

The Indian Ocean Security: Challenges and Opportunities for Pakistan

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Abstract

The Indian Ocean is the ancient human passage through waters and contains immense security and economic values not only for the littoral States of the Indian Ocean but also for the extra-territorial powers. The Indian Ocean had for long remained extremely vital in modern history, and global powers occupied significant positions here to influence their policies. As a new entrant, China wants to further integrate the Indian Ocean for regional trade and socio-cultural connectivity under its Maritime Silk Road Corridor. Pakistan is an integral part of the Maritime Silk Road by providing a geographical access to the landlocked western autonomous region of Xinjiang and Central Asia and even beyond at Pakistan's southern Gwadar Port via road, railway, and telecommunication linkages. This is a great step in the economic integration of the Indian Ocean in the 21st century.

Keywords: Indian Ocean Security, Power Play, Regional Integration, Pakistan's Maritime Perspectives, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), One Belt One Road (OBOR), Maritime Silk Road, String of Pearls.

Introduction

This study focuses on Pakistan's position and perspective regarding the Indian Ocean as a small littoral power seeking maritime security and

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cooperation to enhance its role in regional security of the Indian Ocean as well as expanding its merchandise trade. The paper will throw light on the significance of the Indian Ocean in world politics. The issue of maritime security will also be analysed beside power play among big nations in the Indian Ocean especially between India and China. The paper will look at the Pakistan-India rivalry in the Indian Ocean. The paper will take up the significance of the Indian Ocean in the geo-economics and geo-politics of Pakistan, its security measures of multilateral cooperation among nations, the warm-water approach for the Russian access to the Arabian Sea, and providing commercial conduit to China to link up its western region of Xinjing with the Gwadar deep sea port under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). A number of recommendations have also been put forward in the paper to integrate the Indian Ocean for regional connectivity, merchandise trade expansion, and for socio-cultural cohesion.

Significance of the Indian Ocean

The Holy Quran is full of the knowledge of Oceanography and modern science can not contradict it. Rather, more research could be conducted on the truth of seas and oceans as expounded in the Holy Quran. Take just one verse: the Holy Quran says that seas are full of wealth and natural resources¹ and they (seas) never transgress with each other.² They (seas) keep their distinctions. Many nations in this world solely depend on sea resources, especially island nations. The Oceans' significance for littoral as well as for the landlocked States is equally vital. The Indian Ocean is an arc from the Indian Sub-continent to East Africa and Australia, and is the third largest Ocean after the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. The facts about the Indian Ocean are revealing. From times immemorial, Indian Ocean had served as a great conduit for human travel

¹*Al-Quran*, "Surah An-Nahl", 16:14. And it is He (God) who subjected the sea for you to eat from it tender meat and to extract from it ornaments which you wear. And you see the ships flowing through it, and [He (God) subjected it] that you may seek of His (God) bounty; and perhaps you will be grateful.(trans)

²*Al-Quran*, "Surah Ar-Rahman", 55: 19-20.He (God) released the two seas, meeting [side by side]; Between them is a barrier [so] neither of them transgresses. (trans)

and trade across Asia, Africa, and Australia. Today around 10,000 vessels crisscross each year in the Indian Ocean.³ The Indian Ocean has always remained as the busiest mercantile trade way among many powerful and small nations. Four critically important access waterways namely: Suez Canal (Egypt), Bab-el-Mandeb (Djibouti-Yemen), Strait of Hormuz (Iran-Oman), and Straits of Malacca (Indonesia-Malaysia), are located in the Indian Ocean. The Indian Ocean provides routes to East Asia, Australia, Africa, Europe, and the Americas. The Indian Ocean appeared to be the first human water passage in the history. Many wars were fought among the nations to dominate the Indian Ocean passage. There are several choke points such as the Straits of Hormoz, Bab el-Mandeb, Suez, Malacca, Sunda, Lombok, and the Mozambique Channel.

