

## Great Powerplay in the Indian Ocean: Implications for the Region

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p- ISSN: 2521-2982

e- ISSN: 2707-4587

p- ISSN: 2521-2982

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### Abstract

The Indian Ocean is important due to its strategic location, geopolitical significance and trade activities being performed through it. The United States of America is attaining energy, and other resources have a deep interest in the region. China, through its "string of pearls strategy", is encountering the American goals in the regional by the promotion of its economic activities, securing its dominance in the region, thus posing a constant challenge to the later as well as a regional power i.e. India. Contending interests of regional and international powers in the Indian Ocean Region has led to power projection, affected the security environment, fuelling the issues. The necessity to preserve the available energy resources for survival and to meet future needs is attracting great powers to the Indian Ocean Region. The close alliance between the US and India and dwindling relations between the US and Pakistan are leading towards close ties between Pakistan and China.

**Key Words:** Indian Ocean, Pakistan, Indus Water Treaty, Challenges, Rising China

### Introduction

The Indian Ocean is considered as third largest ocean after the Pacific and Atlantic, prevails up to 75 million kilometres. It is surrounded by Africa, Asia and Australia at its north, a major factor to contribute to its geopolitical and geostrategic significance. The Indian Ocean is well known for its richness in very significant minerals, i.e. near 80% of the world gold extraction, 77% rubber, 57% tin, and manganese and nickel as well. The regional oceans also used as the highest number of world goods to pass through it. The Indian Ocean caters as a transit route of nearly 80 of oceanic trade utilizing 100,000 ships.

Undeniably, the US is retaining a dominant position in the region, maintaining its naval bases as well as close ties with Indian Ocean littoral countries, especially with India, to counter emerging China. India wants to contain China to meet its regional hegemonic designs by stimulating its impact not only in Bengal and Malacca Straits but additionally in the South China Sea. China Pakistan different visions for enhancement of their interests are also attracting the world vision to take an interest in the area. Chinese is ambitious to enhance its strategic depth leading to governing the strategic environment of IOR. Pakistan also needs China to counter India being a traditional rival in the region as solely Pakistan's naval abilities cannot counter India.

Indian Ocean is evidence of power projection in IOR due to the potential of regional powers and strategic interests of major powers. The increasing naval presence of US-India and China-Pakistan in the ocean is making the region vulnerable. This research is taken with the premise or hypothesis that the

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increasing influence of great powers in the Indian Ocean region to control maritime resources is a potential threat for regional peace and security.

Talking in hypothetical terms, maritime resources are independent variable, as they regulate the behaviour of the Indian Ocean and powerful states like India, Pakistan, China and the United States of America. On the other hand, regional security and peace are dependent variables as they are influenced by great powerplay in the region for absolute control of maritime resources. The strategic environment of the region is dominated by the US-India and China-Pakistan, which plays the role of an intervening variable. There is a competition among great powers over maritime resources, and extra-regional states like the US have hegemonic designs, so there is a strong connection between independent variables and intervening variables. Competition over maritime resources among great powers has direct implications for regional security and peace, which can further lead to disputes in the region.

### Methods Literature and Theoretical Application

The basic purpose of this research endeavour is to make understand the nature of attempts and measures to control the maritime resources of the Indian Ocean Region by regional and transnational forces. It has attempted to gauge the hegemonic behaviour of these powers in the Indian Ocean Region by making pro-India and Counter China-Pakistan Strategy. Descriptive and analytical methods are applied in this research during a hypothetical verification base on the interpretation of facts. Collection and verification of secondary data have been done by the exploration of research journals, leading national and international scholar's input, library databases. Research provides indicators of growing resources demands in the Indian Ocean Region and tried to relate them with ocean politics in the region. It has also looked at current developments undertaken by the US in collaboration with India and their implications for the strategic interests of China and Pakistan and for regional peace and security.

The previous research in the academic disciplines has been discussed in the literature review section, is densely focused on the internal conflicts of Indian Ocean littoral states and related matter. But this research attempts to add a new dimension to the existing literature by providing an insight into the significance of maritime resources in the Indian Ocean Region and regional peace and security. Looking on to the literature resources available, it emerges that most researchers do concentrate on the United States of Americas' dominance in the IOR, political and economic rivalry with China, yet fewer researchers have considered implications for the region of Pakistan, which is much relevant to be explored.

