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Hostility vs. Reluctance: Implication of Nuclear Posture Adoption towards India's Bilateral Relations with Pakistan and China

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines India's different nuclear posture adoption toward Pakistan and China. India has been developing its nuclear weapons to ensure its survival amidst ongoing tensions with Pakistan and China. However, India's relationship with China tends to be cooperative, while Pakistan tends to be conflictual. Theoretically, the mutual accumulation of nuclear power will increase tension and further deteriorate bilateral relations. Through posture optimization theory and Jervis' four worlds, this article qualitatively compares the two cases and its implication for their bilateral relations. The result shows that India's adoption of an assured retaliation posture that directly deters Pakistan affects their relationship to be hostile and leaves no possibilities for cooperation. On the contrary, the existence of the United States as India's strategic partner made China reluctant to be aggressive and opt for diplomatic settlements with India. India-Pakistani relations dynamics reflect Jervis's doubly dangerous world, while Sino-Indian relations reflect the second world unaffected by the accumulation of power, although there is an intense security dilemma.

Keywords: India; Pakistan; China; Nuclear Posture; Nuclear Policy

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan perbedaan adopsi postur nuklir India terhadap Pakistan dan China. Untuk menjamin keberlangsungan hidupnya, India mengembangkan senjata nuklir ditengah peningkatan tensi yang terjadi dengan Pakistan dan China. Namun, hubungan bilateral India dengan China cenderung kooperatif, sedangkan dengan Pakistan cenderung konfliktual. Secara teoritis, akumulasi kekuatan nuklir akan meningkatkan tensi dan memperburuk hubungan bilateral negara terkait. Melalui teori posture optimization dan kategorisasi dunia Jervis, artikel ini membandingkan secara kualitatif konflik nuklir India dengan Pakistan dan China serta implikasinya terhadap hubungan bilateral mereka. Hasil analisis memperlihatkan adopsi postur assured retaliation membuat India mengimbangi kekuatan Pakistan secara langsung sehingga hubungan mereka agresif dan tidak memberikan kesempatan bekerjasama. Di sisi lain, keberadaan Amerika Serikat mempengaruhi China untuk enggan berperilaku agresif dan mengambil pendekatan diplomatik dengan India. Dinamika hubungan India-Pakistan memperlihatkan kesesuaian dengan dunia doubly dangerous Jervis, sedangkan hubungan India-China sesuai dengan dunia kedua yang tidak dipengaruhi akumulasi kekuataan walaupun ada dilema keamanan yang intens di belakangnya.

Kata Kunci: *India; Pakistan; China; Postur Nuklir; Kebijakan Nuklir*

Introduction

Nuclear proliferation has heightened tension within South Asia, particularly involving India, Pakistan, and China. Conflicts between these states range from territorial disputes to identity sentiments, serving as a source of insecurity for India, which is (un)strategically located in the middle of Pakistan and China. The India and Pakistan sibling rivalry has been occurring since the forming of Pakistan as a state, which resulted in 1947, 1965, and 1999 border wars, the 1971 Bangladesh war, and numerous terrorist attacks, such as the 2008 Mumbai attacks.[1] Meanwhile, India's growing tension with China started from its skirmishes in the 1965 border war and its extended border disputes, the provision of the Dalai Lama, to China-backed ethnic insurgencies in northeastern India.[2] Thus, the nuclear arms race increases regional instability.[3]

With three nuclear-powered states neighboring each other, any Indian increase in power will alert the others and possibly increase the security dilemma between them. Similarly, when China increased its nuclear capabilities, India and Pakistan felt oppressed by the nuclear growth.[4] The condition creates a "domino effect" pattern where each country increases its nuclear power and motivates other states to balance it. As conflicts plug the relations between them, the clarity of these states' nuclear policies is vital to prevent any possibilities of nuclear retaliation against conventional clashes and any deterioration of a state's bilateral relations.

Under the assumption that these similar patterns of events exacerbated with nuclear weapons will result in India's equally hostile relations with Pakistan and China, the reality shows different behavior. The existing political tensions between India and Pakistan tend to be more fragile and hostile, with no confidence-building measures (CBM) or negotiation efforts succeeding in normalizing their relations.[5][6] On the contrary, India and China relations tend to be less hostile. Despite their ongoing conflict, they successfully normalized their diplomatic ties in 1988 and established cooperation in military and economic fields.[7] Especially with China's disproportionately higher nuclear power than Pakistan's, hypothetically, India should be more insecure and become more hostile to China than Pakistan.

Academic debates have been going on the nature of India-Pakistan and India-China relations. Scholars agree that the India-China-Pakistan relations are dangerously creating instability in the South Asia region, their antagonistic relationship related to their border dispute that fragrance with nuclear

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[1] Anit Mukherjee, "A Brand New Day or Back to the Future? The Dynamics of India-Pakistan Relations," *India Review* 8, no. 4 (February 2009): pp. 404-445, https://doi.org/10.1080/14736480903324990.
[2] Bertil Lintner, *Great Game East India, China, and the Struggle for Asia's Most Volatile Frontier* (New Haven Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2015).
[3] Devin T. Hagerty, "India's Evolving Nuclear Posture," *The Nonproliferation Review* 21, no. 3-4 (February 2014): pp. 295-315, https://doi.org/10.1080/10736700.2014.1072990, 298.
[4] *Ibid*.
[5] Michael Kugelman et al., "Pakistan-India Trade: What Needs to Be Done? What Does It Matter?", in *Managing India-Pakistan Trade Relations* (Washington, D.C., US: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, Asia Program, 2013), pp. 59-74.
[6] Saman Zulfqar, "Efficacy of Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) in India-Pakistan Relations," *IPRI Journal XIII* 1 (2013): pp. 106-116.
[7] Shivshankar Menon, "India-China Ties: The Future Holds 'Antagonistic Cooperation', Not War," The Wire, accessed March 25, https://thewire.in/external-affairs/india-china-ties-expect-antagonistic-cooperation-future-not-war.

capability among three states. Much literature is covered on the hostile relations between India and Pakistan and views India-China relations as underestimated and underexplored.

Iqbal describes the India-Pakistan hostile relationship in detail. The history of three wars and numerous standoffs between India and Pakistan has become the primary source of instability in South Asia. These realities became the main reason for Pakistan to develop its nuclear weapons to respond to India's nuclear possession, which was intended to deter China's nuclear weapons.[8] On the other hand, Mohd Lateef Mir shows a security dilemma between India and Pakistan in operation. India's aspirations for its regional and global profile are perceived as threats by Pakistan as the smaller neighbor. To ensure its security, Pakistan established its nuclear capability that threatens India. This path becomes an "action-reaction" cycle that increases tension between them.[9] Along with those arguments, Sultan and Sasikumar view that the India-Pakistani hostility arises from the wars and conflicts that affect the growing security dilemmas for each other.[10]

On the other side, research by Cunningham and Medcalf shows that India-China nuclear issues are underexplored and underestimated. The stable relationship involving mutual deterrence becomes the reason behind it, even though there is probably mistrust, asymmetric relations, capability development, and geopolitical dynamics that will increase the risk of instability between them.[11] In addition, Basrur views that CBMs and compromises are ways of managing the nuclear rivalry that heightens the tension between India and China.[12] Cooperation and negotiations are plausible from both sides despite being prone to stalemates.

