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Emerging Security Architecture in the Indian Ocean Region: Policy Options for India

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The Indian Ocean Region has become one of the major spotlights in international security in recent times. With the importance of SLOC which connects the Pacific and the Atlantic and the increasing appetite for energy resource for the booming Asian economy, security in the Indian Ocean is a matter of concern for all stakeholders. However, US military presence in Asia is going to decline in the coming period while China is emerging as a great power in Asia which could amount to creating creeping Chinese expansion in the waters of Asia. The lack of a dominant regional power in the IOR and the retreat of US from the region would lead to strategic uncertainty which will unfold competition for dominance by other powers. It is in this context that the most important priority for the regional countries is the IOR should be free from any sort of power rivalry and needs to ensure freedom of navigation and peace and stability in the region. In order for that to happen, India has to emerge as a credible power in the region and must take a leading role in establishing cooperative security framework in the region bringing all countries of the region on board for effective security architecture in the Indian Ocean region.

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''Ever since the sixteenth century – from which time the Indian Ocean became the scene of a struggle for control of the sea – the future of India has been determined not on the land frontiers, but on the oceanic expanse.''[1]

– Sardar K.M. Panikkar

Introduction

The Indian Ocean has held a defining place in the evolution of India. It was through this ocean that two dominant religions of the world, Christianity and Islam, reached India; across this water body European traders travelled to India and established their empires and ruled for centuries. In the post-World War II era, many countries in the Indian Ocean littoral, including India, attained independence. In the years that followed, many have prospered and thrived – developing into fledgling global powers. Yet, there is no mistaking the absence of a coherent and inclusive system of governance in the broader region. Needless to say that there are pockets today within the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) that have turned into dominions of dictators – some ruled by monarchs, others by strict theocracies or authoritarian regimes. Only a handful of nations survive as democracies. These nations must come together to cooperate, collaborate and determine a security mechanism for governance within their single common asset – the Indian Ocean.

The great Indian historian K.M. Panikkar once said: ''the history of the last three centuries has shown that any power which has unquestioned mastery of the sea and strength to sustain a land campaign can hold the Empire of India, monopolize her trade, and exploit her unlimited resource''.[2] This is borne out by what is being witnessed in the Indian Ocean today. As West Asia occupies a principal position on the world's geopolitical landscape, not least because of its centrality to global oil trade, the importance of Indian Ocean has increased manifold and ensured that security of the Ocean is a major concern for all leading powers of the world.

The economic successes in the Asia-Pacific region in the late 20th century and the countries' increasing dependent on energy imports to sustain their economic growth have led to the Indian Ocean region assuming enhanced significance. Nearly half of the world's seaborne trade passes through its sea lanes, and approximately 20% of this trade comprises energy resources.[3] It has also been estimated that around 40% of the

world's offshore oil production comes from the Indian Ocean, while 65% of the world's oil and 35% of its gas reserves are found in the littoral states of this Ocean. Unlike the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans, almost three quarters of trade traversing through the Indian Ocean, primarily in the form of oil and gas, belongs to states external to the region. As a result, free and uninterrupted flow of oil and goods through the ocean's sea lines of communication (SLOC) is deemed vital for the global economy and so all major states have a stake in its stability.

Ironically, today the Ocean is increasingly viewed as a theatre of power rivalry. India and China, the two emerging powers of Asia, are seen to be involved in a conflict to obtain greater influence within its perimeter. China is increasingly enhancing its presence in the Indian Ocean region – both in the blue water naval capability and developing infrastructure in the littoral countries. It seeks to do so by deploying naval ships in the pursuit of combating piracy in the Indian Ocean waters.

Not surprisingly, China's defence budget is the second largest in the world and has been growing at a double digit growth rate for the past 20 years (the only exception being the 2010 budget that had a modest 7.5% increase from the previous one). Its 2011 budget of $91 billion[4] has caused some consternation in the West and among the growing economies of Asia. Given Beijing's ambition to emerge as a great power in Asia, and its military modernisation programme, there is an appreciation among policy analysts that China's power projection is likely to grow and would at some stage sharply impinge upon the security of the Indian Ocean region.

The Indian Ocean has also been facing non-traditional security challenges from non-state actors. The maritime trade route from the Gulf of Aden to the Strait of Malacca is highly vulnerable to the threat of terrorism and piracy. These are gradually turning into a source of major concern for all leading powers of the world. In order to deal with these issues, all major powers of the world including the United States, European Union, NATO, Russia, China and Japan have shown considerable strategic interest towards the Indian Ocean and deployed their navies in the region.

