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**21st Century Warfare:
Deconstructing the
Evolving Character of
War and
Its Adaptation for India**

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21st Century Warfare: Deconstructing the Evolving Character of War and Its Adaptation for India

“One Should not Fight without proper means; even a small Fire can burn down a great Forest if fanned by the wind”

—Kautilya Arthashastra

Abstract

Twenty First Century dawned with the Global War on Terror (GWOT) by United States post 9/11 wherein American State was challenged by proxy group - Al Qaeda. With every new war, it was observed that the nature of war continued to be violent, however, the character fundamentally transformed from conventional ‘contact-kinetic engagements’ to complex ‘multi-domain operations’ primarily manifesting in non-contact-kinetic realm. The evolving character of modern conflict is marked by unrestricted exploitation of geography, widespread use of proxies, acceptable mass collateral destruction, democratisation of air littoral, significance of corporate driven defence industrial complex sustaining economy of war and AI-driven automated kill webs. Some nations are losing in the battle-field but still winning in the cognitive domain through carefully crafted and well calibrated information campaigns. The rules of conflict set out by United Nations post-World War II is gradually being rendered irrelevant by powerful as well as weak states.

The Indian Armed Forces are still adapting to its 2025 Multi-Domain Operations (MDO) doctrine, theaterisation plan and indigenisation through self-reliance as well as innovation (JAI). While progress is evident, gaps in cognitive warfare capability, space bound capacities, maritime strategy and air power still persists. This article ultimately aims to analyse the evolving character of warfare in 21st century and bring out relevant lessons for India.

Keywords: 21st Century Warfare, Multi-domain Operations, Automated Kill Webs, Corporate Generals, Civil-Military Fusion, Space Force, Economics of War, Cognitive Warfare

Introduction

On 02 August 1990, Saddam Hussein invaded Kuwait and within 72 hours, the Iraqi Republican Guards was in absolute control. Neighbouring Saudi Arabia shivered and the result was ‘Operation Desert Storm’ - 42 days air campaign followed by 100 hours of ‘Great Wheel’ - a mechanised manoeuvre supported by heavy firepower. It was an absolute victory for United States and validation of American RMA (Revolution in Military Affairs). That was the end of 20th Century warfare.

11 September 2001: AI Qaeda struck USA heartland (Twin Tower Attack) and 'Operation Enduring Freedom' was launched on 07 October 2001 to hunt the perpetrator viz. Osama bin Laden. After 18 months, diversionary 'Operation Iraqi Freedom' was launched to topple Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. Both the operations proved to be politico - military quagmire for Americans. In the intervening period, Israel- Hezbollah war (2006) brought to the fore utility of proxies and cheap anti-tank weapons. This was the dawn of 21st century warfare characterised by force asymmetry, use of proxies, increased civilian casualties and narrative shaping.

Year 2020: Second Nagorno Karabakh War erupted between Armenia and Azerbaijan in which turkish drones brought absolute military victory for Azerbaijan. Coming to February 2022, Russian armour rolled in Ukraine for swift victory disregarding recent lessons from Armenia - Azerbaijan conflict. The result is an unending war which highlighted importance of military innovation, concept of private military companies and significance of defence industrial complex to sustain prolonged conflicts.

Year 2026 arrived with US/ Israel - Iran conflict in which a military superpower (USA) and technological advanced military (Israel) has been squarely challenged by sanction ridden Iran by blocking critical maritime chokepoint (Strait of Hormuz) which made the global economy bleed (The Guardian, 2026; War on the Rocks, 2026). It is an extension of Israel - Hamas war raging on since October 2023 and characterised by mass civilian casualties using AI based automated kill chain, saturation of world class air defence systems by rudimentary rockets and economics of war altered with novel cheap technology (The Conversation, 2026; The Guardian, 2026).

