

India's Maritime Strategy and its Implications for Pakistan

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Abstract

The last two decades have seen India's increasing investment in its maritime ambitions and naval power. Globalization and changing regional and global dynamics have both played their role in encouraging India in envisioning for itself a role of a regional hegemon. This work aims to deliberate on India's naval ambitions, especially in context of its 2015 Maritime Strategic Doctrine and the effect of Indian naval prowess on Pakistan's Maritime Forces, in both military and geopolitical context.

Keywords: Maritime, IOR, Indo-Pacific, India, Pakistan

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Over the course of the previous decades, enabled by increasing globalization, India has been emboldened to perceive a greater role for itself in the global arena. For this matter, India has made the decision of making its naval forces the forearm of its outreach, deterrence and force-buildup in the region and beyond. This work aims to assess India as a naval power in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) in terms of the effect it exerts on Pakistan as a counter naval power, in the context of how Pakistan is to obverse that pressure.

In the words of Milan N. Vego, while a naval power refers to the 'navy, coast guard, marines/naval infantry and their shore/ sea power is much broader; it now describes the entirety of the use of the sea by a nation. Specifically, a sea (or maritime) power comprises political, diplomatic, economic, and military aspects of sea use'.¹ This implies that in contemporary times, wherever sea power is being effectively displayed, it is more pragmatic and comprehensive in the issuance of geopolitical thrust compared solely, to land power.

India's Ambitions

India being the seventh largest country by size, and having a 7,517 kilometre long coastline, has a natural right to think big of itself in terms of sea power. However, its history has not been supportive of such a role as most of its invading forces came from its north and did not have much taste for seafaring. The British who had eventually seized India by sea, had no interest in developing naval forces on Indian coasts, as their pillage lay inland and if they had to use India as a springboard for further conquest; that too was further inland not across the open sea. Even after independence, India with its socialist disposition was an inward-looking nation with extra-national interests only with its immediate neighbors at the most. India's switch to free market capitalism in the 1990s opened it to the ideas of globalization. In this vein, the Indian strategic naval document 'Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy' of 2015, has certainly expanded India's vision from that of an inward-looking maritime nation to a continental one, eventually morphing into a multiregional approach simultaneous to India's acceptance of its role in the emerging 'Indo-Pacific' concept.²

The Indian naval strategic document in 2015 emphasized India's maritime expansion toward western extremities of the IOR touching the African coast, going beyond into the Red Sea to the other extreme in the Pacific, in engagement with Japan and the island state of Fiji.³ The document recognizes the paramount shift of envisioning India as a 'net security provider'⁴ in the IOR, which would need India to develop a force posture with mobile carrier task forces and sea based nuclear deterrence.^{5 6} The book identifies India's maritime target to be the enabling of its influence on maritime chokepoints and the Sea

¹ Milan N. Vego, "On Naval Power," *Join Forces Quarterly* 50 (2008): 8-17.

² *Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy* - Pg.28, 'India's interests and linkages have also expanded over the years, from the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, to the IOR, thence across the Indo-Pacific Region, and now also into the Atlantic Ocean. The ISLs to these areas have, accordingly, grown in importance for India, with sea routes through the Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal, Southeast and Southwest Indian Ocean, and the Indo-Pacific region contributing to India's SLOCs'.

³ C. Raja Mohan, "PM Modi in Fiji: India's Strategic Foray in the South Pacific," *S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies*, last modified November 24, 2014, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/186113/CO14233.pdf>

⁴ "Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy," *Directorate of Strategy, Concepts and Transformation, Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence (Navy)*, last modified October 2015: 9.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 162.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 48.

Lines of Communication (SLOC) vital to the Indo-Pacific region, the practice of which would be an act of war in real time scenario.⁷

However desirous, this type of strategic theorization does take its lead from an increasingly globalized world subject to changing geopolitics; caused by Russia's rekindling of Cold War era tensions as well as China prospectively becoming the new superpower. These factors have not only united the anti-China/Russia camp but have also forced the camp to put their bets on India to counter China's growing prospects with the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI); by pitching one against the other. In the wake of China becoming an economic giant under the auspices of the BRI, the US and its allies are rightly fearful for the toppling of the present world order.⁸ India fits into this equation quite conveniently when we consider the US policy of boosting up India as an 'intruding power' in the region, but not an economic power that could become just as much a nuisance in the near future as China is now.

