? (209)

Besides these major ships Pakistan navy had around 47 other varieties of ships (including the 20 Chinese missile equipped fast attack craft) that could be used as effective combatants in surface warfare.

For subsurface battle Pakistan had achieved both numerical and technological superiority over India. Its seven modern attack submarines (3 Agosta class and 4 Daphne class) were highly mobile and faster than the 8 Foxtrot submarines that Indian navy possessed. With the additional five Midget submarines Pakistan navy could score over India in subsurface battle between the two navies.

Pakistan had always perceived major threat to its security coming from India, against whom its security doctrine was mainly directed. Much of Pakistan's vulnerability lies in the peculiar shape of the country that stretches in the north-south direction and lacks any depth in defence. The 1,100 mile long disputed border with India in the east is highly permeable in the absence of natural barriers. Pakistan's problem lies in the fact that its line of communication run parallel to

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the border. Before 1971 it had an additional disadvantage due to lack of geographical compactness. Its defence strategy was always West Pakistan oriented. In January 1956 General Ayub Khan aptly described Pakistan's defence problems and strategy in the following words:

The defence of East Pakistan does not lie in that part of the country. So long as the western base is not strong it remains indefensible. In spite of the general length of territory in West Pakistan, there is no depth in the area... since there are no grounds to be given, we have to spring into action immediately in case of a war. Our battle will have to be crucial in the first months. (212)

The unpleasant fact of its physical vulnerability had led to the adoption of a doctrine of 'offensive defence' or as one expert call it "an offensive military tactic premised on a generally defensive policy -- an attack is the best form of defence stratagem". This doctrine envisaged first use of force to inflict heavy damage on vital military installations across the border and thereby to gain initial advantage before going in for a defensive strategy. The 1965 and 1971 wars demonstrated such a strategy by Pakistan. In the words of General Musa, who led the Pakistan army in 1965 war.

A combination of offensive, defensive and counter-offensive actions, depending upon the ground situations, characterised the conduct of land operation. (215)

But in 1965 the strategy failed because of wrong calculation that the war would be confined to Kashmir only. Instead, India retaliated with simultaneous attack on all fronts across the border. The 1971 war was lost because of Pakistan's weak defence in the East Pakistan sector. The

213. Tahir-Kheli, "Defence Planning in Pakistan", n.167, p.212. Also see Cohen, Pakistan Army, n.151, p.145.
perception that the war against East Pakistan would be fought in the West proved to be militarily disastrous because it led to the dismemberment of the country and birth of Bangladesh.

3.4 Bangladesh Armed Forces:

At the time of partition of the subcontinent, just one per cent of the Pakistan army was composed of Bengalis. There was neither a single Bengali Regiment nor was there any military training institutions in East Bengal. West Pakistan military leaders, like the British after the indigenous soldiers' mutiny in 1857, were contemptuous of the Bengalis in terms of military skills but they were more suspicious of their political reliability. The first two battalions of the East Bengal regiment were raised in 1948, six more battalions were formed by 1971 and a ninth battalion was undergoing training when the liberation war commenced. Though Bengali representation in the officers rank of Pakistan army was a mere 5 per cent, in the air force and navy they had 30 per cent representation. However, within all services, Bengali officers were almost wholly limited to technical and staff positions and were seldom used in command positions.

In the post liberation period Bangladesh army was largely geared to maintain internal security and to resist any sporadic arms incursions.


from across the border. As they had not been engaged in a national war, their combat experience was limited. But they had enough experience in suppressing tribal insurrections in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and maintenance of internal law and order. After 1975, the army along with Bangladesh Rifles, a para military border force, has engaged itself in border security operations. This was necessitated by anti-government activities conducted by pro-Awami League activists and Santi Bahini from across the border. The army during the last one and a half decade had shown more interest in politics than in professional work. "They knew how to run the country rather than how to defend it. Their combat efficiency in the event of an external aggression was very much doubled back home. It was compared to the Egyptian army under Nasser whose weakness was exposed during the 1967 war because of their extreme politicisation". Instead of maintaining internal security, the armed forces themselves became the cause of prolonged domestic turmoil and chronic political instability.

