India's Foreign Arms Acquisition: Choices and Motivation of Suppliers and the Recipient

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Abstract

Many studies have explored the relationship between arms transfers and escalation of conflict between states, including between India and Pakistan, but hardly any study has examined the motivations of India's arms suppliers in transferring military equipment and technology to India. This paper attempts to examine India's foreign arms acquisition and the motive forces governing each of India's top arms and their impact on India-Pakistan rivalry. The research drew two major inferences: one, each of India's arms suppliers has its specific strategic, political and economic objectives in transferring arms and technologies to India and have no direct connection with the latter's hostility with Pakistan. Two India's choices of arms suppliers and arms and technology types were a result of both a transformation in the world order and a security crisis in India or its military confrontation with Pakistan (or China).

Keywords

Arms transfer, arms suppliers, India, the United States, Russia, France, Israel, Pakistan, military conflict, strategic stability, military technology, terrorism

Introduction

Arms transfers have played an important role in international, regional, and domestic politics. This study explores the choices and

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motivation behind India's arms suppliers and the recipient itself. Previous studies made comparative analyses of the relationship between arms transfer and military conflict between India and Pakistan, but could not derive a uniform conclusion as to whether India's foreign arms acquisition was the source of that rivalry. The central hypothesis of this study was that India's arms suppliers do not wish to be part of the India-Pakistan rivalry and that their arms sales do not contribute to the escalation of the conflict by default. The underlying argument behind this hypothesis was that the conflict between India and Pakistan preceded India's arms suppliers. Both countries inherited it after their independence. Besides, with the change of arms suppliers of each of the South Asian strategic rivals, their bilateral relations did not improve. India acquired most of the defense equipment from the then Soviet Union (now Russia). After the Kargil War, India started diversifying its arms suppliers. Currently, Russia, the United States, France, and Israel are the top arms suppliers of New Delhi. Except for Russia, all other top arms exporters have exchanged their positions as top arms exporters to India. The conflict between India and Pakistan, however, has rather worsened. This study assumes that the conflict is exclusive of the exogenous factors (arms suppliers, for instance) and that it owes to the nature of the rivalry between the two countries. That is, it is neither driven by foreign arms acquisition, nor will it be ameliorated if external arms sales stopped. India's arms suppliers have their respective motivations in exporting arms and technology to India, in addition to signing strategic and security pacts. This study borrows the division of arms suppliers in three types or tiers, from David Kinsella, and applies it to each of India's arms suppliers to understand their motivation in their arms transfers. Moving ahead, this study explains the factors that led New Delhi to choose different arms suppliers in the post-Cold War era and what lies behind preferring certain arms suppliers to others. It concludes that India's arms suppliers have their respective strategic or political and economic objectives in arms transfers, and

have no direct connection to strategic instability in the region. India does not either acquire arms from a diverse set of arms suppliers expecting that its arms suppliers will side with India in its war against Pakistan.[1] Lastly, this study did not take into account India's border standoff with China or its arms acquisitions from foreign suppliers to fight against China.

Literature Review

There are a diverse opinions on the implications of arms transfer on regional stability. Some political analysts suggest that arms transfer fuel conflicts, others believe that they are a source of regional stability if they are coming from superpowers, which can impose sanctions if two rival states get to each other's necks. Still others believe that arms transfers have little to do with regional conflict, as superpowers are concerned about their strategic interests and are reluctant to become a party to the regional conflicts that do not concern them directly.

Gregory S. Sanjian conducted two quantitatively analytical studies in 1995 and 1998 on the effects of great powers' arms supplies on the nature of India-Pakistan rivalry or cooperation. The research covered the period between 1951 and 1976 and found that the superpowers were not only indifferent to an improvement in the bilateral relationship of India and Pakistan but also were less concerned to create a military balance between the two rival states.[2] Stephanie Neuman also drew similar inferences when she argued that both the superpowers, the United States and the then Soviet Union, showed reluctance to get themselves involved in armed conflicts and pulled back supplies.[3] Another political analyst David Todd Kinsella's study on the relationship between arms transfers, dependence, and regional stability, supports this premise in a way. In his view, the dependence of recipient states on arms transfers of superpowers makes them less likely to pursue belligerent behavior to their rival state(s), for the fear of the imposition of sanctions, for instance.[4] However, Neuman and Kinsella cautioned that the relative upsurge of second-tier producers

had reduced the leverage of the superpowers to prevent an eruption of conflict, resulting in "a new theory of great power impotence". New Delhi's "Make in India" strategy and an emphasis on technology transfer in almost every defense deal with its arms suppliers is a case in point. If Neuman's argument holds weight, as New Delhi increases defense indigenization, the superpowers will have a less likelihood of affecting the military choices of the country.