India's Efforts for Naval Primacy

Nevertheless, to begin with India's overtures into the Indo-Pacific have been quite spectacular and India has indeed endeavored to use the sea wholesomely for 'political, diplomatic, economic and military aspects'. In the IOR, India has established listening posts in Madagascar and Mauritius, and concluded a landmark agreement with France in 2017⁹, which allows India the use of French naval facilities in the Southern Indian Ocean. France has control over territories of La Réunion, Mayotte, and the French Southern and Atlantic Lands as well as having permanent military bases in Djibouti and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). In the Pacific, India's joint exercises with Japan, Australia and the US navies, strengthening relations between members of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD/Quad) by the day are great strides for a third world country such as India to take.

In the same vein, there are several multinational formations of which India is a part, which augment India's naval strategy. For instance, the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) is a biennial forum of Indian Ocean littoral states launched by India itself in 2008; the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) is an association of coastal Indian Ocean countries excluding Pakistan, which is an indication on how this forum is in all probability, dominated by India.¹⁰ It is also a lesson on how India is using diplomacy to isolate Pakistan. And while India has made the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) impractical in the last few years, it has tried hard to strengthen its stature with forums to its east. Sub regional forums like the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN), 'the Bangladesh, China, India, Myanmar Forum for Regional Cooperation (BCIM)' and the South Asia Subregional Economic Cooperation (SASEC) are being pumped with several plans for road and rail projects, the completion of which would network the whole of Southeast Asia in a workable web. Till now, work on only some of these planned projects is under way.

⁷ Ibid., p. 69 'SLOC interdiction would be carried out in various areas: off the Sea Ports of Embarkation/ Disembarkation (SPOE/SPOD), choke points through which the SLOCs may pass, and in the open oceans'

⁸ C. Raja Mohan, Darshana M. Baruah, "Deepening the India- France Maritime Partnership," *Carnegie India*, last modified February 23, 2018, <https://carnegieindia.org/2018/02/23/deepening-india-france-maritime-partnership-pub-75630>.

⁹ "French Embassy in India," *French Embassy in New Delhi*, last modified January 25, 2017, <https://in.ambafrance.org/Indo-French-Dialogue-on-Maritime-Coop-signing-of-White-Shipping-Agreement>.

¹⁰ "Charter of the Indian Ocean Rim Association," *Indian Ocean Rim Association*, last modified October 9, 2014 https://www.iora.int/media/23873/iora_charter.pdf.

India's Maritime Ventures

Adding pomp to these efforts are some of India's ideological projects, such as Act East Policy that aims to strengthen ties with Southeast Asian countries, the Mausam cultural project aimed at remaking cultural links with India's maritime neighbors in the Indian Ocean littoral; and the Sagarmala Project¹¹ that aims to making India a truly maritime nation by adding multiple ports on the peninsular coast line and networking them with the hinterland via rails and roads. India has also increased its frequency of involvement in bilateral and multilateral naval exercises. The annual Malabar Exercises between the 'US, India, Japan, Australia and Russia (INDRA)', 'India, Brazil, South Africa Maritime (BSAMAR)' are only some examples. India's MILAN Exercises are hosted by the Andaman and Nicobar Command biennially.

In 2013, India's former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh recognized India as a 'net security provider' to its region.¹² Further adding that India would henceforth develop security relationships in the Bay of Bengal as a corollary to its Look East Policy. This January, the Indian Navy commissioned its third naval base, Indian Naval Air Station (INS) Kohassa, on the North Andaman Island. Kohassa will be a 'joint logistics node'. Ideally the operational radius of its surveillance and airstrike capacity will encompass the Malacca Strait and large portions of the South China Sea. To connect Andaman across the Malacca Strait, talks are on way with Indonesia for port facilities at Sabang and with Japan for a cross service agreement in which India will be able to use a Japanese port whilst Andaman hosts Japanese warships¹³.

With all these prospects in India's hand, we need to find how it will fare on Pakistan's security and the critical thrust it will be able to make on Pakistan's naval forces in the broader geopolitical nodes and war scenarios; when it is already trying to envelop Pakistan by intensifying maritime relations with Iran, Oman and the UAE.

