

Necessity of Maritime Security in Gwadar Port Complex

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Abstract

In the changing global scenario of international politics, the growing attention following the end of the Cold War, has been directed towards oceans. Indian Ocean and its region has gained immense attention in the past few years. Due to the presence of strategic Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs) and choke points-Indian Ocean has crucial importance to drive international politics. The level of competition in the region has increased. With China's rise as a global economic power, the hegemonic status of US is being challenged. In this regard, China's String of Pearls strategy comes to light with special reference to the One Belt, One Road (BRI). The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is the most potent part of the Belt-Road Initiative. The surmounting attention owes to the geostrategic location of Gwadar. Connecting Gwadar with Xinjiang-it would provide China with an alternate route to reach the Middle Eastern and North African markets, ending its Malacca Dilemma. CPEC in this regard, requires a diverse map for maritime security which sees the interplay of four major navies in the region-US, PLA Navy, Pakistan and the Indian Navy.

Keywords: Indian Ocean, BRI, CPEC, PLA Navy, Maritime Security, Gwadar, US, Heartland Theory

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Introduction

The changing international scenario of world politics has put the Indian Ocean at the forefront of discussion. The nature of politics in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is characterized to be of political, economic and strategic in nature. As politics and economics go hand in hand, IOR is touted to be one of the fundamental areas where the contestation of twenty-first century will be based. As Robert Kaplan emphasizes in his book, *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power*

“It is my contention that the Greater Indian Ocean, stretching eastward from the Horn of Africa past the Arabia Peninsula, the Iranian plateau, and the Indian subcontinent, all the way to the Indonesian archipelago and beyond, may comprise a map as iconic to the new century as Europe was to the last one.”

(*Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power*, Robert D Kaplan)¹

In this context, the Indian Ocean faces its primary contestation in the form of alliances and rivalries. The most basic form of alliance exists between China and Pakistan, and US and India. The rivalry and US's apprehension of a dominant China has put it in a position of countering and containing it in the Indo-Pacific region.

China's rise has been significant in the past decade. As twenty-first century is dubbed to be the Asian Century, the nature of competition has changed drastically due to the economic concerns. The international trade is dependent on the sea routes which have to be secured for a state's vital interests. Indian Ocean in this regard is considered to be of crucial importance as it holds the most important choke points in the world.

The need for the preservation of oceans, water bodies and the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) arises primarily, due to the increased competition between the nation states of the world. The ever-increasing and potent role of seas in the 21st century is important because of the rationale that sets a state's dominance. Indian Ocean in this regard holds an important position in the international arena.

¹ Robert D. Kalpan, *The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power*. (New York, NY: Random House, 2010.)

Indian Ocean has always been a different water body than other oceans. Historically, all the major powers have used it to cross and reach the land areas. To its north are Pakistan, India and Iran, to its east are Australia, Malay Peninsula and Indonesia, to its west lie Arabian Peninsula and Africa. It is considered distinct from the other oceans since it lies at the junction of Pacific and Atlantic Ocean and the Mediterranean Sea. Due to its status as the main line of communication, its relevance in today's politics is due to its coastal ports. Its primary importance lies in the way it is connected and surrounded by land and the oceanic body.² The waters of its coastal ports operate the all year and thus its waters are deep, which ensures smooth trade.³ Furthermore, in historical perspective, the focus of the major powers has always been a source of contestation in the Indian Ocean region. The eastern and western sides of the ocean saw developments separately⁴, which meant a strong history of competition and colonial rule in the Subcontinent.

Strategic Importance of Indian Ocean

According to David Michel and Russell Sticklor of the Stimson Centre, Indian Ocean under the current competition, would account for an increased approach in maritime security, governance and inter-state alliances and competitions.⁵

Hence, its importance is further accentuated by the presence of vital Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs) also known as Choke points. Out

² Sourendra Nath Kohli., *Sea Power and the Indian Ocean: with special reference to India*, (New Delhi, 1987).

³ Li Jiachaeng, "Developing China's Indian Ocean Strategy: Rationale and Prospects", *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies*, 3, no.4, (2017): 481-497, <https://www.worldscientific.com/doi/pdf/10.1142/S2377740017500270>.