To emphasize, this article examines India's different nuclear posture in dealing with Pakistan and China, which are hostile against Pakistan and differently cooperate with China, despite similar conflicts in their relations. This paper argues that a particular categorization of nuclear posture could lead to a certain degree of security dilemma that manifests in a specific world. With the assured retaliation posture adopted by India against Pakistan, the reactiveness of Pakistan results in a doubly dangerous world that is prone to an arms race and conflict escalation due to the high degree of the security dilemma. However, India's catalytic posture against China enables it to build cooperation in a world of conflicts and 'intense' security dilemmas.

While most literature talks about how the build-up of power will affect Indian relations, this paper emphasizes the impact of nuclear posture on the feasibility of compromise and cooperation. The article limits its discussion to bilateral relations between India-Pakistan and India-China, whereas other literature usually examines all actors. Specifically, it looks at India's nuclear policy regarding its utilization of

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[8] See Khalid Iqbal, "Pakistan's Nuclear Program: The Context", *Policy Perspectives,* Vol.13 No. 1, Nuclear South Asia and Strategic Stability (2016). Pp.25.52

[9] See Mohd Lateef Mir, "The Nuclear Conundrum Between India and Pakistan" *World Affairs of International Issues,* Summer 2019 (April June), Vol. 23, No.2 (2019), pp.72-87

[10] See Karthika Sasikumar, "India-Pakistan Crises under the Nuclear Shadow: The Role of Reassurance," *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament* 2, no. 1 (February 2019): pp. 151-169, https://doi.org/10.1080/25751654.2019.1619229 see also Adil Sultan. "India's Nuclear Doctrine: A Case of Strategic Dissonance or Deliberate Ambiguity." IPRI Journal VIII, no. 2 (2018): 26–52. https://doi.org/10.31945/iprij.180202

[11] See Fiona Cunningham and Rory Medcalf, "The Dangers of Denial: Nuclear Weapons in China-India Relations" *Lowy Institute for International Policy* (2011).

[12] Rajesh Basrur "India and China: A Managed Nuclear Rivalry?" *The Washington Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (2019): pp. 151–70. https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660x.2019.1666354

nuclear weapons, especially against their closest adversary, Pakistan, and China. This article also sees the dynamics of the South Asian region, which focuses on India as its central actor. It aims to answer the question, why did India show a different behavior towards their bilateral relations with Pakistan and China despite a similar series of tensions from nuclear weapon proliferation?".

Methodology

This article is based on a qualitative research method with an inductive approach. We utilized comparative design using two contrasting study cases to examine the causal mechanism between India-Pakistan and India-China.[13] Data collection relied on secondary data from the literature, database, and documents, such as state-released official documents, mass media outputs, books, and journals.[14] These data are analyzed through a comparative analysis to discover empirical relationships among its variables.[15] Specifically, the comparative analysis is used to see why a certain case is not happening as it should be and uncover additional contributing variables generated by the theory.

a. Posture Optimization Theory and Four World Models

Posture optimization theory argues that state nuclear posture is more significant in posing a deterrence effect than nuclear power acquisition alone. The international system and domestic constraints limit regional nuclear powers, including capabilities, management procedures, and transparency. This theory identifies three possible nuclear postures adopted by a state, which are; (1) catalytic posture, where the state has a third party that provides military and diplomatic support to stall nuclear breakout; (2) assured retaliation, where the state relies on direct nuclear deterrence and coercion, with a no-first-use principle and presence of a survivable retaliation-strike; and (3) asymmetric escalation where the state has the option to conduct first nuclear offense against any conventional attack. Figure 1 shows the categorizations of nuclear posture that a state might adopt.[16]

[13] Alan Bryman, *Social Research Methods* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).
[14] Umar Suryadi Bakry. *Metode Penelitian Hubungan Internasional.* Pustaka Pelajar: Yogyakarta, 2016.
[15] Arend Lijphart, "Comparative Politics and the Comparative Method," *American Political Science Review* 65, no. 3 (1971): pp. 682-693, https://doi.org/10.2307/1955513
[16] Vipin Narang*, Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era: Regional Powers and International Conflict* (Princeton University Press, 2014)

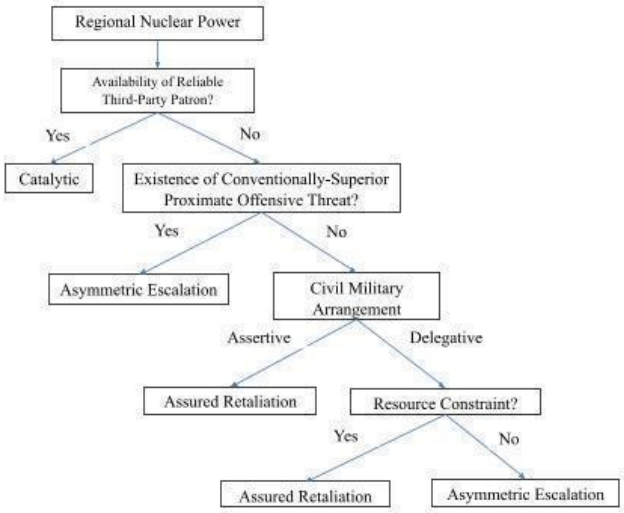

Figure 1. Posture Optimization Theory by Vipin Narang

source: Vipin Narang*, Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era: Regional Powers and International Conflict, 2014*

There are four related and derivable variables to determine their posture: structural and unit-level intervening variables. The structural variables reflected their security environment, which is whether or not the state has a third-party patron to provide protection and the existence of any conventionally-superior offensive threat. If the state has a third-party patron, it will adopt a catalytic posture. The state refers to the protection of its reliable third party in times of a nuclear crisis as an external balancer. If not, the existence of a conventionally-superior offensive threat usable across geographies and poses an existential threat will lead to the adoption of an asymmetric escalation posture as the state will not have any external protection and balancer. Adopting an asymmetric escalation posture means the state can resort to the first use of nuclear weapons against conventional attacks. If not, the posture will be examined from its unit-level variables.

The unit-level variables include the state's civil-military arrangement and its resources' constraints. If the state adopts an assertive civil-military arrangement, it will adopt an assured retaliation posture. Assertive civil-military arrangements push a state to centralize command authority to civilian authorities, meaning nuclear asset deployment is avoided. If the state adopts a delegative civil-military structure, the posture is determined from the resource constraints as there is positive control to ensure nuclear use if necessary. The availability of resource constraints will favor the adoption of assured retaliation, and significant resource limitations will restrain the state from deploying nuclear first. If the state has no resource constraint, it will adopt asymmetric escalation as they are advantageous compared to its adversaries to deploy nuclear first.

To complement Posture optimization theory,[17] this article also utilizes the worlds of offense-defense theory to categorize Indian relations with Pakistan and China. The worlds are derived from the previously determined variables: whether the offensive posture is distinguishable from the defensive one and which capabilities have the advantage over each other. From those variables, four worlds are identified, which consist of; (1) a doubly dangerous environment where both states act as aggressors and an arms race is likely when offensive posture is not distinguishable from defensive ones, but offensive capabilities are advantageous; (2) a world of intense security dilemma with possibilities to increase power without threatening other states when posture is not distinguishable but defensive capabilities has the advantage; (3) a world with evident/possible aggression and security problems without any security dilemma with a different offensive posture from defensive ones with advantageous offensive capabilities; and (4) a doubly stable environment with a different posture and advantageous defensive capabilities.

