

# NAVAL POLICY AND STRATEGY OF PAKISTAN

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Since its inception in 1947, the Pakistan Navy's development has been shaped by the more powerful presence of the Indian Navy. Limited naval infrastructure and poor financial resources for growth further added to its woes. Today, however, it has come a long way and is fully capable of defending Pakistan's national interests. It has attempted to challenge the superiority of the Indian Navy and introduced new weapons in the subcontinent aimed at disturbing the naval balance of power. Importantly, it has emerged as a proactive navy and is contemplating a nuclear role for itself.

This paper aims to analyse Pakistan's naval policy and strategy. It examines the different sources of its naval acquisitions and highlights the nature of its naval strategy. The paper also examines the Pakistan Navy's constraints in terms of budgetary allocations and lack of an appreciation of maritime threats among the ruling elites. The paper also attempts to highlight the Pakistan Navy's effective use of maritime diplomacy during times of war and peace.

## TRENDS IN NAVAL SOURCING

During the last fifty years, the US emerged as the most important source of military hardware for Pakistan's armed forces. There were at least two reasons: one, geostrategic considerations made Pakistan an important component of the US strategic calculus in containing the spread of Communism; and, two US military hardware was the best in the world.

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Under these conditions, the two sides entered into an alliance relationship under several pacts, thereby, paving the way for military sales. In 1954, Pakistan signed a Mutual Defence Assistance Agreement with the US and subsequently became a member of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO). Thus, Pakistan came under the US sphere of influence. Notwithstanding that, bilateral relations experienced major ups and downs from being a strategic ally to being put on the watch list for nuclear proliferation and aiding and abetting terrorism. Besides, the three India-Pakistan Wars also had a major impact on military sales. Given these conditions, the US military sales to Pakistan can be divided into three distinct periods i.e. 1947–1965, 1977–1990 and 1991 to 2004.

As early as 1947, Quaid-e-Azam, in his communication to the US, listed the immediate needs of the Pakistan Navy.<sup>1</sup> According to a Pakistani document concerning military assistance, Washington was requested to provide \$ US 310 million in military aid that included \$ US 60 million for the navy.<sup>2</sup> The US-Pakistan Mutual Defence Agreement was signed in 1954 and the Military Aid and Assistance Group began to assess and recommend the nature of assistance.<sup>3</sup> The US also assessed the Pakistan Navy's role in the context of North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) strategy, and by 1955, the first vessel, HMPS *Muhafiz*, was inducted in the Pakistan Navy. The important issue is that Pakistani naval planners began to mirror most things American as they learnt to adapt to US naval hardware and operate in the framework of Western alliance strategy. The Pakistan Navy even contemplated following the American force structure model centred on the aircraft carrier.<sup>4</sup> With the steady flow of military aid, a variety of naval vessels of both US and UK origin (these were paid for by the US) were inducted into the navy.

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1. Pakistan Navy Historical Section, *Story of Pakistan Navy, 1947–72* (Islamabad: Elite Publishers: 1991), p.172 .
  2. Ibid., p.173. The naval requirements included cruisers (4), destroyers (16), corvettes (4) gunboats (12), submarines (3) and other necessary naval infrastructure.
  3. Ibid.
  4. Ibid., p.79.

The 1965 and 1971 India-Pakistan Wars resulted in a US embargo on military sales to both countries. For Pakistan, this was a major setback. Consequently, Pakistan's interest in its security relations with the US declined and it began to explore alternative sources (France, China and USSR) for its military requirements. By 1975, the embargo was eased and the US agreed to supply some military hardware but on cash-and-carry basis. Financial constraints did not permit any purchases, but Pakistan-US relations did not recover thereafter. Pakistan was also disillusioned with the US over its failure to intervene during the 1971 War and felt betrayed. Post-war, the depleted Pakistan Navy had fair luck when the US agreed to provide, on lease, Gearing class destroyers (between 1977 to 1983) on a "user pays basis."<sup>5</sup> This was followed by the lease of eight Brook and Garcia class anti-submarine frigates (1988–89) and long-range maritime patrol aircraft Orion (1988). The upgrading of the Pakistan Navy's surface, anti-submarine and air capability was aimed at utilising these capabilities for security of the Persian Gulf.<sup>6</sup>

The 1979 Soviet invasion of Afghanistan once again revived the importance of Pakistan in the US strategic calculus. The revolution in Iran and the growing Indo-Soviet military relationship created a conducive environment for Pakistan to emerge as a frontline state for the US. It received \$ US 3.2 billion in economic and military aid.<sup>7</sup> With the withdrawal of the Soviet forces from Afghanistan in 1989 and the end of the Cold War, Pakistan lost its status as a frontline state. The US took a harder position on the nuclear weapon issue and by October 1990, under the Pressler Amendment, terminated military and economic assistance to Pakistan. Though there has been periodic easing of sanctions imposed under the Pressler Amendment, there have been no major naval acquisitions from the US. Instead, the

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5. Devidas B. Lohalaker, *US Arms to Pakistan : A Study in Alliance Relationship* (New Delhi: Ashish Publishing House, 1991), p.61. The arms package of \$ US 1.6 billion at 14 per cent interest rate, among other military hardware, included one reconditioned Gearing class destroyer.

6. Ayesha Siddiqa-Agha, *Pakistan's Arms Procurement and Military Buildup 1979–99* (Palgrave: New York, 2001), p. 155.

7. The navy acquired RGM Harpoon missile systems in 1983.

Pakistan Navy had to return the eight Brook and Garcia class anti-submarine frigates acquired earlier.

More recently, the Pakistan Navy Chief, Admiral Shahid Karimullah visited the US on a ten-day official visit in July/August 2004. On his return from the US, Admiral Karimullah noted that the Pakistan Navy would soon get some additional P-3C Orion long-range maritime surveillance patrol (LRMP) aircraft and spares for the existing two aircraft in its inventory. However, he did note that the entire process had to follow a certain procedure and the military assistance package will have to be approved by the US Senate.<sup>8</sup> ("Pak May Get P-3C Orion from US," *Times of India*, August 7, 2004, New Delhi).