The Changing Character of War in the 21st Century

Long Vs Short Conflict Conundrum

Among the 56 active conflicts worldwide in year 2026, there are multiple examples of both long as well as short duration conflicts and therefore, the conundrum continues to be unresolved. Russia - Ukraine war, launched as short Special Military Operation, has now entered its fifth year, while operation SINDOOR between India and Pakistan ceased in just 88 hours (Economic Times, 2026; YouTube, n.d.). It has been learnt that nations which starts the war without a clear politico-military desired end state, overestimation of own capabilities, ambitious objectives and poor exit strategy gets stuck in the prolonged conflicts (Observer Research Foundation, 2026; Economic Times, 2026).

21st Century warfare has displayed as to how the prolonged wars have fractured time tested geopolitical alignments (NATO and BRICS), challenged economic and military heft of superpowers (Russia, US) and enhanced profile of weaker nations (Ukraine, Iran) (Tribune India, 2026; Observer Research Foundation, 2026).

Terrain is Tyrant: Geography call the Shots

Geography had always played a pivotal role in foreign policy choices of any nation. ‘Pax Britannica’, which defined Britain’s role as global hegemon between 1815 and 1914, was built upon its control over strategic locations like Gibraltar, Malta, Aden, Oman, Singapore and Cape Town (ResearchGate, n.d.; EuroDefense, n.d.). In World War I, the Dardanelles strait played an important role in prolonging survival of the Ottoman Empire.

In the 21st Century too, geography is increasingly being leveraged as a tool of war. Blocking of the Strait of Hormuz by Iran challenged global economy in an unexpected manner (Indian Express, n.d.; War on the Rocks, 2026). Not only oil and gas, but also it choked Helium, Sulphur and Fertiliser requirement of the World (Indian Express, n.d.). Result is global inflation, shutting down of factories and reduced agricultural produce (Indian Express, n.d.; War on the Rocks, 2026). Now there is renewed race among nations to control strategic maritime choke-points and find alternatives by altering geography i.e. Kra Isthmus Canal, IMEC, North South Transit Corridor etc. (Indian Express, n.d.; Press Information Bureau, 2026).

Figure 1: Strait of Hormuz used as Tool of Warfare and Alternative routes



Source: Adapted from Google Maps

Sustenance of Conflicts

In the 20th Century warfare, sustenance capability of a nation was measured through the lens of economic and population size of the nation (ResearchGate, n.d.; EuroDefense, n.d.). Economically weaker nations were continuing the resistance using guerrilla tactics, however, sustaining prolonged

conflicts was almost impossible for them. This made stronger nations audacious to explore their neo-colonialist adventures with vague justifications.

In the 21st Century, it has been proved wrong wherein weaker nations like Ukraine, Iran and Palestine have been able to sustain conflicts for durations longer than expected (Economic Times, 2026; Observer Research Foundation, 2026). Ukraine had strong support of US and NATO initially which was later fractured with arrival of Donald Trump as the President (Economic Times, 2026), however, still it is sustaining war with Russia due to a robust Military - Industrial complex built during the war and innovations on the battle-field (Economic Times, 2026; Australian Financial Review, 2026). Iran is a different case study wherein they shadowily developed deep underground robust indigenous production capacity of drones and missiles despite under western sanctions (NBC News, 2026; War on the Rocks, 2026). In both cases, the political will and nationalistic pride has been significant intangibles propelling weaker nations to sustain prolonged conflicts.

Economics of War

Clausewitz said that 'War is extensions of politics by other means' (ResearchGate, n.d.), however, the bill of war usually outlives the politics. Protracted conflicts gulped big economies like USSR crumbling after decade long conflict in Afghanistan (ResearchGate, n.d.; EuroDefense, n.d.).

