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China-India-Pakistan Nuclear Triangle: The Post India-US Nuclear Deal Scenario

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Abstract

The nuclear relations in South Asia cannot be fully analyzed without taking into account the China factor. After May 1998 nuclear tests, a substantive strategic literature has been focused on Indian and Pakistani nuclear postures and policies. However, their integral link with China in transforming South Asia's nuclear environment remains one critical component that has not been adequately examined. Multifaceted cooperation, competition and conflict have engulfed this triangle since the India-US nuclear deal. This deal has significantly increased the India's nuclear weapons capability and hence, exacerbated the security dilemma of Pakistan and China, which has important implications for the strategic stability in the region. This paper analyses the strategic implications of this deal for the nuclear triangle and argues that the nuclear triangle will remain complex with inherent risks as well as the challenges to the strategic stability. The China-India-Pakistan nuclear strategies will be determined by the larger triangle of US-China-India relations, which will define the politics of South Asia as well as the larger Asian landscape.

Introduction

China, India and Pakistan wedge in a strategic triangular relationship share a history of conflicts and border disputes. All three have nuclear weapons and necessary delivery system with asymmetrical threat perceptions in which Pakistan's nuclear strategy is India-centric; India's nuclear deterrence involves both China and Pakistan; and China's strategic calculation aims of the United States. Two sides of this triangle, China and Pakistan, share a history of hostility with the third side that is India. This strategic triangle is unique in a sense that all three members are nuclear powers sharing borders and longstanding animosities with one another.

The India-Pakistan relations have long been cleaved by deep antagonism since independence with three wars, repeated military crises, and costly arms race. India and Pakistan have rarely interacted in a non-hostile political sphere as a result of a historical legacy marked by the bloody upshot of India's partition and the birth of Pakistan. On May 1998, India and Pakistan held a series of nuclear test explosions, which marked the first step towards weaponization of South Asia with the acquisition and deployment of operationally deliverable nuclear warheads. After 1998 India's nuclear tests, then Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpaae wrote a letter to then US President Bill Clinton and justified the nuclear explosions with reference to the Chinese nuclear threat and its nuclear technology assistance in Pakistan's nuclear program.¹

On July 18, 2005, U.S. President George W. Bush and Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh in a joint statement announced a framework for nuclear cooperation

between the two countries, which brought an end to more than three decades of sanctions against India following its 1974 nuclear test. The final agreement was signed on October 10, 2008 in which India separated its civilian and military nuclear program and civilian program will receive the nuclear energy cooperation under IAEA safeguards. India is getting the fissile material for its civilian nuclear program from international market and can exclusively divert its domestic uranium reserves for its nuclear weapon program.

The India-US nuclear deal is very significant to Beijing and Islamabad for the reason that it is perceived as part of the US grand strategy to China's containment and for Pakistan it can deteriorate deterrence capabilities against India and can tilt the balance of power in favor of India. After the deal, China agreed to sign nuclear agreement with Pakistan in which China committed to provide two nuclear reactors at Chasma. The India-US nuclear deal has not only accelerated the arms race in South Asia, but also has negative consequences for strategic stability in the region. Therefore, the paper intends to explore how and what extent this deal has affected the nuclear triangle and what measures China and Pakistan are taking to counter the increasing nuclear capability of India.

The paper is divided into five sections. The first section describes the triangular nuclear relationship between China, India and Pakistan and how these three countries have constituted a nuclear strategic triangle. The second section explains the India-US civilian nuclear agreement and how it has increased the India's nuclear weapon program. The third section analysis the China's response to the deal and how China is wooing India to prevent its further thrust into the US sphere. The fourth section explores the reaction of Pakistan to this deal and what measures Pakistan is taking to narrow its strategic gap vis-à-vis India. The fifth section offers a conclusion. This paper argues that the deal has exacerbated the security dilemma in the triangular relations and has important implications for the strategic stability of the region.

China-India-Pakistan Nuclear Triangle

The analysis of nuclear relations between India and Pakistan is incomplete without taking into account the Chinese factor. China figures prominently in the nuclear narratives of South Asia. China, India, and Pakistan have fought wars against each one another, wars that convinced small states to seek nuclear weapon against conventionally strong enemy. At the root of their problems lie continued mutual suspicions flowing from their historical experiences of territorial disputes and resultant wars and tensions. In this triangle China and Pakistan have cooperative relations, but both have territorial disputes and adversarial relations with India.