The significance of the Indian Ocean has been evaluated by Michel and Sticklor in a different way by choosing the aspect of neglect while having greater importance with the geopolitical lens. They are of the view that resources and supply lines of the Indian Ocean contain much importance, hence due to the fact that states propel for power and influence. Increased energy requirement around the globe and efficient natural resource utilization has paved the way for linking the resource-rich area markets and customers throughout Asia, Africa and the Middle East. During this course of time, many challenges in maritime resource exploitation have emerged, and policymakers, according to Michel and Stickler, also seek space to explain rivalry. India and China have seen more interesting powers in the IO region, and the growing economic power of the later bring the area into a power play.

Bouchard and Crumplin advocate that the US, after the Cold War, stayed at the predominant position in the Indian Ocean to impact the evolving influence of China and India. Apart from Pakistan, the triangle consisting of India, China and the United States of America have to contend for power and influence in the region through economic and diplomatic terms. Bouchard et al. view that the United States of America intends to maintain its hegemonic position in the region to secure its strategic interests. Ghafouri ([Ghafouri, 2009](#)) says that the US and China both are reliant on the region's energy resources to meet their needs. US' tilt towards India in its various policies is making China suspicious and wary of the US motives in the region, while Chinese naval desires in the Gwadar region and the friendship slogan with Pakistan is creating ambiguity in the minds of India and the US. US' aggressive interventionist policy is making the regional states

uncomfortable to rely on it, whereas China's non-intervention policy is more reliable for them as it may provide them with more independence. The Chinese policy of soft power projection and its cooperation in economic endeavours is contributing more to its popularity worldwide.

Colin wrote that Indian policy of evolving its influence in the IOR makes US policymakers take India as a "net security provider" in the region. The only ocean named after a state in its midst makes India's location in many ways her destiny. Indian ambition in the IOR is to unify it, keeping India in the centre. (Colin Geraghty, 2012) Its naval cooperation with other nations has attracted United States to preserve maritime security in IOR, recognizing it as a net facilitator. China wants to encircle India with its string of pearls strategy. India feels discomfort with China's growing influence in the IOR. India lacks the means to contain China in the IOR except seeking opportunities to deny its further expansion with the help and support of the US.

Holmes and Yoshihara, in their article, state that China is attentive towards security issue and dilemma created by American Naval dominance in the high seas leading from the Persian Gulf to the South China Sea. China is concerned about its supply lane; the Malacca Strait, through which most of the Chinese sea trade is carried, may be interrupted by the US at the time of any crisis occurring between China and the US. China is taking pre-emptive measures by the use of soft power, i.e. to develop relations with the states of the Indian Ocean Region. Gwadar, a seaport in the Arabian Sea in Pakistan, is the best-known pearl. China has invested heavily in this port to secure an alternative supply lane and also to keep a close eye on the Strait of Hormuz. The evolving relations of the US with Indian Ocean littoral states, i.e. Vietnam, Singapore and India, are encircling China and making it conscious about its security, which influences Chinese behaviour in the South China Sea. Chinese aggression is certainly affecting the regional countries in their own capacity. (Holmes, Yoshihara, 2009)

Indian Maritime Doctrine portrays the situation in a very nationalist manner. It states that maritime policy is generally a component of financial development and prosperity, whereas the main interest is to guarantee national security. It is not limited to ensure the protection of coastline and island territorial limits. This environment encourages the high-speed economic growth of the state. Trade is a lifeline for every state, and the same is the case of India. American Maritime Strategy paper presents that battle power which is more credible, can be expressed in the Western Pacific and the Indian Ocean, and its sole purpose is operational or protection of American interests by strengthening group feeling with allies as well as deterrence to the competitors.