21st Century has witnessed careful exploitation of economics of warfare by weaker states to drain the powerful ones (Observer Research Foundation, 2026; Economic Times, 2026). Case in point is Ukraine, which, in the initial year of the conflict used cheaper anti-tank weapons to destroy expensive Russian tanks. When Russians changed their tactics to use cheap one-way attack drones (20-30,000 USD), the Ukrainians innovated much cheap interceptors (1000-2000 USD) to bring them down (War on the Rocks, 2026). Similarly, Hamas used inexpensive crude rockets *en masse* to saturate the expensive Iron Dome air defence of Israel during 'Operation Al-Aqsa Flood' (Times of Israel, 2026). Year 2026 started with Iran sending shivers to the Arab nations by mass employment of cheap Shahed drones (20-30,000 USD) against super expensive patriot missiles (2-3mn USD) (War on the Rocks, 2026; NBC News, 2026). IRGC Navy blockaded the vital Strait of Hormuz using cheap fast attack boats, submarines and mines directed by well protected command centres (War on the Rocks, 2026; Indian Express, n.d.). Ultimately, the 21st century has shown that 'geo-economics beats geopolitics and economics decides strategy of the war'.

Civil-Military Fusion

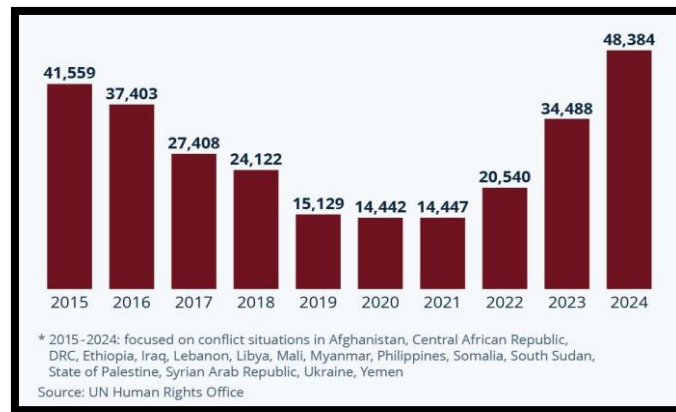
21st century warfare has proved that soldiers are not necessarily the ones who are physically fighting on the battlefield but also information warriors shaping narratives, hacking enemy computer platforms, designing and fabricating drones at rapid pace and operating AI based autonomous systems to shorten kill chains (About Objects, 2025; Military Times, 2026; WION, 2026). Thus, the

democratisation of warfare is happening at a fast pace blurring distinction between military soldiers and citizen warriors.

In June 2025, the US Army established 'Detachment 201: The Army's executive innovation Corps' to fuse cutting edge technological expertise with military innovation (Business Insider, 2026; The Conversation, 2026). Four senior tech executives of Palantir, Meta, Open AI and Thinking Machines Lab were given rank of Lt Col in US Army (Business Insider, 2026). The result was visible in US – Iran conflict wherein low cost LUCAS drones were used by the USA and PROJECT MAVEN (automated kill web developed by Palantir) was used for targeting at scale (The Conversation, 2026; NDTV, 2026; WION, 2026). This shows dramatic shift in civil- military integration which is a game changer in 21st century warfare.

Civilians in the Crosshairs

21st Century warfare has shown no empathy towards civilian infrastructure as well as population despite rapid development of precision strike capability (United Nations Human Rights Office, 2024; The Guardian, 2026). The latest examples are *Minab School Massacre* in Iran wherein 168 School girls were killed and targeting of a drug rehabilitation centre in Kabul in which 400 civilians died (The Guardian, 2026; United Nations Human Rights Office, 2024). Civilian casualty estimates of Russia - Ukraine conflict currently stands at 57,000 and Israel - Gaza conflict at 75,000 (United Nations Human Rights Office, 2024). Civilian infrastructure i.e. energy plants, desalination plants, transportation system, hotels, residential apartments, amazon data centres etc. are being targeted daily in recent conflicts (United Nations Human Rights Office, 2024; The Guardian, 2026). These targets are increasingly being portrayed as legitimate ones by giving bogus justification by the warring parties. As per United Nations Human Rights office statistical report, civilians deaths in conflict across the world surged by 40% in year 2024 (United Nations Human Rights Office, 2024). Figures are much higher in year 2025 and 2026, which is yet to be estimated.