India - an Economic Power or an Intruding Power

As far as India's connectivity with Southeast Asia is concerned, on close inspection, it becomes clear that all Southeast Asian transport corridors fall under the bigger umbrella of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) Economic Cooperation Program that connects Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam, Thailand, China's Yunnan Province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region with India as a corollary state.¹⁴ This means that all these transport links that connect ports at the South China Sea to ports on the Bay of Bengal will be just as much useful to China as they may be to India; only China's economic ingress in this region is already manifolds compared to India's.¹⁵ The same is with the Sagarmala Project, an ambitious plan of Indian Rupees 8.5 trillion, in which 700 projects had initially been identified. However according to Indian Credit Rating Agency (ICRA) 'about 500 different projects valued at about Rupees 8,000 billion are currently in motion already and are at various stages of feasibility study/award process' and 'while about 15-20 per cent of the projects (out of the Rupees 8,000 billion set in motion) are already under implementation, the balance portion of the planned projects, are currently at feasibility study stage'.

¹¹ "Sagarmala," Ministry of Shipping – Governemnt of India, last modified June 8, 2018, <http://sagarmala.gov.in/about-sagarmala/vision-objectives>.

¹² David Brewster, "India: Regional Net Security Provider," *Ministry of External Affairs*, last modified November 5, 2013, <https://www.mea.gov.in/Speeches-Statements.htm?dtl/22468/India+Regional+net+security+provider>.

¹³ "India's Modi and Japan's Abe draw closer as Tokyo woos Beijing," *Reuters*, last modified October 29, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-japan-india-modi/indias-modi-and-japans-abe-draw-closer-as-tokyo-woos-beijing-idUSKCN1N31IG>.

¹⁴ Masami Ishida, "GMS Economic Cooperation and Its Impact on CLMV Development," In *Development Strategy for CLMV in the Age of Economic Integration* ed. Chap Sotharith (Senayan City: 2 Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia, 2008): 115-140,

¹⁵ Anna Louise Strachan, Harnit Kaur Kang and Tuli Sinha, "India's Look East Policy: A Critical Assessment," *South East Asia Research Program*, last modified October 2009, <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/108694/SR85-SEARPInterview-Sikri.pdf>.

Furthermore, 'there continues to be significant challenges in terms of mobilization of funding especially towards the other two pillars of Sagarmala - development of industrial clusters and coastal communities, where progress has been limited'.¹⁶

This was to show that while the Indian Navy may be making impressive strides on regional fronts, the backbone India needs to prosper and to make the economy flow through its veins is still non-existent and progress remains slow. In the last two decades, India has become an export economy with an impressive growth rate of seven per cent, yet according to a United Nations (UN) Report in 2010, one third of the world's 1.2 billion extremely poor live in India.¹⁷ This also shows that while western allies want to boost India as a naval entity in the IOR, they have shown no interest in its socio-economic development.

India's Naval Capability and Ties

However, all this has not stopped India from being ambitious for power and control. The capitalistic growth, which scarcely has any trickle-down effects for the common man, nevertheless always has the reserves for further expansion and growth. Such idealism has led a nation-of-poor like India to pursue the modernization of its naval fleet in a bid to compete with much bigger competitors. While Pakistan has a modest inventory of nine frigates and five submarines; India has 67 fighting vessels, including two aircraft carriers, destroyers, frigates, corvettes and submarines. While Pakistani submarines can launch nuclear warheads, India has already acquired a nuclear-powered submarine. Already the fifth biggest navy in the world, India intends to be in possession of 160 ships within the decade. And while India will be purchasing naval inventory from France and Russia in the future, indigenous shipbuilding has also spurred in the country as around 50 new vessels are being prepared in Cochin, Goa, Gujrat and Surat. Once these indigenous shipyards are able to produce surplus, India might become an exporter of warships which would certainly enhance its geopolitical influence. A large inventory including many patrol boats would also allow India a more robust patrolling of the waters around it, boosting its Anti-Access/Area-Denial (A2/AD) footprint.