#### THE SOVIET UNION

The Soviet Union had reacted strongly to Pakistan joining the CENTO and SEATO. Importantly, US plans of building air bases in Pakistan began to worry authorities in Moscow. In his 22nd CPSU report, Khrushchev singled out Pakistan and noted that American bases in the neighbourhood were a matter of great concern. Notwithstanding that, Moscow did not lose hope of wooing Pakistan.<sup>9</sup> As a matter of fact, it later acted as an 'honest broker' between India and Pakistan in the aftermath of the Indo-Pakistan War.

By the late 1960s, there were reports to suggest that US Polaris submarines had been sighted in the Indian Ocean. Moscow realised the geographical importance of Pakistan and began to show interest in its navy. Vice Admiral N.I Smirnov, deputy chief of the Soviet Navy, during his visit to Pakistan noted that a strong Pakistan Navy was an important instrument of peace in the Indian Ocean littoral. By this time, the US lease of air bases in Pakistan had also expired and the Soviet Union was more than willing to accommodate Pakistan's military requirements. In 1968, a delegation led by General Yahya Khan visited the USSR to explore the possibility of procuring military hardware. The Pakistan Navy had prepared an impressive shopping

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8. "Pak May Get P-3C Orion from US," *Times of India*, (New Delhi) August 7, 2004.

9. Ali T. Sheikh, "Pakistan Soviet Relations and the Afghan Crisis," *Defence Journal*, p.34.

list comprising submarines, destroyers, missile and torpedo boats and maritime patrol aircraft.<sup>10</sup>

In 1968, two Soviet naval ships under the command of Admiral N.I. Hoverin, commander Missile Forces, Pacific Fleet, visited Karachi.<sup>11</sup> The two navies held discussions to explore areas of cooperation including a study to examine the feasibility of fitting missiles on Pakistani naval ships. A Soviet technical team later visited Karachi to examine the retrofit of missile launchers but the plans had to be shelved after the Soviets expressed their inability to undertake the project due to technical constraints.<sup>12</sup> Instead the Soviet Union offered to sell missile and torpedo boats. The Pakistan Navy was fascinated by this offer in the light of the sensational sinking of the Israeli destroyer *Eilat* off Port Said by Egyptian missile boats of a similar class. But the effectiveness of these platforms in the Arabian Sea, especially during the monsoons, was questionable. After deliberations, it was decided to request the Soviet Union for bigger platforms with similar capabilities but the deal never came through. There were also fears that if the Pakistan Navy acquired small boats, it would turn into a coastal defence navy. It was also believed that given the financial constraints, it would not be possible for the Pakistan Navy to acquire bigger platforms. Ironically, these small missile boats later came to haunt the Pakistan Navy during the 1971 War. This probably was the end of any future Soviet and later Russian naval cooperation.

#### UNITED KINGDOM

Britain has been an important source of naval hardware for Pakistan. Since the inception of the Pakistan Navy, Royal Navy officers shaped the former's force structure and long-term naval plans. They even influenced

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10. Pakistan Navy Historical Section, n.1, pp.284-285. The requirements communicated were F class submarines(4), Komar class missile boats(8), Type M 206 torpedo boats(8), Knyda class destroyers (5) and maritime recce aircraft (4).

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid., pp. 287-288.

the British Admiralty to release naval hardware for the Pakistan Navy.<sup>13</sup> The important aspect of these procurements was that there were no political strings attached.<sup>14</sup> But later problems were encountered with equipment that involved US origin components and had to be withheld by the UK whenever US embargoes/sanctions came into force.

For Pakistan, the UK continues to be an important source of modern naval equipment. This has helped Pakistan to keep abreast of developments in naval technology and the two sides have maintained traditional naval relations. The Pakistani naval inventory includes eight ships (Leander class and Type 21) and a variety of naval aircraft (F-27 (Fokker) and Sea King and Lynx helicopters). The two Leander class frigates were commissioned in the Royal Navy in 1971–72 and transferred to the Pakistan Navy in 1988. The ships are old and are primarily used in a training role and have limited operational capabilities. Six Type 21 (Amazon) class frigates were acquired in 1993–94 and these were modernised after fitment of several new equipment.<sup>15</sup> There were plans to equip these vessels with the Chinese C-802 surface-to-surface missiles (SSMs) but Harpoon launchers (ex US Gearings) have now been retrofitted.<sup>16</sup>

## FRANCE

The bitter experience of US embargoes on military sales was the most important factor that forced Pakistan to look for alternative sources of military supplies. The post-1965 War period witnessed a substantial increase in the

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13. At the time of independence, Captain H.M.S. Choudhari was the senior most Pakistani naval officer. Commodore J.W. Jefford, a Royal Navy officer was appointed as the Flag Officer commanding in chief of the Royal Pakistan Navy and asked to assist in the development of the navy in its early stages. After his departure from the naval decision apparatus, Pakistani naval officers continued to be influenced by British naval thinking (like India, most of Pakistan Navy personnel were trained in Royal Navy professional schools) and Pakistan, therefore, continued to maintain naval cooperation with the UK.

14. Siddiqi-Agha, n.6, p.103.

15. Active towed array sonar (ATAS), a new radar and ESM fit and LY-60 N SAMs, Swedish Bofors Type 43-2 torpedo launchers, and Celcius Tech 9LV Mk-3 command and control system and French Nazir MK-2 optronic system. The ships operate the Lynx HAS-3 ASW/ASV helicopters.

16. Discussions with Indian Navy officers.

acquisition of French military equipment. Although the French equipment was relatively expensive, Islamabad was still tempted to procure it because there was less fear of sanctions as the French military sales policy was independent of the Western approach to sanctions.<sup>17</sup>

By 1963, Pakistan had begun to explore the international submarine market and delegations visited France to purchase up to three Daphne class submarines.<sup>18</sup> In 1973, Pakistan approached France for Atlantique maritime patrol aircraft as also repair of three of its vessels (*Babur* and two other destroyers). The French agreed to construct new vessels but refused to undertake repairs on the grounds of low cost effectiveness. The UN embargo on military sales to South Africa resulted in a surplus of Agosta class submarines with the French. The Pakistan Navy availed of this opportunity and the government was more than willing to provide the fiscal resources. The contract was finally signed in 1966.