Those four worlds conditions proposed by Jervis merged with Posture Optimization theory can be concluded into several hypotheses. The Catalytic posture tends to create a world with evident or possible aggression and security problems without any security dilemma. The patron's availability did not require the states to retaliate directly. Asymmetric escalation tends to create an intense security dilemma with possibilities to increase power without threatening other states. The existence of conventionally superior proximate offensive threats allows them to conduct the first nuclear offense against any conventional attack. Furthermore, assured retaliation tends to create a doubly dangerous environment where both states act as aggressors. The arms race is likely because the state relies on direct nuclear deterrence and coercion, with the presence of a survivable retaliation strike. Figure 2 below shows the relationship between Posture Optimization Theory and Jervis Four World model.

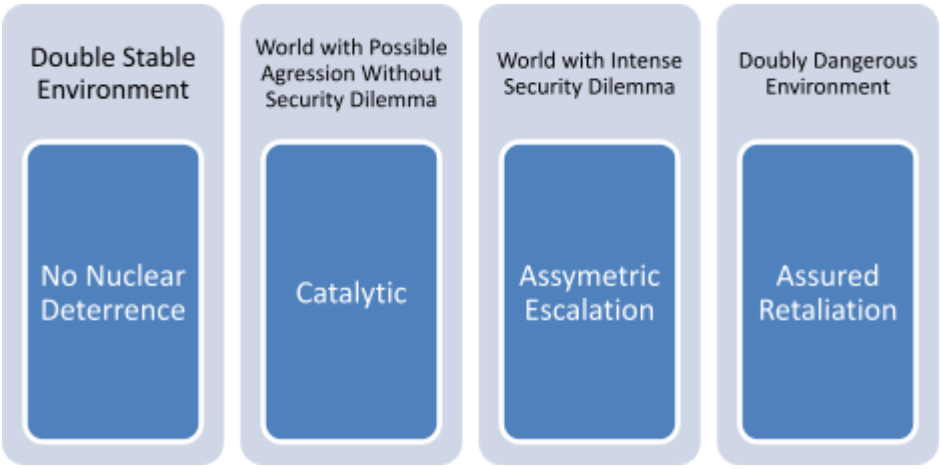

Figure 2. Four World of Posture Optimization Theory

source: Robert Jervis, Cooperation under the Security Dilemma, 1978

[17] Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30, no. 2 (1978): pp. 167-214, https://doi.org/10.2307/2009958.

Analysis

a. Repeating Patterns of Nuclear Tensions

India has constantly exacerbated conflicts with nuclear tensions against its bordering neighbors. The nuclear proliferation within the Southern Asia region revolves around the domino effect of China's nuclear acquisition, which led to India's nuclearization due to its insecurity.[18] India's course of action also instigated Pakistan's insecurity and pushed them to build nuclear weapons for survival.[19] The condition has become a repeating cycle of power accumulation within the nuclearized region.[20] Hence, a cyclical pattern lies with China's growing global power that threatens India as a growing regional power, intensifying Pakistan's insecurity against India.[21]

The constant territory struggle increased the overshadowing tension behind India-Pakistani and Sino-Indian relations.[22] These tensions are prolonged as no settlement of territorial disputes has been reached, resulting in many clashes such as, but not limited to, the 1999 Kargil War, the 2019 military standoff, the Doklam Crisis, and the Galwan Valley clash.[23] [24] The dispute poses an international threat to India's and its adversaries' possession of nuclear weapons. Although the conflicts were not nuclearized, threats of nuclear deployment are often delivered, corresponding to clashes between the borders to prevent further offensive measures.[25]

India's most recent and prominent nuclear tension with Pakistan and China can be examined from two cases in the respective order: the 2019 Border Standoff and the Doklam Crisis. Retaliatory strikes between India and Pakistan shown in the 2019 Border Standoff were overshadowed by threats of nuclear deployment, especially with Air Forces and artillery involved in the offenses.[26] [27] This clash worries observers about the possibility of a nuclear outbreak.[28] Additionally, Prime Minister Modi implies a possibility of an open-ended war through their threat against Pakistan to deploy short-range

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[18] Brahma Chellaney, "The India-Pakistan-China Strategic Triangle and the Role of Nuclear Weapons," *Proliferation Papers*, 2002, pp. 1-30.
[19] *Ibid.*
[20] Arpit Rajain, *Nuclear Deterrence in Southern Asia: China, India, Pakistan* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005).
[21] Brahma Chellaney, "The India-Pakistan-China Strategic Triangle and the Role of Nuclear Weapons," *Proliferation Papers*, 2002, pp. 1-30.
[22] Arpit Rajain, *Nuclear Deterrence in Southern Asia: China, India, Pakistan* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005).
[23] Singh Sandeep, Kaur Amanpreet, and Singh Amandeep, "Changing Equations of India-Pakistan Relations: Unresolved Kashmir Dispute as a Decider Factor," *International Research Journal of Social Sciences* 4, no. 3 (March 2015): pp. 88-95.
[24] SCMP Reporters, "The China-India Border Dispute: Its Origins and Impact," South China Morning Post, July 30, 2020, https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3094884/china-india-border-dispute-its-origins-and-impact.
[25] Arpit Rajain, *Nuclear Deterrence in Southern Asia: China, India, Pakistan* (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 2005).
[26] Abhijnan Rej, "S(c)helling in Kashmir: Bargaining under the Nuclear Shadow," *The Washington Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (March 2019): pp. 163-186,
[27] Annie Waqar, "The India-Pakistan Nuclear Imbroglio: What Way Forward?," Clingendael spectator, July 16, 2020, https://spectator.clingendael.org/en/publication/india-pakistan-nuclear-imbroglio-what-way-forward#:~:text=After%20a%20progression%20of%20cross,killed%20during%20World%20War%20II.
[28] Caitlin Talmadge, "Are Nuclear Weapons Keeping the India-Pakistan Crisis from Escalating-or Making It More Dangerous?", Brookings (Brookings, March 7, 2019), https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/03/08/are-nuclear-weapons-keeping-the-india-pakistan-crisis-from-escalating-or-making-it-more-dangerous/

surface-to-surface conventional weapons.[29] The security outlook of this clash can be seen as an arms race and acquire a nuclear character that can take 125 million casualties if the outbreak is unleashed.[30]

Meanwhile, India-China tension tended to be relatively under control during the 2017 Doklam Crisis. Chinese road construction on the Doklam Plateau triggered India's deployment of military troops as per Bhutan's request for assistance in securing the area.[31] An informal meeting was conducted to realign Prime Minister Modi and President Xi to mend India and China's bilateral relations disrupted by the military standoff.[32] The conflict ended abruptly after prolonging for 73 days without any final agreement between India and China.[33]

Another factor that exacerbated the tension between India, Pakistan, and China rose from their identity-related tension, specifically religious tension. For Pakistan, religion is the main reason for their purpose as a nation, which resulted in the Partition of India and their right to acquire Kashmir and Jammu, which Muslims predominantly inhabit as their territory.[34] Pakistan felt the need to acquire the territory for the importance of their nation-building and to prevent discrimination against the Muslim minority in India.[3536] Meanwhile, Indian religious tensions with China lie in their occupation of Tibet and the provisions of the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan refugees.[37] China perceived the action as a threat and India's intervention to their sovereignty.[38] China also blames India's backing of the Dalai Lama for escalating the situation in the 2008 protests and riots.[39]