The Arabs remained the most motivating factor in opening up many routes of the Indian Ocean. The Arabian mercantile trading activities in goods, spices, and transportation started long before the Europeans. The European discoveries by the Dutch, French, and Spaniards came much later. Long after the Arabs invaded India through sea route, the Europeans took at least eight centuries to “re-discover” according to their perceptions of sea routes to India via the Indian Ocean. One can read an abundance of literature on the civilizational aspects of the Indian Ocean,⁴ and this paper does not intend to go into the details of history. The region contains one-third of the world’s population. An estimated 40 per cent of the world’s offshore oil production comes from the Indian Ocean alone. The combined reserves of the Gulf and Central Asia account for 72.5 per cent of the world’s total oil and 45 per cent of gas. Apart from the above-mentioned

³Saji Abraham, “India's Maritime Policy,” *China's Role in the Indian Ocean: Its Implications on India's National Security*, VIJ Books India, pg. 77, https://books.google.com.pk/books?id=AoFNCgAAQBAJ&pg=PA77&lpg=PA77&dq=Today+around+10,000+vessels+crisscross+each+year+in+the+Indian+Ocean.&source=bl&ots=8p-1p1xajB&sig=bLOHM1pbn89b7dW6dBbz4oBt_9A&hl=en&sa=X&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=Today%20around%2010%2C000%20vessels%20crisscross%20each%20year%20in%20the%20Indian%20Ocean.&f=false

⁴K N Chaudhuri, *Trade and civilisation in the Indian Ocean: An Economic History from The Rise of Islam to 1750* (New York Cambridge University Press, 1985).

natural significance of the Indian Ocean, the United States, China, Japan, South Korea, Europe India, and Pakistan, and many other nations import a substantial amount of their requirements of energy and merchandise imports and exports through the Indian Ocean. Around 70 percent of global petrol export passes through the Indian Ocean.⁵ Ports play an important role in the Indian Ocean. There are around 157 ports and harbours in the Indian Oceans with India having 40 ports, Australia 20 ports, and Saudi Arabia 11 ports.

The United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea (UNCLOS) of 1982 (Article 57) protects nations' sovereign rights of seas and utilization of their resources and determines the sea limit of maritime nations by bringing justice and equality irrespective of their size, population, and power.⁶ To protect the right of a littoral State, a limit of 200 nautical miles has been drawn from coastline as an Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) and the Continental Shelf (under seas resources) that goes up to 350 nautical miles from the coastline. There are 36 littoral States of the Indian Ocean, comprising three Continents namely; Asia, Africa, and Australia. The mother region of South Asia comprise of 5 States, South East Asia 6 States, the Middle East and Africa (12 States each region), Australia and a few Islands under foreign control.

⁵Robert D. Kaplan, 'Centre Stage for the Twenty-first Century: Power Plays in the Indian Ocean' in *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 88, no. 2 (March-April 2009).

⁶The United Nations, *Convention on the Law of Sea (CLOS) of 1982*. (The United Nations, the Division for Ocean Affairs and the Law of the Sea, Office of Legal Affairs, 2001), p. 40.

Ibid.

Indian Ocean Littoral States				
South Asia	South East Asia	Middle East	Africa	Australia
India Pakistan Sri Lanka Bangladesh Maldives	Burma Thailand Malaysia Singapore Indonesia Timor-Leste	Egypt Israel Jordan Saudi Arabia Yemen Oman UAE Qatar Bahrain Kuwait Iraq Iran	South Africa Mozambique Madagascar Mauritius Comoros Tanzania Seychelles Kenya Somalia Djibouti Eritrea Sudan	Australia

As for power play within the Indian littoral States is concerned, India naturally emerges as the most powerful country among 36 littoral States, cooperated by Australia and some South East Asian littoral States besides the United States and Japan. The Indo-US collusion has made China wary about the strategic balance in the Indian Ocean.⁷ This gives natural hegemony to India in sharing regional security in the Indian Ocean.

Maritime Security

The term "maritime security" is bound to various explanations depending on who is using it and for what purpose, whether it is used for military purpose or commercial purpose.⁸ For one nation, it could be a 'maritime security', for another, it could be a 'maritime insecurity' both at, at the same time. Apart from this, it is drawing a distinction between "maritime safety" and "maritime security". Klein and Mossop maintain

⁷Sohail Amin (ed), Major Powers' Interests in the Indian Ocean: Challenges and Options for Pakistan (Islamabad: Islamabad Policy Research Institute, 2015), p. 2.