Realists are of the view that states while living in the anarchic international system where there is no central authority. This central authority can help to control a system without which there is a propensity for strife between states. The conduct of every state is dependent on the threat perception, so they make efforts to acquire power and enhance it by weapons and challenge their rivals. Kenneth N Waltz, a famous realist, views that the wish for survival is a continuous threat of conflict, countering the danger and failure to let one's protection down. Realist debate revolves around four constants which are deterrence, containment, alliance and balance of power politics. This point of view is reinforced by geography and access to resources that make international relations more muddled. Defensive realism states that states attain the power to self-safeguard by the hostile way and affirming that states increase their capacities for power maximization. (Waltz, 1989)

Defensive realism states that when a state looks at the matter as a threat perception to its security, it maximizes its military power, improves the economy and enhances diplomatic relations. These strategies result positively, but the other states view it differently and interpret such activities as offensive act and let them work on some strategies for balancing the threat. Ultimately it leads to power maximization in the international system. On the other hand, offensive terms of reference or offensive realize that states make efforts to maximize their power by influence maximization at their powerful stage, and it ultimately increases their absolute power. Brooks says that nations constantly make attempts to increase power over the other

nations at all chances and times available, and this approach of one state may increase the feeling of insecurity of the other state. (Brooks, 1997)

Blazevic views that if countries endeavour to attain power with the title of self-protection, the other states consider it as an act of hostility, and it leads to decreasing collective security considerations. China is in the process to develop a strategy and to expand its influence in Burma, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. Allen Hamilton states that China is busy building strategic relations on sea lanes which exposes the defensive and offensive position of its efforts to protect China's energy interests. The report adds that the Chinese navy is third in world ranking and being superior to Indian Navy; it has a competitive edge in the region for its expanding sphere of influence. This action of China is a matter of challenge for India and considering it a power maximization tool in the Indian Ocean Region. (Allen, 2009)

Resultantly both offensive and defensive realism can be replicated in relative terms. In this case, Chinese actions may have a defensive approach towards the United States of America, but from an Indian perspective, it could be an offensive action challenging security space in the Indian Ocean Region. For India, it would be the defensive approach towards China, but with Pakistani spectacles, it can be a greater offensive and let force Pakistan maximize its power and be part of an arms race in the region. Other states like the Asia Pacific may term it as America China offensive approach in the region.

### Maritime Power Resource Security and Ocean Politics

Maritime security is a vast area of focus. It prevents criminal acts in the sea and involves national and international efforts to enforce it. (Potgieter, 2012) Technological advancement in land and air transport did not decrease the value of maritime routes, and it maintained its primary position to serve global trade, transportation and communication. Ninety percent of the trade of the world is being made via oceans. Food, fuel, imports and exports all travel on these global economic highways. Maritime trade is the states' lifeblood. In short maritime security in today's scenario is considered national security. (Maritime, 2014)

States who wish to formulate the current security atmosphere to achieve their interests are supposed to be significant sea powers or major contributor to ocean alliance. Security and the rise of the global economy are dependent on safe and secure SLOCs (Sea Lines of communication). (Grove, 2014) With the decrease in the supply of energy resources, i.e. oil, gas, coal and iron ore, there can be a decline in the food supply as well as foreign-built automobiles. So, the importance of the ocean remained vital in the past to the present era and the need to gain sea power in order to protect economic and geopolitical interests is dire. Technological advances help major powers to keep sea power at the forefront to influence geopolitics and the global security landscape. (Grove, 2014)

The Indian Ocean is no more a British colony or domain of superpowers, but it has become a complex and vibrant region. (Occasional Papers, 2011) New role players like India and China have become major powers, and new national alliances are changing the region's scenario. The increasing influence of non-state actors has raised new security challenges in the region. States have to project naval power and to enhance their diplomatic role to keep the sea in good order rather than doing battle or indulging themselves in a direct conflict.

Admiral Mahan stated that the sea is a greater highway that offers shore access to nations with the easier and cheaper than other existent means. (Mahan, 1965) Britain effectively used the ocean for transportation in both viable and military means that fetched elevation of prosperity and political height. According to Mahan, nations need to follow Britain to seek the status of great power. Navy serves two main purposes, i.e. to protect commerce from safeguarding SLOCs and from ensuring fluent trade; and free use of force to obtain territorial command for trade and commerce in faraway lands. The main objective of states which go for the use of military power in the ocean is to protect commerce during peace times for a steady flow of trade and to safeguard SLOCs during wartime. (Mahan, 1965) Despite ongoing advancement in air transportation, seas have been and remain great highway upon which vast quantities of goods may travel during peace and war times. (Schlesinger, 1975) States' interests are varied in SLOC and

in their ability to defend them. States having sea power are concerned to preserve their home waters for their own use, i.e. for economic gains and communication, and do not allow competitors as a way of the outbreak.