To settle the issue, ceasefire agreements, conferences, border control mechanisms, and other forms of CBM have been established to contain violent action. Emergency hotlines, exchanging list of nuclear facilities, communication links as per Memorandum of Understanding, talks such as Composite Dialogue Process, even agreements such as Reducing the Risk from Accidents Relating to Nuclear Weapons, Tashkent Declaration, Shimla Agreement, Lahore Declaration, and Agra Summit.[4041]

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[29] Abhijnan Rej, "S(c)Helling in Kashmir: Bargaining under the Nuclear Shadow," *The Washington Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (March 2019): pp. 163-186, https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660x.2019.1627157, 172

[30] Annie Waqar, "The India-Pakistan Nuclear Imbroglio: What Way Forward?," Clingendael spectator, July 16, 2020, https://spectator.clingendael.org/en/publication/india-pakistan-nuclear-imbroglio-what-way-forward#:~:text=After%20a%20progression%20of%20cross,killed%20during%20World%20War%20II.

[31] Sumit Ganguly and Andrew Scobell, "The Himalayan Impasse: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Wake of Doklam," *The Washington Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (March 2018): pp. 177-190, https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660x.2018.1519369.

[32] Vinay Kaura, "India's Relations with China from the Doklam Crisis to the Galwan Tragedy," *India Quarterly: A Journal of International Affairs* 76, no. 4 (2020): pp. 501-518, https://doi.org/10.1177/0974928420961768.

[33] Aidan Milliff, "Fighting the Elements: Assessing a Sino-Indian Conflict at Doklam," June 28, 2018, pp. 1-47.

[34] Carolyn C. James and Özgür Özdamar, "Religion as a Factor in Ethnic Conflict: Kashmir and Indian Foreign Policy," Terrorism and Political Violence 17, no. 3 (2005): pp. 447-467, https://doi.org/10.1080/09546550590929219.

[35] *Ibid*.

[36] Vindu Goel, "What Is Article 370, and Why Does It Matter in Kashmir?" The New York Times (The New York Times, February 27, 2019), https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2019/world/asia/india-pakistan-

[37] Sumit Ganguly and Andrew Scobell, "The Himalayan Impasse: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Wake of Doklam," *The Washington Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (March 2018): pp. 177-190, https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660x.2018.1519369.

[38] *Ibid*.

[39] *Ibid*.

[40] Singh Sandeep, Kaur Amanpreet, and Singh Amandeep, "Changing Equations of India-Pakistan Relations: Unresolved Kashmir Dispute as a Decider Factor," *International Research Journal of Social Sciences* 4, no. 3 (March 2015): pp. 88-95.

[41] Confidence Building Measures in Nuclear South Asia: Limitations and Prospects

In the context of the India-Pakistan conflict, a de-facto border called the Line of Control (LoC) was also established between India and Pakistan to signify their limits to each other's territory.[42] However, violations of said CBMs aggravate the use of force in the contested territory. The agreement was deemed ineffective in suppressing the nuclear threat between India and Pakistan as it lacked practical, contemporary meaning.[43] Additionally, growing non-state actor threats from terrorists and militants in Kashmir and Jammu continuously instigated the violations along the LoC between India and Pakistan. To this circumstance, there has been no successful cooperation between India and Pakistan as their relations remain hostile.[44] Some of these include the Mumbai Bombings by Lashkar-e-Taiba in November 2008, the 2001-2002 Pakistani-sponsored attacks on the Indian parliament, infiltration of allegedly Pakistani-backed terrorist and militant groups in Kashmir and Jammu, maintaining the suspicion between India and Pakistan.[45] Although India and Pakistan managed to establish the Indus Water Treaty, both parties mismanaged and violated the treaty, resulting in disproportionate control over water access.[46]

Meanwhile, India and China's Line of Actual Control (LAC) are also often violated as China expands interest within their borders to other countries, significantly correlating to their Belt and Road Initiatives projects in the neighboring states. It has yet to reach an agreement between India and China, resulting in the 1962 Border War and unclear control over the Line of Actual Control as its new unofficial redraw of borders.[47]

However, various cooperative efforts between India and China have shown positive developments. They managed to normalize their bilateral relations in 1988 with Rajiv Gandhi's visit to China, which agreed to set their differences aside in expanding cooperation to other areas, such as the economic sector.[48] India and China succeeded in establishing the India-China Joint Economic Group on Economic Relations and Trade, Science, and Technology (JEG) to discuss trade-related cooperation issues.[49] Under this cooperation, bilateral trade between India and China experienced significant growth, increasing from 264 million in 1990 to USD 2,9 billion by 2000.[50] India and China have maintained military cooperation other

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[42] https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/03/01/ceasefire-line-of-control-pakistan-india/
[43] Toby Dalton, "Modernize the South Asia Nuclear Facility 'Non-Attack' Agreementhttps://Carnegieendowment.org/2017/06/28/Modernize-South-Asia-Nuclear-Facility-Non-Attack-Agreement-Pub-71382," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 28, 2017, https://carnegieendowment.org/2017/06/28/modernize-south-asia-nuclear-facility-non-attack-agreement-pub-71382.
[44] Sajid Farid Shapoo, "How Non-State Actors Could Cause War in South Asia," The Diplomat, November 16, 2016, https://thediplomat.com/2016/11/how-non-state-actors-could-cause-war-in-south-asia/.
[45] Frederic Grare, "India–Pakistan Relations: Does Modi Matter?," *The Washington Quarterly* 37, no. 4 (February 2014): pp. 101-114, https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660x.2014.1002158.
[46] Undala Z Alam, "Questioning the Water Wars Rationale: A Case Study of the Indus Waters Treaty," *The Geographical Journal* 168, no. 4 (2002): pp. 341-353, https://doi.org/10.1111/j.0016-7398.2002.00060.x.
[47] Russell Goldman, "India-China Border Dispute: A Conflict Explained," The New York Times (The New York Times, June 17, 2020), https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/17/world/asia/india-china-border-clashes.html.
[48] Jingdong Yuan, "Sino–Indian Economic Ties since 1988: Progress, Problems, and Prospects for Future Development," *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 45, no. 3 (2016): pp. 31-71, https://doi.org/10.1177/186810261604500302.
[49] "Trade and Economic Relations," Embassy of India, July 9, 2021, https://eoibeijing.gov.in/eoibejing_pages/Mjg.
[50] Jingdong Yuan, "Sino–Indian Economic Ties since 1988: Progress, Problems, and Prospects for Future Development," *Journal of Current Chinese Affairs* 45, no. 3 (2016): pp. 31-71, https://doi.org/10.1177/186810261604500302.

than economic cooperation, such as their yearly joint military exercises "Hand-in-Hand" since 2007.[51] Their latest drill was conducted in 2019.[52] These arrangements portray a trust between India and China that enables ongoing cooperation.

b. Nuclear Capabilities Comparison between India, Pakistan, and China

As previously mentioned, nuclear development within the Southern Asia region resulted from a domino effect caused by each other's acquisition of nuclear power. China started its nuclear power development corresponding to the growing threat from the United States during the Taiwan Strait Crisis and the Korean War.[53] With its first atomic bomb test in October 1964, China became a nuclear power state.[54] This brought insecurity for India, portraying its nuclear program as a response to the politico-strategic threat vis-à-vis the 1962 Sino-Indian War.[55] Immediately corresponding to India's growing nuclear power, Pakistan took a clear step to develop its nuclear weapons. Zulfikar Ali Bhutto stated in 1965 that Pakistan would build the bomb even if they went hungry.[56] The series of events led to a cycle of security dilemmas between these states, projecting a degree of a 'nuclear arms race on its own. The figures below portray the nuclear weapon possession gap between India, Pakistan, and China.[57][58][59]

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[51] "Joint Military Exercise with China and Japan," Press Information Bureau (Government of India Ministry of Defence, December 1, 2010), https://www.pib.gov.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=67941.