In the passing decade India has vigorously applied naval ties and diplomacy to reach out to potential allies in the Indo-Pacific. As mentioned above, India is talking with Indonesia for facilities at Port Sabang with even stronger ties being developed with Vietnam, who has allowed India to use its Port Nha Trang for port calls and whose sailors India is training for submarine combat.¹⁸ India is also pushing for a permanent naval base in the country. Being part of the Quad, relations with Australia and Japan are ever strengthening; especially after Obama's failed Trans-Pacific Partnership Policy, it seems like the Quad is shifting the role it wanted the US to play in the Pacific to India, though to a lesser level.¹⁹

In the IOR littoral, India has developed strong bondage with Oman, who has allowed India to use port facilities at Muscat, Salalah and Duqm. In 2015, Prime Minister Modi signed memoranda of

¹⁶ "Rs 8 trillion projects under Sagarmala in motion but funding remains challenge: ICRA," *The Economic Times*, April 12, 2018, https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/infrastructure/rs-8-trillion-projects-under-sagarmala-in-motion-but-funding-remains-challenge-icra/articleshow/63733130.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst.

¹⁷ "Millennium Development Goals 2014," *United Nations*, last modified July 7, 2014, <https://www.un.org/en/development/desa/publications/mdg-report-2014.html>.

¹⁸ Harsh V. Pant, "India And Vietnam: A "Strategic Partnership" in the Making," *S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies*, last modified April 2018, https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/PB180409_-India-and-Vietnam.pdf.

¹⁹ Michal Kolmaš & Šárka Kolmašová, "A 'pivot' that never existed: America's Asian strategy under Obama and Trump," *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 32, no.1 (2019):61-79.

understanding (MoUs) to develop infrastructure on Agalega islands in Mauritius²⁰ and Assumption Island of Seychelles, whereas an Indian listening post in Madagascar has been in its place since 2007.²¹ ²² India's port ambition in Chabahar, Iran, which has remained half-baked till now because of the US' failures in Afghanistan, has also remained a bead in the string that tends to tighten around Pakistan in the IOR.

India's Nuclear Triad

Since India's Pokhran-II series of nuclear tests in 1998, India has deemed to create a nuclear triad within its three commands. In time, the naval leg of the tri-services has gained precedence in the assembly of nuclear arsenal. The reason for this has been China's highly efficient satellite surveillance which has rendered India's land based nuclear missiles under China's target list, a list it ought to share with Pakistan too. India made a doctrinal shift of lodging its nuclear arsenal in ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) and set them in deep waters. The uranium fueled Indian Navy Submarine (INS) Arihant is laced with the K-15 Sagarika nuclear tipped missiles, with a range of 430 miles. Four to five more SSBNs are in the making, presumably with a longer striking range.²³ The Arihant therefore, with a decent firing range, cannot target the Pakistani capital or major Chinese cities.

Implications for Pakistan

Given India's open enmity toward Pakistan, which has become more vocal in the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP's) tenure, Pakistan cannot be pragmatic in being oblivious to India's emboldening in the IOR and the Pacific.

India and the US have been issuing joint statements every now and then accusing Pakistan of being an exporter of terrorism.²⁴ The US' two decades long war in Afghanistan has emboldened Indian presence there because of which Pakistan has been a constant victim of terrorism on its soil. India's bid to develop the Chabahar Port as its link to Afghanistan and Central Asia also chokes Pakistan from its west and north, while tensions on the Kashmir Issue always remain high. As Pakistan applies its means and influence to counter India's growing presence around its land borders, the maritime borders are becoming increasingly tense.

Starting from its maritime border with India, the two countries have disputed on the demarcation of the borderline along Sir Creek. While India insists on having a mid-channel boundary through Sir Creek, Pakistan wants a land borderline to the west of Sir Creek, as the position of the channel keeps changing due to it being a tidal estuary at the Indus Delta. Thus, the presently ambiguous border invites incursions that keep the border patrols alert. On the western flank, just across the border lies Chabahar,

²⁰ Shubhajit Roy, "India to Develop Strategic Assets in 2 Mauritius, Seychelles Islands," *The Indian Express*, last modified March 12, 2015, <https://indianexpress.com/article/india/india-others/india-seychelles-sign-four-pacts-to-boost-security-cooperation/>.

²¹ Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "India and Seychelles agree on naval base at Assumption Island," *The Economic Times*, last modified July 13, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-and-seychelles-agree-on-naval-base-at-assumption-island/articleshow/64731817.cms?from=mdr>.