During 1972-75, when the Awami League was in power army had 5 infantry brigades formed out of 17 battalions. There was just one tank regiment, the Bengal Lancers, equipped with 30 T-54/55 tanks of Soviet


origin. Three artillery regiments were using limited numbers of 105mm
pack howitzers, 25 pounder guns, 120mm mortar, 75 mm RCL and 6 pounder
anti-tank guns. The Bangladesh air force took birth with some
destroyed aircraft, damaged runways, looted stores and neutralised
maintenance facilities. Damaged aircraft left over by the Pakistani
troops after their surrender were repaired for use. Few modern MiG-21
fighters were provided by Soviet Union and transport and helicopters
were made available by India. The navy was the most neglected among the
three services with 500 men in its rank, it had just four patrol boats.

On the whole, Bangladesh armed forces were ill-equipped during the
Mujib period. Mujib had strong contempt for his armed forces and he was
apathetic towards their qualitative improvement. It was reflected in his
decision to create a parallel force in the form of Jatiyo Rakhi
Bahini. The army as a whole viewed the JRB as a counter force. The
JRB's massive expansion at a time when fresh recruitment to the regular
force was virtually non-existent, the sharp increase in allocations for
JRB when defence expenditure was not only meagre but was gradually
decreasing, the sophistication of their weaponry compared to the
standard .303 rifles used by the army and, above all, their training in
the Indian Military Academy at Dehra Dun made the army clear about
Mujib's step-motherly attitude towards the armed forces.


226. Air Vice Marshal (ret'd.), M.K. Bashar, "Birth of Bangladesh Air


228. Talukdar Maniruzzaman, Bangladesh in 1975: The Fall of Mujib Regime
pp.119-29; also see "Bangladesh: Power to Mujib's Private Army", Far
Eastern Economic Review, January 10, 1975, p.18 and 20; Guardian
Weekly (London), August 16, 1975;and P.B. Sinha, Armed Forces of
Bangladesh, Occasional Paper No.1 (New Delhi: Institute of Defence
Studies and Analyses, 1979).
The series of coups and counter coups that started with Sheikh Mujib's assassination in August 1975 clearly demonstrated not only the civil military rivalry but also the deep division between various factions within the armed forces of this new nation. It had the net result of complete erosion of morale and discipline within the armed forces. The military ruler, General Ziaur Rahman, in order to reorganise his highly politicised armed forces initiated a series of measures. He gave his officers speedy promotion, purged the rank of political ideologues and radicals, established new arms transfer relationship with China, reorganised military academy and staff college, and invited a British Advisory Team to set up a defence service command and staff college at Savar near the capital.

Zia launched programme for massive expansion of the armed forces to diffuse the power of officers and troops who had participated in the liberation war. A new infantry division (the 9th Division) was created for Dhaka. Subsequently all five existing brigades of the Bangladesh army were converted into division strength with induction of fresh recruits. During 1975-77, manpower strength of the armed forces doubled from 36,000 to 71,000 (see Table 3.1). Further, the whole country was divided into five military regions. Each sector was


sanctioned a division of regular troops along with BDR and Ansars with a total strength of 30,000.

The strength of artillery regiments increased from 3 to 7, during Zia period but no increase was made in armour strength. He remained highly suspicious of the Bengal Lancer tank regiment whose officers and men took part in the August 1975 coup. However, among the three services, air force remained the most neglected. While the strength of the army doubled during 1975-80, and that of the navy increased from 500 to 4000, almost eight fold increase, the strength of the air force declined from 5,500 to 3,300. This was due to the active involvement of air force personnel in attempted coups at Bogra on September 30, 1977 and at Dhaka on October 2 of the same year. Nearly 1000 servicemen mostly from the air force were either killed or executed in that uprising. For a short while air force operated without having any senior officers to occupy command positions.

During Ershad period (1982-90) the strength of the Bangladesh army had increased to 90,000 and better equipment were provided to all services. The total manpower listing had gone past one hundred thousand. To accommodate additional troops the 6th infantry divisions was created in 1986. One notable feature was the increasing use of Chinese arms.