During the Cold War, the United States was the leading force in the IOR with a considerable military advantage over its competitors. While the former Soviet Union strove to increase its presence in the warm waters of Indian Ocean, it could not really succeed in its attempts. Unlike the Atlantic and the Pacific however, the Indian Ocean was largely spared from superpower rivalry between the United States and Soviet Union. The United States, by means of its naval base in Diego Garcia

and different military pacts like South East Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) held sway over the area. It continues to do so through its various military commands, and has had a comparative advantage in defining the security architecture of the region.

However, with the decreasing ability of the United States to exert military power in different parts of the world and the emergence of new power centres across the globe, countries are looking at regional mechanisms to maintain security and peace. With its exit from Afghanistan, the United States may reduce its presence in the Indian Ocean waters, leaving it open to occupation by other players. In this scenario, it is imperative for India to avoid a major power rivalry between nations, whilst ensuring freedom of navigation and protection of SLOCs. It is thus important for India to devise an effective security architecture which would enhance safety and stability in the Indian Ocean region.

Indian Ocean Region: Prone to Power Game?

The Indian Ocean has always been prone to conflict. For over a century now it has been a ''theatre of operation''[5] for all major powers in varying degrees and different periods. Colonial powers fought battles in the Indian Ocean initially for controlling trade, but later they came to rule its waves. They secured the Ocean largely by controlling the entry points to the Ocean which include the Cape of Good Hope, Socotra Island in the Red Sea, the Suez Canal and the Malacca Strait. Importantly, it was the military strength at home that safeguarded their might out at the Ocean. Portugal established its supremacy by capturing Socotra Island, while Holland ended Portugal's predominance by capturing Malacca in 1641. In 1652, Holland established its settlement in the Cape of Good Hope, but was not able to establish its suzerainty in the Indian Ocean, largely because of its lack of power projection capability at home. From 1641 to 1815 (Congress of Vienna), both Britain and France competed for dominance of the Indian Ocean. Britain lately marginalised France with the opening of Suez Canal in 1869 that eventually helped Britain to take full control of the Indian Ocean.

Great Britain: until the World War I, however, Great Britain had overlooked the importance of being a sea power in the IOR. Prior to World War I, the Ocean was considered as a ''British lake''[6] and Britain continued its supremacy in the region for long period basically relying on control over most of the riparian countries of the

Ocean. However, with the advent of naval rivalries across the globe caused by the war, naval power became so important a factor in international politics that it forced Great Britain to recognise the importance of establishing regional navies. A Royal Indian Navy was, therefore, created more as a symbol and a beginning than as a fighting force, largely because Britain was the undisputable power in the Indian Ocean region.[7]

Japan: although Britain had real suzerainty over the entire Indian Ocean, it was not far from competition for dominance by other powers. Japan, the only great power from Asia at that period, had made an attempt to open a safe entry into the Indian Ocean during the interwar period. It was reported that Japan held negotiation with the Siam government for the construction of a canal across the Isthmus Kra, which would bypass the coast of British controlled Singapore.[8] During World War II the Japanese Navy entered the Indian Ocean, occupied Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and attacked the British naval base at Trincomalee, but had to withdraw from the region because of the American naval presence in the Coral Sea which compelled Japan to encounter with the United States in the Pacific.

United States: active American involvement in the IOR began in the early 1960s when Great Britain decided to withdraw from the region and agreed to permit the United States to establish a naval communication station on one of its island territories. As per the mutual United States–United Kingdom Defence Agreement of 1966, the United States had established its naval base on the island of Diego Garcia by 1970. Combined with the post-Nixon doctrine strategic policy of the United States,[9] and the oil crisis and its attendant politico-economic interest in the West Asia region, Washington developed a new approach to its security interest in the IOR. This approach was aimed to project US power in the region and to play an active role in the security apparatus of IOR.[10] Since then the United States has sought to enhance its power in the region by improving its naval, air, and communication facilities throughout the area including strengthening the Diego Garcia base where all types of naval warship can anchor. In a way, Diego Garcia has lately become a central geopolitical factor for US policy in the Indian Ocean region.[11]