These theorists also drew contrary conclusions when they analyzed India-Pakistan wars in the post-Cold War perspective or when they applied their theoretical models to conflicts between other rival states. The most important contribution of Sanjian's 1999 study, according to him, was his finding that U.S.' and the USSR's arms transfers did intensify the rivalry and military imbalance between India and Pakistan. In his findings, the superpowers' arms transfers and the regional instability were directly proportional.[5] Yet, he conceded that it was not clear if this outcome was by design or by accident. He also quoted other studies, which suggested either irrelevance of endogenous factors (superpowers' arms sales, for instance) or their inability to ease the conflict.[6] Similarly, Kinsella also changed his views in his post-Cold War studies, when he admitted that the arms supplies have caused regional instability in as complex regions as South Asia and the Middle East.[7] Other political analysts believe that the U.S.'s arms supplies to Saudi Arabia, for example, have more intensified regional conflict than prevented it.[8] Michael T Klare enlisted conflict in several countries from Afghanistan, Iran-Iraq War, Lebanon, Cambodia, Angola, Mozambique, and Central America, and suggested that the sustained transfer of arms from the United States and the then Soviet Union kept the conflicts brewing.[9]

All told, the truth lies somewhere in between these standpoints or outside of them. The purpose of this study is to test the hypothesis that India's arms suppliers do not by design shape its foreign policy choices and therefore are not the sources of security instability in

South Asia. If so, what do the arms suppliers want from selling high-tech military hardware and transferring the technology of arms production?

Theoretical models of arms transfers: The process and the objectives of arms supplies:-

Before understanding the objectives of arms supplies, it is essential to know the process through which the global arms transfer system works. The types of arms producers in the world that shape the global arms production and transfer system are defined by three characteristics: defense production base; defense research and development capacity or capability; and, the dependence on arms exports. The degree to which these characteristics play out is determined by a country's domestic political, military, and economic necessities. The distribution of military technology leads us to determine a pattern of arms production and supply network. Technology lies at the heart of military power, and the distribution of military technology defines the relationship among actors in a supply chain management system.

Generally, four types of military technologies exist in the world. Type One Technology (or Technology-I) refers to a social, political, economic, and military structure that bolsters the production of highly innovative and advanced techniques of production. And these techniques are scarcely distributed and possessed by only a small number of states. Type Two Technology (or Technology-II) refers to a military and economic structure that supports the usage, adaptation, and improvement in the acquired weapon system for peculiar battlefield requirements or a type of the export destinations. Type Three Technology (or Technology-III) characterizes an ability to reproduce, reengineer the acquired weaponry, based on the level of scientific and engineering skills. Type Four Technology (or Technology-IV) signifies widely distributed and the most common skills of simply operating the acquired weapon system and related technology.

The production of arms is contingent upon several economic, political and military needs. The economic needs that drive the arms production are termed "factor endowments.[10] The levels of factor endowments and the technology type define the "tier" of arms suppliers. War is considered the mother of military innovations and inventions.

The first tier (Tier-I) suppliers can produce highly innovative and technologically advanced defense products, which cater to the need of every type of military application. They fall into the Technology-I type. Usually, they tend to have a monopoly over high-tech weapon technology. They tend to slacken their monopoly, under some considerations, in the arms capability and supply the weaponry to other states. Nonetheless, they retain the monopoly on defense research and development (R&D), which are the bread and butter for innovation.[11] Top arms producers with a weak economy, however, tend to exploit a foreign country's budget surplus or defense needs to grab as many defense contracts as possible to invest more in the defense innovation.[12] Moreover, they also ensure their control over the supply and availability of defense equipment, for example, by withholding spare parts and the maintenance system. This gives them leverage over the recipient state/entity. The political power attached to arms supply enables the first tier producers to allow the arms transfers to win political allies, and interdict arms transfers when it does not comply with the rules of engagement.

Political objectives are largely associated with Tier-I arms suppliers. Political objectives (the pursuit of power) refers to arms transfer to an ally or a strategic partner that would help ensure a regional balance of power and demonstrate commitment on part of the supplier to the security of the recipient state. One of the important political objectives of arms suppliers is to create and maintain influence on the leadership, usually the politico-military establishment, to help achieve common strategic objectives.

Russia: Russia has been a longstanding defense partner of New Delhi since the latter's inception as an independent state. Russia is the second-largest arms supplier in the world, after the U.S., in both material and financial scales of arms exports, and accounted for twenty-one percent in global arms transfer in 2019. India, China, and Vietnam are the major export destinations for Russian armaments, with 30, 26, and 5.6 percent share, respectively. Outside the former Soviet bloc, New Delhi "enjoys the closest defense-industrial relationship with Russia".[13]

As a sign of close strategic partnership, Russia has granted India a highly capable ballistic missile defense system, and three Shchuka-B type (Akula class) nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSN), namely INS *Chakra*, each for a decade-long lease. The latest deals with Russia included an S-400 BMD system for US$5 billion and INS Chakra-III for US$3 billion. Akula class nuclear submarines have a significant capability of a very low sound or "acoustic signature" and carry cruise missiles.[14] The transfer of such highly capable and sensitive defense technology and nuclear submarines to India is not solely driven by economic reasons. Geostrategic significance runs hand in glove. Russia's deputy Prime Minister for Defense Industry was reported to have said that the Russian arms export agency (Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation) was the "second foreign policy agency" in the country.[15] Arms transfers help Russia retain close and strong political, military and strategic ties with New Delhi, sustain political influence in the country retain it both as a large defense market, and not let it too closely aligned with the US. Russia's image as a great power, with strong political and strategic linkages across different regions, and enhanced diplomatic stature in the world further backstop the strategic partnership with India.