Franco-Pakistani military cooperation is spurred mainly by commercial interests and not by any strategic considerations. By 1992, France had signed a contract agreement for Eridian class mine hunters worth \$ US 350 million.<sup>19</sup> The agreement also included production, logistic support, transfer of technology (one mine hunter to be assembled in Pakistan) , mutual examination of export possibilities and training linked to the various equipment systems. The first vessel (ex French Navy) was commissioned as *Munsif*. The second vessel was built in France and the third in Pakistan. All three vessels are currently operational in the Pakistan Navy.

Similarly, Pakistan and France also concluded a contract for the construction of three Agosta-90B submarines at a total cost of US \$ 950 million for which the loan was provided by the French to be repaid in five to six years.<sup>20</sup> Pakistan examined at least three different submarines from

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17. Ali Abbas Rizvi, "Pakistan's Search For New Arms Sources," *Asian Defence Journal* , November 1995, p.54.

18. Pakistan Navy Historical Section, n.1, p.209.

19. Siddiqa-Agha, n.6., p.161. Pakistan paid 20 per cent of the total amount as down payment and the balance was to be paid in equal monthly instalments of \$ US 25 million at six months interval and the total credit to be cleared by 1997.

20. Ibid., p.162.

China, Sweden and France before deciding in favour of the Agosta-90B. The Chinese submarine was cheaper by \$ US 83 million than the French and the Swedish boat was \$ US 70 million costlier than the French. The Pakistan Navy decided in favour of the French boat due to its earlier *Daphne* and *Augusta 70* submarine operational experience, as also to acquire the best technology available in the market. The French agreed not to supply these submarines to India.<sup>21</sup> The first submarine was to be constructed in France and the remaining two to be assembled/constructed in Pakistan. According to a report tabled in the French Parliament by the Ministry of Defence, Pakistan is France's third best customer after Taiwan and Saudi Arabia. Between 1991 and 1997, military sales to Pakistan accounted for \$ US 1.5 billion.<sup>22</sup>

## CHINA

After decades of evolving relations, Beijing and Islamabad have cemented their strategic links. This cooperation now covers almost all facets of economy, energy, industry, and infrastructure, with nuclear and military cooperation at its core. In 1990, the two sides signed a Memorandum of Understanding for a ten-year defence cooperation.<sup>23</sup> This initiative helped Pakistan tide over American sanctions on defence procurement. The bilateral relations evolved at a time when China's relations with the Soviet Union and India deteriorated, and it was seeking an ally in the region. Pakistan, on its part, was also seeking an alternative source of support as it was disillusioned with US embargoes on military sales. Ideological factors were waived aside by Mao and Ayub, and the relationship grew into a mature partnership.<sup>24</sup> Although China played a limited role during the 1965 and 1971 India-

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21. France has offered to sell India the Scorpene class submarines. For more details, see Vijay Sakhuja "Submarines Lead the Way in South Asia," *OFR Strategic Trends*, vol. II, issue 32, August 16, 2004, at <<http://www.orfonline.org>>.

22. Rizvi , n.17., p.54. Also see Claude Arpi, "What The Hell Were They Doing In This Galley?" at <http://www.rediff.com/news/2002/may/16guest.htm>).

23. Sujit Dutta, "China and Pakistan: End of a Relationship," *China Report*, 30:2, p.127.

24. In 1964, 1969 and 1970 , Pakistan was offered interest free loans totalling \$ US 318 million apparently as a reward for aligning itself with China against India.

Pakistan Wars, Beijing gave full political support to Islamabad on the Kashmir issue.

Cooperation between the Pakistan Navy and the Chinese Navy was established in 1970. Weapons sales and development of naval infrastructure are the thrust areas of cooperation. China is the main source of fast attack craft and small surface ships for the Pakistan Navy. The Fuqing class tanker followed the earlier supply of Hela and Hegu class missile boats. Chinese C-802

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SSMs are fitted on Jalalat class fast attack craft and the LY 60 (N) surface-to-air missiles (SAMs) of Chinese origin are fitted on British-built Type 21 frigates. In 1985, the two sides began to explore the possible sale, including transfer of technology, of F-22 frigates.<sup>25</sup> The Pakistan Navy has now finalised plans to acquire four Jiangwei-II frigates from China.

As regards naval infrastructure development, China is also actively involved in modernisation of the Karachi port, Jinnah naval base and the development of Gwadar port. Geostrategically, China views Pakistan as an outlet to the Indian Ocean and also as a land corridor to the Gulf and West Asia. This area has emerged as a major market for Chinese trade and military sales (Iraq, Iran, Saudi Arabia and Yemen) and, in return, the Persian Gulf has now become a major source of Chinese oil imports to support its growing energy needs. China needs facilities for its navy and mercantile marine as and when they operate in the Persian Gulf in support of Chinese strategic objectives. Thus, China is bolstering Pakistan's naval capability as also supporting its nuclear programme as a challenge to Indian dominance in the region.

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25. A proposal for acquiring the South Korean HDF-2000 frigate was shelved and in 1992-93, the Pakistan government sanctioned \$ US 700-800 million for Chinese origin vessels. For details, see Siddiqi-Agha, n.6., p.165.

## NAVAL STRATEGY

At the time of independence, Pakistan had received only a few naval ships and harbour craft<sup>26</sup> as part of the distribution of the Royal Indian Navy. The Pakistan Navy was, therefore, a coastal defence force and played

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a minimal part in national defence strategy that called for countering a land invasion from India. It was decided to build the navy in three stages based on one or more balanced task forces. Interestingly, the third phase involved acquiring an aircraft carrier. The navy was

tasked to defend and keep the sea lines of communication open. In the event of a major war, the navy, in cooperation with friendly nations was to ensure unrestricted use of the sea lanes for Pakistan's sea-borne trade. During a limited war it was to carry out the task all by itself.<sup>27</sup>

The potential threat to the Pakistan Navy was seen as originating from the Indian Navy. According to Admiral H.M.S. Chaudhari, the first commander-in-chief (January 1951 to February, 1956) the Pakistan Navy was conscious of its capability gap vis-à-vis the Indian Navy.<sup>28</sup> But an absence of geographical depth, limited naval capability and financial constraints forced the Pakistan Navy to follow a defensive strategy. Notwithstanding that, it began to develop an effective naval strategy to counter the Indian naval threat and decided to go offensive in certain capabilities. It has been argued that Pakistan is not a sea power of necessity and in contrast to the Indian Navy's strategy of sea control, it has concentrated on sea denial and prevented its rival from maintaining naval supremacy.<sup>29</sup>

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26. Two sloops, two frigates, four minesweepers, two trawlers, two motor minesweepers and four harbour defence launches.