States having maritime forces use the ocean not only in a way to defend their SLOCs but also to maintain their hold in distant waters in order to accommodate local allies, to threaten rivals or to contain their influence in that particular region. The use of sea power illustrates the connection between supremacy and reliance that subsists among states. It is not accidental that the time of European imperialism was also the era of European dominance at sea, and the later time of Western and Soviet domination of neo-colonialism and social-imperialism also depicted the application of greater sea power as a fundamental element.

In the current era, two main objectives are being pursued by states to exercise sea power: first, states seek to install weapons in the sea either to maintain their control or to counter the weaponry system of any opponent states. Countries having such instalments in the ocean are also concerned about the protection of deployments and shield them in order to safeguard them from any possible attack and also restrict free movement in that particular space where deployment has been made. On the other hand, rival states keep a close eye to detect such deployments to destroy them, perceiving it as a threat to their security. (Brodie, 1958)

The second objective, which has gained much more importance since the last decade, is that states pursue to exercise military force at sea to attain or expand their influence to natural resources under sea bed or to protect them from their competitors. Along with transportation, the sea has also been a source of seafood, and navies performed the minor function of its protection. But the emerging concept of having access to food resources as well as energy and raw material is urging to revise thoughts "what is sea power for?" Technological advances, on the one hand, in the world are enhancing the threat that mineral and energy resources and other valuable assets may be removed from deep oceans, rapid growth in world population and luxurious livings, on the other hand, is forcing to think for the security of these resources which are thought to be run out soon due to excessive and increasing use.

This view helps in shaping movement for corral of oceans which uttered demands to extend the law of territorial waters and passage rights for the restricted economic zone by expanding to 200 miles or more from the coast and limiting traditional freedoms on the remaining high seas, i.e. by creating an international deep-sea authority that would rightly allocate its wealth. It has absolute demand, which may or may not have the outcome of establishing new rights in the framework of Sea laws. If they come up with this, states will go to exercise military power in order to fulfil their interests in the anarchical state which will ultimately prevail consequently.

The challenge of military appliances is making nations enable to claim boats, aircraft, anti-ship missiles and submarines along with suing rights over sea and sea-bed. If states may have access across the sea and meet other ones at its length, then a new international conflict of disputed frontiers can arise, which was merely a land conflict previously. This conflict may further prolong in a new form of profitable trading, i.e. to use force not only to defend legally owned resources but also to acquire others' possessions. The situation became more threatening after the statement of Dr. Kissinger, indicating "the possibility of the United States seizing oil production facilities in the Persian Gulf."

### **Indian Ocean Power Play Shift Post 9/11**

Napoleon had once said, "He who controls Trincomalee controls the Indian Ocean". (Berlin, 2004). Historically, the trend of armed strongholds has been a key element to define the environment of IO and its littoral states from the 15<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> century in Calicut and Aden, respectively. Major marine powers gained advantages over opponents by using fortification as a key tool to get success. The Indian Ocean, being the world's third-largest ocean, consists of 20 percent of the earth's waters overall occupies an area of 73.56

million square miles ([Michel and Sticklor, 2012](#)) with a coastline of 66,526 km. (Hong, 2012) It is adjacent to Australia, Indonesia, Thailand and the Malay Peninsula in the east; its West consists of the East African coast and the north-western Arabian Peninsula. It is further surrounded by the Indian subcontinent in its north and to the oceanic margin, with the Southern Ocean to its south at the latitude of 60°S. The northern limit of the ocean area is covered by the original Antarctic Treaty 1959.