⁴ Satish Chandra, B. Arunchalam, and V Suryanaryan, *The Indian Ocean and its Islands Strategic, Scientific and Historical Perspectives*. (New Delhi: Sage Publications, 1993).

⁵ Sohail A. Azmie, "Maritime Security in the Indian Ocean: The Region Centric Multilateral Approach", *Center for International Strategic Studies Insight*, 5, no.3, <http://ciss.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/Article-01-Maritime-Security-in-the-Indian-Ocean.pdf>.

of these, the most crucial choke points located in the IOR, are Bab-el-Mandeb (connecting Gulf of Aden with the Red Sea and then with the Suez Canal), Suez Canal (connects Europe and Asia), Strait of Hormuz (connects Persian Gulf, to Gulf of Oman and then the Arabian Sea) and the Strait of Malacca (connects Indian Ocean to South China Sea and Pacific Ocean).⁶

As described by Sugata Bose, it is an “inter-regional arena”⁷. Provided in the prophecies of the naval historian and strategist Sir Halford Mackinder in his much cited Heartland theory presented in ‘The Geographical Pivot of History’ in 1904-the control of the world (or world island) rests on the control of Eurasia. This in turn is also seen in the writings of Sir Alfred Mahan who emphasized on the control of the seas. The ocean sees intense conflict with US-China vying for its dominance, with India, Pakistan and Iran as subsidiary actors.

3. China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

In the light of Mackinder’s Heartland Theory-China’s ‘String of Pearls’ strategy lies at the very core of it. With many security analysts considering it as a setup for establishing its naval bases, CPEC on the other hand is a major component of Maritime Silk Route concept. The crucial regard of this aspect has increased the relevance of the Indian Ocean along with its coastal regions.

Out of these is China’s flagship project the ‘China-Pakistan Economic Corridor’ (CPEC) which is part of the ‘One Belt, One Road’ initiative. CPEC tends to be the transformative project for South Asia. The nature of this aspect holds true because of its strategic location.

CPEC aims to connect the western province of Xinjiang with Gwadar, located in the volatile province of Balochistan. According to Munir Akram’s article in Dawn titled The New Great Game

“It (CPEC) will transform China from a one- to a two-ocean power; enable a part of its \$4000 billion annual trade to circumvent the Malacca

⁶ Indian Navy, “Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy”, (2015).

⁷ Azmie, “Maritime Security in the Indian Ocean: The Region Centric Multilateral Approach”, n.d.

Straits and other potential chokepoints in the Indian Ocean and shorten China's supply lines to the Gulf, West Asia and Africa. For these reasons, if no other, China has a vital stake in Pakistan's strategic stability and socioeconomic development. The Chinese commitment of \$46bn for CPEC projects is but the first installment of the massive capital which China is prepared to deploy in Pakistan. The power contest in Asia is now mainly between China and America, and, to a lesser extent, between America and Russia — with India, Pakistan, Iran and others in subsidiary roles.”⁸

CPEC is being given primordial attention primarily because of the strategic location. Gwadar lies in close proximity with the Strait of Hormuz. Its natural geostrategic environment enables it to resolve China's Malacca Dilemma.

Gwadar requires a complete structure of the maritime security primarily due to the nature of threats and challenges presented to it both in the form of internal and external components. CPEC which is located at Gwadar lies at the heart of China's BRI. BRI wants to connect mainland China with the Middle East, North Africa and then Europe through a network of railway lines, roads and other infrastructure programmes. China is part of six of these corridors. Laying a ground network of these corridors connecting states together, China plans to project its economy and trade through the 21st Century Maritime Silk Route.

Thus, it ultimately makes the contestation in the Indian Ocean a huge concern for both the international and regional players. It in this regard holds primary importance for China. Currently, China's rise and its emergence in the international politics is hugely dependent on its trade passing through the Strait of Malacca.

The strait connects the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean. With the rising level of threat in the form of piracy, trafficking and extremism, the Strait of Malacca is the only sea route presently available to China.