27. Pakistan Navy Historical Section, n.1., p. 109.

28. Vice Admiral (Retd) H.M.S. Choudhari, "Maritime Threats and Effective Defence," *Defence Journal*, vol. XVI, no.3, 1990, p.21.

29. Ashley J Tellis, "The Naval Balance In The Indian Subcontinent," *Asian Survey*, vol. XXV, no. 12, December 1985, p.1200.

In the early stages Pakistani naval strategists believed that future wars would be fought at a much greater pace and, therefore, large and high-speed vessels were required. However, it was feared that cruisers being large were easy targets. Therefore, submarines were the most suitable platforms for countries with limited naval power for use against a superior force. Similarly, Pakistani naval officers were also conscious of the relevance and importance of maritime aircraft as force multipliers. It was believed that reconnaissance aircraft were suitable platforms for detecting enemy surface ships and submarines and even attacking these targets. The primacy of submarines and maritime surveillance aircraft in Pakistani naval thought is visible through their constant endeavour to acquire these platforms from any possible source. Importantly, the Pakistan Navy has adopted an offensive sea denial strategy based on submarines and maritime aircraft.

During the 1965 Indo-Pakistan War, the Pakistan Navy had at its disposal one cruiser, seven destroyers/frigates and one submarine against the Indian force of one aircraft carrier, two cruisers and nineteen destroyers/frigates. Of these, the Indian Navy had deployed five destroyers and frigates in the eastern seaboard. According to Vice Admiral Tasneem (then second-in-command of *Ghazi*), at the commencement of hostilities, the submarine was off Bombay to attack any Indian warship.<sup>30</sup> It is believed that the presence of *Ghazi* bottled up the Indian Navy and this strategy enabled Pakistani surface ships, without any air cover, to bombard Dwarka. According to the admiral, during the third week of September 1965, *Ghazi* detected two Indian naval ships and attacked them with torpedoes, damaging one target. There is also another belief in Pakistan that its navy was able to establish effective maritime control over the Arabian Sea.<sup>31</sup> It managed to challenge the Indian

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30. A.H. Amin, "Remembering Our Warriors: Vice Admiral Tasneem," *Defence Journal*, May 2001, p.21.

31. Pakistan Navy Historical Section, n.l., pp.227-28. According to the Indian Navy's official history, at the time of commencement of hostilities on September 6, 1965, a majority of its ships were operating in the Bay of Bengal and arrived at Bombay only on September 9, 1965. Soon afterwards, the fleet undertook several sea sorties but was constrained to attack the Pakistan Navy because the Ministry of Defence had directed Naval Headquarters that the Indian Navy was not to operate in a threatening and offensive manner north of the latitude of Porbandar. For a detailed Indian perspective on the naval operations during the 1965 War, see Vice Admiral G.M. Hiranandani, *Transition to Triumph: Indian Navy 1965-1975* (New Delhi: Lancers Publishers, 2000), pp.33-50.

Navy's numerical superiority through its submarine. The Pakistan Navy had several opportunities to intercept merchant ships carrying supplies to India but it did not do so following advice from the Pakistan Foreign Office that such an act may invite international criticism.

It is evident that the Pakistan Navy adopted a defensive posture aimed at seaward defence of ports in the eastern and western wings, escorting merchant shipping and assisting the Pakistan Army in riverine operations in East Pakistan. But *Ghazi* was deployed in an offensive role outside Bombay to interdict naval vessels. Although the bulk of the naval forces were employed in a defensive role, the Pakistan Navy adopted an offensive and an effective role for its submarine. Thus, the belief that submarines are the most suitable platforms for countries with limited naval power for use against a superior force paid off. The primacy of submarines in Pakistani naval thought was vindicated.

Notwithstanding the thrust towards sub-surface forces, lack of maritime air capability continued to worry the Pakistan Navy. Although the government had approved the purchase of Atlantique aircraft, there were no funds available and plans had to be put on hold. But with the acquisition of submarines and missile boats by the Indian Navy, Pakistan began exploring the possibility of acquiring maritime patrol aircraft from the US or France.<sup>32</sup> These were considered essential keeping in mind the navy's belief that reconnaissance aircraft were the most suitable platforms for detecting enemy surface ships and submarines.

In the 1971 Indo-Pakistan War, the Pakistan Navy had four submarines and six midgets. The entire sea-going fleet, excluding submarines, was required to maintain superiority in waters of interest to West Pakistan. The three Daphne class submarines were ordered to patrol areas covering the west coast of India. According to Admiral Tasneem, on the night of December 2/3, 1971, the Indian fleet (8 ships) left Bombay and passed over *Hangor* at

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32. The choices were : French Breguet Atlantique(4) for \$ US 24 million, US Grumman Tracker (6) for \$ US 15-18 million , French Breguet Alize (6) for \$ US 15-18 million and US P2-h Neptune (6) for \$ US 6 million. For more details, see Pakistan Navy Historical Section, n.1., p.257.

50 metres depth.<sup>33</sup> There were no orders to attack Indian warships and, therefore, an opportunity was missed. The orders were finally received on December 4, 1971, and on December 8, *Hangor* attacked the Indian frigate *Khukri*. *Ghazi*, with longer range and a capability for distant operations, was tasked to locate the Indian aircraft carrier *Vikrant* on the east coast of India. The deployment of *Ghazi* in the Bay of Bengal also had to do with strategic posturing in response to Indian military deployments in East Pakistan.