Figure 2: Graph Showing Civilian deaths in conflicts from year 2015-2024

Source: Adapted from United Nations Human Rights Office (OHCHR), Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict Report, 2024

Cognitive War has NO Ceasefire

21st Century heralded a new era of digital smartphones connecting almost every human on the earth through fast speed internet. Revolutionary trends are being observed almost daily in the field of social media which has contributed to regime changes across the world (Arab Spring) and also exerted pressure on political leaders to initiate military actions. Now, we have reached a point wherein victory in battle-field alone is not enough unless its also won in minds by narrative shaping.

As witnessed in the Gaza war, the narrative was initially in favour of Israel but once Israeli onslaught started, the narrative shifted with harrowing images of Palestinian civilian casualties on social media. Similarly, in ‘Operation Sindoor’, shadow was casted on the absolute victory of India by careful narrative shaping by Pakistan. Therefore, 21st century warfare has displayed adequately that the one who control minds of the population through investment in tools of narrative shaping, will ultimately emerge victorious.

Military Technology: Fancy Loses, Effective Wins

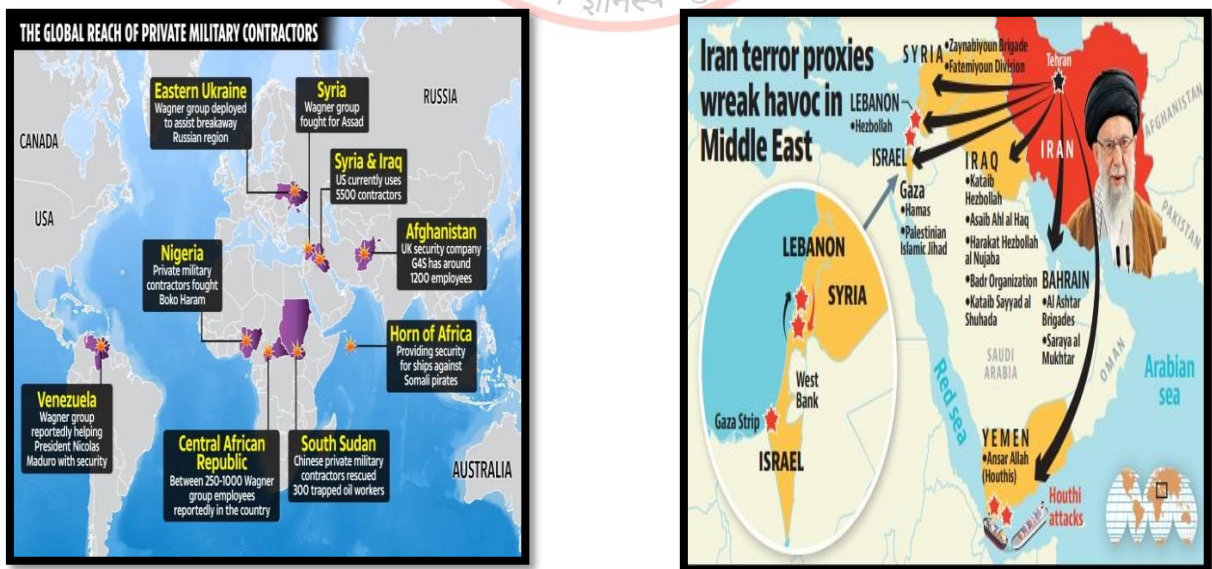
This century has witnessed rapid pace in development of new technologies and equally swift innovations to counter them (Military Times, 2026; Australian Financial Review, 2026). The ‘Shock and Awe’ doctrine of US in Iraq war of 2003, using precision guided expensive ammunition, is transitioned into ‘Massed Precision’ with cheaper Shahed one way attack drones and Loitering Munitions (War on the Rocks, 2026; Eurasian Times, 2026). Fear of large number of human body bags is being reduced to some extent with proliferation of unmanned ground system used for firepower, logistics, surveillance as well as assault (Business Insider, 2026; Military Times, 2026). Boots on ground is gradually being overtaken by robots operating autonomously (Business Insider, 2026). However, it has been observed that the armies which are innovative and have adaptable leadership that can effectively blend legacy equipment with new technology, are winning the wars. Operation Sindoor

