

افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نباشد تن من مباد بدین بوم ویر زنده یک تن مباد
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهیم از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهیم

www.afgazad.com

afgazad@gmail.com

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://thediplomat.com/2017/01/why-indias-icbm-tests-rile-china/>

Why India's ICBM Tests Rile China

The reason behind China's fierce reaction to India's recent missile tests.

By Arun Sahgal
January 14, 2017

Two back-to-back Agni IV and V missile tests have rattled China, particularly as they signal the growing prowess of India's inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM) development program.

Reacting to the Indian missile tests, *Global Times*, an English-language Chinese state-owned publication, gratuitously advised "India to cool its missile fever."

It went on to chastise India for attempting to develop an intercontinental missile capability, adding that owning a few missiles does not mean India has become a nuclear power. "It will be a long time before it [India] can show off its strength to the world," the *Global Times* concluded.

The underlying reason for the Chinese outburst is India's attempt at seeking strategic equivalence with China through its intercontinental missile development program, which can pose a threat to China as well as upset the existing strategic balance in Asia.

Obviously stung by this development, *Global Times* went on to rant about China maintaining a strategic balance in South Asia by helping Pakistan to develop missiles of similar or longer

ranges. In doing so, the paper effectively acknowledged China's support for Pakistan's nuclear program, something the world has long known but which is rarely acknowledged by China.

It is important for India to take note of the Chinese stance and understand what drives this ire — all the more so as China does not see India as a security threat owing to the existing capability (especially technology) gap and India's perceived no-war orientation.

The likely reason for this particular reaction is that China has begun to see developing Indian capabilities and intentions through the lens of the multi-dimensional security challenges that India could pose over the medium term. First among these is the enhancement of India's conventional capability, which China believes could have a direct impact on the situation in Tibet and over the boundary dispute.

Second, China looks upon India's strategic relations in the Asia-Pacific region, particularly growing India-U.S. and India-Japan strategic partnerships and the convergence of maritime democracies, as a part of a process aimed at China's strategic containment.

When it comes to India's nuclear capabilities, China's steadfast stand has been that India is not an internationally recognized nuclear-weapons state under the terms of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Therefore, India's ability to produce nuclear weapons does not accord it international recognition as a nuclear-weapons state. Notwithstanding this Chinese position, India's status as an unofficial nuclear-weapons state is beginning to rankle due to India's growing role as an emerging power and the changing geopolitics of the Asia-Pacific region as a whole.

From a geopolitical point of view, China looks upon India as an aspiring economic and nuclear power, which is being supported by important Western powers (i.e., the United States and its nuclear deal with India) and whose existence outside the NPT regime will marginalize the existing international nuclear regime. The crux of this thinking is that India is being set up as China's nuclear rival with the support of U.S.-led alliance system. Further, China worries that if the situation continues it will lead to reduced power asymmetry between India and China, upsetting the prevailing strategic balance in Asia.

Given the substantial tensions concerning the unresolved Sino-Indian border dispute, as well as the growing salience of the "Pakistan factor" in Sino-Indian security relations, China's perception of India as a nuclear weapons power is important not only for the future evolution of the international nuclear regime but also for future Sino-Indian security relations.

Chinese experts acknowledge that India is worried about a two-front threat from Pakistan and China. They aver that India's security concerns are mainly related to Pakistan, particularly on account of Islamabad's offensive nuclear doctrine and pretensions to leverage tactical nuclear weapons to prevent India from using its superior conventional military force. These concerns also extend to the close security cooperation between Pakistan and China. Given these concerns, from the Chinese perspective Indian nuclear weapons are seen as the "lowest-cost" way to solve its conventional balance problems and to enhance its strategic posture.

Therefore, to Chinese analysts, threats from China and Pakistan, especially the threat from nuclear weapons, have become the greatest excuse for India to legitimize its nuclear weapons program.

However, as mentioned earlier, China does not see India as a serious security threat. This belief is centered on the idea that even if India increases the number of missiles that it can use to target China, Beijing can still handle the threat, given its technological edge and the dispersed deployment of its nuclear weapons. Interestingly the Indian nuclear threat is only seen in counter-force terms and not in counter-city or -value terms, perhaps because of the limited range of the Indian missile systems or the probable high destructive costs of Chinese retaliation.

Further, in terms of intentions, China does not think that India seriously intends to go to war — either nuclear or conventional. This assessment is based on India's strategic culture as well as the consequences, both political and economic. China assumes that India would be more cautious, and would not undertake any provocative action that might lead to war with China.

In short, China judges India's capability by looking at the pace of development and the relative gap that exists between India and China in conventional and nuclear capabilities and technologies. China's perception of India's intentions is equally anchored in the assumption that India and China would never get involved in a full-scale war, whether conventional or nuclear, as it would be both destructive and economically devastating.

This belief by the Chinese leadership is undermined by the back-to-back Indian intermediate and intercontinental missile tests, which signal a push for strategic nuclear parity with China. Many in China believe that India's programs to develop an intercontinental ballistic missile and a strategic nuclear triad, with future MIRV capability, have moved beyond the requirements of minimum deterrence with the potential of upsetting the existing balance of power.

Thus far strategic balance, including extended deterrence, has been part of the China-U.S. strategic dynamic and the sole focus of the Chinese strategic nuclear capability. With the Indian interloper coming on the scene and changing strategic relationships, China in the future could face twin nuclear threats, forcing it to factor Indian nuclear capability in a sort of mirror image of the India-Pakistan-China equations.

More importantly India's long-range missile capability, which can cover most of the Asia-Pacific, will have a deep impact on regional strategic balance, and in a sense challenges Chinese nuclear autonomy in Asia. In the future India could also consider providing extended deterrence to regional powers in Asia as the United States does for Japan and South Korea.

These are some of the considerations that may have crossed the minds of the Chinese after the Agni tests, provoking such a fierce reaction. India will need to be conscious of Chinese sensibilities on emerging Asian nuclear equations, but China too will need to come down from its high horse and initiate a bilateral nuclear confidence-building dialogue. Holding India's nuclear status hostage to India's non-membership in the NPT will not change reality. The earlier China sheds its pretentious approach to the Nuclear Suppliers Group, stops blocking India's

membership, and initiates a bilateral or even trilateral dialogue on nuclear security in Asia, the better it will be for Asian security.