The United States: In light of the theoretical discussion above, the United States's civil nuclear deal, defense agreements, and arms sales to India symbolize more a pursuit of power or influence in the Indian establishment than economic gains. Relations between the U.S. and

India moved from an estrangement in the Cold War era to a strategic partnership of the 21st century. Policymakers and scholar community in the U.S. tend to argue that Washington has made a long-term bet on India.[16] The bet is, India, as a major economic, political, and military power in the Indo-Pacific region that has a rivalry with China, would help the U.S. in sharing the burden of competing with Beijing in the Indo-Pacific region. The U.S. could gain "power" (read influence) in New Delhi's civil-military establishment through the defense deals and high-technology arms transfers and cultivate India as a strategic partner against China.

The U.S. signed a civil nuclear deal with India in 2005, and with the U.S.'s endorsement, India got an exclusive and special waiver from the Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG) that allowed NSG members to export nuclear material and technology to New Delhi. It was historically significant for India's diplomatic status and political stature. However, the U.S. has not yet built a single nuclear power plant in India, which sometimes leads to frustration inside the Washington beltway. Remarkably, this lack of development does not affect the bilateral relationship. Similarly, the two countries signed various defense deals and agreements such as the Defense and Technology Trade Initiative (DTTI), and two of the foundational agreements (which the U.S. signs only with strong defense partners) such as the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) and Communication Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA). For over a decade and a half, the total amount of U.S.'s arms sales has been only worth US$15 billion. In the 2010-2014 period, the U.S. stood second to Russia as the largest arms supplier to India, but, in 2015-2019, it didn't make it to the top three arms suppliers of India. France and Israel replaced it. Nonetheless, the U.S. kept signing the Foundational Agreements and granting India various diplomatic statuses, including Major Defense Partner, and the Strategic Trade Authorization Tier-1 status (reserved for the NATO allies) to facilitate the flow of highly advanced defense technology. This signifies an effort on part of the

United States that is directed more at convincing India to take the charge in containing China in the Indo-Pacific than for economic pursuit.

France: France also has a strong and close strategic partnership with India in the strategic and political affairs of the world. France tends to support India's "strategic, diplomatic and economic emergence" and endorses New Delhi's permanent membership in the U.N. Security Council, "better participation" at G-8, G-20 and other international forums, and access to civil nuclear resources and technology.[17] The hallmark of the Indo-French strategic partnership appears to be the Rafale fighter aircraft, European Pressurized Reactors (EPRs), and the Megha Tropiques. France delivered the first Rafale aircraft to India in October 2019, as part of the intergovernmental deal signed between the two governments in September 2016 for the sale of 36 Rafale aircraft.[18] The rest of the aircraft will be completely delivered to India by 2022.[19] France also sold these combat aircraft to Egypt and Qatar. The sale of Rafale to these three countries constituted a quarter of France's arms export to Asia.[20] Another cornerstone of the Indo-French strategic relations is civil nuclear cooperation. Following the NSG waiver to India in September 2008, the French and Indian governments signed a bilateral agreement for civil nuclear energy cooperation that went live in January 2010. In March 2018, French and Indian governments signed another agreement to "expedite" the nuclear power project in Jaitapur, Maharashtra, and commence work on it. Upon completion, it would be the world's largest nuclear power plant, with six EPRs and a total capacity of 9,900 MWe.[21] The space program is another significant area of cooperation between India and France. Megha Tropiques is the first joint satellite of the two countries launched into space in 2011, for collecting atmospheric and climate data. Maritime security, counter-terrorism, and cybersecurity are other important areas of cooperation.[22]

France conducts its relations with India under its Indo-Pacific strategy. France considers itself as an Indo-Pacific nation, with many

overseas territories (including Mayotte, La Reunion, Antarctic territories, New Caledonia, and French Polynesia), 93 percent (world's second-largest) of exclusive economic zone, over 1.5 million French nationals/citizens, 7000 subsidiary enterprises, 8,000 French troops and a couple of military bases in the Emirates and Djibouti. One of the four pillars of the French Indo-Pacific Strategy is to strengthen relations with "major regional players," including Japan, South Korea, Australia, India, Indonesia, among others, which "share similar" values like liberal democracy.[23] French President Emanuel Macron, in a 2018 visit to Australia, proposed a regional strategic alliance among Paris, New Delhi, and Canberra. Unlike the U.S. Indo-Pacific strategy, which sees China as a strategic threat and seeks alliances to contain its economic and military rise, the idea behind France's strategy is to deepen engagement with Beijing as "an essential partner," to encourage it to work as a responsible stakeholder in the rules-based order in the Indo-Pacific region and pressure it when it does not respect freedom and openness of seas. France could do this all along, from the outset, but it pivoted to the Asia-Pacific only recently, especially since Francois Hollande's coming into power.[24] It suggests that, with American retrenchment from the global engagement, France wants to fill the gap and establish itself as a major stakeholder to protect its maritime interests and gain diplomatic leverage as a great power.