Once CPEC is fully functional it would address this problem of China by reducing the cost of freight and the duration of the cargo. Gwadar -the largest deep sea port in the world constitutes to be one of the primary

⁸ Munir Akram, “The New Great Game”, *Dawns News*, June 12, 2016, accessed on April 5, 2019, <https://www.dawn.com/news/1264242> .

regions in South Asia that holds the power to determine the great power struggle in the region as well as in the international arena. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which is being developed in this coastal region is considered to be the flagship project of the Belt-Road Initiative (BRI). The \$46 billion project, now projected to be of \$62 billion aims to connect the southwestern coastal city of Gwadar with the Chinese province Xinjiang, thus providing an alternative route to China for international trade. The territorial sketch of the project connects Asia, Europe and Africa, by linking China with Russia, Central Asia, Russia and Europe in the North. It then tends to link the sea routes by connecting China with Persian Gulf, Mediterranean Sea through Central Asia and Indian Ocean in the South.

As mentioned above tracing the maritime route of BRI, starts from China's coast ending in Western Europe, with Indian Ocean and South China Sea on one side and South Pacific on the other. According to an estimate, CPEC would cover \$ 2.1 trillion Gross Domestic Product (GDP), with a population of 4.4 billion. This would account for 63 percent of world Gross Domestic Population (GDP) and 29 percent of the world's population.⁹

The initiative would be developed through a railway network from Kashgar to Gwadar and other projects-such as dry ports and the development of special economic zones. CPEC as a project is divided into a few phases, including

- a. The first one is projected to be achieved by 2020. With CPEC being connected with the economic situation of the country, the early harvest projects are aimed to be achieved by 2020.
- b. By 2025, the visions of 2025 and other industrial projects would be achieved.

⁹ Khalid Mehmood Alam, Xuimei Li, and Saranjam Baig, "Impact of Transport Cost and Travel Time on Trade under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)", *Journal of Advanced Transportation*, (2019), <https://www.hindawi.com/journals/jat/2019/7178507/> .

c. By 2030, CPEC would be complete. Functional, it would connect Central and South Asia.¹⁰

CPEC therefore is the transformative project that is crucial for Pakistan in aspects that range from economic to strategic. It is the basis that would provide and provides Pakistan with the necessary leverage against its arch-rival India. The project, with China's support holds immense importance for the IOR.

Gwadar - Strategic Significance

The emphasis on Gwadar, or primarily, in its development stems from the fact that Gwadar lies in close proximity to the world's busiest choke points-Strait of Hormuz. It lies 605 km east to the strait. The strategic importance of Gwadar lies because of its proximity to the Strait of Hormuz (connecting Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman). More than twenty percent of world's oil passes through it every day. And more than seventy-seven percent of world trade towards Asia-Pacific passes through the Strait of Hormuz every day. Gwadar's location provides for an alternate route for China, and thus once developed and fully functional it would also account for an increased power showdown in South Asia, or more precisely the Indian Ocean Region. Shortening China's distance in comparison to the Strait of Malacca, from 21 to 24 days for Middle East and 21 days for Europe. Also, the cost calculated states that a \$1450 decrease is estimated for cargos in the Middle East and \$1350 for those in Europe.¹¹

According to a very famous statement made by the former president General Musharraf in 2002, Gwadar is "economic funnel of the whole region." Another advantage that Gwadar gets is that it is a deep sea port. This rivalry was seen during the cold war-when Soviet Union wanted to get to the Strait of Hormuz, through Gwadar port.

¹⁰ Vice Admiral @ Farooq Rashid, "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the Emerging Maritime Security Environment," Islamabad Papers, no. 37th, (2018), http://issi.org.pk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/IP_Farooq_Rashid_37_18.pdf

¹¹ Alam, Li, and Baig, "Impact of Transport Cost".