On land Indian Ocean linked with 38 states which make up almost 40 percent of the total coastline of the world as a whole. In addition, IO comprises a number of regional seas and sea areas. To go across IO and pass through it towards seas adjacent to the ocean are facilitated and potentially constrained by chokepoints. Seven key chokepoints in Indian Ocean Region (IOR) are “Mozambique Channel, Bab-el-Mandeb, Suez Canal, Strait of Hormuz, Malacca Straits, Sunda Strait and Lombok Strait.”

Indian Ocean Region surrounded by ample resources oil, natural gasses and of minerals and littoral states of IO have 35 per cent gas reserves of the world, around two-thirds identified oil reserves, 40 per cent of gold reserves, it contains 60 per cent of uranium, a huge assortment of other mineral materials along with 80 per cent of all diamond deposited reservoirs. A greater degree of wealth in some important IO states is created by these natural resources, whereas other states either have deficient resources or because of social and historical causes owing to conflicts or weak governance, they have been incapable of taking advantage of such prospective sources of wealth fundamentally.

Economies of IOR are enormously diverse. Statistics for GDP of IO's main countries fluctuate from anticipated 2010 GDP of US\$1,367.2 billions of India and US\$1,192.9 billion of Australia, world's twelfth and thirteenth largest similar to that of Comoros, Somalia, Zimbabwe, East Timor, Maldives and Djibouti. While in accordance to estimates of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) GDP of Comoros by 2010 is US\$0.564 billion, the buck of key states of IOR, placing it in 177th position in the world standing of 183 national GDPs of the world. ([Luke 2012](#))

Wealth disparities of the Indian Ocean's island states and territories can accurately be measured through per capita GDP. On its foundation, key countries of IOR with maximum GDP per capita includes UAE, Kuwait, Australia, Qatar and Singapore, among world standings of first, fourth, tenth, fourteenth and eighteenth positions correspondingly. Moreover, IO countries with rear GDP per capita are Somalia, Mozambique, Eritrea and Madagascar with GDP of per capita US\$981, US\$905, US\$676 and US\$298, correspondingly. All these countries have been in a situation of differences, conflict and anarchy, mainly as a consequence of war or civil disorder. In spite of the poverty of countries like Sudan, Eritrea, Djibouti, Mozambique and Somalia; five key states of IOR, which are South Africa, India, Saudi Arabia, Australia and Indonesia, are member states of the G20 group, which grants positions to these more affluent IO states and a place of authority which has prospective to be utilized for their combined benefits.

### **Rising India and Policy Shift Implications**

The legislative issues of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) between three significant forces are unpredictable gratitude to the conceivable ascent of India and China and subsequently the general decrease of the US. On the one hand, rising China needs to counter the predominance of the US inside the locale and stand up for itself as a local hegemon. On the other hand, an arising India looks to adjust to China. The area being a significant energy course is that the middle phase of world legislative issues. Regional states, as well as outside forces, need to ask a most extreme portion of energy assets, fisheries, and freshwater assets.

Alongside the power competition in the region discussed earlier, the regional states are also engaged in cooperation and coordination due to their common economic interests. Such shared interests urge states to strengthen ties among themselves, ultimately leading to undermining the traditional and non-traditional threats in the region, i.e. terrorism and piracy etc. The Indo-US strategic partnership and Sino-Pak strategic involvement in the region are driving the regional politics towards a novel quadrilateral structure. India is rising as a great power, but that rise is connected to its domestic stability along with careful adoption of her



external relations not only with the USA but also with China and Pakistan. The potential of conflict intensifies, recognizing the fact that the states possess nuclear capability. India is developing her naval potential for the protection of her sea lanes and meeting the objectives, is joining hands with the USA keeping in view her dominance ranging from Atlantic to Pacific and hegemony in Africas, Gulf and the Arabian Sea.

Nonetheless, the Indian Ocean is the only ocean bearing the name of the state that regards India for its economic security. Indian engagement with the US on the one hand and with Iran, on the other hand, is a matter of concern for America as after developing strategic ties with the USA, it would be hard for India to maintain a balance between two as one fulfils her strategic interests in the region and the other is supporting her to acquire her desired goal in the region by facilitating her in all possible ways in the field of nuclear fuel and technology. India, moreover, requires a vivid hegemony in the South Asian region to play its role actively in the Indian ocean, which is mainly being supported by the US to contain Chinese influence. This sense of strategic partnership between India and the US is making China more cautious to protect its energy supply and trade routes in the ocean.