²² Manu Pubby, "India Activates First Listening Post on Foreign Soil: Radars in Madagascar," *The Indian Express*, last modified July 18, 2007, <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/india-activates-first-listening-post-on-foreign-soil-radars-in-madagascar/205416/>.

²³ Sebastien Roblin, "India is Building a Deadly Force of Nuclear-Missile Submarines," *The National Interest*, last modified January 27, 2019, <https://nationalinterest.org/blog/buzz/india-building-deadly-force-nuclear-missile-submarines-42532>.

²⁴ "Joint Statement - United States and India: Prosperity Through Partnership," *Ministry of External Affairs*, last modified June 27, 2017, <https://www.mea.gov.in/bilateral-documents.htm?dtl/28560/Joint+Statement++United+States+and+India+Prosperity+Through+Partnership>.

which if it becomes a geostrategic port India dreams it to be, might be docked by Indian warships or aircraft carriers one day. Across the Gulf of Oman lie the three Omani ports, where Indian ships are often on port calls and are free to use port facilities; putting the Indians in close range to surveil, creating a posture of deterrence.

In the open seas, Pakistan faces the ingress of Indian naval vessels every now and then.²⁵ The Indian Navy's attempts at blockading sea lines around the Port of Karachi in Operation Talwar during the Kargil Standoff 1999 and during Operation Parakram 2001, are constant reminders of Pakistan's vulnerability at sea. After the Pulwama incident on 19th February 2019, the Pakistan Navy spotted an Indian submarine in its waters and escorted it out without attacking it.²⁶ India was not shy on asserting its offensive posture, called-for in its Strategic Document. Following the incident India had immediately deployed the aircraft carrier INS Vikramaditya, nuclear submarine Chakra (range 300 kilometres), 60 ships and 80 aircrafts in the North Arabian Sea.²⁷ This fleet was already stationed in the Andaman Island for a Theatre Level Readiness and Operational exercise (TROPEX) since 19 January 2019. This type of theatre level readiness counteract Pakistan Navy, especially when considered as a 1+1 alliance with the US naval forces, already having naval bases in Bahrain, Oman, Kuwait, the UAE and Diego Garcia. In case of any international conflict in which the two countries may be involved, there are huge chances that India will want to settle scores with Pakistan using its heavy naval buildup with its allies in tow.

Pakistan's Counter Strategy

At the regional level, Pakistan has gained strength as a geopolitical entity with the US withdrawing from Afghanistan, which in practical terms is also an Indian withdrawal from Afghanistan. China being an adjacent power has its own issues at India's borders and in context of the unfading Pak-China friendship that has led China to make CPEC its flagship project in the BRI, there is strength for Pakistan too. To its west, Pakistan enjoys close ties with the Arab world and special ties with Saudi Arabia. The outcome of the Afghan War has drifted Russia more towards Pakistan than India, as manifested in the Moscow Process, making the continent more placid for Pakistan than for India.²⁸

Yet in the global arena India might have stronger friends, who have aided its projection as a naval power in the IOR. Pakistan is a member of forums like the Economic Cooperation Organization (ECO) and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) that help the country's regional integration. Regional interconnectivity and being a nuclear power have kept the chances of an all out war between Pakistan and India at bay. However in case of an international conflict, the chances of the two states getting involved are high. This gives the Pakistan Navy both the calm to plan and prepare for a future and the urgency to stay alert for any unforeseen misadventure on the local and the global scene.

In terms of naval diplomacy, the Pakistan Navy has made excellent strides. The Pakistan Navy has trained high ranking naval officers from several friendly states like Jordan, Malaysia, Nigeria, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Turkey etc. It is also regularly on port calls at friendly ports. In addition to,

²⁵ Ali Osman, "Tools of War: How an Indian Submarine was Pushed away from Pakistani Waters," *Dawn*, last modified Novemebr 19, 2016, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1297189>.

²⁶ "Stopped Indian Submarine From Entering Our Waters: Pak," *Deccan Herald*, last modified March 5, 2019, <https://www.deccanherald.com/national/pakistan-navy-says-it-stopped-721623.html>.

²⁷ "Navy Made Operational Deployment After Pulwama Attack: Officials," *The Quint*, last modified March 18, 2019, <https://www.thequint.com/news/india/navy-made-operational-deployment-of-strategic-assets-after-pulwama-attack>.