is a classical example wherein the Indian air defence systems with suitable modifications and integration effectively countered advanced Turkish drones used by Pakistan. The same is being repeated in US – Iran conflict wherein Iranian military is using legacy MANPADs to bring down technological advanced F- Series Fighters and MQ-9 predator drones (NBC News, 2026; War on the Rocks, 2026). Overall, it has been learnt that exquisite military equipment with the most advanced technology alone cannot win you wars unless it is used effectively by military minds.

Proxies/ Private Military Contractors: Soldiers for Sale

The Century has also witnessed reluctance of major/ regional powers to put boots on ground due to domestic pressures and attributability threats (ResearchGate, n.d.; EuroDefense, n.d.). Therefore, it has become a trend among states to use proxies nurtured by them over decades and also render services of PMCs (Private Military Contractors) to achieve political objectives (ResearchGate, n.d.; Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2025). The examples of such PMCs are ‘Black Waters’ of USA and ‘Wagner Group’ of Russia. Sanction ridden Iran, vying to be regional power in West Asia nurtured proxies like Hezbollah (Lebanon), Hamas (Gaza) and Houthis (Yemen) in addition to certain Shia militias in Iraq and Syria (ResearchGate, n.d.; The Guardian, 2026). Pakistan has been using such proxies (LeT and JeM) since the end of the 20th Century (ResearchGate, n.d.). These proxies/ PMCs have gradually become new soldiers of the 21st Century warfare who have no attributability of their actions and are not restricted by international regulations.

Figure 3: Global Proliferation of Proxies and PMCs



Source: Adapted from publicly available maps on Private Military Contractors and Iranian Proxy Network

Corporate Generals

The corporates especially defence industry have always profited themselves from wars by first validating their new equipment in the battlefield and later sell them to other countries. These corporates invested heavily in lobbying the politicians to wage wars (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2025). In the 21st century, the corporate billionaires have taken a giant leap wherein now they are wearing the mantle of ‘Pseudo Generals’ who decide outcome of military operations (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2025). Case in point is Elon Musk who is a US billionaire and CEO of multiple companies. His company, Space X, provided seamless internet connectivity to Ukraine through 50,000 Starlink terminals connected to 7,000 satellites in space (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2025; Eurasian Times, 2026). Appreciating the importance of cognitive domain, Musk also bought Twitter in October 2022 which assisted him in narrative shaping (The Conversation, 2026). However, there has been instances wherein Starlink connectivity was cut off during the course of conflict which impacted outcomes of certain military battles (Eurasian Times, 2026). Similarly, during various global conflicts, commercial companies have sold satellite imageries to warring parties which helped them in precise strike on those targets (Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2025). Thus, the corporates are gradually emerging as new Generals who are deciding the course of conflicts.

Artificial Intelligence: Force Multiplier or Frankenstein?

In the 21st Century, the long awaited era of ‘Bombing at speed of thought’ has arrived due to automated swift kill chains running on AI (The Conversation, 2026; WION, 2026). Israel used ‘Gospel’ and ‘Lavender’ in Gaza; US army used Project MAVEN developed by Palantir for targeting in Iran; while Ukrainians had been using GIS Arta based Uberisation module for their artillery (The Guardian, 2026; DARS, n.d.; The Conversation, 2026). This widespread use of AI has its associated ethical challenges because the human has been kept-out-of-the-loop of decision making (Observer Research Foundation, 2026; DARS, n.d.). Israel’s Gospel and Lavender is programmed to accept upto 100 civilian casualties which is major ethical concern (The Guardian, 2026; The Conversation, 2026). However, the political leaders are ready to accept such risks. Case in point is US Secretary of War, Pete Hegseth who legislated military aim in Iran as “Maximum lethality, not tepid legality. Violent effect, not politically correct” (NDTV, 2026; WION, 2026).