[52] Bikash Singh, "Indian and Chinese Troops to Conduct Joint Military Exercise in Umroi," The Economic Times, December 3, 2019, https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/indian-and-chinese-troops-to-conduct-joint-military-exercise-in-umroi/articleshow/72341874.cms.

[53] John K. Warden, Elbridge A. Colby, and Abraham M. Denmark, "Nuclear Weapons and U.S.-China Relations: A Way Forward" (Washington, DC, US: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2013), pp. 1-60, http://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/130307_Colby_USChinaNuclear_Web.pdf.

[54] *Ibid*.

[55] Manjeet S. Pardesi, "China's Nuclear Forces and Their Significance to India," *The Nonproliferation Review* 21, no. 3-4 (February 2014): pp. 337-354, https://doi.org/10.1080/10736700.2014.1072996.

[56] Meaghan Tobin, "*Explained: how India and Pakistan became nuclear states*", 7 March 2019, https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/explained/article/2188958/explained-how-india-and-pakistan-became-nuclear-states

[57] Hans M. Kristensen, and Matt Korda. "Indian Nuclear Forces, 2020." *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 76, no. 4 (2020): 217–25. https://doi.org/10.1080/00963402.2020.1778378.

[58] Hans M. Kristensen, and Matt Korda. "Pakistani Nuclear Weapons, 2021." *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 77, no. 5 (2021): 265–78. https://doi.org/10.1080/00963402.2021.1964258.

[59] Hans M. Kristensen and Matt Korda. "Chinese Nuclear Forces, 2020." *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 76, no. 6 (2020): 443–57. https://doi.org/10.1080/00963402.2020.1846432.

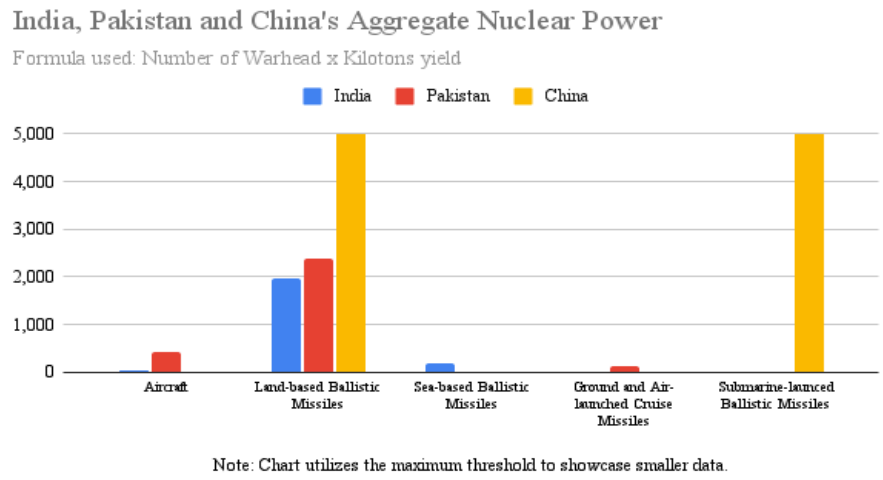

Figure 3. Comparison of Aggregate Nuclear Power based on Arsenal Type
Source: Hans M. Kristensen, and Matt Korda, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 2020

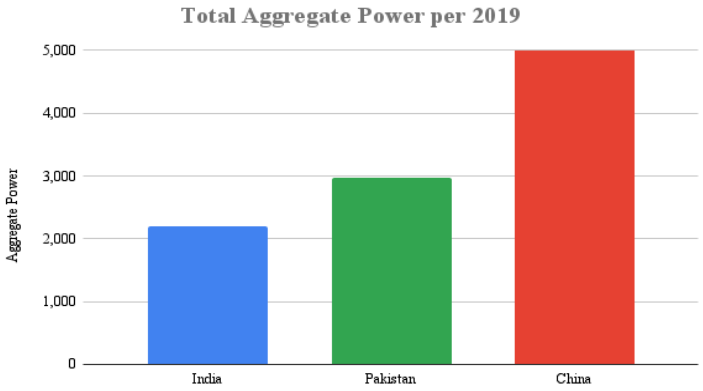

Figure 4. Comparison of Total Aggregate Nuclear Power
Source: Hans M. Kristensen, and Matt Korda, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 2021

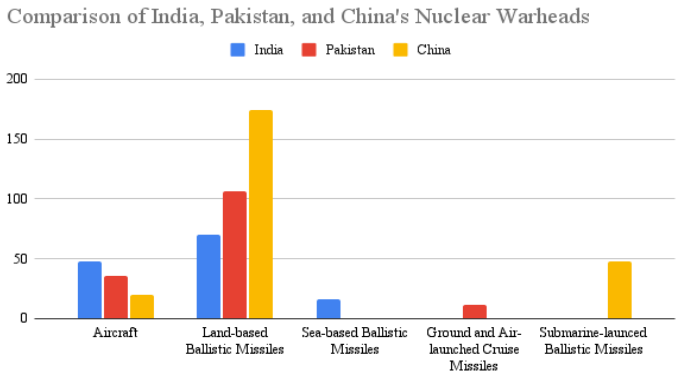

Figure 5. Comparison of Warheads based on Arsenal Type
Source: Hans M. Kristensen, and Matt Korda, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 2020

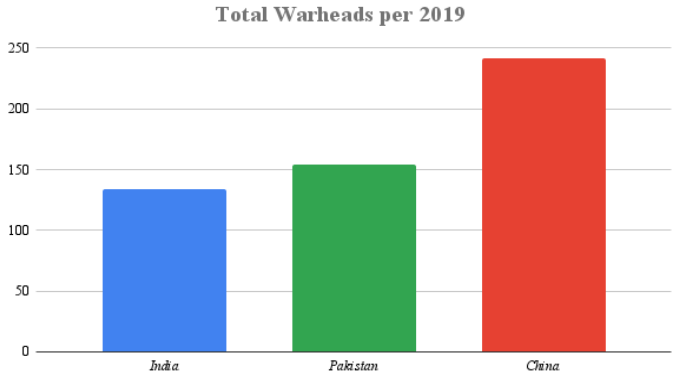

Figure 6. Comparison of Total Nuclear Warheads
Source: Hans M. Kristensen, and Matt Korda, Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, 2021

c. Indian, Pakistani, and Chinese Nuclear Doctrines

The state nuclear doctrine affected the operationalization of their nuclear weapons. It also constitutes the main principles of their nuclear weapon development, degree of transparency for their nuclear weapon deployment, command-and-control architecture, and strategic use of nuclear weapons.[60] The doctrine will be the main document to determine a state's policies when dealing with nuclear threats.[61]

