Changing Impact of Military

What is the issue?

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India need military power of a different kind in which prowess at sea is a major.

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What is the brief history of Indian defence forces?

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- All three wings of India’s armed forces saw combat in the two World Wars, albeit under the British flag.
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- In 1947, India had to cope with an incursion in the Kashmir valley, however, the two militaries did not face each other directly.
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- The next confrontation came on northern borders of India in 1962, neither the Air Force nor the Navy came to combat in these conflicts, the former only as a transporter.
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- The Cabinet then decided to enhance the Army’s strength to 825,000 to cope with wars on both fronts and also approved enhancement in the force levels of the Air Force and the Navy.
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- Even as this process began, came the war with Pakistan in 1965, this was the first occasion when both land and air forces engaged in combat and the Navies remained peripheral.
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- It was only in 1971 that all three wings of the two armed forces faced each other in a war.
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- The Kargil operation in 1999 was supported by the Air Force, retrieved the positions occupied by the adversary.
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What lessons India has learnt from earlier conflicts?

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- The five conflicts which is faced by Indian defence forces spotlights that all three of Pakistan’s misadventures in 1948, 1965 and 1999, stemmed from the belief that India would not respond militarily.
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- The War of 1971 falls in a different context as it was not Pakistan that took the initiative but India that achieved its desired objectives merging policy and military power with finesse.
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- As for the Chinese intervention in 1962, they followed up with military action after three years of deliberately created tension and succeeded in acquiring the territory claimed by them, in the process they also lowered India’s stature internationally.
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What is the present condition of defence priorities?

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- All three countries namely India, Pakistan and China which involved conflicts are now nuclear weapon powers.
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- While the capabilities of each may vary, their ability to inflict unacceptable casualties on the others needs little emphasising.
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- China’s primary goal now is to seek parity with the USA and to become a global super power.
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- Such aspiration will certainly be set back decades should it engage in military conflict with us with no substantive benefit but with some inevitable penalties.
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- India also seeks to become one of three or four major world powers and this goal can only get compromised should it seek military confrontation with Pakistan.
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- Also, for both countries, continuing economic progress is vital to achieving their core strategic objectives.

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What are strategic options before India?

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- In the changed environment, military strength, in concert with diplomacy, is more suited to persuade rather than to punish with exceptions being one-sided scenarios.
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- Also, maritime power has come to be seen as more suited to a nation's ability to further these goals since it provides the 'reach' that land and air power just cannot.
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- India is just about starting but has still to shed its continental fixation.
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- India must recognise that ability to operate credibly in the Indo-Pacific is vital to our interests.
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- For this, military power of a different kind is needed in which prowess at sea has to become a major, if not prime, determinant.
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Source: Business Standard

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