⁸Natalie Klein, Joanna Mossop, Maritime Security: International Law and Policy Perspectives from Australia and New Zealand (London Routledge, 2010), p. 5.

that "maritime safety" refers to preventing or minimising of occurrence of incidents at seas as stipulated under the International Maritime Organization (IMO) while "maritime security" refers to the UNCLOS of 1982 for settlements of disputes and issues related to the maritime security.⁹ This, however, does not clearly define the term 'maritime security'.¹⁰

New threats to States are not just military-oriented that convert security as more complex and cumbersome. Today, these threats or threat-perceptions might stem from within States such as the internal political disorders, economic crunch or sharpening of differences, societal cleavages, ecological or environmental landscapes or threat perceptions as maintained in a widely referred study of Bary Buzan.¹¹ In this regard, maritime security can entertain a single or a variety of these threats. Plagues, vulnerabilities, drugs, smugglings, piracy, and terrorism also pose a threat to maritime security from an operational point of view of vessels.¹² Vessels also bring new culture, know how, language, products, technical communications, influence, and conflict. This needs to be reconciled. One can safely assume that maritime security means military, political, and economic capabilities of States to use seas and oceans for certain common objectives of many nations involved in a given period of time. Therefore, a collaboration of like-minded allies is required for enhancing maritime security of nations for strategic, political, and economic reasons.

The Power Play

The United States, Great Britain, Russia and Japan used to be the extra-territorial powers in the Indian Ocean up to the end of World War II. Japan dominated the Indian Ocean by defeating Great Britain and maintaining its

⁹Ibid., p. 6. See also the UN Convention on the Law of Sea, 2 December 1982, 1833 UNTS 3.

¹⁰Ibid., p. 6.

¹¹Barry Buzan, *Peoples, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in Post-Cold War Era* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991), pp. 116-33.

¹²Michael McNicholas, *Maritime Security: An Introduction* (Amsterdam & London: Elsevier /Butterworth Heinemann, 2008).

hegemony by capturing Singapore and Burma and giving setbacks to other European powers, which eroded the European hegemony of the Indian Ocean. There had been a long confrontation in the Indian Ocean after World War II until the demise of the Cold War and the former Soviet Union by 1989. With this end, a new dimension occurred in the Indian Ocean as to who would dominate this Ocean.

With the rise of China, a new factor has been emerging to share power hegemony and to provide a safe water passage for merchandise trade equally shared by all stakeholders in the Indian Ocean. Historically, the ancient Silk Road on the hinterland was well connected with the Indian Ocean, giving access to landlocked and faraway Asian lands and peoples to the Indian Ocean. This assertion, however, created a rift in the region and disturbed peace efforts as many traditional powers do not intend to accept the entry of another extra-territorial power - China.

Most of the adversaries also opposed the presence of China in the South China Sea in the Pacific and the Indian Ocean, which makes it a "Two Oceans Power" - in the Pacific and the Indian Ocean simultaneously. China is being contested in the Indian Ocean most strongly by giving a pivotal role to India by the United States, Australia, Japan, and some other South East Asian allies. Interestingly, with the increasing rapprochement between China and the Philippines after the verdict given by the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) at The Hague on 12 July 2016, the situation has become much calmer for China in assuming a peaceful role in the Pacific. This might have some implications for the Indian Ocean where some countries might not perceive China as a future hegemonic power in the Indian Ocean.

India's Growing Naval Expansion

There is intense naval rivalry taking place between China and India in the Indian Ocean nowadays. India has been competing with China's growing maritime modernization and expansion and developing its conventional naval capabilities and ballistic missiles submarines, air craft carriers, and state-of-the art anti-submarines warfare capabilities. Moreover, United States and India have recently signed the Logistics Exchange Memorandum

of Agreement (LEMOA) on 29 August 2016.¹³ The purpose of the LEMOA was to enhance their naval capabilities in the Indian Ocean and in the Pacific theatre (especially in the South China Sea) under the US "pivot to Asia" strategy. The United States would deploy around 60 percent of its ships in the Indo-Pacific region¹⁴ - a new term designed to accord unprecedented weightage to India.

China has also been expanding its maritime capabilities to respond to any eventuality that might take place in Taiwan and disturb its maritime interests in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean. China has been building airfields and artificial islands to beef up its defence in the South China Sea.¹⁵ China has been developing its military logistics to an unprecedented level of over 400 percent to protect its maritime lifelines and its growing interests.¹⁶ Presently, there are around 20,000 Chinese naval personnel that would increase to 100,000 to protect Chinese maritime interests from Gwadar to Djibouti in the Horn of Africa, where China has been contracting its naval base.¹⁷ The LEMOA would have bearings on China, containing its strength, and to opposing the China-Pakistan maritime cooperation. The Gwadar, CPEC, OBOR could act as agents of regional connectivity between China, the Middle East, and Africa that is also highly beneficial for promoting the Pakistani naval interests in the Indian Ocean. Pakistan and China, however, are likely to face opposing positions to be taken by India and the United States.¹⁸

¹³ Anwar Iqbal, "US-India defence pact to impact Pakistan, China", *Dawn* (Islamabad), August 30, 2016.