India and Pakistan fought three wars in 1948, 1965, and 1971. The 1948 war erupted when the Hindu ruler of the predominantly Islamic princely state opted to join India rather than Pakistan. The 1965 war is also known as second Kashmir war, which was again fought over the disputed region of Kashmir. In 1971 war Pakistan forfeited its eastern part which later became an independent country Bangladesh. After the 1971 war conventional balance shifted decisively in India's favors. Pakistan conceived an interest in nuclear weapons to counterbalance India's conventional superiority. Pakistan also conceived the need for allies to maintain balance of power in South Asia. Pakistan saw China as a reliable friend against India as China-Indian relations were also deteriorating

due to their border dispute. Pakistan supported Soviet Union draft resolution to bring China into the United Nation in 1961 and this was the beginning of their friendship.²

India and China had a very decent and respectable commencement of bilateral relations with a popular slogan of Hindi-Chini Bhai Bhai (India and China are brothers). Nevertheless, border dispute, reciprocal distrust and fallout of the Chinese intervention in Tibet eventually resulted in a border war in 1962. China's decision to turn to Pakistan after 1962 to pressurize India laid the foundation of this triangular relationship. Ashok Kapur, an expert on South Asian affairs, called this trend in the 1960's as a "tight strategic triangle". In 1965 war between India and Pakistan, China supported Pakistan and threatened India to open a second front of the war.³

In 1964 the Chinese tests triggered nuclear debate in India. Stephen P. Cohen identified three groups: the first group was "nuclear abolitionist", who rejected outright the idea of India pursuing the nuclear weapon option. The rational was the Gandhian tradition of non-violence and nuclear disarmament. The second group, "nuclear hawks", strongly supported the nuclear option and they argued that nuclear weapons provide an absolute deterrent against Chinese massive military conventional power and unknown nuclear stockpiles. The third group, "contingent hawks", argued in favor of nuclear of nuclear option but wanted India to cross that threshold only in the event of "new strategic/political threats appeared, such as revived conflict with India or any unspecified crisis."⁴

India opted the view of third group and developed the nuclear technology, but didn't test the bomb until in 1974 which India called as a "peaceful nuclear test" and didn't declare itself as a nuclear weapon state. India's nuclear tests in 1974 and refused to sign the NPT made Pakistan desperate. In an attempt to develop nuclear deterrent capability, Pakistan waded into the strategic sphere of China. Pakistan kept pleading for Chinese help and in early 1980's the reports surfaced that China had provided Pakistan with a "blueprints" for a bomb as well as enough weapons grade uranium for one or two weapons. The Pakistan nuclear weapons program also required huge amounts of money, which Pakistan was in no position to afford. Pakistan invoked 'Islamic identity' to "raise the necessary finances to fund the nuclear program" from friendly Muslim states in the Arab world. Countries like Libya and Saudi Arabia provided necessary financial resources for the nuclear program.⁵

In the 1980s India under Rajiv Gandhi improved relations with China. Both countries took steps to tone down the conflicting relationships, to build strategic dialogues and to find common economic and political ground. Ashok Kapur called this trend a "loose" strategic triangle.⁶ This trend is still visible in the triangular relationships in which for China and India political differences are not hurdles in stronger economic ties, which are rapidly expanding while India-Pakistan relations remained hostile. India's economic liberalization policies further pushed China to enhance economic relations and further pursued reconciliatory policies.

In May 1998 India crossed the nuclear threshold by conducting nuclear tests and declared itself a nuclear weapon state, Pakistan followed the suit. China was cited as the driver for these nuclear tests. Then Defense Minister George Fernandez announced that China remained India's potential enemy number one.⁷ Then Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee in his letter to then US president Bill Clinton justified nuclear tests by citing the China threat. Chinese officials rejected these allegations that "China posed a nuclear

threat to India” as groundless and stated, “This gratuitous accusation by India against China is solely for the purpose of finding an excuse for the development of its nuclear weapons.”⁸ India’s nuclear tests and its hostile rhetoric toward China didn’t provoke any serious rethinking of Chinese military posture towards India and China continued to accord the Indian threat low priority.