Gwadar is located near the most important Sea Line of Communication (Strait of Homuz). By providing an alternate route to China, for trade and energy-Gwadar and the Indian Ocean dominate much of the international debate. Moreover, its location away from Pakistan's eastern border makes it an even more suitable option for trade and energy transit. Therefore, it requires a closer look at the maritime security and its pertinence to the Indian Ocean region.

a. Gwadar-China's Strategic Gambit: China's BRI is one of its primary interest in the Indian Ocean. With its growing economy and energy needs-its trade travels through the choke points in the ocean. Strait of Malacca constitutes to be one of the crucial gateways that provides China the passage to reach Middle East and subsequently North Africa and Europe. About a quarter of world's energy consumption is accounted under China's figures. Malacca Strait is a water body that connects the Indian and the Pacific Ocean. Located between the Malay Peninsula and Indonesia's Sumatra Island-this strait becomes an arc from Southeast Asia to the Red Sea. Giving it the name of the 'Arc of Islam.'

China post-Cold War-since the early 2000s is being considered as a contender to US's hegemony in international politics. This idea put forward by many Western scholars, due to its economic development posits to be a serious threat to the American order. Although China's economy does not bear the characteristic marks of its (agrarian) communism-its distinct features, do not hinder the international mode of trade. It being an eastern and an old Asian civilization certainly makes a shift from the western control over international politics.

b. China's Malacca Dilemma: As many scholars have contributed to the Malacca Dilemma faced by China in the Indian Ocean, its policies have always been matched with the US and looked at skeptically. Almost a quarter of world's oil is consumed by China. And the heavy vessels have to go through the Malacca Strait. Malacca strait comes under relative influence of India (due to its geographical proximity). And with US already having established bases near the choke points, accounts for a different Chinese strategy to safeguard its interests in the Indian Ocean region. China's fears regarding Malacca derive from the presence of India (with whom it shares a hostile relation) and US's

presence in the region. An American researcher claimed at US's National Defence University that if China's poses a detrimental threat to the US-it could block off the Malacca Strait. Such an action would automatically impose an embargo on China, cutting of its energy supply and trade.

The researcher focused on establishing dominance through sea control, by sending off 13-15 Marine Corps which could control around 800 Chinese ships/vessels carrying its trade. Furthermore, China's fears arise due to India's "Look East policy"-which has a substantial chunk concentrated on developing economic and strategic ties with the nations in Southeast Asia. This naturally would counterbalance, the Chinese threat that India's faces in the Indian Ocean. India in this regard, while interacting with the nations in Southeast Asia does not consider it be an inherent part of China. It nonetheless asserts a historic, traditional and Indian characteristic and perspective to the use and domination of the Indian Ocean by India.

Exacerbating the threat is the constant presence of US in the Indian Ocean. The alliance that India-US have formed over the years, and with US's "Pivot to Asia" strategy, its Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) signed in 2016, continue to affect China's Indian Ocean policy. The agreement resides on the use of each other's (US and India) military facilities to contain and counter China's growing influence in the region. Along with this India under Modi administration has charted off in a new direction to develop and strengthen its ties with US's allies-including Australia and Japan.

Known as the Quad alliance, the security dialogue which was disbanded in 2008 has been revived under Trump administration. But developments as these do not seem to 'obstruct' China. According to an article published in the Foreign Policy magazine, Trump should engage Southeast nations to ward off Chinese influence.

China with the above mentioned realities requires to revamp its strategy in the Indian Ocean. China has come at the forefront of the world politics due to its economic size. The Malacca dilemma, along with a hostile neighbourhood would affect its

influence. For this very purpose, the much discussed BRI's primordial project CPEC.

Since CPEC starts to project Chinese trade through Gwadar port, it would also reduce the time and cost required for Chinese shipment. Providing an alternative route is the key to reduce the danger that Malacca Strait poses for China. Another danger that the Malacca strait poses is its narrowness, which has been the cause of sinking of the Chinese ships. According to the figures, Indian Ocean constitutes to be the most crucial of shipping lanes for China the other being (Eastern Pacific, Arctic and the Atlantic). With 40 percent of Chinese trade passing through Indian Ocean and more than 80 percent of imports coming to China, Indian Ocean remains as a top priority for China.

c. Traditional Threats to Gwadar - US-India Partnership: US-India in a bid to counter China in the IOR have developed a strong partnership. India in its rivalry with China has developed a formidable alliance with the US. Although, China does not consider India as its rival or a competitor. But US and India are cooperating in the region to contain China's rise.