Crystal Gazing: 21st Century Warfare in Indian Context

07-10 May 2025, Operation Sindoor: The Indian subcontinent saw first glimpse of 21st century warfare, characterised by beyond visual range combat between both Air Forces, exchange of precision missiles, loiter munitions and drones, targeting of religious sites and narrative shaping through misinformation/ disinformation campaign by Pakistan. This 88 hours of conflict between India and Pakistan testified that, in the era of non-contact-kinetic warfare, international borders have no

sanctity, nuclear arsenal carries zero deterrence and natural resources (Indus Water Treaty) are justified tool for coercion (YouTube, n.d.; Press Information Bureau, 2026). This was a stark reminder for both India and Pakistan to adapt their doctrines, structures and tactics as per the 21st century warfare. In the last one year, Pakistan created new appointment of Chief of Defence Forces (CDF), Army Rocket Forces Command (ARFC) integrating missiles and drones and also rushed to procure large quantity of loiter munitions (Pakistan Army, n.d.). India, on the other hand, legislated doctrine of considering every terror attack as an act of war, expedited long awaited Theatre Command structures, procurement of drones, counter drone system, loiter munitions and creation of organisations to absorb these equipment in all combat arms (Press Information Bureau, 2026). Renewed focus was laid on understanding and prosecution of multi-domain operations through training reforms, structural changes and capability development.

Ubiquitous Military Readiness: The 24/7 Force

In the Indian subcontinent, 21st century dawned with operation Parakram, wherein mammoth Indian Army formations took long time to mobilise. The outcome was the ‘Cold start Doctrine/ Proactive Strategy’ which involved relocation of forces and logistic echelons. Pakistan did a quick catch up by relocation and reorganisation of his forces and enunciating the New Concept of War Fighting (NCWF). A decade and a half later, India adopted the ‘strategy of dynamic response’ to any terrorist attack emanating from Pakistan which was evident in Uri (2016), Balakot (2019) and Pahalgam (2025). Since the escalation ladder is getting breached every time, it is incumbent upon the Indian Armed forces to be always ready to respond swiftly (Press Information Bureau, 2026; YouTube, n.d.). In any future war, the transition from Grey Zone to conventional conflict will be swift and unpredictable. It was also evident during Operation Sindoor where within 88 hours, the operation which started with destruction of terrorist infrastructure spiraled into air interdiction operation (Press Information Bureau, 2026; YouTube, n.d.). Therefore, Indian politico – military establishment should be prepared for such dynamic responses as well as quick transitions and the armed forces needs to be always in state of readiness.

Democratisation of Air Littoral

In the 20th century, use of Air power was quite rare and its application always triggered conventional conflict. Therefore, during the Kargil War (1999), India first restrained itself to use Air Force and later once used, the political directive of not crossing line of control was stringently followed (ResearchGate, n.d.). Conversely, in the last decade, the Indian Air Force has been used without

hesitation in Balakot (2019) as well as recent Operation Sindoor (2025) (Press Information Bureau, 2026; YouTube, nd.). Use of unmanned Combat aerial vehicle (UCAVs), loitering munitions and low-cost drones have further democratised use of air power in a big way (Military Times, 2026; About Objects, 2025; Eurasian Times, 2026).