Arms transfers and permanent military presence in the region also strengthen this view. According to SIPRI's reports, in 2010-2014, France exported 29 percent of its arms to Asia and Oceania, and in 2015-19, the percentage grew to thirty. In the latter period, France became the third-largest exporter of arms in the world, and India constituted the third biggest export destination (14 percent) of French arms.[25] Through arms sales to India, partnership in the space, and cooperation in the maritime region, France seeks to work with New Delhi for counter-terrorism, anti-sea piracy, maritime security, freedom of navigation and overflight in the seas, and maritime

security. In 2018, France and India signed an agreement for the exchange of military and naval bases/facilities,[26] and have conducted joint military and naval exercises. In a recent letter to an Indian newspaper, the French Ambassador to India emphasized on the shared principle of strategic autonomy in foreign policy that bound the two countries together as strategic cooperative partners. He explained how France was contributing to New Delhi's "Make in India" policy by co-producing and transferring defense technology to the country.[27]

There are two other motive forces in the arms transfer: economic objectives and the military objectives.[28]

Economic objectives (or pursuit of wealth): Export of defense articles achieves the same primary benefit as do other export items, that is, a positive effect on the balance of payments through an increase in foreign exchange reserves, a positive contribution in the economic growth and increased employment. For the defense sector, exports of arms help achieve economies of scale, which implies that the larger the items of production for supply, the lesser the cost of production. Above all, the economies of scale help arms supplier states save the money for defense research and development and improve the infrastructure of defense industries. Economic objectives in arms transfer are usually associated with Second Tier or Tier-2 arms suppliers. However, a tier-1 state, with a weak economy, may also supply arms for the pursuit of money to invest more in its defense research and development. But, that's a rarity. Russia's defense exports are a case in point.

Israel: Israel is listed as a second-tier arms supplier. It buys arms from the US and elsewhere and is bound by certain limitations on the arms transfer or re-export of the US-origin arms. Defense and security factors dominate in Israel's foreign policy, stemming from the origin of Israel and the accompanying existential fears from Arab states' invasion. Then, revolutionary Iran emerged in 1979 that considered Israel as the arch-enemy. Regional threats of terrorism also shaped

Israel's strategic culture. For a long period of Israel's existence, its diplomatic relations with the outside world were hobbled due to Israel's occupation of Palestinian territory. Largely for these reasons, Israel's Ministry of Defense and the Mossad, the intelligence agency, carried out "covert" cooperative relations with many countries, including Arab states in the Middle East and North Africa, Turkey, India, and ASEAN nations, among others.[29] And for these reasons, arms sales have become a cornerstone of Israel's foreign policy. In the trends of arms transfers between 2010 and 2014, Israel was the 10th largest arms exporter, with India being the biggest export destination, having 46 percent share, followed by Columbia and Singapore with 6 percent each. In 2015-2019, Israel was the eighth largest arms exporter in the world, with India, Azerbaijan, and Vietnam being the biggest arms export destinations, having a share of 45, 17, and 8.5, respectively.

The motive forces behind Israel's arms transfers were those of a typical second-tier arms supplier state: the pursuit of wealth, and political and diplomatic relations. Arms exports earn foreign exchange reserves, contribute to positive economic growth, which in turn helps defense research and development and strengthens the domestic defense industry, and the cycle goes on. In 2018, Israel exported arms worth US$7.5 billion, of which 46 percent went to Asia, 26 percent to European countries, 20 percent to North America, 6 percent to Latin America, and 2 percent to Africa.[30] Secondly, and most importantly, Israel's arms transfers have also had some political or diplomatic objectives. Arms transfers have backstopped Israel's political linkages with the outside world, especially in the Middle East and the Asia-Pacific region, where Muslims have a huge population. The increasing engagement with these countries has arguably pushed the Palestinian issue on the back burner, as countries are witnessing strategic advantages in enhancing defense ties with Israel. Strong defense relations with India and Southeast Asian nations under the arms transfers are cases in point.[31] Thirdly, arms transfers help Jerusalem

cultivate partners in countering terrorism in the region. Countries of the Asia-Pacific region have sought Israel's transfer of both arms and technology for counter-terrorism purposes and even conducted joint military exercises.[32] The fourth motivation behind enhancing and strengthening defense relations, in particular with the Middle East North African (MENA) and Southeast Asian states might be to gain support against Iran, isolate Tehran in the region, or pressurize it against adopting aggressive security policy against Jerusalem.