Geographically, US is the only country in the Indian Ocean region that does not have a presence in the region, as a country. But continues to deter, dominate, influence and control the affairs of the area. International pundits have prophesied that its hegemonic status and established order would be challenged by a Chinese one. Surpassing the tag of world's biggest economy by 2030, would make US the second biggest and India third largest.

US's biggest gambit in the region is being challenged by China's emergence. Indian Ocean being a region comprising of both land and water, includes some of the most crucial Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs) or choke points. Being functional all year round, the global trade and energy transits hold a significant position for states especially US.

US's presence in South Asia and then subsequently in the Indian Ocean is not a 21st century phenomena. During the Cold War, it characterized the region into South, Central and East Asia. But this is now a crucial part of US's policy.

For over a decade, US had no adversary in international politics. But China's rise has made it divert its Asia policy. With Obama's Pivot to Asia, and joint oped penned by Obama and Modi in 2014 outlining the importance of their ties and core areas-US under the Trump administration has renewed its shift and focus in the region by assigning the name of Indo-Pacific to the region. It under its new National Security Strategy defines the Indo-Pacific region as "from the western shores of India to the western shores of US."

Thus, defining the present US strategy for the Indian Ocean can be traced back to 1986. During the last years of the cold war-US marked sixteen crucial shipping lanes in the world, and decided to control them. The pattern devised includes six in Indian Ocean. The order of this mechanism is, Hormuz, Suez Canal, Malacca, Bab-el-Mandab, Persian Gulf and those of South Africa. Militarily, the western side of the ocean comprises of Arabian Sea, Red Sea, Gulf waters, and the eastern waters of Africa-which constitute as US Fifth Fleet's operational area. Whilst, the remaining waters come under US Seventh Fleet.

US's Indian Ocean strategy is part of its Indo-Pacific approach. And according to the Council on Foreign Relations US's Indo-Pacific strategy has more Pacific and less Indo. US in this matter only has one key ally against China, in the Indian Ocean region and that turns out to be India.

In the new great game, that is the easiest connotation to describe the situation of the region-US's alliance with India is pitted against China. In a much similar manner, Pakistan's alliance with China is to influence India in South Asia. India's aspirations to become the regional hegemon, would only be in line with the US, till it does not challenge its hegemony in global politics.

US on the other hand, prefers India since it is not a threat to American domination in the region. US as mentioned above also seeks Indian partnership, as it perceives India's Look East policy is compatible with US's Balancing Asia strategy.

Although Indo-US history during the cold war has been somewhat ambivalent. India developed a quasi-Monroe doctrine under Nehru's leadership. That adhered to non-interference by external powers in the region. The posture only changed under an Indira Doctrine, which was further developed under Gujral (also known as Gujral Doctrine). These have started a tradition of allowing external powers in the region, as long as they do not challenge Indian dominance.

US in this regard has been an unequivocal supporter of India in the region. Its control over the shipping lanes in the Indian Ocean, along with its naval stations has been challenged by China's String of Pearls strategy. To contain a rising China and to follow Mahan's words-American primacy has extended to include India, along with Japan, Australia and other Southeastern nations. This also has led to the development of Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor (IPEC) on the lines of BRI, LEMOA and Quad among many other initiatives.

The security concerns arise because of the speculation that US-India consider China's 'String of Pearls' strategy as a threat to 'encircle' India. Though based on speculations, it has resulted in above mentioned agreements like LEMOA (Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement). The agreement, according to a newspaper report provides the basis for

*"The Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) allows the two allies to use each other's military facilities for checking China's growing influence in Asia and in the fight against terrorists."*¹²

Furthermore, the American focus on CPEC can be seen through the statement given by Secretary of State Rex Tillerson that termed the launch of CPEC as an 'unfolding phase.' America has also expressed its disapproval and supported India's stance over CPEC's route through Gilgit-Baltistan.

¹² Rashid, "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and the Emerging Maritime Security Environment": 14.

