

India-Pakistan Relations: Nuclear Doctrine, Militarization and Security Dynamics of the Indian Ocean Region

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According to Cold War notion of strategic stability, deterrence will prevail if both countries have second strike capability due to the concept of [Mutually Assured Destruction \(MAD\)](#). Likewise, deterrence will be fragile if only one state has second strike capability.

The Indian Ocean is a global common and is named after India in geographical sense but New Delhi has lately started self-believing that this Middle Eastern cum Afro-Asian oceanic expanse is India's backyard. India is the first South Asian littoral State that is introducing nuclear weapons into this Ocean. Like India nuclearized South Asia in 1974, the onus of provoking a response in the Indian Ocean rests with it.

The pursuit and maintenance of nuclear capability has been important for India to project its power, to revise global order and increase its influence and prestige not only in South Asia but also the Indian Ocean rim and beyond. In November 2017, India deployed its second Arihant-class SSBN, the Arighat. Currently, India is also constructing two more Arihant-class submarines. Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) has also dedicated GSAT-7 satellite which is used by Indian Navy as a multi-band military communications satellite. Aside from India's second operational nuclear-powered submarine, it has 13 diesel-electric ones, among which about half are in service. Such Indian ambitions, growing economic and industrial and naval capabilities coupled with canisterization and MIRVing of missiles pose serious challenges not only for Pakistan's maritime, energy and economic security but also for its conventional and strategic capabilities.

India started gaining experience of operating leased Russian nuclear powered submarines in 1980s. A sea-based nuclear strike force is a route to an assured second-strike capability beyond South Asia. New Delhi will be able to project its strategic capability globally. Major Powers which presently, do not take India as a threat might have a plan B if India shifts to its so called non-alignment policy to version 3.0.

In 2003, India revised its 1999 nuclear doctrine. The draft doctrine of 2003 relied on the principals of **No First Use (NFU), Massive Retaliation, and Credible Minimum Deterrence (CMD)**. Having officially adopted a posture of no first use and assured retaliation, India considered it essential to acquire a capacity for continuous at-sea nuclear deterrence (CASD) to ensure the survivability of its nuclear second-strike capability. Recently, a debate has evolved on the possibility of [shift](#) in Indian nuclear doctrine. As India terms its sea-based leg of the nuclear triad as a critical enabler of doctrine of No-First-Use. The potential change in No-First Use policy and adopting the First Use doctrine does not hold

logic in this paradigm.

India portrays that it faces a security trilemma due to two-front challenges in terms of security (One being China, other being Pakistan). Furthermore, by camouflaging behind *South Asian Naval Nuclear Trilemma*, India has plans to continue to enlarge and modernize its SSBN fleet due to alleged threat from China. Such Indian motivations and perceptions vis-à-vis China do not hold ground as Indian military program started before Chinese nuclear tests which were conducted in 1964. In 1963, Homi Bhabha who is considered the father of Indian Nuclear Program wrote to Prime Minister Nehru stating that the Chinese nuclear test will be of [no military significance](#) and Chinese possession of a few bombs will not make any difference to the military situation. Also, even when China possesses only 250 nuclear weapons, India has the capability and capacity to produce approximately [2600 nuclear weapons](#). This capability, if acquired and goes unchecked by the major powers, does not hold ground vis-à-vis regional ambitions. This shows Indian ambitions to opt for blue water navy and global hegemonic ambitions which may pose a serious security threats in future to the U.S. and Russia alike.

India, China and Pakistan security calculus cannot be seen in isolation from the role of the U.S. in the region. U.S. considers India as a major defence partner, providing it a bigger role in the Asia-Pacific. The Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) between U.S. and India, coupled with Defence Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) which permits both India and the U.S. military forces to use each other's bases and other infrastructure, can antagonize China and affect the Balance of Power in the region. Therefore, this situation can be termed as **India, China Pakistan, U.S. Nuclear Quadrangle**.

Like Pakistan reluctantly responded to nuclearization of South Asia in 1974, Islamabad has started taking restrained and minimal measures to ensure deterrence stability in the IOR. Pakistan's navy at present operates five French diesel-electric submarines: three purchased in the 1990s and two dating from the late 1970s. In May 2012, Pakistan established its Naval Strategic Force Command (NSFC) which is the custodian of Pakistan's sea-based developing capability to strengthen its CMD and maintain strategic stability in the region. In November 2016, Pakistan established a Very Low Frequency (VLF) communication facility that provides a secure military communication link, hence, enhancing the flexibility and reach of operations including the use of [submarines](#). Pakistan also has [developed](#) Babur III SLCM (450 Km range).

The completion of nuclear triad by India and its naval nuclear modernization can persuade it to use non-violent compellence against Pakistan in the future. This strategy can include a [naval blockade](#). Thus, the nuclearization of Indian Ocean by India can give it more offensive edge, prompting possibilities of coercive nuclear escalation between India and Pakistan in case of a conflict.

To stabilize deterrence, both adversaries should have an assured second strike capability. India has an unfair advantage of lead time in developing the capability and also has access to foreign technologies. Therefore, it is logical for Pakistan should also take minimal measures to stabilize deterrence.

To end with, it is imperative to address the security issues between India and Pakistan which will be reverberated due to emerging Indian maritime nuclear capabilities. It is high time to reconcile India-Pakistan nuclear deterrence with arms control.

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