After conducting its last nuclear test, "Operation Shakti," in 1998, India arranged their nuclear doctrine to be implemented for its future nuclear weapons use.[62] The nuclear doctrine emphasizes the acquisition of a credible minimum deterrence under a no-first-use policy while reassuring India's capabilities in conducting retaliatory actions for inflicting counter-nuclear offenses.[63] To conclude, India's basic foundations of nuclear doctrine lie in these elements; (1) credible minimum deterrence, (2) no-first-use policy, (3) effective command and control structure, (4) unilateral moratorium on nuclear testing; and (5) global, verifiable, and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament.[64] (Basic tenets of Indian nuclear doctrine)

Pakistan's nuclear doctrine can be summarized as ambiguous and India-centric. Pakistan's nuclear doctrine is built upon similar principles with different operationalization and deployment conditions compared to India's.[65] The fundamental principles of Pakistan's nuclear doctrine are based on these 5 points; (1) India-centric minimum nuclear deterrence, (2) deployment principle of massive retaliation, (3)

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[60] Mahesh Shankar and T. V. Paul, "Nuclear Doctrines and Stable Strategic Relationships: The Case of South Asia," *International Affairs* 92, no. 1 (2016): pp. 1-20, https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2346.12503.
[61] *Ibid*.
[62] David M. Malone and Rohan Mukherjee, "India and China: Conflict and Cooperation," *Survival* 52, no. no. 1 (2010): pp. 137-158.
[63] *Ibid*.
[64] Reshmi Kazi, "India's Nuclear Doctrine: A Study of Its Tenets," *Indian Foreign Affairs Journal* 9, no. 1 (2014): pp. 46-55.
[65] Bhumitra Chakma, "Pakistan's Nuclear Doctrine and Command and Control System: Dilemmas of Small Nuclear Forces in the Second Atomic Age," *Security Challenges* 2, no. 2 (July 2006): pp. 115-133.

nuclear first-use policy, (4) counter-value nuclear targeting, and (5) delegative nuclear command and control structure.[66]

Furthermore, China's nuclear doctrine can also be considered similar to India's, with different perceptions of threats. Since its 1964 nuclear test, China has maintained its minimum deterrence doctrine under a policy emphasizing no-first-use and assuring Chinese capabilities in deploying survivable second strikes for deterrence.[67] China's acquisition of nuclear power is encouraged by the increasing threat from the United States as an instrument of diplomatic credibility and ensures its survivability.[68] Specifically, four central schools of thought have guided the development of China's nuclear doctrine, which includes self-defensive nuclear doctrine, minimum nuclear deterrence doctrine, counter-nuclear coercion doctrine, and doctrine of limited deterrence.[69]

d. Comparing India's Nuclear Posture toward Pakistan and China

The display of behavior that India has been projecting towards Pakistan and China is influenced by a series of external security environment factors and internal structural factors. The first part of the analysis examines the behavior with the Posture Optimization theory, specified to observe regional nuclear power states.[70]

1. India v. Pakistan: Assured Retaliation

The border standoff in 2019 highlights the current India-Pakistani nuclear clash, which includes an intense exchange of retaliatory strikes across the LoC.[71] Even though there were no nuclear deployments at the end of the day, India portrays a relatively alert and reactive behavior against Pakistan. The threats of using nuclear weapons as retaliatory strikes and occasional offensive restraint become the character of India's approach towards Pakistan.[72] This response is an assured retaliation posture derived from structural and systematic factors: unavailability of a third-party patron, absence of any conventionally-superior proximate offensive threat, and India's assertive civil-military arrangement.

Firstly, regarding Pakistan, India does not have any third-party patron that could provide them further protection against Pakistan's nuclear attacks. Perceiving Pakistan as a lesser power, India tends to

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[66] *Ibid*.
[67] Hans M. Kristensen and Matt Korda, "Chinese Nuclear Forces, 2020," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 76, no. 6 (January 2020): pp. 443-457, https://doi.org/10.1080/00963402.2020.1846432.
[68] John K. Warden, Elbridge A. Colby, and Abraham M. Denmark, "Nuclear Weapons and U.S.-China Relations: A Way Forward" (Washington, DC, US: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2013), pp. 1-60, http://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/legacy_files/files/publication/130307_Colby_USChinaNuclear_Web.pdf.
[69] Liping Xia, "China's Nuclear Doctrine: Debates and Evolution," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, June 30, 2016, https://carnegieendowment.org/2016/06/30/china-s-nuclear-doctrine-debates-and-evolution-pub-63967.
[70] Vipin Narang*, Nuclear Strategy in the Modern Era: Regional Powers and International Conflict* (Princeton University Press, 2014)
[71] Abhijnan Rej, "S(c)helling in Kashmir: Bargaining under the Nuclear Shadow," *The Washington Quarterly* 42, no. 2 (March 2019): pp. 163-186, https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660x.2019.1627157, 165
[72] Evan Braden Montgomery and Eric S. Edelman, "Rethinking Stability in South Asia: India, Pakistan, and the Competition for Escalation Dominance," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 38, no. 1-2 (2014): pp. 159-182, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2014.901215.

face Pakistan directly, rejecting any intervention from others.[73] India's unilateral approach against Pakistan is considered to assure direct deterrence and avoid heightened tension with external involvement. Although it is undeniable that India has a strategic alliance with the United States and Pakistan received military support from China, they limit their role as a strategic partner in this case.[74]

India perceived Pakistan as a non-conventionally superior proximate offensive threat in the security environment variable. Based on conventional military power, Pakistan can be considered inferior to India. Comparing their army capabilities deployed within the borders, air force capabilities in delivering offenses, and supporting equipment in table 1 showed India's advantage against Pakistan's defense equipment.[75]

Table 1. India and Pakistan Conventional Military Power Comparison

Type	**India**	**Pakistan**
Army		
Total Equipment	19.995	10.612
Armored Fighting Vehicle	7.076	6.012
Anti-Tanks	3.110	5
Artillery	9.809	4.595
Air Force		
Total Equipment	1.196	436
Aircrafts capable of use	768	413
Helicopter	39 Alliant tech systems and 389 MRHs	19 MRHs and 4 TPT
Military Personnel		
Total Active Military Troops	1.458.500	651.800

Source: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2021

From another perspective, comparing military expenditures can also be used as an economic parameter to compare military prioritization between India and Pakistan. India's defense spending ranked second place after China with USD 64,1 billion, around six times Pakistan's defense spending of USD 10,8

[73] Pervaiz Iqbol Cheema, "Kashmir Dispute And International Community," *Strategic Studies Special Issue: the Jammu and Kashmir Dispute* 18, no. 2/3 (1996): pp. 55-79.
[74] Harsh V. Pant, "The Pakistan Thorn in China–India–U.S. Relations," *The Washington Quarterly* 35, no. 1 (2012): pp. 83-95, https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660x.2012.642294.
[75] The International Institute for Strategic Studies, "Chapter Six: Asia", in *Military Balance 2021* (S.1.: Routledge, 2021)

billion.[76] In 2020, India's defense spending experienced a 3-10% increase, while Pakistan's defense spending decreased by around 3-10%.[77] Hence, seeing their military capabilities and budget prioritization, it can be concluded that India's military capabilities are superior to Pakistan's.

