

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نیاشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://the-diplomat.com>

India Military Eyes Combined Threat

Indian military planners are reshaping the Army in readiness for a potential combined threat from China and Pakistan. Can it “cold start?”

1/17/2012

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh may have told the country’s parliament last month that he [doesn’t expect an attack by China](#), but India’s military is taking no chances.

The world’s second-largest army, which celebrated its 64th Army Day on January 15, is on the cusp of implementing a major transformation in its organizational structure and war strategies to meet a possible combined threat from China and its ally Pakistan.

The change follows more than half a decade of annual exercises involving one of India’s three strike corps and a desert corps, which have engaged in operations to fine-tune a strategy that would enable India to take Pakistan by surprise.

Under this concept, the defensive corps close to the border with Pakistan have been re-designated “pivot” corps, and have been handed enhanced offensive elements under integrated battle groups (IBG) that consist of division-sized forces comprising armor, artillery and aviation assets designed to swiftly hit Pakistan before the strike corps, located deeper inside India, would be able to mobilize.

This is supposed to offer India the so-called “cold start” option, under which the IBGs would swing into action in less than 48 hours.

Speaking to me for Indian broadcaster NDTV last week, Indian Army Chief Gen. V.K. Singh [explained the concept](#), although he refrained from actually referring to it as “cold start.”

“Our aim was to make the army more agile, more lethal, more responsive, and networked army that is able to meet with the future threats,” he said. “To that extent, certain steps were laid down. One of the things we looked at was the restructuring of our organizations into groupings that will take place in battle. So, we have validated these. Certain changes have come about because of our validation in test bedding. These are coming into effect.”

The transformation study, carried out under Singh while he was commanding the Eastern Army as part of a previous assignment, started validating the concepts from 2010. As the [Times of India](#) noted, Exercise Vijayee Bhava (Be Victorious), for instance, practiced blitzkrieg-style operations to hit the enemy hard at short-notice. According to the paper, it essentially revolved around the armor-intensive 2 Corps.

However, [the two-month-long Exercise Sudarshan Shakti](#), conducted in November and December of last year, not only took the concept further, but added several new dimensions to India’s war-fighting theories. For the first time, the Army successfully used its satellites and UAVs to provide a real-time picture and information of the war zone to battlefield commanders.

In addition, real-time links between sensor and shooter were tested, which enabled commanders to make decisions instantly, even as information was being shared among platforms and personnel.

Led and implemented by the Indian Army’s biggest and most lethal formation, the 21 Corps, the exercise witnessed the participation of over 60,000 troops and 300 tanks and brought together all elements – including air power – on one single platform. The air power on display reportedly included combat jets like the Su-30 MKI, Jaguars, MiG-27 and MiG-21, AWACS and helicopters.

But if “Sudarshan Shakti” was meant to authenticate India’s new war fighting strategy against Pakistan, a series of changes in the Northern and Eastern Commands of the Indian Army have quietly taken place over the past four years aimed at reorganizing India’s preparedness against China. As mentioned earlier, two new mountain divisions raised for deployment on the China frontier are now ready, which has added teeth to the Eastern Command and allowed the Army to reorganize a Reserve Corps into a full-fledged formation against China.

The reality is that although India has three “strike” or offensive corps aimed at Pakistan, it still lacks a dedicated offensive formation against China, regarded by the military as the bigger threat. A projected plan to raise a Mountain Strike Corps (since the terrain along the Chinese frontier is super high altitude) is currently pending with India’s Finance Ministry since it involves massive investment, to the tune of over \$10 billion dollars, over the next five years. The Defense Ministry as well as the Army HQ is, however, hoping to kick-start the process of raising this formation sooner rather than later.

“At the moment we’re a threat-based organization. We’re moving towards a threat-cum-capability based one. And as the years go by, we will become a totally capability-based force,” Singh told me. “It has various implications like what kind of equipping norms you have, what kind of training that you do, what kind of resources you have to rapidly deploy to various places. So these are things that are being put into effect now, and by the time we see the result, it will take some time. It’s not that overnight we can change something.”

As I mentioned in my [analysis following Army Day last year](#), the latest shift is aimed at strengthening the Army’s capabilities to fight what one general has called a war on “two and a half fronts” – a reference to possible simultaneous confrontation with Pakistan and China in addition to being deployed in a counter-insurgency situation internally.

So far, the four wars between India and Pakistan and one between India and China have been standalone conflicts, but Indian strategic thinkers say a future scenario under which close allies China and Pakistan launch a joint offensive against India is a distinct possibility. The Indian Army therefore wants to be ready for such an eventuality. And the way forward, the Army has concluded, is to become a fleet-footed force capable of quick mobilization and deployment.

According to an Indian military handout, the transformation “envisages seamless integration of available forces without the constraints of inflexible ‘commands.’”

“So far, each command and formation operated well within its prescribed boundaries and deployed the combat as well as support services only within its own jurisdiction,” the handout noted. “The transformation, however, seeks to break down these artificial boundaries to minimize losses and increase optimal utilization of resources. So in the years to come, the Indian Army will move from a ‘command-based’ deployment to a ‘theater command’ format where the ‘front’ or the spearhead will be seamlessly integrated with resources in the “depth” or the rear.”

Most senior military commanders agree that such massive exercises, which put to test both men and machine, help hone the skills of various frontline formations. Inter-services synergy based on advanced technology has been on the rise in the past five years and is therefore a major gain for the Indian military since future wars, whenever they take place, will be swift, short and fought under a technology-intensive umbrella.