The Pakistani naval strategy during the 1971 War reveals that it replicated the 1965 strategy of offensive defence. It deployed its surface fleet along its shores in a sea denial role and submarines in an offensive role, validating the earlier belief that submarines are the most suitable platforms for countries with limited naval power for use against a superior force. The primacy of submarines in Pakistani naval thought once again stood vindicated. Despite the loss of *Ghazi*, the utility and relevance of submarines was proved. The outcome of the war further reinforced the Pakistani naval strategy of offensive sea denial based on an offensive role for submarines. But weaknesses in anti-missile defence and detection capabilities in surface forces were exposed.

However, the need for dedicated maritime reconnaissance aircraft as force multipliers continued. Defeat in the 1971 War led to an appreciation of the vulnerability of the Pakistani Navy to missile attacks due to a lack of maritime air reconnaissance. In order to overcome the deficiency in maritime air, the Pakistan Navy acquired Atlantique maritime patrol aircraft from France, one F-27 from the Netherlands and Sea King helicopters from the UK. The shore-based Sea King helicopters were fitted with Exocet missiles (acquired in 1975–76).

The Pakistani naval strategy of offensive sea denial was now flavoured with force multipliers<sup>34</sup> Missile-equipped submarines were to be now deployed in an offensive role off enemy ports and opportunity targets, maritime aircraft for reconnaissance and early warning and shore-based

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33. Amin, n.30, p.21.

34. K.R. Singh, "Pakistan: Evolution of Naval Strategy," *USI Journal*, 124 (518), October–December, 1994, p.505. Also see Captain I.K. Saluja, "India and Pakistan Navies - 1971 and Now," *Hands Call*, Autumn 1996, pp.13–14.

missile equipped Sea King helicopters in a strike role. Despite this qualitative and quantitative edge, the Pakistan Navy could not have executed sea control primarily due to geographical constraints and its inability to commit large naval forces in the Bay of Bengal.

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The Pakistan Navy continues to rely on the primacy of submarines in its force structure. In the 1990s, Pakistan and France concluded two major contracts for the construction of Eridian class mine hunters worth \$ US 350 million and three Agosta-90B submarines at a total cost of US \$ 950 million.<sup>35</sup>

Pakistan's naval strategy appears to draw inspiration from the national military strategy

based on 'offensive defence'. The force structure is optimised for offensive attacks against enemy forces at enemy ports using its strong fleet of submarines equipped with Harpoon missiles while maintaining a defensive strategy based on layered defence along the coast centred around British-built Type 21 frigates and smaller Chinese origin missile boats. The offensive component of the strategy aims at attacking high value enemy naval platforms and destroying key transportation and military facilities, thereby, placing the enemy on the defensive. This strategy has been tested in the past during the 1965 and 1971 Wars when Pakistani submarines were

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35. Ibid. Pakistan examined at least three different submarines from China, Sweden and France before deciding in favour of the Agosta-90B. The Chinese submarine was cheaper by \$ US 83 million than the French and the Swedish boat was \$ US 70 million costlier than the French. The Pakistan Navy decided in favour of the French boat due to its earlier Daphne and Agosta 70 submarine operational experience, as also to acquire the best technology available in the market. The French agreed not to supply these submarines to India. The first submarine was to be constructed in France and the remaining two to be assembled/constructed in Pakistan.

deployed in offensive roles outside Bombay and Vishakapatnam. Surface forces would be deployed to prevent the enemy from executing sea control.

### MARITIME DIPLOMACY

A strong British influence on Pakistani naval thought paved the way for an aggressive strategy of naval diplomacy. Despite financial constraints, Pakistani naval ships visit several countries on goodwill visits and have even attended International Fleet Reviews. Naval ship visits to Gulf countries are a common practice and these visits also include joint naval exercises aimed at projecting the Pakistan Navy as

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the navy of Muslims. The Pakistan Navy has conducted exercises with several navies including those of the US, France and UK. It even carried out exercises with the Indian Navy in the 1950s and 1960s under the British sponsored Joint Exercises Trincomele (JET).<sup>36</sup> Officers and sailors from several Muslim and non-Muslim countries have been trained in the Pakistan Navy training establishments.<sup>37</sup>

The most important aspect of Pakistan's maritime diplomacy relates to the support of some Muslim countries during the 1965 and 1971 India-Pakistan Wars. During the 1965 War, President Soekarno of Indonesia noted that an attack on Pakistan was like an attack on Indonesia and agreed to provide whatever Pakistan needed for its war effort against India.<sup>38</sup> The Indonesian naval chief was of the view that the Andaman and Nicobar Islands were an extension of Sumatra and even enquired if Pakistan wanted Indonesia to take over the islands. The Indonesian Navy began to patrol

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36. Rahul Roy-Chaudhury, *India's Maritime Security* (Knowledge World: New Delhi, 2000), p.175. The Indian Navy participated for the last time in JET in 1965.

37. Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Jordan, Kuwait, Libya, Malaysia, Myanmar, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Sri Lanka.

38. Pakistan Navy Historical Section, n.1, pp.228-229.

around the islands and also dispatched a submarine and missile boats to Pakistan. But these vessels arrived only after the ceasefire due to the long distance, and later returned. Similarly, during the 1971 War, Saudi Arabia exhibited sympathy and concern and transferred two fast patrol craft to the Pakistan Navy for operations in East Pakistan.<sup>39</sup>

In recent times, on October 21, 2003, the Chinese Navy engaged in a joint naval exercise with the Pakistan Navy off Shanghai. According to the Chinese, these exercises were the first with any foreign country and the Pakistanis described the event as another milestone in the long-standing bilateral cooperation of the two countries in the defence sector.<sup>40</sup> The exercise involved the Pakistani naval ships, *Babur*, a destroyer and the Chinese built ocean going tanker, *Nasar*. Earlier, these Pakistani ships had visited Langkawi, Malaysia, to participate in the LIMA2003 (Langkawi International Maritime and Air Show). In all, about 1,600 naval personnel from both sides participated in the exercises. The exercises included joint search and rescue and joint patrolling and search for suspected vessel.