With India, in particular, Israel's defense relations strengthened in the event of the 1999 Kargil War, when Pakistan Army caught India unawares by making incursion across the Line of Control, the boundary that separates the disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir between the two countries. It was considered a failure of India's intelligence and surveillance system, as it could not either spot or prevent the cross-border movement of soldiers. In the conflict, Jerusalem provided the Indian Army with laser-guided missiles to be loaded on the French Mirage-2000 aircraft and shipped to India its Heron and Searcher drones for the high altitude surveillance of ground troops, aircraft, and bunkers. Israel's arms transfers reportedly turned the war in favor of India.[33] It was a turning point in the Indo-Israeli defense relations, as New Delhi considered Jerusalem as a reliable defense partner in the face of the then U.S. sanctions on the export of technology and arms to the country. Since then, India and Israel have signed defense deals and agreements for counter-terrorism cooperation.[34]

It looks like Israel's arms sales contributed to the conflict in South Asia, as it would happen later in February 2019, during the Balakot Crisis between India and Pakistan, when Indian Air Force reportedly used Israel-made SPICE (Smart, Precise Impact, Cost-Effective) missiles in an airstrike on Pakistan's mainland.[35] As explained in previous paragraphs, Israel's motivation might have been driven by economic and political factors, as explained in detail in previous paragraphs.. Besides, to create homogeneity, Israel referred to mutual

problems such as cross-border terrorism[36] and threats of state invasion that necessitated cooperation for intelligence gathering, border surveillance, reconnaissance of enemy territory (ISR), and the missile defense system. Israel has had a niche in these areas and was ready to provide the Indian Army with the ISR technology and missile defense. Secondly, it made a repeated violation of the U.S.'s export sanctions on India and severe restrictions on China and disregarded U.S. objections. Third, Nicolas Blarel wrote that India had made orders of the arms and technology before the conflict erupted and that Israel only sped up the shipment process.[37] Fourth, even if Israel did not transfer its armaments to India, the latter would have used other means of technology and arms to conduct airstrikes within Pakistan. What needs to be understood is that a foreign state's arms supplies do not instigate a conflict on their own; conflict might already be there, with or without foreign arms acquisition; and, at best, arms supplier arguably pursues its long-term economic, political and strategic interests. If Israel would not have provided the Indian Army with arms and technology, it might not have become so strong a defense partner of India as it is now. Thus, the long-term economic benefits and strong diplomatic relations might have propelled Jerusalem to meet the commitment, with no regard to the repercussions on New Delhi's rival. And this characteristic is attributable to second-tier suppliers, which tend to be more inclined toward the pursuit of wealth as such than being considerate of the strategic fallout of their actions.

The following discussion would involve factors that led India to choose different suppliers.

Determinants of India's Search for Arms Suppliers

Two factors were dominant in New Delhi's choices of arms suppliers and the type of defense equipment: a transformation in the world order, and military conflict or terrorism event.

Systemic/Structural transformation of the world: Disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1989-90, brought about a structural transformation in the world, with the United States emerging as the sole superpower and its ideologies of liberalism and democracy reigned supreme superseding all other values, especially those of the communism or socialism. This led to a fundamental restructuring of Indian political and economic thought. New Delhi revised its approach to the world, gave up its ideology of socialism and anti-colonialism, adopted liberalization of its economy (New Economic Policy), increased economic, political, and diplomatic engagement with the West, especially the United States, and initiated diplomatic relations with Israel.[38]

On the other hand, with the Soviet threat gone, the United States, and by extension the West, sought to cultivate India as a counterweight to China and to reduce Russia's political influence in New Delhi. The first decade after the Cold War was all about India's foreign policy restructuring and search of arms suppliers and outside powers' revisit to their India policy.[39] Later on, at the turn of the new century, as the world grew to become multipolar, India's defense acquisition also became diverse. In 1999-2003, New Delhi was the second-largest recipient of foreign arms, 79 percent of which were acquired from Russia.

New Delhi's strategic value for each of its arms suppliers factored differently in their foreign policies, i.e. India is considered a large defense market; the largest democracy; a counterweight to China's military and economic rise; and a stakeholder in the liberal and rules-based international order in the Indo-Pacific region. And such consideration on their part has in many ways constructed India's self-belief as a rising great power, which necessitated assertiveness in the region, and more investment in foreign arms acquisition and defense indigenization. As a consequence, regional security instability will be affected for sure, as India's rival states will be forced to invest in the qualitative and quantitative conventional and nuclear arsenal. It

would appear as if the arms suppliers contribute to the arms races and security instability. In reality, this is the doing of the transformation in world politics, the multiplicity of powerful countries, and the assertiveness in the foreign policy of the emerging major powers. If the U.S. wouldn't provide arms, France and Israel would, and if none of them does, Russia will do; and if no one does, India will do all it can and manufacture arms through defense indigenization. There is no way that a country will have money and not spend on its military power for both its security and survival and for commanding power in the region.