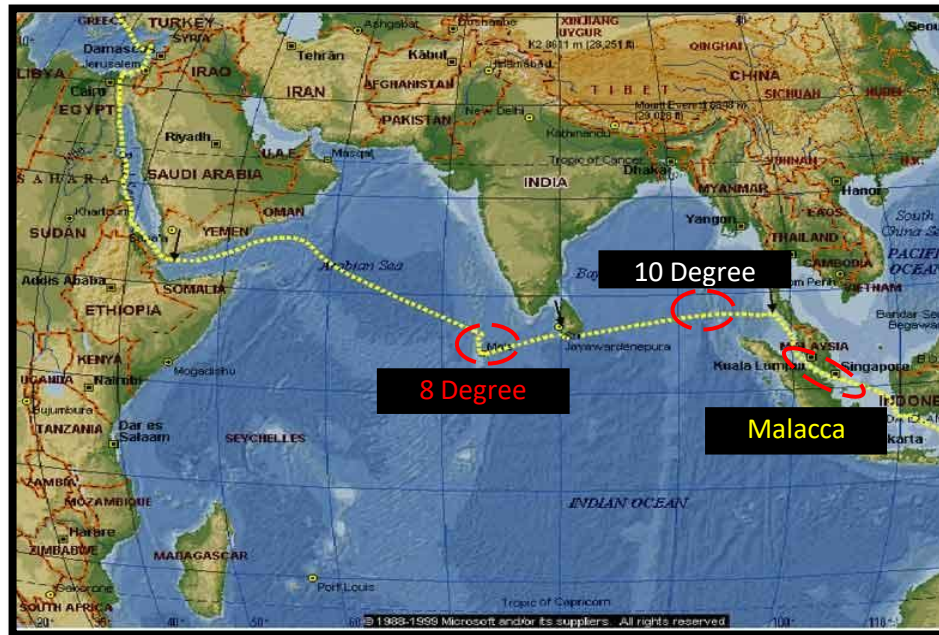
Implications are very clear:- Tactical Battle Area (TBA) for ground forces has now become Tactical Battle Space (TBS) and therefore, joint combat is the call of the hour. Also, big fighter jets does not augur well with war economics as well as narratives once lost to enemy air defences (Australian Financial Review, 2026; Military Times, 2026). Therefore, there might be a requirement to invest more in unmanned force, network centricity, beyond visual range combat and massed precision using one way attack cheap drones. The democratisation of air littoral needs to be operationalised by all arms and services by reviewing equipment profile, training as well as TTPs.

Continental to Maritime Re-Orientation

All the wars fought by India in the 20th century and limited non-contact-kinetic duels in the 21st century was primarily focused on land borders. Our maritime strategy has largely been oriented towards assuming the role of a Net Security Provider in the Indian Ocean Region through surveillance, anti-piracy operations and acting as first responders for disasters. On careful analysis, it has been learnt that India is well positioned geographically at the centre of West-East maritime route which connects Europe to East Asia (Indian Express, n.d.). This route is critical not only for commercial traffic but also for energy security of East Asian nations (Indian Express, n.d.).

Iranian blockade of Strait of Hormuz and counter blockade by US has brought new dimension in warfare i.e. Maritime chokepoint strategy (Indian Express, n.d.; War on the Rocks, 2026). India is strategically located within striking distance of 8-degree channel (between Lakshadweep and Maldives), 10-degree channel (between Andaman and Nicobar Islands) and Malacca Straits (Bound by Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia) (Indian Express, n.d.). Malacca straits is 900 Km long which carries highest volume of oil among global chokepoints in addition to one-fifth of global trade (Indian Express, n.d.). Therefore, it is imperative upon us to develop requisite naval capacities to impact the East-West Transit corridor in case of conventional conflict with our increasingly belligerent neighbours. To achieve this, it is imperative for the armed forces to strike right balance between expensive aircraft carriers and cheaper fast attack boats, submarines, frigates, undersea drones and mines. Hormuz blockade by Iran and counter blockade by USA has squarely defeated the concept of transit passage through waterway under International Maritime Law (War on the Rocks, 2026). Therefore, India should prepare itself to preempt in maritime domain in future, if the need arise. Hence, the Great Nicobar project is a step in right direction.