233. Khan, n.220.
237. B.L. Kak, "Dhaka beefing up armed forces", News Time (Hyderabad), November 30, 1986. Under General Ershad, the wave of execution and force retirement of freedom fighters continued. The repatriated contd.
by the Bangladesh armed forces. China had supplied around 60 T-59 tanks, for the army, three squadrons of F-6, and one squadron of F-7 fighters for the air force and one missile armed frigate along with 32 other ships for the navy. Pakistan had also transferred around 40 F-6 fighters to Bangladesh air force. The level of economic development and terrain condition did not demand sophisticated equipment. The armed forces were well equipped for internal security tasks, particularly to tackle low level insurgency in CHT.

Since the country has no power aspirations, the armed forces were organised, trained, and equipped for defensive operations. They confronted some inherent difficulties. There was comparatively little depth in terms of total area available for the conduct of conventional military operations. The country lacks any natural barriers for its security. Moreover, deployment on extended frontiers, lack of requisite mobility and surveillance facilities, inferior armour and above all inadequate spare parts and communication equipment accentuated their problem.

It is the stated national policy of Bangladesh that it has no offensive designs. The operational offensive is to be undertaken without loss of much territory while seeking an international political negotiation, which, if it fails, calls for an all out unconventional

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contd.f/n.237

officers and men emerged as a viable force in Bangladesh army and politics. To keep his officers and men happy and to enlist their support Ershad raised an army of 10,000 men exclusively for the use of Government of Saudi Arabia. As the agreement with that country could not materialize it led to an assertion of number in Bangladesh armed forces. For a detailed report, see Holiday Weekly (Dhaka) 20 December 1985; Kessing's Contemporary Archives, vol.33, no.7, July 1987, p.35291; and India Today (New Delhi), 15 March 1983, pp.75-6.


counter offensive. In case of external attack the likely strategy would be to mobilise the people and the troops. Bangladesh would engage itself in a kind of "Vietnam style warfare". This concept of total national defence was the brainchild of the late President Zia-ur Rahman wherein the armed forces would act as the nucleus of people's defence force. This concept of people oriented guerrilla warfare is echoed in the Chief of Staff Training Directive 1/82:

... at a certain stage we will have to cater for utilising every able bodied person... In the integration and mobilisation of the population and material resources of our country, our army... will form the nucleus for nation wide people oriented resistance.(242)

In a nutshell, Bangladesh army had identified its potential enemy, that was, India. The tactical doctrine was in the process of evolution to put maximum resistance in case of any future confrontation with India. "The military thinking was that they wanted to make any external intervention very expensive". In case of a conflict with India its armed forces would attempt to harass and delay the Indian troops long enough for international pressure to be brought into play. But, the basic fact that the army's six divisions were posted throughout the country indicated that the main role of the army was internal security. Bangladesh navy with four frigates and 45 fast attack crafts was equipped for inshore territorial defence with limited offshore defence capability.


242. Chowdhury, n.239, p.68.

3.5 Sri Lanka: Armed Forces:

The Sri Lankan armed forces do not have a glorious military tradition. Their military history dated back to the advent of western colonial powers during the 17th century. Until recently armed forces were regarded as a mere ceremonial outfit. They did not have any great tradition of combat in the colonial wars unlike their counterparts in India and Pakistan. They lacked the experience of fighting in the national liberation wars as the Bangladesh and Indonesian armed forces did. Nor did they ever launch high-intensity guerrilla wars for extended periods of time unlike what the Thai, Burmese, Malaysian, and Filipino armies have been doing ever since the independence of these countries. Before 1983, the only occasion when the Sri Lankan armed forces got real test in internal security operation was in 1971 when they were pitted against an armed opponent in the form of Janatha Vimukti Parama (JVP) or, People's Liberation Front. Now the armed forces are facing a more committed, well-trained and well-equipped enemy, the LTTE. The level of military capability has steadily increased since 1983.


245. Ibid., pp.150-51.


The government came under popular (Sinhala) pressure to modernise the armed forces. But one major discernible change that has taken place is that, endless wars has introduced the army as a "new, more professional and assertive actor on to the political stage". The Cabinet frequently consulted the generals on matters of military operation and procurement. The ethnic conflict and government's firm belief in military solution to the crisis has transformed a "barrack army into a street army in Sri Lanka".