While building up the blue navy, India developed its multi-faceted capabilities, i.e. ships, submarines, arsenals, naval bases, acquired manpower, established cruise missiles alongside submarine-based missiles, acquired command on islands of Andaman and Nicobar closer to Malacca. The weight of the Indian navy is about 70,000 men, 130 ships, and 200 aircraft with an aircraft carrier, whereas the optimum level they are looking for is to increase the size of navy and coast guards at the rate of twice and thrice respectively by adding 32 new ships to her naval fleet, 6 submarines and an aircraft carrier "Admiral Gorshkov" renamed as "INS Vikramaditya". The nuclear deal with the USA is further adding to her defence potential.

Besides, the 'Act East Policy' of India is to strengthen diplomatic and economic ties with ASEAN. The Indian leadership is engaged in a constructive environment with Indian Ocean Regional states and is actively involved in multiple naval agreements of cooperation and understanding with regional states, which has led India to be recognized as a net security provider, which makes it attractive to Washington looking for partners to contribute to preserving maritime security in IOR.

By means of India's increasing dependence on importation of energy, any distraction in IO (which are principally sufficient at "choke points" same as Strait of Malacca, Gulf of Aden, Strait of Hormuz and Suez Canal), can go ahead to severe results for economy of India. Whereas a major threat is a disruption of supply for the duration of wartime, nowadays, non-state actors, such as planned terrorists, pirates or criminals, are also a growing risk.

Nonetheless, seeing that India gradually more considers itself like a great power and describes its safety and security in stipulations of the whole IO basin, its strategic boundaries will extend from "African coast" to "Strait of Malacca" and "South China Sea" and, has potential to stretch, as far south as a continent of Antarctica. Furthermore, India already gazes at the strategic and economic significance of the Central Asian region and has prepared moves to combine its strategic balance, together with two airbases in Tajikistan.

## **Regional Implications**

The Indian Ocean has presumed a dominant place in the strategic circle of its regional as well as great powers of the world. The region is rapidly becoming an arena of fast-growing militaries and economies dependent on sea routes. Since the Portuguese advent in the region, IOR has been predominantly under the influence of the West who is being vulnerable now over changing scenarios in international politics in general and Indian Ocean Politics in particular.

Although the United States is trying to reconfigure its position in the region, it seems to be difficult for her to maintain a dominant influence. On the other hand, India and China are entering into great power rivalry, and Pakistan is continuously building an alliance with China to assert its position and is more focused to enhance its capabilities, especially in marine power. As China is building its naval capacity, there are apprehensions that its "String of Pearls" strategy may develop into a military reality anytime in future. West only can compensate or counter Chinese military initiatives through procuring techno-advanced weapons

in order to attain maritime supremacy in IO. Presently, the US and Allied navies are at calm as they supersede in knowledge and technical know-how of being able to exert supremacy and interdict SLOCs, if required, in case any event of a clash with China occurs.

While analyzing the Chinese strategic position, Iran's role as a player cannot easily be ignored as Chinese 80 percent of oil supply comes from the Middle East. If in future, there will be any confrontation between China and the US, Arabian Gulf and the Indian Ocean could be proved as a primer. In the upcoming thirty years, PLAN naval dispositions could lead to Chinese maritime supremacy in the Indian Ocean and heightened risk of resource-driven conflict. India's rising great power status will also come under high importance in the coming decades, as the US consider India is inevitable and will help the US to maintain a global strategic balance in this region. US entanglement definitely will strengthen Indian capability of its greater power projection beyond its borders and exclusively into the Indian Ocean region, which looks indispensable for its economic and social stability.

Two states, Pakistan and India, are highly important for the future that can put a strategic impact on the Indian Ocean and its neighbors. For contrasting reasons, however, this impact may not change the essential power balance in the region. Pakistan and India, both nuclear powers, remains in confrontation mode almost all season of the year. Similarly, China and India will have increasingly complex relation and entwined ties, but relative peace and strategic stability would remain in place as some mutual economic and strategic interests bind them and prevent them from involving in a confrontation. India perceives itself as an emerging global power in a progressively multi-power world, therefore upholding and pursuing a strategy of poly-alignment. To balance developing forces in the current scenario, such an ambition is going to be a reality.