Having a naval base at the centre of the Indian Ocean, however, was not enough to acquire complete ''dominance'' in the Ocean for United States; a controlling stake from the shore line was considered necessary, as had been done by the British. This difficulty was apparently resolved by reactivating the US Navy's 5th Fleet Central Command (NAVCENT) in Manama after the 1991 Gulf War. During the war the United States

had to depend on the 7th Fleet Naval Command based in Japan as they had been brought to the Indian Ocean to assist US military involved in the war. The NAVCENT is a major component of the US Central Command (CENTCOM), headquartered at Florida, with the responsibility of 25 nations, ranging from Egypt in the west to Pakistan in the east, and from Kazakhstan in the north to Kenya in the south. Its area of responsibility (AOR) encompasses approximately 2.5 million square miles including the Arabian Gulf, Red Sea, Gulf of Oman, parts of the Indian Ocean and 27 countries.[12]

Soviet Union: the former Soviet Union's approach towards the Indian Ocean was more of a response to US initiatives than for power projection because it lagged on strategic mobility, technology, and naval air capability in the region. During the Cold War, the Kremlin was greatly worried about United States' predominant position in the Indian Ocean and wanted to neutralise US underwater strategic capabilities deployed in the vicinity of the Middle East.[13] The main aim of the Soviet Union was to counter the American second strike capability and to overcome American "predominance in strategic nuclear capability" that prevailed in the Indian Ocean.[14] As a result, Moscow had consistently made overtures to the countries of Africa and West Asia for a firm foothold in the area, but was unable to succeed in its mission.[15] In fact, the Soviet Union's main emphasis was to developing a land route to reach the Indian Ocean linking the Soviet Union, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India.[16] The Soviet Union also showed the same interest in the Pakhtuns in a quest for achieving a warm water port in the IOR and was rumoured to have its eyes on Gwadar – the fabled warm water port that had been Moscow's ambition since the days of Czarist Russia.[17]

China: when differences cropped up between the Soviet Union and China along the common border in the 1960s and Russian ambition to have a foothold in the Indian Ocean, it necessitated China to do a balancing act in the Indian Ocean region. China's policy towards the Indian Ocean was part of its approach towards the super power rivalry between the east and west, especially its opposition to Soviet revisionist social imperialism. China viewed Moscow's drive for parity with the United States with wariness. For Beijing, it was a sign that Moscow was intent on establishing its hegemony in the heartland of Asia, and rapidly expanding its military and political contacts throughout the IOR could become detrimental to China's security calculations.[18] China felt that Soviet naval presence in the Indian Ocean region would lead to the "encirclement" of China and regarded it as a follow-up of "British Imperialism".[19] China feared that Soviet Social Imperialism wished to open up an

'arch-shaped maritime route, stretching from the Black Sea across the Mediterranean, the Red Sea, the Indian Ocean and the west Pacific to the Sea of Japan''.[20] This perspective got strengthened when India concluded Treaty of Peace, Friendship and Cooperation with Moscow in 1971 during the Indo-Pakistan stalemate, which in turn, helped to strengthening Sino-Pakistan relations.

The Chinese economy began to grow by leaps and bounds during 1990s which forced the government to hunt for natural resources in different parts of the world. Indeed, in this drive China focused initially on the Southeast Asian region, and then shifted to the West Asia and Africa. Currently, China's dependence on oil and gas, which largely come from foreign sources, for its economic growth are critical. The share of oil in China's total energy mix is expected to increase to 28.9% by 2030 from 22.4% in 2004: natural gas will rise from 3.0% to 8.3% during the same period.[21] The increasing need for energy has become one of the most critical motivations for China's current Indian Ocean policy initiatives. Considering the importance of energy security, China believes that control of natural resources as well as security of transport routes are critical in its long-term foreign policy objectives.[22]

As of now, the imperatives of China's Indian Ocean policy are fuelled by both its need of natural resources and its ambition to consolidate its position in Asia. China's larger strategic concerns are inescapably linked to its economy, which this year has reached the second position, toppling Japan and stands next only to the United States. To sustain its economic growth and ensure energy security China has recently developed the ''string of pearl'' strategy towards the Indian Ocean region. This strategy is actually aiming to seek a legitimate presence, including a physical presence, in the IOR. Shending Li, from the Fudan University, is a strong advocate of China's right to assert itself in the Indian Ocean and to establish naval bases in the region. His logic is that the world's second largest economy, with 70% of its oil coming from the Middle East, must have the rights to secure its oil route. Protection of SLOCs in the IOR, therefore, play an important factor in China's grand strategy.

