

Nuclear Deterrence and Strategic Stability: The India-China-Pakistan Triangle

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Abstract

In May 1998, India conducted a series of nuclear tests under the code name 'Operation Shakti,' marking a significant milestone in its nuclear journey. The initial test occurred on May 11, followed by additional tests on May 13, solidifying India's status as a nuclear weapon state. This declaration came after India's first nuclear test, 'Smiling Buddha,' on May 18, 1974, and positioned India within a complex security framework in South Asia. Pakistan followed suit by conducting its own nuclear tests on May 28, 1998, known as 'Chagai-I'. Conversely, China established itself as a nuclear power on October 16, 1964, when it successfully detonated its first atomic bomb, code-named '596,' becoming the fifth nation to possess nuclear weapons. The emergence of these nuclear capabilities has profoundly influenced the geopolitical dynamics of South Asia, ushering in an era characterized by nuclear deterrence. Scholars have argued that nuclear weapons serve as a strategic 'security certificate' for states within the anarchic international system, aligning with the principles of deterrence theory. This article aims to critically analyze the nuclear doctrines of India, Pakistan, and China, elucidating their historical significance and implications for regional security. Major section of this study will focus on how nuclear armament has deterred direct military conflict among these states, thereby preventing major wars. Notably, Pakistan's nuclear strategy is often perceived as a counterbalance to the threats posed by India, supported by its strategic partnership with China, often referred to as an 'all-weather friend.' In conclusion, this article will conclude by reflecting on the broader implications of nuclear weapons in South Asia, emphasizing their role in shaping security paradigms and influencing interstate relations. Through a detailed examination of the historical and theoretical contexts surrounding these developments, the article seeks to contribute to the discourse on nuclear deterrence and its significance in contemporary international relations.

Keywords: Nuclear deterrence, realpolitik, real power, latent power, nuclear doctrine

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