Non-traditional Threats Some emerging challenges, studied as non-traditional threats to the development of Gwadar and CPEC are appended below:

a Baloch Insurgency: Pakistan faces the threat of Baloch insurgency in its Southwestern province. This threat has been exacerbated by the involvement of foreign actors in the regions including Iran and India. Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) is one of the most active groups in Balochistan. It formidably attacks the military and defense force of Pakistan. The activities that take place in Balochistan under the guise of grievances are often linked with the involvement of India. According to a report, BLA and other insurgent groups in Balochistan have expressed their disapproval over the 'Western' route of CPEC. Incidents like these, governmental neglect and foreign intrusion all have constituted to the dire state of Balochistan. In this aspect, CPEC though is crucially located in Gwadar. It nonetheless, is not seen as an opportunity for Balochs. Although the national leaders of the province have offered their support for the project, the insurgents on the other hand present a much bigger problem.

With these problems-Balochistan is also engulfed in hybrid warfare. Hybrid Warfare is an amalgamation of conventional, non-conventional and technological resources. Employed through fake news and now through social media, it makes an extensive use of both state and non-state actors.

Hybrid Warfare's sole purpose is to destabilize a state internally without any clear involvement by a state. India in this respect has been a conventional enemy. Now deploying its reach through non-state actors, CPEC has been at the target of this hybrid warfare.¹³

Pakistan to develop Gwadar and to protect the project has deployed a Special Security Divisions (SSD). To counter such

¹³ Farman Kakar, "Hybrid Warfare and Pakistan," *The News*, January 13, 2019, <http://tns.thenews.com.pk/hybrid-warfare-pakistan/#.XLb-rzAzBM>.

threats the army has employed nine army infantry battalions and six civil armed forces wings, with 12,000 troops.¹⁴

b. Extremism: Another potent threat to CPEC is the growing radicalization both in Pakistan and China. China has been facing the problem of Uighur minority in North-Western Xinjiang province. The Muslim minority is said to have connections with the Tehreek-e-Taliban in Afghanistan and the Eastern Turkestan Islamic Movement.

Both these issues are serious apprehensions for China. In matters of pursuing the BRI and CPEC in this respect.

c. Afghanistan Instability: Afghanistan is crucial to China's peace process. Since as mentioned above, Uighur extremists are directly supported by the Afghan Taliban. China in order to make a much focused approach towards the implementation of BRI, engaging with Afghanistan is a stable option.¹⁵ The Afghan peace process requires China on the table, for a stable South Asia.

Since Afghanistan is a land-locked country. Chabahar cannot provide it with the assistance and connection that CPEC can. Also China on the other hand historically and according to its recent White papers does not want to establish hegemonic control over any state in the world. It is this idea that can largely build Afghanistan and develop its infrastructure.

d. Military Component: India being a state with a huge territory and population has always projected itself to be the regional hegemon of not only South Asia, but of the Indian Ocean region. IOR is the new chess board for the new great game, where both the regional and external actors are involved. Stating

¹⁴ Hamzah Riffat, Tridivesh Singh Maini, *The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Strategic Rationales, External Perspectives, and Challenges to Effective Implementation*. (Washington: Stimson Center, 2016): 14, <https://www.stimson.org/wp-content/files/file-attachments/The%20China-Pakistan%20Economic%20Corridor%20-%20Final.pdf>.

¹⁵ Ahmed Bilal Khalil, (2019, April 12). "The Afghan National Unity Government's China Card Approach to Pakistan; Part 2," *The Diplomat*, April 12, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/04/the-afghan-national-unity-governments-china-card-approach-to-pakistan-part-2>.

in regard with the hegemonic aspirations of China and India, James R. Holmes and Toshi Yoshihara, associate professors at US Naval War College, were of the view that both states, to achieve this have “redirected their gazes from land to the seas.”

India purports to be a nation that is contributing towards normal ties with its neighbouring countries. Its criteria and approach towards ‘panscheel’ and peaceful coexistence from the cold war era, has been revamped recently. In a new and changed approach, India defence sector especially its navy has transformed its guard and delivered a new strategy in the Indian Maritime Security Strategy that talks about its navy’s aim to extend its control to the choke points of the Indian Ocean, by maintaining a robust navy. The Indian interests, thus rely heavily on its aspiration to become a regional Hegemon, consequently making it an influential state in the international arena.