¹⁴ Charles Tiefer, "China And Pakistan Should Note - This Week, India And US Sign The LEMOA Pact", *Forbes* (Washington), August 28, 2016.

¹⁵ "Island Building in the South China Sea", *SouthFront: Analysis & Intelligence*, July 2015. <https://southfront.org/chinas-artificial-islands-south-china-sea-review/#promo>

¹⁶ Minnie Chan, 'China plans 400 per cent increase to marine corps numbers, sources say', *The South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong), March 13, 2017.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ See also for a similar view in Sardar Masood Khan, "Indian Ocean region: Challenges and Strategies", *The Observer* (Islamabad), February 22, 2017.

Pakistan's Perspective

A. Strategic Significance

Pakistan is one of the littoral States of the Indian Ocean having a costal line of 900 km of which 700 km or 75 per cent in length lies in the Makran coastal line in Balochistan. The rest of 25 per cent of Pakistan's coastal line rests in Sindh – Karachi, Thatta, and Bidin Indus Delta. For Pakistan, and like many other countries of the Arabian Sea in the Indian Ocean, the passage is the major source of its oil imports and merchandise trade. Pakistan has two most operational ports, Port of Karachi, and Bin Qasim Port. The state-of-the art Gwadar Port is now under a limited operation since November 2016 after its inauguration.¹⁹ Other small ports and harbours are: Ketī Bandar, Jiwani, Gadani, Ormara, and Pasni that could be developed into future big ports. Importantly, being an Indian Ocean littoral State, with the third largest population asset of 180 million people in the region, and the nuclear State of region, maritime security is a vital element of Pakistan policy. The importance of the Indian Ocean is further vital for Pakistan because it is the fourth largest State in terms of having ports and harbours in the Indian Ocean after Saudi Arabia, Australia, and India respectively. Another significant aspect is that the largest river flowing into the Arabian Sea in the Indian Ocean is the mighty Indus River.

The country's coastal line used to be 1,644 km long with an access from Jiwani to the Bay of Bengal when East Pakistan was not separated from West Pakistan.²⁰ The separation of East Pakistan also meant the strategic loss of 654 km long or 40 percent of the coastlines as the ports of Chittagong and Khulna were lost in 1971. Therefore, a geographical coastline affect could also be realised in the new Pakistan's maritime policy after 1971, which strikingly reduced its maritime presence in the Indian Ocean.

¹⁹ Ahmad Rashid Malik, "Inauguration of the CPEC", *Pakistan Today* (Islamabad), December 16, 2016.

²⁰ See general information on marine in Pakistan in J.C. Pernetta, *Pakistan in Marine Protected Area Needs in the South Asian Seas Region* (Gland: IUCN, 1993).

Pakistan is deeply concerned with the emerging security situation in the Indian Ocean as a littoral State. Maritime security is the prime concern of Pakistan to tackle the issue of counter-terrorism, piracies, armed robberies, drug trafficking, and crimes. The peaceful use of the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), Continental Shelf, increasing maritime connectivity, future ports development, and Gwadar Economic Zone are the prime considerations for an upward trajectory of Pakistan's maritime policy.

B. Multilateral Security Measures

Strategically speaking, Pakistan focuses on its maritime policy through a number of multilateral ventures with a number of countries. Pakistan's joining of the US-led anti-Communist treaty, Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO)²¹, signed on 8 September 1954 at Manila and formally launched at Bangkok in February 1955, was aimed to strengthen Pakistan's land, air, and naval defence. Thailand and the Philippines were the only South East Asian countries that joined the treaty with Pakistan as the only country from South Asia that had joined the treaty along with Australia, New Zealand, Great Britain, and France with South Korea and South Vietnam as Dialogue Partners under the US flag and Truman's anti-Communist doctrine. After the separation of East Pakistan, the significance of SEATO largely disappeared for Pakistan, and the country got disinterested in the activities of the SEATO as it could not save the country from the Indian naked aggression in collaboration with the Soviet Union, the leader of Communism, against Pakistan in its eastern wing. The Soviet bloc saw SEATO as a curse erected against it and its allies.²² Pakistan withdrew from the SEATO on 7 November 1973 and France on 30 June 1974. Resultantly, the treaty was eventually dissolved on 30 June 1977, and new maritime security measures were being developed in the Indian

²¹ See the text of the 'Southeast Asia Collective Defence Treaty (Manila Pact), September 8, 1954' Yale Law School, Lillian Goldman Law Library, New Haven, 2008.
<http://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/usmu003.asp#1> Accessed 17 January 2011.