In this regard, it can be argued that China is more concerned about the influence of a third country, especially an Asian country, other than the United States, in the Indian Ocean. Power influence by an Asian country in the Indian Ocean might cripple China's vital interests including trade and energy security, as well as its great power ambition. Given its geographical advantage and increasing naval capability, India has become a natural power in the Indian Ocean region which can directly

influence the situation around the waters. In such a scenario China perceives an Indian domination in the IOR would be detrimental to China's core security calculation. In order to reduce such security vulnerability Beijing has sought to increase its strategic relationship with other littoral countries like Pakistan, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and recently Sri Lanka. The recent Chinese activity of providing logistical support in building infrastructure facilities like Gwadar of Pakistan, Sittawe of Myanmar, and Hambatota of Sri Lanka have created more apprehension about Beijing's long term intention in the IOR. Some of these facilities can be used for military purposes by China when a real security threat emanates. Beijing envisions emerging as a great power in Asia and these facilities in the Indian Ocean will provide the much needed strategic leverage for China in the Indian Ocean littoral area. China also provides military assistance to the littoral countries for both their internal and external security, which induce them to make a more friendly relationship with Beijing. The series of ports in friendly countries along with its vision of a canal across the Isthmus of Kra, in Thailand, may turn ''Asia's balance of power in China's favour by giving China's burgeoning navy and commercial maritime fleet easy access to a vast oceanic continuum stretching all the way from East Africa to Japan and the Korean Peninsula'' says Robert Kaplan.[23]

Dominant Security Architectures in the IOR

Security in the IOR has been very significant for the international community, not only because of the large chunk of trade that pass through this region, but also because it connects the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans. Ever since the withdrawal of the British from the region, security architecture in the IOR has profoundly based on a ''linkage concept''. According to Ian Clark, ''linkages are created between (sub) regions when individual states, or group of states, consciously pursue security policies on a wider than sub regional basis''.[24] Security of the region has been preserved largely through the linkage process extra-regionally, involving local states and an outside power; Australia and many other regional countries, including countries from West Asia to Southeast Asia with the United States, India with the Soviet Union, Pakistan with China and the United States. States of the littoral area have never sought security by concerted actions among themselves. Today, however, the security architecture of the IOR has been transformed from the linkage process to the concept

of cooperative security, albeit external powers presence may continue in the region for a while. In a way, the first of its kind of a regional grouping for security purposes can be seen with the onset of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS). The IONS is a compendium of regional navies initiated under the leadership of Indian Navy in New Delhi in 2008. However, the real challenge for the IONS is how to emerge as an effective security mechanism in the region and its success depends on how much importance India gives to it.

Pan-Ocean Security Frameworks

While considering a pan-Ocean security framework, it is to be noted that autonomy has been the central concept of any ideology regarding Indian Ocean. It is in this concept that other subcategories revolve around, like autonomous political action, autonomous economic growth, and autonomous cultural development.[25] In fact, the quest for autonomy is directly related to the identical experiences of the countries in the region that had been undergone during the colonial period and the resultant economic exploitation and cultural denigration. When the regional countries got independence, they sought to transfer the autonomy as their political ideology which became the votaries of the concept of Asian solidarity and Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). However, when the Cold War intensified the regional countries feared that the IOR would soon become a ''theatre of operation'' for a power rivalry. This fear understandably brought in the concept of ''strategic coherence'' between the littoral countries which helped them to emerge as a group that adopted common policies and position in an effort to quell the division of regional countries by the external powers. By doing this, the regional countries expected that the Indian Ocean should be free from power rivalry. In this attempt the regional countries started demanding that the Indian Ocean must be considered as a ''zone of peace''.