While India declares a commitment to non-first use, Pakistan continues to keep this option open. It has been argued that since Pakistan has not officially stated a policy of non-first use, this would undermine the credibility of its deterrent against Indian attack. Due to Pakistan’s limited conventional capability, maintaining ambivalence towards non-first use is deliberate. To counter both its adversary’s conventional and nuclear attacks, Pakistan opts for nuclear first use. The conventionally weak Pakistan believes that with this policy opinion, it has deterred its adversary from crossing the LOC (Line of Control) between India and Pakistan. Both Pakistan and India enunciate a doctrine of “survivable and credible deterrence”. A clear understanding of the term “credible” is vague. The credibility can also be equated with the ability to survive a first strike and thus still in a position to retaliate.

In 1999 Pakistan and India engaged in a limited military confrontation in the Kargil region. The Pakistani military believed that it could safely conduct a low-intensity conflict in Indian-administered Kashmir since Pakistan’s nuclear weapons capability would prevent an Indian conventional military attack. The United States intervened at Pakistan’s request and this limited conflict did not lead to the eventual use of nuclear weapons. The 2001-2002 crises following the attack on the Indian parliament by allegedly Pakistani supported terrorists led India believe in the efficacy of limited war persecuted very expeditiously. In 2004 the Indian army adopted a dangerous doctrine called “Cold Start”, which aims to give India the ability to “shift from defensive to offensive operations at the very outset of a conflict, relying on the element of surprise and not giving Pakistan any time to bring diplomatic leverages into play vis-à-vis India.”⁹ The strike is meant to be so swift and decisive that it would “pre-empt a nuclear retaliation.”¹⁰

In response to India’s Cold Start strategy, Then Pakistani Chief of Army Staff General Pervez Kayani commented, “Proponents of conventional application of military forces, in a nuclear hangover, are chartering an adventurous and dangerous path, the consequences of which could be both unintended and uncontrollable.”¹¹ In other words, Pakistan was threatening to use nuclear weapons if India tried to carry out the kind of conventional attack it had been rehearsing. In response to Cold Start strategy Pakistan adopted tactical nuclear weapons, which are smaller bombs and short-range missiles that are designed to achieve more limited, or tactical, objectives. Pakistan successfully tested the 60-km nuclear-capable short-range surface-to-surface missile Hatf IX (NASR), which aims to “pre-empt India’s ‘cold start doctrine.’”¹² India, on the other hand, threatens to massive retaliation against use of tactical nuclear weapons. Shyam Saran, former foreign secretary and the current Chairman of India’s National Security Advisory Board said that if India is attacked with nuclear weapons “it will engage in nuclear retaliation which is massive and designed to inflict unacceptable damage on its adversary. The label on a nuclear weapon used for attacking India, strategic or tactical is irrelevant from Indian perspective.”¹³

India perceives China as an immediate challenge and China looks at India as a potential rival down the road, yet both are now enhancing their trade relations and share common interests on scores of international issues, such as multiculturalism, environment, international crime and terrorism. India-Pakistan relations, on the other hand, are outright antagonistic. For Pakistan, India is an enduring enemy; while India looks at Pakistan as a small power challenging India with the help of external linkages. It is clear that this triangle represents a very complex set of co-relations and linkages and the United States renewed interest in India as a counterbalance to China further complicated the triangular relations.

India-US Nuclear Civilian Agreement

In 1998, the new Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government carried out their election manifesto and declared India a nuclear weapon state after conducting five nuclear tests in May 1998. Despite intense U.S. pressure¹⁴, Pakistan followed suit, making South Asia “the most dangerous region”¹⁵ where two explicit nuclear powers confronted each other. After an initial flurry of anger and sanctions, it became clear that both states were not going to give up their nuclear weapons and the world had to accept this reality. However, the Clinton Administration’s approach towards the Indian nuclear program remained to “cap, roll back, and eventually” eliminate it. The Indian Foreign Minister Jaswant Singh and Strobe Talbott, U.S. Deputy Secretary of States from 1994 to 2001 and the chief U.S. negotiator with India, held eight rounds of discussions to explore opportunities for a better relationship between the two countries during 1998-2000. India’s growing economy played an important role in improving the relations. In 2000, the economic growth rate was 6 percent as compared to 3.5 percent in 1980. President Clinton visited India in March 2000 to improve economic relations, and started a new beginning of “dynamic and lasting partnership” but the nuclear issue still remained a stumbling block.¹⁶