²² See for instance, Rustom Khurshedji Karanjia, *SEATO: Security or Menace?* (Bombay: Blintz Publications, 1956).

Ocean. The SEATO was an alliance in failure²³ and its repercussions were seen within to years of its collapse in 1979 in the shape of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan.

In the post 9/11 era, Pakistan joined the Japan-led Operation Enduring Freedom-Maritime Interdiction Operation (OEF-MIO) during 2001-2010 to counter terrorism in the Indian Ocean along with other 36 countries.²⁴ The operation ran successfully but, because of domestic issues in Japan, it was discontinued in January 2010. Pakistan remained an active participant of the OEF-MIO.²⁵

C. The Warm-Water Theory

In connection with Pakistan's maritime policy, there is a need to explain the "warm-water" theory. The warm-water theory stemmed from the desire of the old time Czars in Russia to occupy ports facility in the Indian Ocean via today's Pakistan. Although occupying huge territory across Europe and Asia and becoming a Eurasian power, Russia always lacked an access to the warm-water ports—a dream that was never fulfilled. Furthermore, the entire course of later Russian military advances in Asia was motivated by its long-standing desire to gain warm-water ports.²⁶ Russian Asian territories in Central Asia also did not reach the Indian Ocean waters at any point at any time in its long history. The Russian penetration into Central Asia started with this theory of southward reach to the warm-waters. Had the Revolution in 1917 not intervened,

²³See Leszek Buszynski, *SEATO, the Failure of an Alliance Strategy* (Singapore: Singapore National University Press, 1983).

²⁴Richard Tanter, "The MSDF Indian Ocean deployment – blue water militarization in a "normal country" ", Nautilus Institute for Security and Sustainability, March 30, 2006 & Sandra L. Hodgkinson *et al*, Challenges to Maritime Interception Operations in the War on Terror: Bridging the Gap', *The American University International Law Review*, vol. 22, no. 4, 2007.

²⁵Ahmad Rashid Malik, "Japan's Anti-Terrorism Efforts: The Implications for the Refuelling Mission in the Indian Ocean", *Report*. Tokyo: The Japan Foundation, March 2011.

²⁶Alex Marshall, *The Russian General Staff and Asia 1800-1917* (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 2.

their southward push might have reached the Persian Gulf.²⁷

The Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1979 was also marked by a tragedy of the un-fulfillment of its warm-water dream. The repercussions of its push into Afghanistan since that time have taken a new turn in the shape of fundamentalism and terrorism against the West nowadays not only in Afghanistan but also throughout the region from Central Asia to the Persian Gulf and Russia, thus making the issues of maritime security more complicated for Central Asia to be linked to the Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf. After long history and rivalry, now Gwadar Port is ready to cater to the needs of Central Asia, Russia, China, and Mongolia but the situation in Afghanistan is still not ripe to undertake such facility. Pakistan has invited Russia to use the Gwadar Port for commercial purposes,²⁸ complicating Indian efforts for seeking hegemony in the Indian Ocean.

D. Gwadar Port and the CPEC

The development of the Gwadar Port should not be taken as a kind of strategic collaboration between Pakistan and China against other nations but needs to be seen as a development process of the sea resources of the Indian Ocean and a natural access for China and the landlocked Central Asian States to get sea access to the Arabian Sea for energy and merchandise trade. In the early 1970s, Pakistan first offered this facility to the United States to help develop the port for naval purposes but because of some reasons the United States did not grab this opportunity and refused.²⁹ It was China that much later had shown interest in Gwadar and

²⁷Harm J De Blij; et al, *The World Today: Concepts and Regions in Geography* (5th ed) (New Jersey: Hoboken, 2011), p.98.

²⁸Khalid Mustafa, "Russia allowed use of Gwadar Port", *The News International* (Rawalpindi), November 26, 2016.