²⁸ Ayaz Gul, "China, Pakistan, Russia to Meet on Afghanistan, Angering Kabul Leaders," *Voice of America*, last modified December 26, 2016, <https://www.voanews.com/a/china-pakistan-russia-to-meet-on-afghanistan-angering-kabul-leaders/3651066.html>.

bilateral exercises with friendly nations like Turkey, Oman, UAE, Sri Lanka, China, Russia etc., the Pakistan Navy regularly participates in several multinational exercises too. Pakistan's own multinational maritime exercise AMAN-19 under the slogan 'Together for Peace', was a huge success as 46 countries from around the world participated.²⁹ This naval diplomacy is vital in terms of constantly remaking confidence building measures (CBMs) with allies in a dynamic world.

Pakistan's Doctrinal Efforts

Because of unparalleled numbers with India, Pakistan has seen its nuclear arsenal as the only and a vital strategy to counter India's huge conventional navy. In enhancing its seaborne nuclear arsenal, Pakistan seeks to regain the strategic depth it once had in Afghanistan, and a means to deter India from intruding in its waters. To counter such skewed numbers, Pakistan has adopted a strategy of installing low-yield tactical nuclear weapons on a variety of naval vessels.³⁰ In fact, Defense Secretary Khawaja Asif asserted in 2016 that we have a superiority in tactical weapons and that we have more than we need.³¹ This gives Pakistan dominance in case the conflict escalates as with a greater number of low-yield warheads more targets can be taken down at the same time. Even more so, a spread-out deployment can give wider strategic depth in the Arabian Sea.

It should be noted here that Pakistan has kept the first strike option open to itself, as in 2002, Lieutenant General Khalid Kidwai elaborated that Pakistan's 'Nuclear weapons are aimed solely at India' and will be used if India occupies a large part of Pakistan's territory, destroys its militaries, strangles it economically or destabilizes it politically.³² This means that if India, following its Cold Start Doctrine, attempts a blitzkrieg like it did after the Pulwama incident, Pakistan's declared first strike policy, would allow it to counter-attack with low-yield nuclear warheads, punishing the enemy demonstratively, while keeping the event under the nuclear threshold.

But this does not mean that Pakistan has not pursued a second strike capability. In May 2012, at the Naval Strategic Force Command (NSFC) headquarters in Islamabad, the Commander NSFC Vice Admiral Tanveer Faiz said that 'the Force, which is the custodian of the nation's second-strike capability, will strengthen Pakistan's policy of Credible Minimum Deterrence and ensure regional stability'.³³ In 2017, Pakistan test fired its first nuclear-capable, submarine-launched cruise missile Babur-III having a missile range of 450 kilometres with terrain hugging and sea skimming flight capabilities to evade hostile radars.³⁴

In 2017, a Naval panel briefed the National Assembly on the purchase of eight modified diesel-electric attack submarines from China; four of which will be procured in 2023 and the remaining four

²⁹ "China Participates in Pakistan's Naval Drills in a Big Way," last modified *Pakistan Today*, February 10, 2019, <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2019/02/10/china-participates-in-pakistans-naval-drills-in-a-big-way/>.

³⁰ "We Have Low-Yield N-Weapons to Ward off India's War Threat: Pakistan," *India Today*, last modified October 20, 2015, <https://www.indiatoday.in/world/pakistan/story/we-have-low-yield-n-weapons-to-ward-off-indias-war-threat-pakistan-268997-2015-10-20>.

³¹ "Pakistan Defence Minister Threatens To 'Nuke' India," *Newsd*, last modified September 29, 2016, <https://newsd.in/pakistan-defence-minister-threatens-nuke-india/>.

³² Peter R. Lavoy, "Pakistan's Nuclear Posture: Security and Survivability," *Non Proliferation Policy Education Center*, last modified January 21, 2007, <http://npolicy.org/article.php?aid=291&tid=30>.

³³ "Naval Chief Opens NSFC Headquarters," *The News International*, last modified May 20, 2012, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/archive/print/362833-naval-chief-opens-nsfc-headquarters>.