Indian Ocean as a "Zone of Peace"

The idea of making the Indian Ocean a zone of peace came out of a concerted bid by the littoral countries when the United States began to consolidate its military position in the region following its takeover of Diego Garcia from Britain. Subsequently, the United States converted Diego Garcia into a military base and began stockpiling nuclear weapons. Considering the gravity of the danger of having nuclear weapons in the region, the Lusaka summit of NAM in 1970 advocated that the Indian Ocean

must be seen as a ''nuclear free zone''.[26] This concept was further echoed in the 26th session of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 1971 and Sri Lanka proposed a resolution demanding the Indian Ocean be declared a zone of peace. Eventually the UNGA passed resolution no. 2832 which called for ''halting the further escalation and expansion of their [the great powers'] military presence in the Indian Ocean'' and ''eliminating from the Indian Ocean all bases, military installations and logistical supply facilities, the disposition of nuclear weapons and weapons of mass destruction and any manifestations great power military presence in the Indian Ocean conceived in the context of great power rivalry''.[27] Admittedly, in 1972, the UNGA appointed an Ad-Hoc Committee on the Indian Ocean to consider ways of implementing the zone of peace resolution. Sri Lanka submitted a working paper to the Ad-Hoc Committee and demanded that there must be ''a gradual reduction and ultimate elimination'' of the military presence of foreign powers from the region.[28] However, the zone of peace concept did not make further headway largely because of the shadow of nuclear rivalry in South Asia between India and Pakistan. India exploded a nuclear device in 1974 and since then Pakistan had been trying to acquire a similar one, eventually Pakistan tested a device in 1998 after India conducted its second nuclear test.

The Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation

The Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) was launched in Mauritius in March 1997 to facilitate cooperation in trade and investment among the Indian Ocean littoral countries. It comprises 19 members which represent seven sub-regions; Southern Africa, Western Africa, Southern Asia, Western Asia, South-eastern Asia, Australasia, and Islands of the Indian Ocean. Currently it has five dialogue partners *viz.* China, Egypt, France, Japan, and UK.

IOR-ARC is the first organisation that represents the entire rim area, to encourage regional economic cooperation following the success of regional economic groupings like the North Atlantic Free Trade Area (NAFTA), European Union, and Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). The focus of IOR-ARC is on economic cooperation rather than economic integration.[29] It allows member states to remain free to pursue their interests in other trading arrangements.

The IOR-ARC can be seen as a manifestation of the idea of former Indian Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru's vision of Afro-Asian Solidarity. The Cold War, in

fact, prevented the Afro-Asian countries from making any substantive cooperation, which has greatly influenced the nature of their relations with one another.[30] A lack of coherence between them has sometimes exacerbated tensions amongst themselves. However, the withdrawal of the shadow of super power rivalry from the IOR has really broken the ideological barriers which led to the establishment of an Ocean-wide forum of countries of the IOR.

India, a founding member of the IOR-ARC, is actively involving in its various projects such as Indian Ocean Business Centre, Trade Promotion Programme, Investment Facilitation and Promotion, and so on. However, the IOR-ARC has not been able to fulfil its stated potential due to varied reasons like the lack of a coherent idea as to how should it grow further, and secondly, littoral countries' inherent apathy to promote it as a genuine economic grouping. Recently IOR-ARC has taken up the new challenges facing the rim countries including piracy and other non-traditional security issues. In the 10th meeting of the foreign ministers of the IOR-ARC held in Yemen in August 2010, Prime Minister of Yemen Ali Mohammed Mujawar emphasised the importance of IOR-ARC on security issues and said that, ''one of the most important steps to ensure security in the region is to restore security situation in Somalia and strengthen the Somali government's capabilities required to counter piracy''.[31] Similarly, India's Foreign Secretary Smt. Nirupama Rao recently observed that ''the political and strategic subtext of this (IOR-ARC) organisation's activity is very relevant in the current times''.[32] In a way, IOR-ARC could emerge as a political grouping in the IOR in future.

Indian Ocean Naval Symposium

The IONS is the first pan-Indian Ocean forum on defence, which meets once in every two years. The IONS is an initiative of the Indian Navy and its first meeting was held in New Delhi, in 2008, in which 26 navy chiefs participated and discussed various transnational challenges that affect the maritime domain. The second meeting held in Dubai, in May 2010, was attended by 32 navies, and the third one is planned to be held in South Africa in 2012. Notably, the United States, the United Kingdom and Japan have applied for observer status in the IONS, but China has not, and the decision will be taken by majority vote in the IONS.

The symposium was conceived on the model of the US-led Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) to facilitate constructive engagement between littoral countries

of the Indian Ocean region. Its primary objectives are to promote a shared understanding of the maritime issues facing the littoral states of the Indian Ocean; to strengthen the capability of all littoral nation-states of the Indian Ocean; to establish and promote a variety of transnational, maritime, cooperative mechanisms to mitigate maritime security concerns; to develop interoperability in terms of doctrines, procedures, organisational and logistic systems and operational processes; and to identify any other areas of cooperation as may be mutually agreed.[33] Since it comprises countries with different political, ideological, and cultural orientations, the IONS promotes the idea of ''cooperation of the willing''.[34] Although it lacks clear political vision, its operational dynamism does support the political process for an enduring peace and stability in the Indian Ocean region.

