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GL/11/26

**INDIA'S EVOLVING GRAND STRATEGY IN PRACTICE
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**ORGANISED BY CENJOWS
12 MAR 2026**

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Like all major powers in the international system, India pursues a grand strategy that aligns with its ambitions as an emerging great power. Rooted in an ancient civilization and profound cultural heritage, India possesses a distinct strategic culture and its own unique approach to warfare. India's strategic practice is well documented historically. Seminal texts, such as Kautilya's Arthashastra, form the foundation of a realist paradigm that continues to shape the nation's grand strategy today. Furthermore, historically Indian empires—most notably the Cholas—demonstrated a clear grand strategic vision that included power projection and securing crucial Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) across the present-day Indo-Pacific region.

Fundamentally, the concept of grand strategy represents a coherent theory of national security based on a careful synchronization of means and ends. It establishes strategic priorities, accounts for necessary trade-offs, and aligns available national resources accordingly. In the contemporary context, New Delhi is focused on expanding its strategic presence in the Indo-Pacific while simultaneously realizing a credible strategic deterrence against conventional and nuclear threats from both China and Pakistan. Concurrently, India is strengthening its capacity to engage in limited warfare across its borders if compelled. India's maritime strategic outlook serves as a major element in its conception of the broader Indo-Pacific, constituting a foundational pillar of its grand strategic posture. To guarantee the capability for offensive strike operations and maintain credible deterrence along a two-front axis, New Delhi is prioritizing comprehensive military modernization. This evolving assertiveness has been visible in recent proactive military postures against Pakistan across the Line of Control, as well as during the prolonged Doklam and Galwan Valley standoffs with China along the Line of Actual Control.

Geopolitically, the politico-military orientation of India's grand strategy encompasses the entire Asia-Pacific region. The broader Indo-Pacific dynamic is integrated into India's maritime geostrategic outlook, thoughtfully balanced alongside its continental commitments and territorial imperatives. The integration of the Indo-Pacific into

India's maritime calculus involves two distinct operational requirements: asserting control over vital maritime chokepoints and securing broader command of the sea. Together, these enable the critical strategic mandate of keeping international Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) open, free, and secure.

With "Credible Minimum Deterrence" and a "No First Use" doctrine serving as the central tenets of its nuclear policy, India's maritime imperatives—as outlined in official maritime security strategy documents—are increasingly pivotal. Paramount importance is being accorded to nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarines (SSBNs) to ensure a robust, survivable second-strike capability against its nuclear-armed adversaries. Sea-based nuclear deterrence marks a crucial evolution in the 2015 maritime security strategy document compared to its 2007 predecessor. Platforms such as the fully operational INS Arihant, alongside upcoming vessels like the INS Arighat, provide the critical foundation for this strategic architecture. Furthermore, India views the proposed development of an expanded fleet, including nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSNs), as essential to its long-term deterrence goals. Strategic estimates suggest that a balanced force structuring—comprising functional SSBNs, a fleet of nuclear-powered attack submarines (SSNs), and an accompanying strength of conventional diesel-electric submarines (SSKs)—is required for the Indian Navy to entirely fulfill its mandate as an effective, blue-water force capable of multi-dimensional operations.

Concurrently, despite navigating a challenging neighborhood, India continues to advocate for diplomacy and stable relations wherever feasible. Furthermore, as an extension of its grand strategic vision, India is actively projecting soft power and expanding diplomatic outreach into extended neighborhoods, such as Central Asia, and geographically distant domains, such as the Pacific Island nations.

In conclusion, India's emerging grand strategy rests on enhanced strategic partnerships with other major global powers, notably the United States, through strategic mechanisms like the Quad. It also entails asserting greater influence within multilateral forums, driven by a longstanding desire for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council, and eventually seeking structural accommodation within the global nuclear order commensurate with its recognized status as a responsible nuclear-armed state.