³⁴ "Pakistan Attains 'Second Strike Capability' With Test-Fire Of Submarine-Launched Cruise Missile," *Dawn*, last modified January 9, 2017, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1307384>.

will be assembled at the Karachi Shipyard and Engineering Works (KSEW) by 2028.³⁵ Some papers have also reported that 'Pakistan will build two types of submarines with Chinese assistance: The Project S-26 and Project S-30'. The vessels are to be built at the Submarine Rebuild Complex (SRC) facility being developed at Ormara, west of Karachi and that 'Beijing confirmed in October that it would sell eight Project S-26 and Project S-30 submarines'.^{36 37} This leaves an interesting query as the S-26 and S-30 are Qing style submarines with missile range of 1500 kilometers.

This news interestingly couples with Bangladesh's induction of two type 035G-class submarines from China into its navy.³⁸ The submarines will be stationed near Cox Bazar which makes India's Visakhapatnam, home to the Indian Navy's nuclear-powered submarine fleet and the Defence Research and Development Organization's (DRDO) missile test ranges, vulnerable to attack. Additionally, it also makes India's ability to launch nuclear warhead towards China from the northern edge of the Bay of Bengal difficult.

Partnership with China is therefore a part of Pakistan's naval strategy. While China's advanced A2/AD systems will bar Indian submarines from crossing the Malacca Strait, its own submarines frequently patrol the Indian Ocean.^{39 40} At the same time, Chinese Siloes line the high-altitude terrain to the north of India as China tries to ingress in Afghanistan with BRI programs, all of which favour Pakistan's regional strategy. China's complementing the aims and targets of the Pak Navy in a time of aggression, is in fact, the biggest challenge to India's naval strategy and forward planning.

The Future

Within the next decade, Pakistan ought to procure in addition to the eight submarines from China, four corvettes from Turkey; two made in the Istanbul Shipyard and two in Karachi's KSEW.⁴¹ It also ought to have upgraded three of the Agosta 90Bs with Turkey's assistance and upgraded and purchased several radar/sonar electronic intelligence (ELINT) systems; moving on into substantial indigenous production in Karachi and Ormara.⁴² By that time Gwadar would have become an international trading port, Pakistan Navy will also have received its order of two 1,900 tonnes offshore patrol vessels from Netherlands; one of which will be made in Karachi.⁴³ KSEW is already producing Fast Attack Craft (FAC)

³⁵ "China to Supply Pakistan With Eight New Attack Submarines," *The Express Tribune*, last modified August 31, 2016, <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1173324/china-supply-pakistan-eight-new-attack-submarines/>.

³⁶ "The Chinese Government Will Supply Eight Modified Diesel-Electric Attack Submarines to Pakistan by the Year 2028," *Sputnik News*, last modified August 30, 2016, <https://sputniknews.com/middleeast/201608301044792625-china-supplies-pakistan-eight-submarine/>.

³⁷ Franz Stefan Gady, "China Confirms Export of 8 Submarines to Pakistan," *The Diplomat*, last modified October 19, 2016, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/10/china-confirms-export-of-8-submarines-to-pakistan/>.

³⁸ "Bangla PM Sheikh Hasina Defends Decision to Buy Two Chinese Submarines," *The Economic Times*, last modified July 13, 2017, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/bangladesh-pm-sheikh-hasina-defends-decision-to-buy-two-chinese-submarines/articleshow/59581475.cms>.

³⁹ Si Fi-Ou, "China's A2AD and Its Geographic Perspective," *Asia-Pacific Research Forum* no. 60 (2014).

⁴⁰ Shaurya Karanbir Gurung, "14 Chinese Navy Ships Spotted in Indian Ocean, Indian Navy Monitoring Locations," *The Economic Times*, last modified July 12, 2018, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/14-chinese-navy-ships-spotted-in-indian-ocean-indian-navy-monitoring-locations/articleshow/61882634.cms>.

⁴¹ "Pakistan to buy four corvette ships from Turkey," *The Nation*, last modified July 6, 2018, <https://nation.com.pk/06-Jul-2018/pakistan-to-buy-four-corvette-ships-from-turkey>.

⁴² "Pakistan's KSEW Begins Construction of New Fast Attack Craft and Pull Tugs," *Naval Technology*, last modified January 5, 2017, <https://www.naval-technology.com/news/newspakistans-ksew-begins-construction-of-new-fast-attack-craft-and-pull-tugs-5709836/>.