Thus, the IONS has the potential to emerge as an effective and inclusive cooperative security mechanism in the Indian Ocean region. It can reduce the influence of extra-regional powers, and more importantly, great power rivalry. It could also ensure maritime security in the Indian Ocean region through practical coordination at the policy level and operational synergy between navies among the littoral countries.

Security Scenario in the IOR: Present and Future

Compared with other major oceans, a distinctive feature of the Indian Ocean is that it lacks a dominant regional power. Although India is a major country in the littoral area, it is often reluctant to take a leading role in the security apparatus of the Indian Ocean region. Evidently, this regional power vacuum has invited extra regional powers into the area and it can even be argued that today the United States is the most significant naval power in the Indian Ocean region. China, the newly emerging great power, is also seeking to increase its influence in the Indian Ocean, which ''exposes the region to the contours of power politics in the 21st century'', argues Robert Kaplan.[35] According to him, ''as the competition between India and China suggests, the Indian Ocean is where global struggles will play out in the 21st century''.

The security architecture of the Indian Ocean region will inevitably be linked to the power and position of India, especially dependant on the course which India pursues with regard to the matter of its power projection in future. As an emerging global power, both in economic and political terms, and also the largest military

power in the littoral area, India will play a crucial role in the security apparatus of the region. Given the pace of economic growth at an average 8%, India's defence expenditure will be growing in proportion with the economic growth. Currently India's defence expenditure is 2.5% of its annual GDP. India is due to spend almost $80 billion on military acquisition from 2011 to 2015, according to a study by Deloitte and the Confederation of Indian Industry on the country's defence market.[36] As a result, by the end of this decade India could be considered as a "middle power"[37] in the international system.

Middle powers are the states who can attain the capability of the great powers, but lack the system-shaping capabilities of the great powers.[38] Their size, resources, military prowess, and economic strength will provide an influential role in the international system. In other words, "middle powers may lack the capacity to challenge the way in which the great powers run the international system, but they are sufficiently powerful to defy any great power attempt to force them to behave in a manner against their choosing".[39] Concretely, middle powers, then are the emerging powers that have the capability and intention to manoeuver their way into great power status. Though India does not have the ambition to become a great power, India will certainly influence the geopolitics of the Indian Ocean region.

Realists say a powerful state will be interested in expanding into "empty spaces".[40] Great powers tend to push their frontiers forward into the politically empty spaces of their continents and for that they may resort to military expedition. While an emerging power's intention is not hegemony or to expand its boundary because that could lead to a direct military conflict which will hinder its economic growth, but surely will seek to expand its "influence" with the help of its economic strength and its relative military prowess. Mearsheimer argues that the ultimate goal of all states is to achieve hegemonic position in the international system.[41] However, it is the choice of individual country whether it wants hegemony depended on its "size of population and territory, resource endowment, economic capability, military strength, political stability and competence".[42] As of now, India has neither the military capability nor the political will to seek hegemony even in Southern Asia.

Considering its economic growth, however, India is seeking a larger voice in various international bodies like the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank and is aiming for a permanent membership at the UN Security Council. The *Economist* magazine recently opined that the deliberations of the last concluded

G-20 meeting held in Seoul on November 12, 2010, was based more on the ''Delhi consensus'' than the North's agenda.[43] Similarly, when India becomes militarily powerful it may seek to expand its influence beyond its borders. While conditioned by unfriendly relationships with the whole spectrum of its land border, India cannot expand its influence through the land. At the same time, China, a great power-in-waiting, is commanding more leverage than India in its extended neighbourhood, especially in the case of Pakistan and Myanmar. In this situation India's ''power influence'' will definitely be in the Indian Ocean, the empty space. India is going to induct almost 40 ships to its Navy by 2020, which include two aircraft carriers, six to eight submarines and various classes of warships. As a result, India will look into shape the future security environment of the IOR. India's ability to create a favourable security environment in the Indian Ocean region will ultimately strengthen India's political profile in the international system.