US and India have been cooperating in this regard. One of the most important agreements seen recently is Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) signed between US and India. The agreement allows India to recheck its supply at US naval stations providing US with the same facilities. Agreements such as these show US-Indian alliance in regard to the growing Chinese influence.

Prior to this a prominent shift in the Indo-US alliance was seen during Obama’s tenure. Obama’s ‘Pivot to Asia’ delivers US’s strategic interests in South Asia. And thus working upon Mahan’s heartland theory-US’s focus to the Indo-Pacific region (as characterized by Trump’s Asia strategy) is to maintain its hegemonic status and also to deter.

India in the military dimension has become the only state in South Asia increasing its military budget. This can be seen in the form of continuous up gradation in India’s military buildup. US supported India in joining the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR). Along with this a renewal in US’s posture towards India has altered the dynamics of regional politics in the Indian Ocean.

India’s continuous military buildup includes the development of Ballistic Missile Submarine (SSBN) Airhant which can target up to 2000 km. It has made India capable of second strike and also has increased

Pakistan's fears. India's naval buildup in the Indian Ocean gives rise to concern to the nuclearization.¹⁶ According to sources India is also developing its nuclear enrichment facilities to provide for its nuclear equipped submarines. The reports presented by Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO), India is working towards developing Multiple Independent Targetable Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV). Such capacities will greatly increase India's potential and strength in the region. US-India have been cooperating in this realm.

Ashley J. Tellis a senior associate Carnegie Endowment for International Peace has termed the Indo-US partnership as strategic partnership in the Indo-Pacific region. The areas of cooperation include missile, technology, nuclear technology, environmental challenges, defence cooperation,

Furthermore, the Indo-US Nuclear deal has also lobbied and supported India's nuclear arsenal. This aspect has increased the likelihood of increased defence competition. China, on the other hand has been working to develop and build its nay-PLA Navy to dominate the Indian Ocean region. This includes the development of Anti-ship Ballistic Missile (ASBMs), Anti-ship Cruise Missile (ASCMs), submarines, the C4ISR (command and control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance).

Chinese Navy on the other hand, has also been dealing with piracy. Piracy has grown on to become an international threat. China since 2011 in Libya also protected its 35,000 workers from an international piracy ring.

As US-India have been cooperating in the IOR, China-Pakistan on the other hand have been simultaneously increasing their naval capacities. A deal of us \$600 million construction and development of four frigates between China and Pakistan was signed, which now has joined the PN naval fleet. The recent strategic defence collaboration between Pakistan and China is considered to be the largest between two countries.

¹⁶ Qadeer, M. A. India's Military Build-up: Intent and Purpose. *The Diplomat*, April 12, 2019, <https://thediplomat.com/2019/04/the-afghan-national-unity-governments-china-card-approach-to-pakistan-part-2/>

PLA Navy aims to develop itself as a blue-water navy. That is wants to develop its focus towards maintain the strength to conduct global operations especially deep sea-ports. This aim of PLA Navy, along with China's String of Pearls strategy is considered as a threat to encircle India, by some of the Indian analysts.

Though China does not want consider India as its enemy-India's approach to become the regional hegemon under US's umbrella will see contestation in IOR. US's off-shore balancing strategy ¹⁷has given India a free hand and an unprecedented level of domination over smaller neighbouring littoral states.

Pakistan Navy and Gwadar

Pakistan Navy post 9/11 has been part of various operation. Some operations were launched from Northern Arabian Sea which led to the downfall of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. Pakistan Navy which is also part of Task Force-151 to combat the threat of piracy. Also Pakistan Navy has conducted several other exercises with other nations-titled AMAN. Furthermore, its local production of Zulfiqar class F-22P frigate has added to the potential of Pakistan Navy.

Also, it has deployed the Special Security Division (SSD)-secured by SSD Task Force 88 includes aircraft carriers, drones, fast attack craft, surveillance vehicles to counter conventional and non-conventional threats to CPEC including the protection of sea lines of communication (SLOCs).