According to Commodore Muhammad Shafi of the Pakistan Navy, "We are going to have an intensive exercise... The exercise will be tactical in nature and covers several dimensions of modern-time naval warfare. It also includes joint search and rescue, joint patrolling and search for suspected vessel. ... It provides a platform for professional interaction between the two navies."<sup>41</sup> The commodore also noted that it [exercises] would enhance professional capability and understanding of each other's operating philosophy and the Pakistan Navy was expected to make tremendous gain from the joint exercises. The Chinese too were enthusiastic of the joint exercises and Chinese Navy Admiral Xiu Ji Wen said that China is proud of having joint maritime exercises with Pakistan, an old, traditional and trustworthy friend. He said Pakistan is the first foreign country with which, it (Chinese Navy) was conducting a joint exercise. He said he was sure the

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39. Ibid., p.312.

40. See "Pak-China Joint Navel Exercises Begin" at <<http://www.PakistaniDefence.com>>

41. Ibid.

exercise would be successful and help to strengthen their strategic partnership for peace and security.

Admiral Shahid Karimullah, chief of Naval Staff, Pakistan Navy, visited China in May 2004. During the visit, Admiral Karimullah called on General Cao Guangchuan, defence minister, Vice Admiral Zhang Dingfa, commander, People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy, and Lieutenant General Li Jinai, head of the General Armament Department.<sup>42</sup> The two sides held detailed discussions and agreed to continue to hold joint naval exercises and cooperate in non-traditional security fields to strengthen their defence capability and enhance professional skill. It was agreed to have a long-term cooperation, through joint naval exercises, exchange of high level visits and bilateral training. Admiral Karimullah's visit to China is bound to bring the two navies closer. The Chinese Navy has been invited for a joint naval exercise in 2004-05.

What is more worrisome is the fact that the PLA Navy is keen to obtain oceanographic data of the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal to enable its submarines to operate in the region. Producing a full set of oceanographic data of these areas is a slow process since sea temperature and salinity levels vary according to the seasons. Besides, such data is built up over long periods by physical presence of ships or submarines. The Chinese are well aware of the limitations and, thus, believe that as part of their naval cooperation with Pakistan, such information could be availed. At the time of the 1962 Indo-China War, the Indian military leadership had apprehended a combined naval threat from China and Pakistan. The Chinese Navy had 25 submarines and 21 of these had the capability to operate in the Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea. A reassessment of the Chinese naval threat ruled out a naval conflict but the presence of Chinese submarines had been confirmed.

As regards India, the two navies established naval confidence-building measures (CBMs) in 1991. However, the sanctity, efficacy and effectiveness

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42. "Pakistan, China To Extend Defence Ties. To Hold Regular Naval Exercises Strengthening Defense Capability," available at < <http://www.paknews.com> > dated May 29, 2004.

of these CBMs between the two navies is questionable. It is a common practice for the Pakistan Navy to 'shadow' and 'buzz' Indian Navy ships and aircraft while operating in the Arabian Sea or on passage to the Persian Gulf. The Indian Navy also undertakes similar activities when Pakistani naval ships and aircraft engage in exercises or are on passage to Southeast Asia. Both sides have remained silent out of pride or ego. The 'buzzing' and 'formatting'—as these incidents are called—have continued<sup>43</sup> and there has been an unfortunate incident.<sup>44</sup> The downing of the Pakistan Navy Atlantique aircraft can well serve as an incentive for the two navies to build up existing CBMs. In the past, Pakistan and Indian Navy chiefs have made positive declaratory statements to serve conciliatory purposes.<sup>45</sup> Unfortunately, these

43. See "Buzzing Fleets in the High Seas," *Asian Defence Journal*, October 1999. In 1983, an Indian Kashin II class destroyer nearly opened fire on a Pakistani Atlantique. In 1996, there was a near collision between a Pakistan Navy SA.316B Alouette III helicopter and an Indian Navy Sea King shadowing the Pakistan Navy's annual Sea Spark exercise in the Arabian Sea. Pakistan Navy Atlantique and P3C Orions have repeatedly been warned off by Indian Sea Harrier V/STOL fighters scrambled from the aircraft carrier INS *Viraat*. An Indian Navy official stated, that "Every time our warships enter the northern Arabian Sea, it is shadowed by either an Orion or an Atlantique. We do the same to them using our Bears, IL-38s, Dornier-228s and Sea Kings." In the Cold War, the same game was played by US P3C Orions and Soviet Tu-142 Bear long range maritime patrol aircraft. In August 1995, a Pakistan Navy Alouette flew dangerously low over an Indian warship at anchor in the port of Tanjung Priok, Jakarta. Both the Pakistan Navy and Indian Navy had been invited to the Indonesian International Fleet Review. Also see Vijay Sakhuja, *Confidence Building From The Sea: An Indian Initiative* (New Delhi: Knowledge World, 2001). p.34.
44. In a reckless and avoidable sortie, the Pakistan Navy Atlantique ostensibly for radar probes and electronic intelligence snooping repeatedly violated Indian airspace and intruded into the Kutch area in Gujarat. The appearance of this slow moving, long range maritime patrol and anti-submarine warfare aircraft over land was indeed intriguing. Two MiG 21 aircraft of the Indian Air Force intercepted the Pakistani Atlantique. There was no response from the intruder to radio communication warnings from the interceptors. The hostile turning manoeuvre of the Atlantique resulted in shooting down of the aircraft. The 1991 agreement clearly spells out that aircraft will not fly within 10 km of each other's airspace. The failure to abide by the agreement resulted in loss of life as also maritime asset. Indian Navy Sea Harrier aircraft have often intercepted and formatted Atlantique and Orion aircraft acting as snoopers. They have been firmly informed to clear the area or face a nasty situation. It is rather strange that the Pakistani aircraft did not communicate and resorted to a hostile manoeuvre. This clearly shows that the aircraft was on a suspicious mission.
45. Admiral Fasih Bokhari, former chief of Naval Staff of the Pakistan Navy, was quoted as saying, "I would like to see India and Iran trading across our soil; Central Asia and India trading across our soil, because that is a part of integration into the region which gives our neighbours a stake

statements have failed to generate faith. Besides, they have rarely been pursued to their logical end.