There are two schools of thought which are more extreme, inferring about the impacts of increasing Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean and on India itself. They put bluntly that China either is seeking to be governing and overriding power in the Indian Ocean while relegating India to some form of subordinate or secondary position or is merely bidding to secure its flow of energy and access to resources in the sea. China's steps to guard and enhance its interests are interpreted by some analysts as its effort to contain or threaten India, which breeding apprehension in Indian strategic circles, leading them to conclude that it would develop into a great power rivalry between two countries. As often happens in such situations, negligible and unimportant issues are given importance even out of context and endorsed or counted for consequences that do not certainly reflect an accurate state.

In conclusion, the tension between India and China will remain high, and China will develop new ties and strategies and naval capabilities and seek alliances to get ocean hegemony in the region. But Beijing is conscious of the impact these moves might have on India and will seek to portray its actions as non-threatening. There is also a chance that India will view Chinese actions and policies with doubts, and it prepared itself to engage China at the state and diplomatic level. Of course, all this could change, and the situation will need a strong observation.

## Conclusion

The Indian Ocean, a resource-rich region, is center stage of world attention. Following are the main findings of the research.

- First, the World Order is transforming due to the Chinese rise as a major power and its impact on the world. The rise of China is causing anxiety among security veterans in the US, who as a result has encouraged and supported proxies in order to retain US supremacy in the ocean to remain the dominant power, ultimately causing worries and trouble for the area of its consistent engagement. China's role in the strategic and security environment of IOR can be substantial.
- Second, by allying India in the region, the United States is keeping it in the frontline to pose pressure towards China in order to counter its impact. India is being benefitted by the US in all fields, including



nuclear power as well as marine power. Therefore, the Sino-Pak collaboration may counter negativities emerging in the wake of the Indo-US alliance.

- Third, emerging strategic adversary among the US and China is making the situation more volatile. Traditional mistrust and security concerns are likely to keep the region on slippery footing.
- Fourth, the Chinese future strategy in ocean politics is not sufficiently vivid, which is making the situation ambiguous regarding the US and its allies' further strategy.
- Fifth, a demilitarized region will be in the common interests of all regional as well as extra-regional players.

Since Europeans first led to explore the sea in the 15th century, the importance of sea power is signified. Portuguese advent in Spice Island (in the Indian Ocean) and later on Dutch and English arrival in the region for trade through sea ultimately converting it to their colonies for centuries changed regional scenario and revealed importance of the sea to the world. Indian Ocean Region is the theatre of major power play in the 21st century involving the geopolitical and geostrategic environment. There will be traditional (security-related) and non-traditional challenges (SLOC vulnerability, piracy, maritime terrorism, IUU fishing and natural disasters) to cope in the region along with other challenges. IOR is the region of escalating tensions and rivalries among littoral states due to internal instabilities as well as the interference of external powers. The emerging rivalry between regional players India and China are making the region vulnerable, and the interests of major powers in the region are making the situation more complex as they are making alliances in the region to meet their interests.

It is expected that there might trigger conflict in the region due to resources, along with the security of trade routes. This approach is changing the regional environment and pushing it to an intense situation where regional powers will try to attain dominance, as India has declared that it will address the Indian Ocean issues itself. Perceiving it a threat, China is pursuing to secure its sea lanes for the smooth flow of energy goods as well as resources. The USA, on the other hand, wants to maintain its status in the region and to invest in the Indian navy to play the role of regional hegemon effectively to contain emerging China is developing its ties with regional states to counter the US.

To secure routes or to maintain dominance is mounting military presence in the IOR. Such huge military deployments by the US and India to contain the influence of China are raising apprehensions in regional states, and they are more concerned about their national security and protection of their financial resources. As the US is pursuing to counter China in the Indian Ocean, China is also expanding its naval capabilities in order to contain the US and India in the IO.

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