During the run-up to the 2000 presidential elections, Condoleezza Rice, who later became President George W. Bush’s National Security Advisor, wrote in *Foreign Affairs* that “the United States should pay closer attention to India’s role in the regional balance...India is an element in China’s calculation and it should be in America’s too. India is not a great power yet, but it has the potential to emerge as one.”¹⁷ She also emphasized the role of Japan, South Korea and Taiwan in China’s containment but in India’s case she saw the potential to emerge as a great power; but the Indian nuclear program marginalized its role in the plan to contain China. Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s visit to the United States in November 2001 helped to promote the term “natural ally” and there was renewed appreciation of Indian democracy in the United States. In a statement, Vajpayee also mentioned the possibility of cooperation in civilian nuclear energy between the two countries.¹⁸

The Bush Administration discarded the previous approach and adopted a flexible approach to bring India closer to the nonproliferation regime without its being a signatory to the NPT. The first breakthrough in the relationship was on January 12, 2004, when both governments announced the Next Steps in Strategic Partnership (NSSP), an important initiative that allowed India’s access to once-restricted high technology and removed Indian entities from a sanctions list.¹⁹ The thaw in Indo-U.S. relations led to the

unprecedented nuclear deal when Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and U.S. President George W. Bush signed a joint statement on July 18, 2005. This joint statement was the framework of the Indo-U.S. nuclear deal, under which India agreed to undertake several obligations to strengthen its commitment to the nuclear nonproliferation regime and, in exchange, the United States agreed to a civil nuclear cooperation.²⁰

Contours of the Indo-U.S. Nuclear Deal

According to the July 18, 2005 joint statement, India agreed to separate its military and civilian nuclear facilities, placing the latter under IAEA safeguards; this required an India-specific safeguards agreement with the IAEA. For its part, the United States had to change its domestic law to accommodate a civilian nuclear cooperation agreement with India. This touched on the AEA, which governs U.S. nuclear cooperation with other countries, and Section 123 of which required full-scope safeguards. On December 18, 2006, President Bush signed the Hyde Act into law, to provide a waiver for India from the relevant provisions of the AEA. On September 6, 2008, the United States got an exemption for India from the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) guidelines, making it the first country that had not signed the NPT (Treaty on Nuclear Nonproliferation) to be allowed to have nuclear trade with NSG members. India received this waiver after tough negotiations. This deal was finally signed on October 4, 2008. US President Obama's visit to India in November 2010 was marked by a pledge to support India's full membership in the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG), Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), The Australian Group and The Wassenaar Agreement.²¹ India's membership in these regularity bodies would give it an equivalent status to the five recognized nuclear weapons states.

Many observers have noted that there are no measures in this global partnership to restrain India's nuclear weapons program. Robert Einhorn, President of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, argued that most of the steps India pledged are "simply reaffirmation of existing positions."²² India was already observing the unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing: proponents of the deal argue that this agreement would bind India to honor that pledge while opponents note that the deal failed to bind India legally to sign the CTBT. India has supported FMCT negotiations for years, but the deal failed to commit it to halt the production of fissile material. Regarding enforcing effective export controls, India is already committed by UNSCR 1540 passed in April 2004 to adopt and enforce effective laws prohibiting the proliferation of nuclear weapons.²³

There are concerns about the implications of this deal for India's nuclear weapons program. This deal may allow India to ramp up its nuclear production, as the supply of nuclear fuel to India would free up India's existing capacity to produce plutonium and highly enriched uranium for its nuclear weapons stockpile. One important reason for the DAE's willingness to agree to have more of its nuclear facilities placed under safeguards is India's severe and growing shortage of domestic uranium. An Indian official told the BBC after the U.S.-India deal was announced, "The truth is we were desperate. We have nuclear fuel to last only till the end of 2006. If this agreement had not come through we might have as well closed down our nuclear reactors and by extension our nuclear program."²⁴ David Albright, President of the Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS), in his testimony before the House International Relations Committee,

stated that “without India halting production of fissile material for its nuclear weapons programs, nuclear assistance, particularly any in the areas involving the fuel cycle, would likely spill over to India’s nuclear weapons program.”²⁵ It is calculated that, with imported fuel India would be in a position to increase its nuclear weapons production from 7 warheads to 40-50 warheads per year.²⁶ It was argued that spent fuel rods also contain enough material for around 1,000 more nuclear weapons.²⁷ India’s fast breeder reactors are not included in its list of safeguarded civilian nuclear facilities: their existence outside of IAEA safeguards is regarded as a nonproliferation concern because of their production of weapons-grade plutonium.²⁸