²⁹Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto offered Gwadar Port facility to President Richard Nixon to build as a US. navy base during a trip to Washington. China also supported the idea. Afghanistan was training Baloch separatists at that time and pushing the stunt of Pushtoonistan on behalf of the USSR. India and Iraq were also behind Balochistan's separation. Perhaps for these reasons, the United States did not positively respond to Pakistan's offer of Gwadar to avoid confrontation with the USSR, which wanted to push the idea of an access of the warm-water port through Pakistan via Afghanistan. See Dr. Zulfqar Khan, "A Retrospective Perspective on Pakistan-United States Relations: 1947-

offered a loan of US\$ 245 million in 2001 to construct the Gwadar Port for commercial purposes. Moreover, the emergence of the landlocked Central Asian Republics in the early 1990s further pushed the significance of the Indian Ocean manifold, because the shortest and cheapest outlet to global markets available to the Central Asian Republics was through the Gwadar Port as a gateway to Central Asia to increase their merchandise trade.

The global power politics in the Indian Ocean by India, United States, Japan, and their collaborators could only estrange the development strategies of Pakistan and China, which is trying to find out alternative ways of developing their economies. The United States' military presence in Diego Garcia³⁰ and its collaboration with India and Japan made China and Pakistan wary about the strategic imbalance in the India Ocean. Gwadar is a pure commercial port, and Pakistan does not offer any military facility such as anchoring of PLA's naval vassals or jet aircraft landing and takeoff facilities to overlook the Arabian Sea and beyond. Gwadar Port is not going to become another Diego Garcia or Malta that might be controlled by China. Undeniably, Gwadar Port is not a military base. Gwadar would develop on the pattern of the ports of Hong Kong, Singapore and Dubai. Nor has China ever made such a plea to Pakistan to use Gwadar for the PLA's naval, air, or land forces. Against the largely propagated misperception of the "String of Pearls" theory that intends to describe the growing maritime power of China in the Indian Ocean, Gwadar Port would only serve the commercial needs of Pakistan, China, and Central Asian states and countries beyond. No parallel could be drawn between the US pivot to Asia and the "String of Pearls" as Pakistan is not a part of any such policies to oppose or support.

1977" in *IPRI Journal*, vol. 13, no.2, (Summer 2013), p. 37, Johann Chacko "For CPEC peace", in *Dawn*(Islamabad), 24 July 2016, & Usman Shahid, "Balochistan: The Troubled Heart of the CPEC", in *The Diplomat* (Tokyo), 23 August 2016.

³⁰Diego Garcia is an atoll in the south of the Indian Ocean, about 1000 miles from south of India, under US administration since 1966 after Great Britain made an agreement on lease basis until 2016. The United States adopts more cruel regulations violating human rights on the Diego Garcia Island than Guantanamo Bay Island.

Moreover, Pakistan also needs to effectively devise its "Vision East Asia" to respond to India's "Act East" policy. Pakistan is more inclined toward the OBOR preferences. Additionally, Pakistan is one of the conflict-ridden countries and badly at the crossroads of terrorism in the region. It would not like to become once again a "frontline State" in the Indian Ocean promoting the interest of any power including China. For Pakistan, it is high time to reassert for economic globalization of economies in the Indian Ocean. Although Pakistan has gained a middle power status in the Indian Ocean, it is the second declared nuclear weapon state in the Indian Ocean, which is another strategic distinctive feature of Pakistan's significance in the Indian Ocean. Under the growing competitions and rivalries, it is natural for Pakistan to enhance its maritime security through multilateral maritime security activities that included the SEATO in the 1950s, ASEAN-Regional Forum (ARF), and the OEF-MIO. As the OEF-MIO was discontinued in 2011 and Japan has developed much stronger maritime links with India, this compelled Pakistan to seek more naval collaboration with China. It should be pointed out that there is no "String of Pearls" policy as such. Rather, Pakistan's strong military ties with a number of Persian Gulf states also enhance its maritime security and commercial activities.

The Indo-Pakistan Rivalry at Sea

The "Indian Ocean" is not "India's Ocean", but India anticipates to dominate the Ocean for "natural" reasons as a big, populated, and nuclear country. India faces challenges posed by Pakistan and also by China for its maritime postures and militarization of the Indian Ocean. Both Pakistan and China are hindrances to India's hegemony in the region. The main distinction between the Pakistan-India rivalry in the Indian Ocean is that Pakistan does not intend to seek hegemony and domination in its maritime policy or even militarization, whereas India wants to dominate the region by seeking American, Japanese, Australian support to counter Chinese rise in the region. The "Indo-Pacific" and "Indo-West Pacific" concepts were coined in order to aggravate Indian designs from the Indian Ocean to the Pacific in collaboration with Japan and Australia under the umbrella of the

United States and like-minded partners.³¹ India also flexes its muscles in the Indian Ocean through its vibrant "Act East" policy. On the contrary, Pakistan wants to maintain a balance in the Indian Ocean and, for achieving that end, it is continuously struggling on balancing act, as illustrated in the following Table.