The only time before 1983 when armed forces attracted government's attention was during the JVP uprising in 1971. Not only their strength increased but they were provided modern weapons received from India, Pakistan, Soviet Union, Britain, China and United States. With the onset of ethnic civil war Sri Lankan armed forces had undergone qualitative and quantitative improvement. During 1983 and 1991 the total strength of the Sri Lankan armed forces had gone up from 16,000 to 82,000 a phenomenal increase of more than 500 per cent in eight years. If the various other paramilitary and police units are added, then the strength of the security services had exceeded one hundred thousand in 1991.

248. Interview with Mervyn de Silva, Editor Lanka Guardian at Colombo on April 10, 1990.

249. This was revealed by the former National Security Minister, Lalith Athulathmudali, see Parliament Debates, Hansard (official document), vol.38, no.2, November 28, 1985, cols. 234-36; Government had expressed the fear that if the situation continued "the country can become militarised like most of the African countries", see Parliament Debates, Hansard, vol.43, no.4, 17 November 1986, col. 557.


Sri Lankan army had a strength of 77,000 men. Infantry troop formed its backbone. In 1983 there were five infantry regiments, each having one regular and two reserve battalions. With the rapid increase in military manpower the whole infantry formation was reorganised into three divisions with ten brigades. The standard infantry weapon was the 7.62 mm Chinese Type-56 (Chinese version of Soviet Ak-47) assault rifles. In 1984 United States approved the sale of 300, 5.56 mm M-16 rifles under a 2 million dollar Foreign Military Sales Credit Programme. However, the largest number of 500,000 rifles with ammunition were purchased from Belgium at an estimated cost of 35 million Sri Lankan rupees. Besides that, small arms were received from Pakistan. The one time .303 rifle yielding foot soldiers were having surplus arms and ammunition for distribution among the Sinhalese residing in northern and eastern provinces.

Before 1970s, there was only a single air defence artillery regiment equipped with 24 Bofors 40 mm L-60 guns for the defence of Colombo and Trincomalee ports. During the 1971 crisis Soviet Union donated 12, 82 mm


mortars. China gifted 10 85 mm Type-56 towed artillery and 16, 76 mm M-256 howitzers were provided by Yugoslavia.

After 1983, artillery regiments had acquired most of their weapons from Pakistan. These included 10 105 mm and unspecified number of 25 pounder field guns, 106 mm recoilless rifles and 107 mm mortars. The air defence regiment had also received 24 3.7 inch guns from undefined source. In July 1991 it was reported that Sri Lankan army had received 12 130 mm type-59 artillery pieces from China which were divided into three batteries of four guns each, with one battery attached to each of the three artillery regiments.

The armour components of the army consisted of three reconnaissance regiments. Out of 200 armoured personnel carriers, 150 came after 1983. These included 18 Saladin armoured cars and 15 Ferret scout cars, both from Britain, 30 South African Buffalos purchased through third parties and 43 armoured vehicles received from China after June 1990.

In 1972 China provided, free of cost, five Shanghai class gun boats fitted with anti-aircraft and anti-submarine armaments. Prior to that only a limited number of naval crafts were procured either from Britain or Singapore. Its manpower strength has increased from 3000 in 1983 to 8000 in 1990. It had taken delivery of 9 British Cougar coastal patrol


boats, 6 each of Israeli **Devora** and **Super Devora** fast attack crafts, 2 Vosper landing crafts and 2 fast troop carriers from Singapore and three other ships from South Korea. Government argued that these ships were needed to strengthen the surveillance zone in the Pak Strait.

In 1991 Sri Lankan navy had a total of 68 ships consisting of 2 locally built coastal patrol craft, 36 inshore patrol craft plus about 30 small fast patrol boats. After fighting broke out in June 1991 China provided three improved version of **Sanghai** class fast attack craft and one 24 meter long (capable of handling a 50 ton payload) landing craft. A second craft with 100 ton payload was built at Colombo dockyard. It was believed that the additional landing craft would improve amphibious assault and logistic capability of the armed forces.