The significant implication of this deal is the palpable expansion of fissile material facilities for nuclear weapons. In 2014, the US based research organization Institute for Science and International Security (ISIS) reported that India is building a uranium enrichment facility near Mysore. This plant aims to produce HEU (Highly Enriched Uranium) for India’s indigenously developed INS Arihant nuclear powered ballistic missile submarine and may produce HEU for nuclear weapons, including thermonuclear weapons.” This report further notes, “This new facility will significantly increase India’s ability to produce enriched uranium for both civil and military purposes.” Although India has signed the IAEA additional protocol but it does not include any provision to oblige India to include any enrichment facilities like near Mysore.²⁹ Similarly 2014 SIPRI’s report on the “World’s Nuclear Force” revealed that India is “expanding its uranium enrichment capabilities” and unsafeguarded enrichment facility near Mysore might be designed for India’s ballistic missile submarine projects “but the potential excess capacity could also signify its intent to move towards thermonuclear weapons by blending the current plutonium arsenals with uranium secondaries.”³⁰

Indian has larger stockpiles of fissile material stockpiles now as compared to its stockpile in 2008. In 2008, India’s HUE was estimated to be 0.6 ton and now this figure has grown to 0.6 ton in 2013 and weapon grade plutonium in 2013 is 5.2 tons which was 0.5 ton in 2008.³¹ It is important to note that India has kept its fast breeder reactor out of safeguards, which is operative since 2010. It fueled with reactor-grade plutonium and will produce weapons grade plutonium.³² With this fast growing stockpiles India is not only developing its ballistic missile submarine project, which is an important leg of its triad system for second-strike capability but also India is enhancing its capability for thermonuclear bomb.

The Indian navy invokes the nuclear doctrine’s requirement for a maritime force structure in its 2007 maritime strategy document declaring, “the most ‘credible’ of all arsenals in a second strike is the nuclear armed missile submarine.”³³ The best delivery system in terms of survivability is submarine launched ballistic missiles. Nuclear submarines are hard to detect and can stay out at sea for weeks, or even months. If India could deploy a fleet of nuclear submarines, it will give India ability to launch nuclear weapons at military and even civilian targets in Pakistan and China.

The formal induction of the Arihant is a powerful first step towards establishing a sea based nuclear deterrent. The Indian armed forces are currently able to deliver nuclear weapons via fighter aircraft and surface-to-surface missiles. The sea-based deterrent will add the capability of firing submarine-launched ballistic and cruise missiles. The nuclear submarines are nearly invulnerable to even the most modern anti-submarine warfare technology and offer a qualitative advantage to a country’s ability to retaliate after

absorbing a nuclear first strike. This will dissuade an adversary from attempting a dangerous preemptive nuclear attack. This has significant ramifications for the strategic framework involving China, Pakistan, and India. The next sections would analyze the Chinese and Pakistani reaction to the deal and how it is affecting the strategic stability of South Asia.

China's Reaction

Stephen Cohen, the US specialist on South Asia security issues has commented that the United States and India's relationship are changing and both are "groping for a strategy to cope with the emergence of China as a major world power." He further argued, "thirty-eight years ago (1962) the United States viewed India as a major free, democratic and Asian power that could balance a threatening, expansionist China."³⁴ Nicholas Burns, Undersecretary of State and a key negotiator of the deal, told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, "India has made this (nuclear cooperation) the central issue in the new partnership developing between our countries."³⁵ A key architect of Bush's India policy and US ambassador to India, Robert Blackwill, noted, "President George W. Bush based his transformation of US-India relations on the core strategic principle of democratic India as a key factor balancing the rise of Chinese power." Blackwill added, without this China factor at the fore "the Bush Administration would not have negotiated the civil nuclear agreement and the Congress would not have approved it."³⁶