Regional military or security crises:

In the post-Cold War era, events of warfare in the region, military conflict with Pakistan, and terrorism incidents in India made their unique impression on New Delhi's choice of arms suppliers, respectively. The Gulf war of the early 1990s that pitted the United States and Iraq against each other, after the latter invaded Kuwait, transformed of modern warfare. In Operation Desert Storm, the U.S. Air Force introduced stealth technology that deceived Iraqi radars, used GPS technology for navigation, precision-guided munitions (PGM) destroyed Iraqi tanks from a standoff position, and advanced surveillance aircraft monitored the troop movement.[40] This revolution in the conduct of warfare also led India in part to look for other defense suppliers for its military modernization, as Russian technology was considered not up to date with international standards, especially in the first decade after its dismemberment.

Kargil War between India and Pakistan in 1999 would prove to be another turning point in spotting deficiencies in India's military technology. India was by then a nuclear power, and it could not detect and prevent border incursion by the Pakistan Army. India's Kargil Review Committee Report highlighted the need for defense modernization. In this period, Israel and India's defense relations

became strong, as the former proved its reliability in a crisis (this subject is dealt with under the subheading of Israel). Terrorism can also be considered a factor under the regional security crisis that contributed to India's quest for foreign arms and technology acquisition. The 9/11 terrorist attacks in the United States proved to be another turning point in New Delhi's relations with the outside world. On September 24th, 2001, the United States lifted nuclear tests-related sanctions and arms embargo on India and Pakistan, among others.[41]

In December 2001, and May 2002, two terrorist attacks in India targeted the Indian Parliament and families of Indian troops in Kaluchak, respectively. India mobilized forces along the border with Pakistan and readied for war, codenamed the campaign as Operation Parakram.[42] Some authors argue that the Indian Army's threat of mobilization was not credible enough, as it lacked the essential elements of swift movement, strategic surprise, and an attack with offensive firepower.[43] Slow mobilization of troops ceded Pakistan Army enough time to redeploy its forces stationed along the western border, against the fleeing Al-Qaeda terrorist from US operation in Afghanistan, to the border with India. Lastly, in the aftermath of another 2008 Mumbai terrorist attack, India's strategic policymakers counseled against a counterattack on Pakistan, because the armor was reportedly considered inadequate and antiquated.[44]

These events did demonstrate that the Indian Army, perforce, needed defense modernization and that it had to acquire modern high-tech defense hardware from foreign suppliers since its domestic defense industry was not up to the mark. The challenge for India was to diversify its arms suppliers in ways that do not lead to affect its traditional notion of "strategic autonomy," which almost every government in power has carried forward. Major arms suppliers, those in the Tier-1, or with Technology-I, tend naturally to withhold spare parts, maintenance systems, techniques of production, re-export licenses, among other things, to maintain political and strategic

leverage in their relationship with clients. Of all the issues, spare parts, technology transfer, and re-export policies might be the most dominant determinants of political leverage of arms suppliers over the recipients. And these were the factors behind India's choice of arms suppliers.

Conclusion

This study took account of the motivations of India's arms suppliers and the driving factors behind New Delhi's arms acquisition.

The study also assessed whether India's arms suppliers transferred military hardware and technology to support the country's wars or confrontations against Pakistan and thereby causing regional instability. The study reviewed the existing literature on the subject but found a conflict in their findings, failing to reach a uniform conclusion as to whether external arms suppliers stirred up regional conflicts, remained indifferent, or helped stabilize crisis between rival states. This research assumed that India's arms suppliers did not provide the country with arms and technology to fight wars against Pakistan. The inferences that this research drew at the end of the study are as follows. India's top arms suppliers are Russia, the United States, France, and Israel. Each of these arms suppliers has its own respective strategic, political, and economic objectives in their arms sales to India.

Russia has had strategic defense ties with India, and most of the Indian military platform constitutes Russian military hardware and technology. In the post-Cold War history, this study did not find evidence of Russia's arms supplies to arm India against Pakistan. Due to intermittent sanctions of the U.S. and the E.U., Russia has found in its energy and arms exports a viable source of earning revenues, and India has been its largest export destination. Strategically too, Russia will be less served by not supplying India with arms, just because it will cause regional instability because doing so will make India turn

inevitably to other suppliers, which does not simply make sense for Moscow.

The United States considers India as the counterweight to China's economic and military power. Since the 2005 civil nuclear deal with India, Washington has made a large bet on India toward that end. The study could not find evidence of Washington's outright arms supplies to India during its wars or military confrontations with Pakistan or to fight a war with Islamabad. Strategic reasons vis-à-vis China dominated the U.S.'s thinking.