Various Initiatives as Regional Responses to CPEC (BRI)

- a. Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor:** The term Indo-Pacific has been almost everywhere in US policy. Started off by Hilary Clinton in 2011 as an answer to a burgeoning threat by China-IPEC that is the Indo-Pacific Economic Corridor aims to connect South and Southeast Asia. India's Look East policy is supported by Modi's Link East policy.

¹⁷ Rashid, (2018). "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)", 10.

Though the corridor has been stressed under the Trump administration, its work is not yet completed to compete with the BRI. Its main focus is to counter the growing Chinese influence. US though not geographically located or bordered by the Indian Ocean. It still considers itself a part of the Indo-Pacific region. As is evident from the words of David N. Rosenblum (Deputy Assistant Secretary in US's State Department's Bureau for South and Central Asia) "stretching from the US West Coast to the Bay of Bengal" show the shift in its policy towards the IOR.

- b. Chabahar Port:** India, along with Iran and Afghanistan has vouched to invest and develop the sister port of Gwadar-Chabahar located in Iran's Baluchestan-Sistan province. India's bet on Chabahar is to undermine Pakistan, and also to influence Afghanistan. Chabahar lies 80 km from Gwadar. It still does not give India the same advantage as China gets from Gwadar.
- c. Naval Bases:** Maritime security incorporates economic, oceanic, recreational and security issues. It thus is another word in the twenty-first century that defines a state's progress. With the increasing possibility of nations to develop themselves as a Blue Economy, it crucially depends on managing their maritime security. But the concept of maritime security for major powers engaged in competition also depends on establishing and controlling the SLOCs. Indian Ocean constitutes to be an important part in this. With US already being a major naval power, having a strong presence in the region. China's String of Pearls strategy that aims to connect the mainland China, to the Port of Sudan, through military and economic initiatives-is eyed as a threat to US's dominance in the IOR. Djibouti (an African state) is the latest example of this competition. With India having gained access to the Japanese base in the French-African hub makes it an evident assertion of the rising competition between these powers.

Another concern for the US-Indian relationship in IOR is CPEC. The apprehension of it being used as naval base has been reiterated many a times by the Western and Indian media. It significantly has been denied by China.

d. Gulf Countries and the Indian Ocean: Further competition is seen in the Indian Ocean between Jebel Ali and Gwadar. The silent competition between the two according to analysts is considered will take away Dubai's position. Gwadar is touted to be the next Dubai. This has led to the brewing of an increasing war between the two ports.

Other competition in the Middle East and Gwadar includes Bab-el-Mandeb, Suez Canal, Gulf of Aden, Persian Gulf, Red Sea, Arabian Sea, Gulf of Oman collectively known as the Western Indian Ocean are also seeing a regional and external competition. Due to China's rise and engagement with ports in this region-Gwadar due to its geostrategic location seems to be the most plausible option for China.

Other geopolitical concern includes the Quad dialogue. Including US, Japan, Australia and India-Quad is not an official forum. Though it has been referred to be an alliance to guard against China's rising influence. It is considered to be an unofficial announcement of targeting China and its interests in the Indo-Pacific. Surrounded by Pacific and the Indian Oceans-Australia turns out to be a strong share holder in the alliance formed against China. Its shift in policy is caused by paying more attention to the Indian Ocean-as it is the arena of great power contest.

Conclusion

Robert Kaplan has emphasized on the importance that the Indian Ocean will play in the twenty-first century. Considering the fact that Indian Ocean has many focal points -Gwadar is one of them.

The need for maritime security includes the changing face of geopolitics and geo-economics in the region. Being part of CPEC-China's most prominent BRI projects, the region accounts for a more nuanced approach. Since Gwadar in the bigger picture is an essential component of China's Maritime Silk Road-it is considered to be a source of threat for US hegemony in IOR. As Kaplan has argued in his book *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power*, he talks about how America considers "the gradual loss of Indian and western Pacific

Oceans as veritable American lakes” signifies America’s concern over the Indo-Pacific region. Thus, owing to its renewed shift towards Asia. The Indian Ocean is an arena of conflict for major as well as regional powers. The struggle to contain and counter China holds great significance and implications for Pakistan. Therefore, a robust strategy over maritime security is key in defending our interests (both strategic and economic).

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