Figure 4: Critical Maritime Choke Point Leverage Available to India



Source: Annotated by the Author

Rule the Invisible, Win the Visible

The last century warfare in Indian subcontinent had primacy of visible domains i.e. Land, Sea and Air. Now, in the 21st century, it is increasingly seen that invisible domains viz. Space, Cyber, EW and Cognitive domain are in driving seat (ResearchGate, n.d.; EuroDefense, n.d.). Before a missile is fired or a drone is launched, the battle is shaped by cyber and electronic attacks, narrative shaping and space bound high-resolution surveillance (Observer Research Foundation, 2026; WION, 2026; DARS, n.d.). Once the kinetic engagement starts, enemy's OODA loop is targeted by hacking of decision support systems, jamming of the ground/ aerial vectors and space-based guidance for precision strikes (DARS, n.d.; Observer Research Foundation, 2026). Further, narrative shaping is done using multiple modes and it is ensured that battlefield losses are converted into cognitive victories (The Conversation, 2026; Observer Research Foundation, 2026). Our both adversaries i.e. China and Pakistan, have developed adequate capabilities in these invisible domains which, not only needs to be countered, but also we need to stay ahead of the curve in any future conflict (Tribune India, 2026; Observer Research Foundation, 2026). The Defence Forces Vision 2047 of creating a defence geospatial agency, data force, drone force, cognitive warfare force, space and cyber command needs to become reality soon.

Unblinking eyes, Unerring Navigation: Need for a Space Force

India has largely been dependent on the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) for satellite-based surveillance and navigation capabilities. Though ISRO has been one of the most efficient space organisation, however, it is relatively less oriented towards security needs of the country (Times of India, 2026). Case in point is India's regional navigation system (NaVIC) which is now hanging by thread, as the number of fully functional satellite has dropped to 03 against minimum requirement of 04 satellites (Times of India, 2026). Similarly, India's space-based surveillance (SBS) programme has been at a very slow pace due to which India's armed forces are not able to achieve persistent surveillance over enemy (Times of India, 2026).

The 21st century warfare had demonstrated that space-based capabilities are critical for armed forces to achieve high resolution surveillance, precision targeting and error free navigation (Interesting Engineering, 2026; Times of India, 2026). Even a technology deprived nation like Iran has been able to achieve precise strikes on US bases, as far as Diego Garcia, using Chinese surveillance satellite and Beidou-III navigation system (The Conversation, 2026; WION< 2026). Therefore, it is imperative upon us to push for early realisation of a Space Command which can cater for needs of armed forces. Private sector participation is also required for swift development of such capacities. There is also a need to invest in Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellites to achieve high speed connectivity, low latency, redundancy and satellite resilience through low-cost launches (Interesting Engineering, 2026).

Conclusion

The wars of the 21st century are showing us every day that peace is fragile, world is multipolar, asymmetric warfare is the new normal and economics decides strategy of the war. India, which is beacon of growth in the economic turbulent world, has its own unique challenges due to turbulent relations with China and Pakistan. Operation Sindoor has shown manifestation of Sino-Pak collusivity in all domains which is major challenge for Indian security planners. It is imperative upon us to learn right lessons from ongoing conflicts and apply them in the Indian way for any future engagement. The hard fact which needs to be realised is that the military advantage in 21st century will be generated less by platforms and weapons and more by ability to innovate, produce at scale, sustain and adapt faster than the adversary. National security needs to be looked at holistically now due to ever persistent grey zone which was correctly summed up by NSA Ajit Doval during 5th convocation ceremony of Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU) on 15 April 2025, wherein he stated that 'National security is whole nation's responsibility'.

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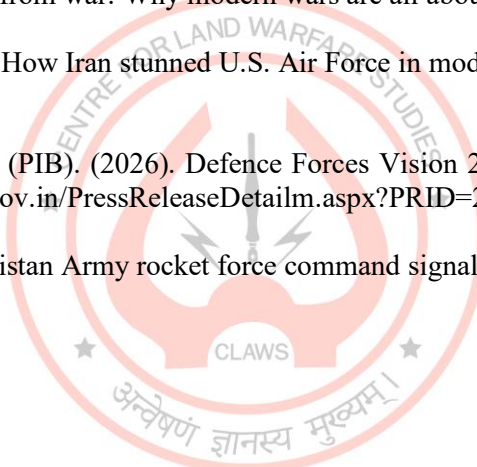
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