

The dissuasive potential, and strategic reach, of a nuclear-powered hunter-killer submarine was clearly demonstrated in the Falklands conflict and it is unlikely that Indian naval planners missed the lesson. Given the training role of the INS *Chakra*, it is highly probable that India has embarked on a major programme to procure more such vessels. It is generally accepted that the Indian navy will ultimately operate six nuclear-powered vessels of the *Sierra* or *Victor* class.⁴³ Both types of submarine are capable of carrying nuclear weapons and India has demonstrated its ability to produce sophisticated missiles as well as a "peaceful" nuclear explosion. Therefore, a potentially nuclear-armed, as well as nuclear-powered, Indian submarine fleet must be considered a distinct possibility at some point in the future.⁴⁴ At this stage, however, it is more pertinent to address the question of the nuclear-powered submarine acquisition programme in terms of its political implications.

The Soviet Connection in Indian Naval Expansion

The fact that the nuclear-powered submarine has been "leased" from the Soviet Union raises speculation about future Soviet involvement in India's naval strategy. Whether or not "leasing" is a euphemism for "giving" remains to be seen, but it is not a practice unique to Indo-Soviet military relations. The United States has recently leased eight frigates to Pakistan and has followed this procedure in the past. Such arrangements are partly designed to assuage regional security concerns and to give a measure of comfort to the opposing superpower. They also save the recipient considerable expenditure and provide a quick and effective means of

⁴³ See: McKinley, op cit. p. 25. The same figure was given to the author in a conversation with a Pakistani naval officer.

⁴⁴ A second nuclear-powered submarine was expected to be transferred to India in 1989 but has not materialized. It is widely rumoured that Indian crews have not mastered the nuclear technology on the *Chakra* and that safety considerations may be holding up further transfers from Moscow. Alternatively, cost factors and/or a change in Moscow's position with respect to New Delhi's stance on nuclear non-proliferation may account for the apparent slowing down of the nuclear submarine program. See note 46 below.