France also supplies India with arms and technology because it views India as a strategic partner in committing to the freedom and openness of the Indo-Pacific, shares common interests toward the global challenges like climate change and terrorism, and also draws economic benefits from the bilateral defense trade. Israel started its arms supplies to India to expand its diplomatic outreach in South Asia, to set a precedent and expand its relations further toward Southeast Asian states, especially the Muslim countries like Indonesia. Counter-terrorism cooperation and economic benefits also governed the relationship. The study found no evidence of Israel's clear motives of arming India to fight against Pakistan.

Finally, India's arms acquisition stemmed from a change in the world order—bipolar to multipolar—and a security crisis in the country in terms of a terrorist attack or the country's military confrontation with Pakistan (or China—which is not a variable observed under this study). India does acquire military hardware and technology to enhance its defense and offensive power, but that does not mean that the countries fulfilling that need necessarily are the reason behind fueling or sustaining its conflict and rivalry with Pakistan.

Endnotes

[1] International community's support of New Delhi's stance on terrorism and its risk taking behavior vis-à-vis Pakistan is not limited to New Delhi's arms suppliers. Pakistan's close strategic partners also tend to stay quiet on the matter in public domain.

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[8] William D. Hartung, U.S. Arms Transfer to the Middle East: Promoting Stability or Fueling Conflict?" *Security Assistance Monitor,* October 19, 2015.

[9] Michael T. Klare, "Deadly Convergence: The Perils of the Arms Trade," *World Policy Journal,* Vol. 6, No.1, (Winter 1998-99), pp. 141-168.

[10] Factor endowments constitute a country's "overall level of industrialization, the existence of an adequate economic infrastructure, the supply of skilled labor force, the existence of backward and forward linkages with other industries (for the supply of raw materials, subcontracting, and the marketing of spin-off products), the level of state support and protection, and the existence of a market for the goods".

[11] As an exception and aberration, tier-1 states with weak economy, such as Russia in the aftermath of the Cold War, tend to pursue funding for the defense research and development by selling their arms and technology abroad.

[12] Bjorn et al, "Transfers of Major Conventional Weapons," in SIPRI Yearbook 2001, Armaments, Disarmament and International Security, accessed April 17, 2020; Also, Richard F. Grimmett, "Conventional Arms Transfers in the Post-Cold War Era," *CRS Report for Congress,* September 23, 1998.

[13] Ibid.

[14] India signed the deal for a total of five air defense squadrons in 2019; it made the advance payment of US$800 million in 2020. The first delivery of the S-400 air defense would arrive by the end of 2021. There is a risk of U.S. sanctions (Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act) on purchasing Russia's high-tech defense equipment. Reportedly, S-400 would compromise the U.S.'s F-35 aircraft's stealth technology. U.S. State Department officials have repeatedly denied of any "blanket sanctions waiver" for New Delhi, should it continue with the purchase of S-400. India appears indifferent to these threats.

[15] Stephen Blank and Edward Levitzky, "Geostrategic aims of the Russian arms trade in East Asia and the Middle East," Defense Studies, 15:1, 2015, pp. 63-80.

[16] Author's conversation with K. Alan Kronstadt, Congress Research Service, May 2019.

[17] "Indo-French relations," *France in India, French Embassy in New Delhi*, accessed March 15, 2020. See also, "The French White Paper on Defense and National Security," *Council on Foreign Relations,* accessed Marc 15, 2020. https://www.cfr.org/content/publications/attachments/Dossier_de_presse_LBlanc_DSN_en_anglais.pdf

[18] "Frace delivers to India its first Rafale," Press Release issued by the French Ministry of Armed Forces, October 9, 2019, accessed March 15, 2020.

[19] For detailed discussion on the Rafale, its procurement process, cost, trials, expenditure, and specifications, see Vinay Kaushal, "The Acquisition of Rafale Aircraft: Facts and Concerns that Ought to be in the Public Domain," *IDSA Occasional Paper No.52,* May, 2019; "In Depth Rafale," *Rajya Sabha TV Summary, Aspire IAS,* October 2019; Franz-Stephan Gady, "France hands over three Rafale fighter jets to India," *The Diplomat,* November 22, 2019, accessed March 15, 2020.;

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[21] "India, France review status of Jaitapur nuclear power project," *PTI, Economic Times,* December 15, 2018;

[22] "Indo-French".

[23] See Par Philippe Le Corre, "France's Pivot to Asia: It's More than Just Submarines," *IRIS,* May 9, 2016; "French Strategy in the Indo-Pacific: 'for an inclusive Indo-Pacific'," *Directorate for Asia and Oceania*, accessed March 15, 2020; Lucy Nason, "The French Pacific Pivot," *Australian Institute of International Affairs,* July 20, 2019; and, Harsh V. Pant and Vinay Kaura, "France is Looking for New Allies in Asia," *Foreign Policy,* July 18, 2019;

[24] Ibid.

[25] Peter D. Wezeman and Siemon T. Wezeman, "Trends In International Arms Transfers,2014," SIPRI, March 2015; and, Pieter et al, "Trends," pp.4-5.

[26] "India, France sign strategic pact on use of each other's military bases," *PTI, Times of India,* March 10, 2018.