Before 1983 Sri Lankan air force lacked any offensive capability and its operational support to the army was limited to transport and occasional reconnaissance duties. The transport squadron had World War II vintage Douglas DC-3 **Dakota** and a few DH-114 **Heron**s procured from Britain. The helicopter squadron had 13 choppers consisting mainly of Bell 206A **Jet Rangers** that United States provided during the 1971 JVP uprising. The 6 MiG-17s given by the former Soviet Union during that period were written off by 1984 as completely unserviceable. The 6

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265. New York Times, April 12 and June 14, 1972. These were provided under US $2 million Soviet military assistance to Sri Lanka in 1971.
Bell-47 helicopter gunships operated since 1971 were also grounded by the time ethnic conflict started in 1983.

Realising the inherent weakness of the air force, government hurriedly purchased five aircraft at a cost of SL Rs. 250 million. These included two Bell 206B Jet Ranger gunships equipped with armour plating and weaponry for field operations, two Bell 212 twin engine helicopters for air lifting service personnel to combat zone and one fixed wing aircraft for long range reconnaissance of the coast and rescue operations. Since 1984 a crash programme was launched to expand combat aircraft, helicopter and transport inventory. Additional Bell 212, Bell 206 Jet Rangers and 4 Bell 412 attack helicopters were acquired. Most of these helicopters carried guns and unguided rockets for counter insurgency and army support missions.

Aerial surveillance capability was improved with the creation of a maritime squadron in 1988. It is equipped with two Dauphin SA-365 helicopters (purchased from France in 1979), 6 Cessna 337 utility aircraft, 3 Doves and one Heron used for photo mapping purpose.

Light bombing and ground strafing operations in the northern and eastern provinces were regularly undertaken by the 9 piston engine SIAI Marchetti SF.260 basic trainers procured from Italy in 1985. In 1991


269. Ibid., also see Military Balance 1990-91, p.177.

Sri Lankan air force received 6 F-7M fighters (Chinese version of Soviet MiG-21s) from China. These were the first fighters in the hands of the air force after MiG-17 and Sri Lanka has become the third South Asian country, after Pakistan and Bangladesh, to have this Chinese fighter in its inventory.

Chinese aircraft also formed the backbone of its transport fleet. These included 6 Y-12 twin engine light aircraft (delivered in 1987) and 2 Y-8 (An-12) medium range transports, but were used as bombers against Tamil militant targets, using 40 gallon oil drums filled with 300 kg. of explosives.

After 1983 Sri Lanka sought the help of the United States, China, Pakistan and Israel for training of its security personnel. During the visit of a high power Chinese delegation to Colombo in July 1984 arrangements were made for Chinese training of Sri Lankan armed forces and future supply of Chinese equipment. During 1984-90, China turned out to be the largest supplier of arms to Colombo. Since 1984 Washington has been providing a sum of $15000 annually under the International Military Education and Training Programme. Though it was a modest training programme, it carried significance because in 1970 Mrs. Bandaranaike had declared that, in future officers would not be sent to the US for training. The government admitted the presence of Pakistani military personnel who were providing training to the military instructors of island's army. But the most controversial aspects of


military training was the presence in Sri Lanka of members of the Kini Mini Service (KMS), the ex-servicemen of the Special Air Service (SAS) hired from Channel Islands and the Shin-bet, the Israeli internal Intelligence Division. "Some fought in the war and other helped in a major way to train the Sri Lankan troops to fight terrorism".

Sri Lanka's Israeli connection needs special mention here. The government admitted that Israeli involvement was limited to military matters. But it did not reveal that anti-terrorist groups were trained by Mossad in Israel and purchasing teams went there to buy Israeli made equipment, on a large scale, including Devora petrol boats. The Colombo Government did not know that Mossad was also providing training to the warring groups of Tamil militants in the same military base in Israel. Even anti-patrol boat equipments were provided to the Tamils to sabotage ships similar to Israeli made Devora used by the government forces. Though the military had vastly expanded its material capability with the massive purchase of arms from all possible sources, they lacked morale and discipline. A Colombo based newspaper in an obvious reference to the island's army wrote:

"In today's world an army that is not disciplined is a rabble in arms. It could be a threat to the very society that it is intended..."