Washington's strengthened relations with India are seen as part of a grand strategy to contain China. It was in this context that the Chinese Ambassador to India, Sun Yuxi, warned, "we have nothing against India's growing ties with the U.S., but Indo-US ties should not be directed against a third country."³⁷ In the US-India nuclear deal clearly Washington seems to be appeasing New Delhi by giving in almost everything New Delhi asked for. One senior US negotiator conceded, "The Indians were incredibly greedy that day. They were getting 99 percent of what they asked for and still they pushed for 100."³⁸ Michael Krepon, Co-founder of Stimson Center, Called it a "sweetheart deal for India."³⁹ This appeasement is evidence of China containment intent.

While officially China did not oppose the deal but government-controlled media criticized the India-US nuclear deal. *China Daily* reported, "The United States' making an exception to accommodate India" is driven by "geo-political considerations" in "maintaining regional strategic balance." This has repercussions for the nuclear nonproliferation regime as "US-Indian nuclear co-operation might encourage other nuclear powers to have nuclear co-operation with their partners, which might trigger a chain reaction of nuclear-technology proliferation."⁴⁰ Relations with Pakistan provide China an opportunity for "diplomatic maneuvering vis-à-vis India and the United States."⁴¹

After India-US nuclear deal, China signed a nuclear agreement with Pakistan in which China committed to provide two nuclear reactors to Pakistan at Chasma. USA announced this deal a violation of NSG guidelines. China justified the agreement by noting a "grandfather" provision, but the U.S. argued that in 2004, when China joined the NSG, no such commitment was reported.⁴² After the India waiver, the NSG did not condemn the Chinese deal with Pakistan. The lack of generality in the India NSG waiver

has encouraged China and Pakistan to seek a deal outside the NSG, but this approach has limitations and cannot be sought on a regular basis.

Beijing has stepped up courting New Delhi as an attempt to counter Washington's growing influence in South Asia. China is also ready to take advantage of the India's NSG exemption by benefiting from the Indian nuclear market. In November 2006 President Hu Jintao visited both India to sign multitude of agreements and offered India civil nuclear agreement. During the state visit of Chinese President Xi Jinping to India from September 17-19, 2014, India and China agreed to begin the process of discussion on civil nuclear energy. Both countries decided to "carry out bilateral cooperation in civil nuclear energy in line with their respective international commitments, including working level consultations between the Department of Atomic Energy of India and the China Atomic Energy Authority."⁴³ Nuclear commerce with India would be significant for China. India's civil nuclear energy market offers billions of dollars in investment opportunities. China's reputation as a low-cost nuclear reactor manufacturer and willingness for greater technology transfer would give Beijing an upper hand over other contenders.

One of India's major interest is to ensure that the changing contours of Indo-US partnership do not disrupt the balance of power between India and China and consequently the peace and tranquility in the neighborhood. Then Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was confident that closer India-US ties would not jeopardize improving Sino-Indian relationship. George Perkovich, Director of the Nuclear Policy Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, argued that India's global emergence and economic growth is remarkable, but criticized the U.S. strategic policy of balancing China's power in Asia as India might not be willing to play a role that is in American interest.⁴⁴ *People's Daily* also quoted an Indian scholar as "India's DNA doesn't allow itself to become an ally subordinate to the U.S., just like Japan or Britain."⁴⁵

India continues to regard Pakistan as the principal external factor in its relations with China, while China is attentive to the India-US strategic partnership and its implications for its relations with India on the other hand. While China's continuing support of Pakistan is partly motivated to contain India, it is also aimed at maintaining a stable relationship with an important Islamic state. By this China would be able to retain its influence over the Islamic unrest in its own territory, especially in Xinjiang. Pakistan's tribal areas provide training and monetary support to Xinjiang extremists. China needs Pakistan's support for their extradition to China for trial.⁴⁶ The Chinese government noted that explosives used in separatists' activities in Xinjiang in 1997 were manufactured in China but originally "exported to Pakistan and then re-exported to Afghanistan."⁴⁷