The present condition of bilateral relations between India and Pakistan is of suspicion, mistrust, and hostility. Three wars have been fought in the past and the intrusion in Kargil dented the goodwill that was generated post-Lahore bus diplomacy initiative. Besides, the 2001–02 military stand-off was a result of Islamabad's continued sponsoring of terrorism in Kashmir. Despite these events, the two sides have engaged in establishing CBMs aimed at reducing tension. There have been several dialogues, initiatives, summits and exchanges from both sides.<sup>46</sup> On the naval front too the two sides have established CBMs.<sup>47</sup> However, the sanctity, efficacy and effectiveness of these CBMs between the two have been questionable.

#### DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS AND PAKISTAN NAVY

Since independence, both civil and military leaders have governed Pakistan. The Pakistan Navy, though an important component of national defence, never received much favour among the military ruling elites and

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in our security ... moving away from fifty years of India centric policies which have been hostile and confrontationalist into the next, fifty years of befriending India." See "An Interview With Admiral Fasih Bokhari, CNS Pakistan Navy," *Defence Journal*, Islamabad, December 1997, p.6.

46. A plethora of peace initiatives between India and Pakistan have mushroomed and now cover a wide spectrum of issues from military to military agreements to Old School Boys Association. Both sides have also negotiated agreements to reduce tensions and avoid wars and established hotlines, taken steps to prevent wars and have issued notification of military exercises. But these CBMs have not been negotiated in intricate details and the implementation mechanism has been unsatisfactory.
47. The Indian Navy and the Pakistan Navy will avoid holding major military manoeuvres and exercises in close proximity of each other. The strategic direction of the main force being exercised will not be towards the other side and no logistic buildup will be carried out close to it. Any exercise involving six or more ships of destroyer / frigate size and above, exercising in company or crossing into each other's Exclusive Economic Zone will constitute a major exercise. The schedule of major exercises will be transmitted in writing to the other side through diplomatic channels 30 days in advance. Information on type of exercise, latitude and longitude of the area, duration of exercise and type of formations participating are to be intimated. Naval ships and submarines are not to come closer than three nautical miles from each other so as to avoid any accident while operating in international waters. Aircraft of either country will refrain from buzzing surface units and platforms of the other country in international waters.

strategic planners. On the contrary, democratic regimes in Pakistan, whenever in power, encouraged naval acquisitions. During the early years, Liaquat Ali Khan, the first prime minister of Pakistan, understood the importance of the navy and appreciated its role in protecting sea-borne trade on which Pakistan was highly dependent.<sup>48</sup> Even the Quaid-e-Azam, Mohammad Ali Jinnah, noted that Karachi (Pakistan Navy headquarters after independence) was a gateway to western Pakistan besides being the port of call for ships of other countries.<sup>49</sup> Karachi enjoyed a strategic position on the air route from West to East and people from all over the world passed through Karachi. He stressed that given the strategic location of the Pakistan Navy headquarters at Karachi, the eyes of the world were constantly on the way the Pakistan Navy presented itself as the ambassador of the newly independent country. Importantly, the Quaid-e-Azam, in the true traditions of a maritime nation, had chosen a naval officer to be his ADC.<sup>50</sup> Notwithstanding this understanding of maritime importance among the elites in Pakistan, the navy continued to remain a 'Cinderella Service.' Admiral H.M.S. Choudhari, the first commander-in-chief of the Pakistan Navy had noted that "he had to carry out a crusade to create an understanding of the role of navies in the defence of the country."

General Mohammad Ayub Khan, the then army chief, wielded a lot of influence among the Pakistani political establishment and did not appreciate the need of a navy. General Ayub Khan wanted the navy and the air force under the ambit of the army and had even suggested changing the rank structure based on army ranks.<sup>51</sup> The influence of the army was so strong that the traditional white uniform of the Pakistan Navy was changed to khaki.<sup>52</sup> The change was very unpopular and both officers and sailors expressed their unhappiness and the uniform was finally reverted to the

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48. Pakistan Navy Historical Section, n.1, p.146.

49. Ibid., pp.94-95.

50. A photograph taken on August 7, 1947 depicts Quaid-e-Azam standing with Lt S.M. Ahsan, DSCs in Pakistan Navy Historical Section, n.1, p.54.

51. James Goldrick, *No Easy Answers* (New Delhi: Lancer Publishers, 1997), p.59.

52. Pakistan Navy Historical Section, n.1, p.243.

traditional whites. Admiral Choudhari has candidly conceded that it was primarily due to an understanding of matters maritime by the civilian governments that the Pakistan Navy could be built up against an army-dominated mindset.

The Pakistan Navy has not found an important position for itself among the military ruling elite. Naval officers believe that the navy has a better chance of getting its needs approved by civilian governments. They also believe that the political leadership is more conscious of the importance of navies in national defence.<sup>53</sup> For instance, in 1948, despite financial constraints, Quaid-e-Azam permitted the Pakistan Navy to purchase a destroyer from Britain. In 1953, the navy received several naval vessels from the United States. Under President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto's democratic leadership, the Pakistan Navy commissioned a separate aviation branch and also acquired a few naval vessels. After the 1971 India-Pakistan War, President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto held out considerable promise to upgrade what he termed as the forgotten Service. The Pakistan Navy was of the opinion that Bhutto was the first head of state after Quaid-e-Azam to evince interest in the navy.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, during the democratic regimes of Prime Ministers Benazir Bhutto and Nawaz Sharif, the navy acquired submarines, frigates and minesweepers from foreign sources. It can be argued that the Pakistan Navy was provided several opportunities to grow and build up during the democratic period while the military rulers, highly influenced by the continental threat, never appreciated the relevance of a navy.

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There was also a fear among democratically elected leaders that a powerful army was not in their interest as it could challenge democratic institutions and, therefore, were quite happy to allocate resources to the

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53. Siddiqi-Agha, n.6, p. 65.

54. Ibid.

navy. But this belief received a jolt with the events of October 1999. Admiral Fasih Bukhari, Pakistan Navy chief resigned because he was not considered for the post of chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff Committee.<sup>55</sup> He was superseded by General Pervez Musharraf who still had to complete one and a half years of his tenure .It is believed that Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was under great pressure and also feared a possible military coup.