279. Ibid.

to protect. (281)

There was indiscipline within the armed forces because it was basically an ethnic Sinhala army perceiving their role against the secessionists as a war between Sinhalese and Tamils. After 1956 when Sinhala-Buddhist dominance in Sri Lankan politics was legalised, successive governments by consciously manipulating the recruitment policy made the armed forces respond to Sinhala-Buddhist interest. "Many important units came to look upon themselves as Sinhala regiments upholding Sinhala power and hegemony against hostile minorities. Politicisation of the armed forces and indiscipline within its ranks became more acute after the UNP came to power in 1978. To counter the growing Tamil militancy the government showed great haste in increasing the military manpower. This provided the JVP cadre an opportunity to infiltrate into the armed forces. Under the "Chit system" most of its members were recommended by UNP members of Parliament to join the armed forces. Tamils with 18 per cent of the island's population have a more

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2 per cent representation in the armed forces. When deployed in Tamil areas the armed forces found themselves in a sea of hostilities. Their mere presence was treated as a symbol of Sinhala oppression and they were viewed as an army of occupation.

3.6 Nepal: Armed Forces:

Nepal is best known to the outside world for the fighting qualities of its men. The Gorkha soldiers in the British Indian Army had exhibited their fighting spirit in both the World Wars. More recently, as part of the Indian army they had fought wars against China and Pakistan and also as part of the British Task Force in South Atlantic they brought glory for this tiny Himalayan state during the Falkland war of 1982.

Nepal's geopolitics disfavoured the creation of a large standing army. Its poor economic condition also did not permit the maintenance of a regimental army. Sandwiched between India and China - two of Asia's most powerful military powers, its security in the event of external threat would have to be guaranteed by both neighbours. In such a situation, Nepalese army could become effective (only to a limited extent) by adopting hit and run tactics of guerrilla warfare. But the primary concern of the army was internal security. Not only that they supplemented the police force in maintaining domestic stability and order, they also performed police duties in areas where police force were

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either non-existent or their strength was negligible. Army had another vital function of manning border checkposts to prevent illegal crossing of border and also to check trans-border smuggling. These missions did not require sophisticated weapons.

Despite the fact that Nepal on many occasions experienced political turmoil, but on no occasion officers in the army had manifested their political inclination. It had established a tradition of discipline and loyalty to the King and with the establishment of a democratic system such loyalty has been shown to the elected representatives of the people. However, during the previous regime royal patronage was bestowed on the army to enlist its support for the monarchical system. Most of the officers in the army came from the Chetri caste and for appointment to crucial posts like Chief of Army and Royal Guards, Chetris of Thakuri clan were getting privilege over Rana clan. Soldiers were usually recruited from the hilly regions, and rarely from the Terai region. But the majority of the army were deployed either in the Kathmandu valley or in the plains of the south bordering India. This could be justified on the ground that army was engaged in curbing the insurrectionary activities of the banned Nepalese Congress from their base in India.

Nepalese army lacks adequate training facilities. In exchange for Gorkha recruitment in the Indian army, India was obliged to train their

288. Rishikesh Shah, *Essays in the Practice of Government in Nepal* (New Delhi: Manohar, 1982), pp.107-10. The present author argued that the army regarded the King as the State so, it was both loyal to the King as well as the State.


army personnel and provided them the required arms and ammunition. An Indian Military Mission went to Kathmandu in 1952 to assist the training and reorganisation of the Kingdom's army. The mission was headed by a Major General and comprised 197 other ranks. In 1958 it was renamed the Military Training and Advisory Group, further renamed as the Indian Military Liaison Group in 1963 with a much reduced strength till its final withdrawal in 1970. In recent years selected officers were sent to Dehra Dun (India), Sandhurst (Britain) and the United States for training.

The strength of the Nepalese army had increased from 22,000 in 1980 to 35,000 after a decade (see Table 3.1). Infantry troops, numbering six brigades, including the palace brigade, had an overwhelming dominance. Infantry weapons, like small arms and machine guns, were obsolete. The single artillery battalion was equipped with light mountain guns, howitzers and a few mortars. The recent supply of 500 truck-loads of Chinese small arms and anti-aircraft guns have met the weapon requirement of these army units. Before that India was the sole supplier of weapons to the Nepalese army under an agreement signed between the two countries in 1965, with the United States and Britain stepping in where India could not fulfil its commitment. Such an arrangement became necessary owing to Nepal's efforts in the early 1960s to diversify its arms procurement. Instead of seeking military assistance from India (under the provisions of the letter it exchanged with India in 1950), Nepal sought weapons from both the United States and Britain.