[27] "Ambassador Emmanuel Lenain's opinion piece in The India Express," France in India, February 5, 2020, accessed March 15, 2020.

[28] Military objectives (pursuit of victory in war): For an ally or a strategic partner, consistent flow of armaments would signify an effective defensive/offensive posture or a conventional deterrence against military threats. The supplier state(s) also establish military bases in a friendly country as a quid pro quo for the arms transfer and at times constitute an equivalent of a direct military involvement in the client state. This objective is usually associated with third-tier supply states, where the patron state dictates the use of supplied arms against rebels in the proxy country or its war with an adversarial state. This objective could have consideration in this study if the subject covered the Cold War era rivalry between India and Pakistan.

[29] Ronen Hoffman, "Israel's foreign policy under Benjamin Netanyahu," *Foreign Policy Research Institute,* July 2019, pp. 4-5.

[30] Yuval Azulai, "Defense Ministry seeks to expand Israel's arms exports," *Globes,* November 26, 2019; Als, see Yaniv Kubovich, "Israel's Arms Exports Spike, Hitting Record $9 billion," *Haaretz,* February 5, 2018, for the year 2017, in which Israel made a record highest arms exports of worth US$9.2 billion, of which 58 percent went to the Asia-Pacific region. In addition to making a region-wise classification, this report also categorized arms exports based on the nature of armaments sent abroad.

[31] See for details, Alvite Singh Ningthoujam, "The Military Security Dimension of Israel-Southeast Asia relations," *Middle East institute,* January 7, 2020, and "Israel's Growing Defense Ties with Asia," *The Diplomat*, July 30, 2019; Also, Harsh V. Pant and Ambuj Sahu, "Israel's Arms Sales to India: Bedrock of a strategic partnership," *ORF Issue Brief,* Issue No. 311, September 2019.

[32] "Israel's Growing".

[33] Israel supplied arms to India notwithstanding the U.S.'s then embargo or severe restrictions on arms sales to India, China, Burma and Zambia. The then U.S. Defense Secretary William S. Cohen objected to Israel's supply of surface to air missiles to India, especially during the conflicting situation between the subcontinental rivals. It appeared that Israel, in contravention to U.S. laws, sold "unauthorized" arms and technology to "pariah" states, to which the Washington had refused to be made arms transfers.

[34] Read details in Nicolas, "Planes," or his book, "The Evolution of India's Israel policy: continuity, change, and compromise since 1922," *Oxford University Press,* 2014.

[35] Judah Ari Gross and Agencies, "India used Israeli arms for strike inside Pakistan—report," *Times of Israel*, February 26, 2019; Snehesh Alex Philip, "Inside story of attack on Balakot—from IAF officer who planned and executed it," *The Print,* February 26, 2019;

[36] Björn et al, "International," pp. 446.

[37] Nicolas, "Planes".

[38] Chandra, "India-Russia," p. 35-37.

[39] For an instructive discourse on shaping the Indo-US relations after the Cold War, see Stephen P. Cohen, "India Rising," *Brookings,* June 1, 2000, accessed May 5, 2020, and Richard N. Haas, "Foreign Policy in the Age of Primacy: An Overview," *Brookings,* September 1, 2000, accessed May 5, 2020.

[40] Kris Osborn, "Stealth, GPS, 'Smart Bombs' and More: How Desert Storm Changed Warfare Forever," *The National Interest,* November 21, 2016, accessed May 21, 2020; for detailed account, read Benjamin S. Lambeth, " The Winning of Air Supremacy in Operation Desert Storm," *RAND,* 1993;

[41] The U.S. had imposed an arms embargo and arms exports sanctions on India, following its nuclear tests in May 1999. Remarkably, Russia had not followed the U.S.'s suit in imposing sanctions, and instead proceeded with its pre-disintegration nuclear deal to build two production plants at Kudankulam, Tamil Nadu.

[42] Read Stimson Center's detailed report on the Twin Peaks Crisis, authored by Polly Nayak and Michael Krepon, titled "US Crisis management in South Asi's Twin Peaks Crisis," *Stimson Center, report 57,* second edition, September 2014.

[43] Walter C. Ladwig III, "A Cold Start for Hot Wars? The Indian Army's New Limited War Doctrine," quoted in Maaike Verbruggen, "India's arms imports: A holistic overview of India's motivations for choosing arms suppliers," *Reprosentralen, University of Oslo*, Autumn, 2015, accessed May 9, 2020.

[44] For the 2008 terrorist attack and ensuing US diplomacy for crisis management see Polly Nayak and Michael Krepon's "The Unfinished Crisis: US Crisis Management after the 2008 Mumbai attacks," *Stimson*, February 2012; for an account of Indian Army's reported concerns about obsolete military technology, read Siddharth Srivastava, "India's strategic and political environment," in "India's Contemporary Security Challenges," ed., Michael Kugelman, quoted in Maaike, "India's," pp. 19.