Lastly, India's adoption of an assertive command and control structure leaves any decision related to nuclear weapon deployment to Indian civil authorities. Through its NCA two-layered control structure over its nuclear arsenals, Prime Ministers have the full authority to issue any orders, and the National Security Advisor executes said directives.[78] It implies that the decision-making process for affairs related to nuclear power will go through a more thorough bureaucratic process, ensuring no accidental or unauthorized use of nuclear force.[79] Knowing that nuclear policies are under civil authority implies that the interest of the current ruling party will also influence every nuclear policy. The formulation of the current Indian nuclear doctrine is highly influenced and endorsed by the interest of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in securing their position in the Indian political contestation.[80] The legitimization of an assertive command and control structure implies that political dynamics and inclination became significant in determining the interpretation and implementation of the nuclear doctrine.[81]

In this case, Pakistan's position as a natural adversary leaves a lack of diplomatic ties between India and Pakistan. It grows a tendency for them to have an assertive and coercive approach.[82] As India focuses on directly deterring Pakistan with its nuclear capabilities, the tension of nuclear deployment is rather prevalent. However, it often comes in the form of threats following retaliatory actions. Especially in facing Pakistan's ambiguous and India-centric nuclear doctrine under a delegative command and control structure, India portrays a more assertive and reactive behavior against Pakistan as a diplomatic approach may not be effective.[83] The clash in their nuclear doctrine resulted in a hostile and suspicious bilateral relationship.

2. India v. China: Catalytic Posture

Compared to Pakistan, China's latest clash with India in the Doklam plateau can be regarded as a 'managed' one. The lack of agreement within the establishment of LAC resulted in a high frequency of skirmishes and frictions involving land and air power between India and China that occurred during the Doklam crisis.[84] Despite the rising tension coming from the conventional offenses by the local military officials within the borders, the situation was managed during the Wuhan Conference 2018 and Mahabalipuram 2019 as a formal diplomatic means to overcome their strategic differences and through

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[76] *Ibid*.
[77] *Ibid*.
[78] Harsh V. Pant, "India's Nuclear Doctrine and Command Structure: Implications for India and the World," *Comparative Strategy* 24, no. 3 (2005): pp. 277-293, https://doi.org/10.1080/01495930500197965.
[79] *Ibid*.
[80] *Ibid*.
[81] Harsh V. Pant, "India's Nuclear Doctrine and Command Structure: Implications for Civil-Military Relations in India," *Armed Forces & Society* 33, no. 2 (2007): pp. 238-264, https://doi.org/10.1177/0095327x06291852., 280
[82] John MacDonald, "Vajpayee, Singh, and Modi: The Prime Minister's Influence on Indian Nuclear Strategy," *India Review* 19, no. 4 (July 2020): pp. 307-350, https://doi.org/10.1080/14736489.2020.1797315.
[83] Sébastien Miraglia, "Deadly or Impotent? Nuclear Command and Control in Pakistan," *Journal of Strategic Studies* 36, no. 6 (2013): pp. 841-866, https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390.2013.805126.
[84] Rajesh Basrur, "India and China: A Managed Nuclear Rivalry?," *The Washington Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (March 2019): pp. 151-170, https://doi.org/10.1080/0163660x.2019.1666354.

informal negotiation through Prime Minister Modi and President Xi relations.[85] An agreement to disengage from the conflict shows a degree of compromise between both countries despite an ongoing border dispute and growing insecurity from growing nuclear power.[86] Both states seem reluctant to escalate the nuclear conflict, which correlates to India's adopting a catalytic posture against China.

One factor influencing the adoption of the India catalytic posture toward China is the availability of the United States as a reliable third-party patron that could grant protection for India. The overall power comparison between India and China shows that the gap is disproportionately disadvantageous for India. China has twice as many active military personnel as India, with 2.035.000 personnel.[87] China's defense spending reached USD 193,3 billion in 2020, exceeding India's defense spending thrice.[88] India's nuclear weapons also fall short of 150 warheads compared to China's 320 warheads.[89] Logically speaking, India alone is heavily disadvantaged in its conflict with China. In that case, India has maintained its strategic relations with the United States since 1962 to deter the possible threat from China.[90]

India's strategy to divert China's attention to the United States aligns with China's status as a growing global power. The United States presence affects China's judgment of using nuclear forces on Indian offenses. On the other hand, for the United States, this opportunity serves as a way to counter China's influence in the Asia Pacific.[91] That makes the United States India's patron in this issue, which can be considered India's bargaining chip.[92] In the Doklam Crisis, the India-United States strategic alliance established a perspective of how India could be the United States offshore balancer against China by having the United States as its patron.[9394] With this, China's primary focus shifted from any escalation of Sino-Indian conflicts to the expansion of power by the United States. Hence, India can have assertive approaches against China while maintaining cooperation under the catalytic posture.

e. Plausibility of Cooperation Under Nuclear Tension: Jervis' Four Worlds

Under the typologies of Jervis' Four Worlds, it is seen that the accumulation of nuclear power between India, Pakistan, and China has grown a certain degree of security dilemma against each other. From India's perspective, nuclear weapon development could not stop as China continuously grows as a

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[85] Christian Wagner, "The Indian-Chinese Confrontation in the Himalayas: a Stress Test for India's Strategic Autonomy," *SSOAR Open Access Repository*, no. 39 (July 2020): pp. 1-5, https://doi.org/10.18449/2020C39.
[86] Aidan Milliff, "Fighting the Elements: Assessing a Sino-Indian Conflict at Doklam," June 28, 2018, pp. 1-47.
[87] The International Institute for Strategic Studies, "Chapter Six: Asia," in *Military Balance 2021* (S.l.: Routledge, 2021), pp. 218-313.
[88] *Ibid*.
[89] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, "10. World Nuclear Forces," in *SIPRI Yearbook 2020: Armaments, Disarmament and International Security* (S.l.: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 325-393.
[90] S. Paul Kapur and Sumit Ganguly, "The Transformation of U.S.-India Relations: An Explanation for the Rapprochement and Prospects for the Future," *Asian Survey* 47, no. 4 (2007): pp. 642-656, https://doi.org/10.1525/as.2007.47.4.642.
[91] Suneel Kumar, "China's Revisionism and Cessation of the Doklam Impasse," *Mezinárodní Vztahy* 56, no. 2 (January 2021): pp. 65-88, https://doi.org/10.32422/mv-cjir.1779.
[92] *Ibid*.
[93] *Ibid*.
[94] Suneel Kumar, "China's Revisionism and Cessation of the Doklam Impasse," *Mezinárodní Vztahy* 56, no. 2 (January 2021): pp. 65-88, https://doi.org/10.32422/mv-cjir.1779, 72.

disproportionately stronger adversary.[95] While it is undeniable that the increasing power brought insecurity to Pakistan's national defense, pushing them to follow India's nuclear development suit.[96] The growing security dilemma resulted in bilateral relations identical to conflict and tension, although the degree may differ. Correlating to the previous analysis of nuclear posture, the combination of security-environmental and unit-level variables has resulted in highly hostile relations between India and Pakistan. At the same time, India shows a relatively cooperative standing with China despite the similar circumstances of nuclear threats.