China's growing economy needs uninterrupted oil supplies from Middle East. Chinese naval war planners have a maritime strategy called the "string of pearls". The term is used to describe the elaborate system of ports developed by China to ensure Chinese oil supplies. For India, China's acquisition of access to port facilities in Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan looked like a push to encircle India with

unfriendly governments and expanded military presence in India's neighborhood. Beijing strategists see the Indian nuclear ballistic missile submarine capability as threatening its access to the Indian ocean through the Malacca strait, where 80 percent of Chinese trade takes place. India could use its submarine to block Chinese oil imports through the strait, thereby causing major disruption in the Chinese economy. India's willingness to work with the United States in the anti-missile defense system, raise concerns in China about its own encirclement, particularly in light of India's improving relations with Japan.⁴⁸

Some in Beijing and New Delhi see strengthened Sino-Indian ties as a constraint on American hegemony. They speculate good Sino-Indian relations because both countries prefer multipolar world and reject absolute American hegemony in Asia.⁴⁹ Others in Washington and New Delhi are suspicious of China and seek to build US-India relations as a strategic counterweight to growing Chinese power. They argue that both India and the United States are democratic countries and they have some common values that will unite these two countries to prevent growing China.⁵⁰ However, India has repeatedly assured China that India does not have any intention to join such type of anti-Chinese coalition. Some other scholars argue that due to historical reason, India will try to preserve its foreign policy autonomy. Instead of heavily involving with the United States, India may try to develop a multifaceted and flexible relationship with the United States and other Asian powers such as Russia, Japan and China.⁵¹

Pakistan's Reaction

As India continues to advance its nuclear capabilities, Pakistan also appears to be increasing its fissile stock and improving its delivery vehicles in order to hedge against possible increases in India's nuclear stockpile. Islamabad is augmenting its current nuclear arsenal, and is building the capacity to surge ahead in the production of nuclear weapons material. It may have increased Islamabad's appetite for a stronger nuclear arsenal, and in so doing provoked a nuclear arms race between India and Pakistan. In 2008, the Pakistani weapons were estimated at 30 to 60 weapons. Pakistan has accelerated its production of plutonium and highly enriched uranium, and Islamabad may have an arsenal of up to 110 weapons.⁵² Many of these weapons could be mounted on ballistic missile.

Pakistan repeatedly blocked consensus to start negotiations on the treaty due to its security concerns, despite pressure from major powers.⁵³ It fears that India would be able to increase its fissile material stockpiles as a result of NSG waiver. The Pakistan National Command Authority (NCA), which is responsible for nuclear weapons, stated that Pakistan's position would be based on its "national security interests and the objective of strategic stability in South Asia."⁵⁴ Zamir Akram, Permanent representative of Pakistan to the CD, also highlighted that "ensuring our security is the supreme national interest of Pakistan" and "the FMCT that has been proposed will only ban future production of fissile material": as a result the existing asymmetry in fissile material stockpiles between India and Pakistan could be increased.⁵⁵ However, according to an alternative perspective, early conclusion of an FMCT is in the interest of Pakistan as it would freeze the increasing asymmetry and Pakistan has enough nuclear weapons for its deterrence against India.⁵⁶

Pakistan has accelerated its efforts to take measures, both internally and externally, to catch up India's nuclear capacity. Internally, Pakistan is increasing the production of enriched uranium and plutonium for weapons. *The New York Times* wrote that the rapid increase of Pakistan's nuclear stockpiles placed it fifth position in nuclear arms possession, according to an intelligence report.⁵⁷ Externally, Pakistan has demanded a similar exemption from the NSG guidelines, but it has received a noncommittal response from the United States.⁵⁸ There is also a possibility that Pakistan can condition its support in the Afghanistan War for support for the FMCT on nuclear energy cooperation. Frustrated with India's access to the global nuclear market, Pakistan signed a nuclear agreement with China in which China committed to provide two nuclear reactors in violation of NSG guidelines.