Earlier in 1956, Prime Minister Mohammad Ali Choudhary had ruled out the possibility of giving the Pakistan Navy the status of senior Service.<sup>56</sup> The naval chief had argued that the navy dated back to the 17th century and merited being regarded as the senior most Service. This was based on the fact that the first British armed men to land on Indian soil were the Company marines. But the prime minister maintained that the army was the senior most Service and the order of precedence was laid out as army, navy and air force. It was also concluded that the senior most officer of the respective Service would be designated as commander-in-chief, as was embodied in the Constitution. These events had a great impact on General Ayub Khan who persistently imposed restrictions on financial resources being allocated for the navy.<sup>57</sup> Besides, the general was unhappy with Admiral Choudhari as the latter opposed the appointment of one of the Service chiefs as supreme commander of the armed forces as being against the interests of a democratic government. A variety of conflicting beliefs between the admiral and the general led to the resignation of Admiral H.M.S. Choudhari. The admiral laments that with the Quaid-e-Azam not there to “captain the establishment of a strong , clean and a democratic government in the country,” naval growth had been hampered. According to the admiral, an elected government with the cooperation of the military could evolve a more effective defence for the country.<sup>58</sup>

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55. “Pak Navy Chief Bukhari Quits,” *Indian Express*, October 3, 1999.

56. Pakistan Navy Historical Section, n.1, p.243.

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid.

## FROM A BUYER'S TO A BUILDER'S NAVY

During the early years, the Pakistan Navy had to rely on external sources for its requirements of ships, submarines and aircraft as also their repair. There was very little local infrastructure for repairs and ships were dry-docked at foreign ports as far as Britain and Singapore. The ambition for naval self-reliance was visible in 1951 but had to be put on hold due to financial constraints. Admiral Choudhari had plans to build ships and submarines indigenously but was told by the government that second-hand ships would be better.<sup>59</sup> Consequently, the Pakistan Navy had to make good with second-hand and sometimes obsolete ships. Over the years, there has been an impressive growth in the indigenous shipbuilding and weapon repair capabilities. The Naval Dockyard, Karachi, the Karachi Shipyard and Engineering Works Ltd (KSEW) and Karachi Port Trust (KPT) are the three main organisations catering to the construction and repair works of the Pakistan Navy. Minor facilities for repair also exist at Port Qasim, Gwadar and Pasni .

During the two last decades, the Pakistan Navy has effectively pursued modernisation of naval shipbuilding and repair facilities. Some of the projects are: (a) modernisation of Type-21 frigates; (b) construction of missile equipped vessels; (c) Agosta 90-B submarine construction facilities; (d) establishment of the Maritime Technological Complex (MTC).

Six Amazon class frigates of British origin were retrofitted with state-of-the-art equipment procured through various non-US manufacturers. This modernisation effort was the first in Pakistan's naval history. Similarly, the third Agosta 90-B submarine, purchased under transfer of technology, will be built in the Pakistan Navy dockyard. It is the most prestigious and technically challenging construction project ever undertaken by the naval dockyard.<sup>60</sup> Another project on the anvil is construction in Pakistan of Chinese

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59. Pervaiz Iqbal Cheema, "Arms Procurement in Pakistan: Balancing the Need for Quality, Self-Reliance and Diversity of Supply," in Eric Arnned, ed., *Military Capacity and Risk of War: China India, Pakistan and Iran* (Oxford: OUP), p.155.

60. Lt Cdr Tufail Akhtar Arbab, "Pakistan Navy at the Helm of New Millennium," *Defence Journal*, October 2000. Also see Richard Scott, "Agosta 90 B Surfaces for Pakistan Navy," *Jane's Navy International*, May 1999, pp. 32-37.

Jiangwei class frigates under the transfer of technology plan. KSEW has a major role to play in both these projects.

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to meet its requirements. The Pakistan Navy established the MTC at Rawat, on the same lines as Kamra, under the Ministry of Defence. The MTC is intended for research and development. In 1998, the navy also established the

Naval Research & Development Authority (NRDA) at the naval dockyard and integrated it in the MTC.<sup>61</sup> The sole purpose of the NRDA will be to provide essential field data to evaluate and prioritise development projects. The NRDA has already completed several weapon-oriented projects that are undergoing trials onboard ships and submarines.

#### CONCLUDING REMARKS

From a motley collection of a few ships, the Pakistan Navy has come a long way and today possesses a three-dimensional navy. It has made great strides to keep it modernised with the introduction of force multipliers such as the submarine launched missiles, long range reconnaissance aircraft fitted with anti-ship missiles and, more recently, air independent propulsion systems for submarines. However, its naval capability remains much lower than that of the Indian Navy due to limited mission requirements and area of operations as also financial constraints. It, thus, has relied on a defensive naval strategy. It has concentrated on sea denial and challenged its rival, the Indian Navy, from maintaining naval supremacy.

Pakistan's naval strategy continues to rely on a dense layered defensive posture along its coast and challenges the Indian threat of naval blockade and quarantine. It has developed alternate ports to decongest Karachi and

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61. Siddiqi-Agha, n.6, p.163.

dispel any fear of a naval blockade. Submarines and maritime air are the primary platforms for waging war at sea. Given the limitations of naval platforms, it would operate in the northern Arabian Sea with occasional forays off Indian ports by submarines in an offensive role.

Given the long gestation periods and huge costs of building a navy, Pakistan will continue to buy platforms from any source that is able to provide it with a reliable support base. As regards the submarines, with its

**Pakistan's naval strategy continues to rely on a dense layered defensive posture along its coast and challenges the Indian threat of naval blockade and quarantine.**

experience in assembly/construction of the Agosta- 90B, it may build for other clients particularly for Bangladesh, Malaysia and Latin American Navies. Taking into account the age of the vessels, the Pakistan Navy force levels will begin to decline drastically by 2005, thus, necessitating a major acquisition programme. The likely sources would be China, UK, France and South Korea but these acquisitions will depend on availability of financial resources. Pakistan would continue to consolidate an indigenous shipbuilding capability and may even adopt an aggressive sales strategy. ■