1. The Doubly Dangerous World of India and Pakistan

With no successful and sustainable effort in defusing the conflict and an ongoing 'arms race,' hostility and suspicion became a characteristic of India-Pakistani relations.[97] India is highly reactive with retaliatory actions to assure deterrence against Pakistan's movements, with Pakistan acting the same against India.[98] With the lack of trust and willingness to compromise, India and Pakistan need to restrain themselves from strategically going nuclear with each other.[99] Although India's nuclear doctrine prevented them from deploying any nuclear weapon first and opted for limited-scaled conventional attacks, Pakistan's nuclear doctrine has no similar reassurance. The reactive exchange of fire between India and Pakistan still leaves fears of escalating with no effective CBM or trust-building mechanism.[100]

The highly hostile relations between India and Pakistan could be categorized as the first world of Jervis, a dangerous double world where conflicts are imminent, and arms races are very likely.[101] The reactive retaliatory actions, high frequency of conflicts, and dynamic developments of nuclear forces will make India and Pakistan's offenses with each other prone to an escalation of tension.[102] India's adoption of an assured retaliation posture maintains the security dilemma felt by India towards Pakistan. Although it does suppress Indian direct actions against Pakistan, insecurity grows as both states increase their nuclear power to deter each other. In this world, deterrence is more plausible than normalizing bilateral relations or maintaining a sustainable CBM.[103] As a result, India and Pakistan's bilateral relationship is far from cooperative.

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[95] Rajesh Basrur and Bommakanti Kartik, "The India–China Nuclear Relationship," *Strategic Analysis* 35, no. 2 (August 2011): pp. 186-193, https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2011.542914.
[96] Rajesh Kumar Mishra, "India-Pakistan: Nuclear Stability and Diplomacy," *Strategic Analysis* 29, no. 1 (2005): pp. 101-130, https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2005.12049793.
[97] Suresh Dhanda, "Conventional War Under Nuclear Shadow India-Pakistan Scenario," *Journal of Global Research & Analysis* 1, no. 2 (December 2012): pp. 1-10.
[98] Karthika Sasikumar, "India-Pakistan Crises under the Nuclear Shadow: The Role of Reassurance," *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament* 2, no. 1 (February 2019): pp. 151-169, https://doi.org/10.1080/25751654.2019.1619229.
[99] Suresh Dhanda, "Conventional War Under Nuclear Shadow India-Pakistan Scenario," *Journal of Global Research & Analysis* 1, no. 2 (December 2012): pp. 1-10.
[100] *Ibid*.
[101] Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," World Politics 30, no. 2 (1978): pp. 167-214, https://doi.org/10.2307/2009958.
[102] Christoph Bluth, "India and Pakistan: A Case of Asymmetric Nuclear Deterrence," *Korean Journal of Defense Analysis* 22, no. 3 (2010): pp. 387-406, https://doi.org/10.1080/10163271.2010.500027.
[103] *Ibid*.

2. Sino-Indian Cooperation Under Intense Security Dilemma

India's patronage of the United States influenced China to be more reluctant in escalating their small-scale conflicts with India into an all-out war. With their ambition to become a global power, the United States will be their center of attention. Their primary interest is to drive the United States away from the region.[104] Especially with conflicts between India and China mainly being minor skirmishes, India's aggressiveness is often dismissed. It diverts its focus on the India-United States strategic alliance that may affect the geopolitical dynamics in South Asia.[105] Under this catalytic posture and considering India's nuclear power gap with China, India's nuclear power accumulation did not threaten China's security significantly.[106]

However, it is not to say that the security dilemma did not exist between India and China. A degree of insecurity from increased power amidst conflicts, including territorial disputes and Dalai Lama sentiments, is still prevalent in their relations.[107] This resulted in Jervis' second world, which shows that an accumulation of nuclear power did not threaten either state, although an intense security dilemma exists. With the United States backing up India with a degree of protection, nuclear offenses from China are unlikely to prevent involvement from the United States.[108] Moreover, the availability of The United States as the third patron did not require India to respond to China's threats directly.

To prevent further involvement from the United States, China tends to opt for diplomacy in efforts to de-escalate Sino-Indian conflicts. Although stalemates are often reached in the discussions, India and China seem to use personal relations, informality, and bilateral diplomacy to settle their disagreements.[109] India utilizes the United States support to neutralize the hostile nature of Sino-Indian conflicts while persuading China to play safely in conflicts involving India.[110] Under this arrangement, India can be in an environment that allows building cooperation with China while setting aside their disputes.

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[104] Mohan Malik, "Balancing Act: The China-India-U.S. Triangle," *World Affairs* 179, no. 1 (2016): pp. 46-57, https://doi.org/10.1177/0043820016662742.
[105] Zafar Khan, "The Effects of US–China Competing Strategies in Asia-Pacific on India and Pakistan Rivalry in the South Asian Region," *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, January 2021, p. 205789112110211, https://doi.org/10.1177/20578911211021155.
[106] Yogesh Joshi and Anit Mukherjee, "From Denial to Punishment: The Security Dilemma and Changes in India's Military Strategy towards China," *Asian Security* 15, no. 1 (September 2018): pp. 25-43, https://doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2019.1539817.
[107] John W. Garver, "The Security Dilemma in Sino‐Indian Relations," *India Review* 1, no. 4 (2002): pp. 1-38, https://doi.org/10.1080/14736480208404640.
[108] *Ibid*.
[109] Zafar Khan, "The Effects of US–China Competing Strategies in Asia-Pacific on India and Pakistan Rivalry in the South Asian Region," *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, January 2021, p. 205789112110211, https://doi.org/10.1177/20578911211021155.
[110] *Ibid*.

Conclusion

As the security dilemma grows with the accumulation of nuclear power in Southern Asia, India's different nuclear posture adoption affects its bilateral relations with Pakistan and China. The availability of patrons, a conventionally-superior proximate threat, and India's assertive civil-military arrangement resulted in an assured retaliation against Pakistan and a catalytic posture against China. These implicate India's bilateral relations with Pakistan and China, making Pakistani threats more reactive and hostile while China shows more reluctance in their disputes. India-Pakistan relations fit into Jervis' first world, filled with hostile conflicts and the arms race. Sino-Indian relations fulfill the intense security dilemma without significantly affecting their power accumulation. This explains the highly hostile relations between India and Pakistan and the plausibility of Sino-Indian antagonistic cooperation. Even though both cases are under the same circumstances of nuclear tension.

As the research is focused on the adoption of nuclear posture, further research is possible to explore the factors that might affect the different behaviors that India portrayed toward Pakistan and China. The scope of this research is limited to India's nuclear power capabilities up until 2019, and their implication to their bilateral relations with Pakistan and China, in which the data presented might not be entirely reliable due to the degree of ambiguity and transparency of the state's power projection. This research acknowledges that India's bilateral relations with Pakistan and China might not be exclusively affected by nuclear posture, as there are other confrontations and projections of power that India utilizes against its adversaries.

This research also attempts to build the correlation between posture optimization theory and Robert Jervis Four world model. The hypothesis can be explored more with other cases, especially those that show the world of intense security dilemmas with possibilities to increase power without threatening other states under asymmetric escalation.

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