292. S.D. Muni, "Chinese Arms Pour into Nepal", The Times of India (New Delhi), September 1, 1988; also see The Statesman, June 7, 1989.

Apart from the regular troops there was a 28,000 strong paramilitary police force assigned with the duty to maintain general law and order. Further, it had around one hundred thousand military reserve in the form of retired soldiers from the Gorkha brigades of British and Indian armies. With the addition of reservist Nepal could become a formidable military power. But, it lacked the means to equip such a large army. By allowing its citizens to serve in foreign armies Nepal earned valuable foreign exchange. There were around 8000 Gorkhas serving in the British army. In 1991 Nepal received US $ 33.5 million from their pensions, salaries and gratuities. More than 55,000 Nepalese served in the Indian army and a further two lakh were employed in various paramilitary and police forces. Annual earning from these India-based Gorkhas totaled around Rs. 1.3 billion (US $ 31.42 million). Without remittances from Gorkhas, Nepalese economy would have been hard pressed.

3.7 Bhutanese Army

Under the provisions of the 1949 bilateral treaty India had accepted the responsibility of Bhutan's external defence. The primary responsibility of the Royal Bhutanese army was internal security and the army was given the additional burden of patrolling the border check posts. The potential source of domestic conflict that Bhutan


297. Ibid.


confronts today, and that has highlighted the army's role as an internal
security force, is the ethnic conflict between the native Drukpas and the
rebellious Nepali settlers in the southern part of the country whose size
is estimated at 30 to 52 per cent of the Kingdom's total population of
more than 1 million. Their growing size is considered as a threat, and
King Jigme Singhe Wangchuk has recently announced that Bhutan is
facing internal security threat because of the rebellious activities of
ethnic Nepalese. The 4000 strong Bhutanese army is inadequate to
suppress the growing terrorism which has the potential to rip the country
apart and threatens, as never before, the monarchical system of Bhutan.
In October 1991 the National Assembly of Bhutan called for a freeze on
further developmental projects in the south.

Army was trained by Indian officers and their weapons were also
derived from India. Officers in the army and the Royal Body Guard
were trained in Indian Military Academy at Dehra Dun, the National
Defence Academy in Pune and the College of Combat at Mhow. They were
also imparted training for counter insurgency and Jungle warfare in the
Mizo hills in India. India had helped in setting up a Military School
at Haa in Bhutan to provide pre-course training to officers, instructors
and staff of the Bhutanese army before their departure for full training
in India. Kuensel, a fortnightly official bulletin of the Bhutanese

300. S.D. Muni, "Bhutan Steps Out", The World Today (London), vol.40,
no.12, December 1984, pp.517-18; also see Rita Machanda, "Bhutan:
Winds of Change", Far Eastern Economic Review, October 3, 1991,
p.25.


302. See "Bhutan: A Threatening Division", Asia Week, November 22, 1991,
p.30.

303. A.C. Sinha, Bhutan: Ethnic Identity and National Dilemma (New Delhi:

Government, while commenting on the training and reorganisation of its armed forces said:

A military mission from India was deputed for service in Bhutan in April 1962 to train and reorganise our armed forces on modern lines. Our association with the Indian Military Training Team (IMTRAT) was formed then. The Wangchuk Lo Dzong Military School was established in Ha and the task of running the school was given to IMTRAT. It was designed to train and provide the nucleus of instructors for the reorganised army. Potential officers of our army were also to be selected and prepared by the school to receive pre-commission training at the Indian Military Academy. In the meantime, to overcome acute shortage of officers, the scope of the school was temporarily enlarged to act as an Officers' Training School for directly commissioned officers.(305)

During the 68th session of the National Assembly of Bhutan held in October 1989, King informed the members that the IMTRAT was in Bhutan to coordinate the logistic support and assistance being provided by India to the army of Bhutan and also to help in imparting specialised training to its personnel. Besides the army there was a 15,000 strong militia that served as local security force and reserve. The militia men were trained by army instructors in mock battles to counter border intrusion.