Comparison of Pakistan and India Navy Capabilities

	India	Pakistan
Personnel	53,350	23,800
Submarines - Tactical	14	8
Frigates	13	10
Combatants	96	18
Landing Craft	34	4

Source: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance: An Annual Assessment of Global Military Capabilities and Defence Economics*, 2015. London: Routledge, 2015.

Pakistan's policy of creating a balance and conditions for peace in the Indian Ocean has been quite successful and well responded to by a number of countries. The bright example is the 5th AMAN (Peace) 2017 naval exercises "Together for Peace" hosted by Pakistan Navy in February 2017, and responded to by as many as 35 countries.³² These exercises have been carried out after every two years since 2007 with the main objective of anti-terrorism and to fight maritime threats in the sea to promote peace, cooperation and stability in the Indian Ocean. Bilaterally, Pakistan Navy also conducts joint exercises with some partner countries especially with the Chinese People Liberation Army (PLA's Navy) and Russian Navy to

³¹To understand this concept see Rory Medcalf, 'A Term Whose Time Has Come: The Indo-Pacific', in *The Diplomat* (Tokyo), 4 December, 2012.

³²"Over 35 countries to participate in 'Aman-17' naval exercise", *Dawn* (Islamabad), 8 February 2017.

secure the maritime passage of the CPEC and to eliminate piracy and maritime crimes and threats. In the foreseeable future, both China and Russia are likely to increase their political footprints in the western Indian Ocean³³, while China and Pakistan will enhance their merchandise interests in the sea. These are the basic reasons for India's growing anxieties about Pakistan and China in the Indian Ocean

India feels threatened because of the close partnership between Pakistan and China and the efficient capabilities of Pakistan naval forces. For India, Gwadar Port would be used for maritime purposes by China³⁴ and it will help strengthen Pakistan's maritime position through what they call "String of Pearls", policy, which China and Pakistan categorically refused.³⁵ They, on the contrary, refute all such Indian claims time and again, and state that Gwadar Port will be used for mercantile trade and connectivity under the OBOR. Indian apprehensions, however, continue, and it is trying to build influence in the region through a number of ways including an increase in naval presence to counter perceived Chinese and Pakistani threats. The intrusion by an Indian nuclear submarine in Pakistan's waters on 4 November 2016, just ahead of the Gwadar inauguration, was a clear illustration of Indian fears of Pakistan-China maritime collaboration at Gwadar. Pakistani authorities believed that the Indian submarine was "Gwadar bound" to sabotage the CPEC shipments.³⁶ India, on the other hand, refuted any such claims.³⁷ The tussle, however, continues between the two countries in the Indian Ocean.

³³Muhammad Azam Khan, "AMAN 17 and the balance of power in the Indian ocean", in *Pakistan Today* (Islamabad), 9 February 2017.

³⁴"Chinese navy ships to be deployed at Gwadar: Pak navy official", *Times of India* (Mumbai), 25 November 2016.

³⁵See Ashay Abbhi, "String of Pearls: India and the Geopolitics of Chinese Foreign Policy", July 26 2015. Available at: <http://www.e-ir.info/2015/07/26/string-of-pearls-india-and-the-geopolitics-of-chinese-foreign-policy/>

³⁶"Pakistan Navy repulses Indian sneak submarine", *Daily Times* (Lahore), 19 November 2016. See also Ahmad Rashid Malik, "Sabotaging the CPEC", *Issue Brief*, 1 December, 2016. Islamabad: Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad, 2016.

³⁷Imtiaz Ahmad, "Pak navy claims it 'blocked' Indian submarine, New Delhi says it's a lie", *Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), 19 November, 2016.

Recommendations

Looking at the dynamics of political, security, economic, and cultural diversity of the States of the Indian Oceans, and to help resolve some of the outstanding issues prevailing for centuries, decades, and years, the following eight concrete measures could be adopted to address such issues. These recommendations are as under:

I. The Indian Ocean Integration

The Indian Ocean littoral States are not well integrated. Regional organizations such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), Association of the South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Gulf Cooperation (GC) and other Middle Eastern littoral States, and East African States of the Indian Ocean should form a wider regional association to integrate the entire region.