⁴³ "Work underway on Pakistan Navy OPVs," *Asian Military Review*, last modified November 27, 2018, <https://asianmilitaryreview.com/2018/11/work-underway-on-pakistan-navy-opvs/>.

with an indigenously built Missile System; the third of which, PNS Himmat was commissioned in 2017.⁴⁴ Yet considering all these efforts, Pakistan Navy would be no numerical match for India's conventional or strategic inventory. India plans to spend at least US Dollars 61 billion on its navy within a decade.⁴⁵

While China does compliment Pakistan and will opt to combine strategy in case of an international conflict involving the IOR, India is allied with the US and its allies. US' highly advanced integrated Anti-Submarine Warfare (ASW) systems constituting unmanned and sensor technologies can detect, localize and attack enemy submarines. This gives the US superiority in terms of information gathering that is in turn translated into command and force superiority. So, the future war will be between 1+1 powers, not secluded ones.

The future is also poised to bring in huge shifts with the coming of submarine drone networks and drone squadrons. The US navy launched its first drone squadron in 2017 which was the first step in achieving the desired goals of intelligence gathering, time critical strike, anti-mine warfare and anti-submarine warfare through Unmanned Vehicles (UMVs).⁴⁶ For almost the same purposes, China's Haiyan-class Unmanned Underwater Vehicles (UUV) and underwater gliders are designed for underwater combat and patrol for ASW in a much wider area.⁴⁷ China's Underwater Great Wall is another example of laying a network of hydrophone on the seabed of the South China Sea that will connect it with onshore processing centers, giving China undeterred intelligence of subsurface movement in the South China Sea when the project is complete.⁴⁸ These subsurface systems combined with the already advanced surveillance systems that powerful maritime states possess, may create a much more contested naval environment in the future, especially for states that lack such intelligence. Even if these technologies come in slow progression, this is the future that the smaller naval powers such as Pakistan have to prepare for.

Pakistan being a numerically lesser power, still was ranked the 13th most powerful military of the world by the US based Business Insider.⁴⁹ The reason for Pakistan's military being feared as a formidable force is its resilience in battle and its global outlook.

The 'Maritime Doctrine of Pakistan, Preserving Freedom at Sea' 2018 envisions the Pakistan Navy as a 'combat-ready, multi-dimensional force that contributes effectively to credible deterrence, national security and maritime economy, safeguarding Pakistan's maritime interests while radiating influence in the region with global outlook'.⁵⁰ The Doctrine also envisions the induction of force multipliers such as Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) and Surface-to-air (SAM) batteries and the pursuit of information superiority as its future goals.

⁴⁴ "Indigenously Built Fast Attack Craft (Missile) PNS Himmat Commissioned In Pakistan Navy," *Pakistan Today*, last modified July 28, 2017, <https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2017/07/28/indigenously-built-fast-attack-craft-missile-pns-himmat-commissioned-in-pakistan-navy/>.

⁴⁵ David Tweed and N.C Bipindra, "Submarine Killers: India's \$61 Billion Warning to China," *Bloomberg*, last modified July 28, 2015, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-07-28/submarine-killers-showcase-india-s-61-billion-warning-to-china>.

⁴⁶ Amanda R. Gray, "DEVON 5 Welcomes New Commodore, Establishes New Squadron," *America's Navy Forged by the Sea*, last modified September 27, 2017, https://www.navy.mil/submit/display.asp?story_id=102620.

⁴⁷ Zachary Keck, "China Tests New Unmanned Mini Sub," *The Diplomat*, last modified July 1, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2014/07/china-tests-new-unmanned-mini-sub/>.

⁴⁸ Dolma Tsering, "China's 'Undersea Great Wall' Project: Implications," *National Maritime Foundation*, last modified December 2, 2016, https://www.academia.edu/30413347/Chinas_Undersea_Great_Wall_Project_Implications.

⁴⁹ Christopher Woody, "These Are The 25 Most Powerful Militaries In The World — And There's A Clear Winner," *Business Insider*, last modified June 8, 2018, <https://www.businessinsider.com/most-powerful-militaries-in-the-world-ranked-2018-2#4-india-22>.

⁵⁰ "Preserving Freedoms at Sea," *Maritime Doctrine of Pakistan*, (2018): 161.