The Beijing-Islamabad nuclear deal will allow Pakistan to produce more fissile material, which in turn enhances Pakistan's capability to increase its deterrent forces. Beijing wants Pakistan to keep its deterrent forces both qualitatively and quantitatively strong. This nuclear deal is a reaction to the Indian-US nuclear deal that Pakistan feels threaten its deterrent capability and, therefore, Islamabad would keep its deterrence credible. Pakistan pledges to increase its fissile material stockpile not only to increase the yield of its warheads, but also to boost the accuracy and lethality of its deterrent forces. Pakistan is currently increasing both the number and quality of its warheads. Pakistan's expansion of fissile material is largely driven by India's existing advantage in fissile material stockpiles, and is therefore aimed at reducing the gap.⁵⁹ With increasing production of fissile material, Islamabad could enhance its deterrent capability, but it could also face challenges in how Islamabad could manage the delivery systems for increasing deterrent capabilities. Currently Pakistan has two delivery systems for its nuclear forces: aircraft and missile systems. It also plans a triad, in reaction to India's recent test of a nuclear submarine system.

Pakistan is attempting to develop a sea-based version of the indigenously built nuclear capable ground launched 'Babur' cruise missile.⁶⁰ Pakistan has been working to integrate the French-built Khalid-class submarines into its strategic forces for several years, but significant hurdles remain, specifically, missile tubes how to be modified to handle nuclear capable missiles like the Babur cruise missile, and the navy needs to be integrated into the country's existing nuclear command and control architecture, which is currently dominated by the army. Pakistan has no plan to deploy nuclear propelled submarines over the next few decades. Instead, naval planners have focused on acquiring more sophisticated conventional submarines, like the recently announced purchase of six submarines from China.⁶¹ A senior Pakistani official told *HIS Jane's* "the technical details are almost done. The present discussions are mainly about the financing details."⁶² Pakistan's focus on conventional submarines underscores the country's financial constraints.

The deal has contributed to a significant increase in India's nuclear stockpiles. This expansion of fissile material production infrastructure has facilitated India in the evolution of a triad of strategic delivery systems for an assured second-strike capability. In reaction Pakistan has also increased its fissile production. In seeking strategic parity, Pakistan not only increases its fissile material stockpile, but also relies on nuclear weapons use for stability and deterrence purposes. It has also frustrated the efforts to

thwart increased production of fissile material and has provoked an unprecedented arms race in South Asia.

Conclusion

Nuclear stability in South Asia is said to be maintained by the dyadic behavior pattern that India and Pakistan are expected to maintain. But the dyadic patterns are irrelevant in explaining the security situation in South Asia. It is a complex triangular relationship that involves China, India and Pakistan in which history continues to cast a shadow making them locked in complex relationships. The US decision to establish a strategic partnership with India has been influenced by India's rising international weight and strength and partly by new US disquiet over an assertive China.

The Indo-US Nuclear Deal has helped to reduce the strategic gap between China and India. China still does not worry much about India's ensuing attempts to maintain a credible nuclear deterrent and to secure a *de jure* nuclear power status, and it feels confident that China's overall strength remains greater than India's. What worries China is India's improved security ties with the US and if there would be a growing convergence of American and Indian objectives in dealing with China. Growing closeness between India and the US highlights the possibility that the US may be establishing a policy of containment or encirclement, and this concern in turn affects China's relationship with both the US and India. As fast growing economies, the incentives for India and China to cooperate remained strong. As US-India relations grew even tighter and India grew stronger, China maintained a clear interest in warm ties with India.

The deal has enabled India to make qualitative and quantitative improvement in its nuclear arsenals. Nuclear fuel supply for India's civilian nuclear program has freed its domestic uranium reserves to be exclusively used for making more nuclear weapons. The resultant imbalance has forced Pakistan to increase its reliance on nuclear deterrent, which could lead to nuclear instability in the region. Pakistan is advancing toward a sea-based missile capability and expanding its interest in tactical nuclear warheads. This increased reliance on nuclear warheads and arms race has posed grave dangers in the region.

The triangular relations are based on conflicting territorial claims and asymmetrical distribution of economic and military power among the three. The distribution of each member is clearly asymmetrical. Indian power is balanced by China's aid to Pakistan. At the same time China's power is balanced by countervailing American and Russian support for India's diplomatic and military aims. The failure of its members to resolve territorial disputes means that the three are expected to be locked into triangular strategic relations involving continuous military and economic competition. These trends point to the durability of this strategic triangle in the foreseeable future. At the global level, this triangular relationship between India, Pakistan and China will be influenced by the nature of the Indo-US-China relationship.

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