II. The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

The Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), launched in 1997, is a good initiative but it is limited to just ten Indian Ocean countries. The IORA should be expanded to all 36 countries to achieve better outcomes for regional integration and connectivity.

III. The Indian Ocean Security Cooperation Association (IOSCA)

A comprehensive multilateral security forum is required to handle the security and defence issues of the Indian Ocean littoral States. Earlier, security fora were time-barred and directed against particular forces to seek hegemony. The ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) is a good example but it does not cover all the littoral States

of the Indian Ocean.³⁸

IV. The Indian Ocean Free Trade Partnership (IOFTP)

Similarly, an economic forum should be created amongst all the littoral States of the Indian Oceans to expand trade and economic cooperation among member States. A regional Free Trade Agreement i.e., the Indian Ocean Free Trade Partnership, (IOFTP) should be initiated to form an economic union for trade integration among the Indian Ocean littoral States.

V. The Maritime Silk Road

The Chinese initiative of the 21st century Maritime Silk Road is a novel idea and it offers immense opportunities to a number of the Indian Ocean littoral States to integrate and promote trade, commerce, connectivity, and social-cultural cohesion. This initiative should be comprehensively promoted. Under this plan, marine life and biodiversity protection should also be initiated to address environmental issues.

VI. The Indian Ocean Cultural Association (IOCA)

A cultural forum should also be formed to promote diverse cultures namely; Indian, Islamic, Arab, South East Asia, African, and Australian cultures and languages. A Cultural Research Centre of the Indian Ocean littoral States should be formed to promote cultures and education. The Perth-based Indian Ocean Centre should be revitalized for conducting diverse research on the Indian Ocean by enhancing scholarship and fellowship programs.

³⁸Cooperative Peace and Security In The Indian Ocean Region, *The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Australia*, <http://foreignminister.gov.au/speeches/1996/indocean.html>

VII. The Indian Ocean Commission for Arbitration (IOCA)

A commission should also be proposed to sort out territorial disputes and differences among the Indian Ocean States in line with the international arbitration rules and regulations and before referring to international mediation. The Sir Creek dispute between Pakistan and India is just a case in point.

VIII. The Indian Ocean Nuclear Free Zone (IONFZ)

The massive military, nuclear, missiles, and conventional build up in the Indian Ocean severely dims the prospects for peace. India and Pakistan are the only nuclear powers in the Indian Ocean, along with Israel having its undeclared nuclear capabilities and after the resolution of Iran's nuclear program. Since the early 1970s, there had been a proposal lying on the table that the Indian Ocean should be de-nuclearized to promote a defence and security atmosphere, and Indian Ocean Nuclear Free Zone (IONFZ) should be declared by the United Nations General Assembly by dismantling all nuclear weapons and arsenals. The proposal for the Indian Ocean Zone of Peace (IOZP) had been there for quite some time, for instance, the UNSC Resolution 2832, XXVI, of 1971.³⁹ Some countries (like Sri Lanka and others) even went to suggest de-militarize the Indian Ocean. All these efforts would be a great step in building trust and regional harmony in the Indian Ocean in the 21st century. This measure would help end up the long standing nuclear and military standoff between India and Pakistan.

Conclusion

These are some of the great challenges faced by several littoral States in the Indian Ocean. As far power play is concerned among super and major

³⁹See for detail, Yoshikazu Sakamoto, *Asia, Militarization & Regional Conflict* (Tokyo: United Nations University, 1988).

powers in the region, Pakistan is in search of multilateralism in the Indian Ocean so that a particular power could not dominate the Indian Ocean politics and security apparatus and pose security and other challenges to smaller littoral States. Pakistan is carefully treading on the US pivot and rebalances to Asia, China's OBOR, and India's 'Act East' and devising its own preferences in collaboration with other countries. Pakistan needs to be pro-active on its Vision East Asia and develop a "Go East" policy in order to be more vibrant in its policy toward the Indian Ocean. Pakistan does not seem isolated on the Indian Ocean issues. Rather it is fully integrated with a large number of littoral States and outside powers to make the Indian Ocean a zone of peace. Regionally speaking, a number of political, security, and economic measures, given above, would create durable peace and harmony in the Indian Ocean. In the final analysis, it is proposed that Pakistan should intimate its intention of joining the IORA and should propose the idea of the Indian Ocean de-nuclearisation in the United Nations as a first step to integrate the Indian Ocean region.