



**INSTITUTE OF
STRATEGIC STUDIES**

web: www.issi.org.pk
phone: +92-920-4423, 24
fax: +92-920-4658

Issue Brief

Maritime Security in 21st Century: Strategic and Conventional Options for Pakistan

Tahir Mahmood Azad, Research Fellow, ISSI

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Maritime security has become a vital issue in contemporary world politics. It is fundamental to national as well as human security: arms and drug trafficking, terrorist movement and threats in the maritime domain, illegal fishing and exploitation of sea resources and environment are some of the important challenges. In addition, states are also advancing their naval capabilities to protect their maritime interests and respond to conventional and non-conventional threats. Major powers are continuously advancing their naval capabilities to control the high seas.

In the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), there are 36 states in the littoral belt. There are also eleven neighbouring states, which though land-locked, are directly-indirectly dependent on this belt. The highest tonnage of the world's trade, i.e., 65 per cent of the world oil, and 35 per cent of gas, situated in the littoral states, also pass through it.¹ The geo-economic importance of IOR has fascinated the global and regional military and economic powers, especially USA, China, Japan and India.

Pakistan, one of the 36 IOR littoral states, has a long coastline to guard with sparse infrastructure, thus making it doubly hard to protect and patrol. Pakistan is also confronting various maritime challenges. These challenges have far reaching implications for Pakistan.

These maritime security challenges contain both traditional and non-traditional characteristics. Ninety-five per cent of Pakistan's trade is through the sea lines of communication (SLOC) passing through the IOR. The Indian Ocean also comprises upon essential choke points such as the Straits of Hormuz, the Straits of Malacca and the Lombok and Sunda Straits that are significant for trade.² Pakistan's operationalisation of the Gwadar port which is close to Strait of Hormuz, will raise further security concerns.

More than any other challenges, Indian modernisation of its naval forces pose several serious security threats for Pakistan. In July 2009, India launched its first advanced technology vessel(ATV) submarine, under the US\$ 2.9 billion project. The INS *Arihant*, is now undergoing sea testing and will consequently

¹ Sohail Amin et al., "Major Powers' Interests in Indian Ocean: Challenges and Options for Pakistan," p.1. This publication is based on papers presented at the two-day international conference on —Major Powers' Interests in Indian Ocean: Challenges and Options for Pakistan held on November 18-19, 2014 at Serena Hotel, Islamabad, <http://www.ndu.edu.pk/afwc/pub/OPINION-Vol.1-No.2-Dec.pdf>, Accessed on September 20, 2016.

² MohidIftikhar, " Maritime Security in the Indian Ocean: Challenges for Pakistan," *Security Sector Reform Resource Centre*, Jun 3, 2015, <http://www.ssrresourcecentre.org/2015/06/03/maritime-security-in-the-indian-ocean-challenges-for-pakistan/>, Accessed on September 20, 2016.

be installed into the Indian Navy.³ It would be the first of four Arihant-class submarines that will execute a key role in India's strategic nuclear deterrent.

The current naval capabilities of Pakistan and India are as follow:

Naval Power: Pakistan vs India⁴

	Pakistan	India
Total Naval Strength	197	295
Aircraft Carriers	0	2
Frigates	10	14
Destroyers	0	10
Corvettes	0	26
Submarines	5	14
Coastal Defense Craft	12	135
Mine Warfare	3	6

This table reflects that Pakistan's naval strength is far below than India. In Indian current projects, it plans to spend at least \$61 billion on expanding the size of its navy in 12 years.⁵ India's dream of becoming the sixth country in the world capable of launching nuclear warheads from land, air and sea - "nuclear triad" - would have serious strategic implications for Pakistan. It is a fact that with nuclear-armed submarines, India will attain a second-strike capability that would definitely destabilize "strategic stability" in the South Asia region.

Although Pakistan has an efficient navy with its limited resources, but it also needs to modernise its naval power as well. To counter Indian naval buildup, Pakistan agreed to purchase eight new submarines from China in March 2015, which will be equipped with a Stirling-cycle Air-independent propulsion (AIP) system and will be able to carry up to three nuclear warhead-carrying CJ-10K land attack cruise missiles (LACMs) each. It has been assessed that Pakistan's nuclear submarine is likely to be based on the Qing

³ "India Submarine Capabilities," NTI, September 30, 2015, <http://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/india-submarine-capabilities/>, Accessed on September 20, 2016.

⁴ "Current military capabilities and available firepower for 2016," http://www.globalfirepower.com/country-military-strength-detail.asp?country_id=pakistan, Accessed on September 20, 2016.

⁵ David Tweed and N.C Bipindra, "Submarine Killers: India's \$61 Billion Warning to China," Bloomberg, July 28, 2015, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2015-07-28/submarine-killers-showcase-india-s-61-billion-warning-to-china>, Accessed on September 12, 2016.

Class Chinese SSK (diesel-electric submarine). Highly advanced electric propulsion system of Qing Class Chinese SSK will enable Pakistan to replace diesel engine power generation with a nuclear power plant.

In 2014-2015, Pakistan signed an agreement with a German firm “Rheinland Air Service (RAS)” to upgrade two Pakistan Navy-regional air transport (ATR-72s) into maritime patrol aircraft (MPA) with anti-submarine warfare (ASW) capabilities. According to the Ministry of Defence Production, these ATR-72s will be ready for Pakistan by 2017-2018. Furthermore, it is possible that a third ATR-72 will ultimately be sent for conversion, especially since the platform is considered a key part of the Navy’s Aviation Vision 2030 plan.

Pakistan has already calculated the Indian motivations to modernise its naval force both conventionally and unconventionally. Pakistan is seriously considering to acquire nuclear armed submarine and also modernise its nuclear force. Pakistan has already taken different steps to ensure a strong and robust naval force that is vital for its national security interest.