3.8 Conclusion

The foregoing survey of armed forces in South Asia highlights the fact that the threat of external aggression and internal political instability were the prime motivating factors for countries in the South Asian region to expand the strength of their armed forces and various other paramilitary outfits. India, no doubt, was the dominant military power in the subcontinent because its military manpower strength, along with armoured, artillery, ships and combat aircraft, were superior to the


combined manpower strength of all the South Asian countries put together. But, considering its security commitments both in the Chinese and Pakistani fronts and the increasing involvement of the armed forces in internal security operations (particularly in the Kashmir valley, Punjab and in the north-eastern region) the 1.3 million armed forces in India for the defence of more than 800 million people, 15,000 kilometers of land and maritime boundaries and several other island territories, were just adequate enough to defend the country's sovereignty and territorial inviolability.

On the other hand, after the withdrawal of Soviet troops from Afghanistan, the security commitment of Pakistani armed forces in its western front (on the pretext of which Pakistan during the 1980s vastly improved its military potentials with generous assistance from the United States), was virtually non-existent. Added to this, nearly 10,000 Pakistani troops had returned back from Saudi Arabia in 1988. In such a situation, given a future confrontation between the two countries the ratio of deployable forces would be more or less the same with Pakistan having the edge in the ground while the advantage in air and sea would lie with India. Moreover, in a short duration war; Pakistan's strategy of offensive defence would give it tremendous benefits. But, the possibility of another round of full scale Indo-Pak war appears to be remote because first, armed forces in both countries are now frequently used in aid to the civil authority and are more concerned with maintaining domestic order and stability and second, the flow of arms and spare parts from their external suppliers - Soviet Union in case of India and the United States for Pakistan - have been stopped because of the disintegration of Soviet Union and denial of US arms to Pakistan due to its nuclear weapons programme.
In case of other countries in the region, reorganisation and modernisation programme of their armed forces were not geared towards meeting external threat, but was basically internal security oriented. Till 1983 Sri Lanka had the smallest contingent of armed forces among the five major South Asian countries. But their size had speedily increased with the growth of Tamil militancy in the northern and eastern parts of the country. In Bangladesh and Nepal the strength of the armed forces and paramilitary units had increased during the last decade primarily because regime security was interpreted as a national security problem.

For the continuation of these unpopular regimes in the seat of power - martial law regime in Bangladesh and autocratic monarchy in Nepal - armed forces were given patronage and to enlist their support their size was increased and they were provided with Chinese weapons for use against elements opposing these undemocratic regimes. In two countries in the region, namely Pakistan and Bangladesh - army was the dominant political institution and had the virtual monopoly to decide about its own requirements.

In some of the South Asian countries few ethnic groups were denied recruitment to the armed forces. This was the case with Bengalis, before 1971, and Sindhis in Pakistan armed forces, which is dominated by the Punjabis. Tamil in Sri Lanka, ethnic Nepalis in Bhutan, Terai people in Nepal had traditionally been excluded from the rank of the armed forces because these communities were being viewed in their respective countries as potential source of security threat. Considering the fact that army had an important internal security role in countries like Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and Bhutan, this unique recruitment policy eroded discipline and professionalism. Pakistan army deployed in Sindh, Bangladesh army used against Chakma tribes in Chittagong Hill Tracts, Sri Lankan army's role in Tamil areas, and deployment of Bhutanese army in southern
provinces with the single objective to quell ethnic disturbances had demonstrated that it was an instrument of coercion in the hands of the government to suppress political opponents. Instead of being viewed as an impartial arbiter, ethnic communities perceived them as an army of occupation. The East Pakistan crisis of 1971 had demonstrated the disastrous consequence of such a perception. Sri Lanka is slowly, but steadily, moving in similar direction.
### Table 3.1

**SIZE AND COMPOSITION OF THE ARMED FORCES - SOUTH ASIA**

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Total</th>
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Source: Military Balance (London: International Institute for Strategic Studies)