However, India's increasing military profile in the IOR could, in turn, collide with the interest of other major powers, particularly China. Beijing perceives that Indian dominance in the IOR will be detrimental to its interests because of its overwhelming dependence on the Indian Ocean for its energy security. According to a Chinese scholar, Zhu Fenggang, ''India's ability of unfettered control of the seas stretching from the Strait of Hormuz to the Malacca Strait in peacetime, and the capacity to blockade these choke points effectively in wartime ... will plainly encroach upon China's traditional sphere of influence in general and its energy security interests in particular''.[44] In its ''Malacca dilemma'' security syndrome, it appears that it is India that China considers a real threat to its energy security more than any other power.

In a widely discussed argument of a competition between India and China in the Indian Ocean for dominance, propounded US Scholar Robert Kaplan, he argues the ''Indian Ocean is where the rivalry between the US and China in the Pacific interlocks with the regional rivalry between China and India, and also with America's fight against Islamic terrorism in the Middle East, which includes America's attempt to contain Iran''.[45] However, contrary to Kaplan's argument, it is highly unlikely that a regional rivalry between New Delhi and Beijing in the IOR for dominance is possible in the near future. India does not pursue the dream of becoming a great power and its defence capability and political structure are not conducive for such a power dream. India always believes in the freedom of navigation in the IOR and considers the Ocean should be free from any sort of power rivalry. So India's priority

options will be to keep other contenders away from seeking dominance in the region and to ensure SLOC are as free as possible.

China's actual plan for the IOR is still far from clear and open to debate, but its current defence capability does not allow Beijing to project power in the IOR. China's strategic priority today is the East China Sea and South China Sea, while Taiwan and Spratly Islands have been depicted as "core interests", along with Tibet and Xinjiang. As of now its naval capability is a countervailing to the American power in the western Pacific, particularly in a conflict over Taiwan and Beijing's recent military acquisition is clearly aimed at achieving the "local access denial".[46] "The People's Liberation Army (PLA) is developing capabilities to interdict, at long ranges, US aircraft carriers and expeditionary strike groups that might deploy in the western Pacific".[47] China currently focuses on increasing the profile of its undersea arsenal, including submarines, both conventional and nuclear, and has already acquired 12 Kilo-class attack submarines, 13 Song class submarines, two Shang class nuclear attack submarines, four Han class nuclear attack submarine, and one Jin class nuclear ballistic missile submarine, with four more on the way.[48] But China does not have a single aircraft carrier (it is developing one Shi Lang class aircraft carrier and may be increased to four–six by 2025), the tactical air superiority at sea, while the Unites States boasts 24 of the world's 34 aircraft carriers, including all the 11 super carriers.[49]

However, India must consider seriously that China might pursue a "naval grand strategy" in both the Pacific and Indian Oceans in conjunction with its great power status, once the Taiwan issue is resolved in China's favour. But before China projects its power in the Indian Ocean it will make sure that at least a safe access to the Indian Ocean through land, either through Pakistan or Myanmar, becomes possible. China has already initiated plans to establish an energy corridor from the Indian Ocean to mainland China which will help Beijing to overcome the Malacca dilemma. Beijing is also assisting Pakistan making the Karakkoram Highway an all-weather road route connecting Xinjian to Karachi port, and possibly extend to Gwadar. Its "string of pearl strategy" is being considered as a potential platform to project its power in the region in future. "A one ocean navy in the western Pacific makes China a regional power: a two ocean navy in both the western Pacific and Indian Ocean makes China a great power, able to project a force around the whole navigable Eurasian rimland".[50]

As of now, China's strategy towards the IOR is to contain India's increasing profile in the region. For that China pursues a combination of soft power and hard

power mechanisms; soft power in terms of providing economic aid for building infrastructure like ports and roads, while hard power by helping the militaries of various regional countries by means of military aid and selling of arms to them. Today China is Pakistan's leading arms supplier, which includes battle tanks, missiles, fighter aircrafts, and submarines worth billions of dollars.[51] Similarly, since 2000, China has been the largest arms supplier to Sri Lanka, and in 2008 alone Colombo purchased $56 million worth of arms from China in its fight against Liberation Tigers of Tamil Elam (LTTE).[52] China is also seeking constantly to get a permanent naval presence in the region and participating in Shared Awareness and De-Confliction (SHADE) to counter piracy and armed robbery. In this regard, if India does not apply its advantageous position effectively, the security structure of the IOR will, one again, be determined by external powers.

Conclusion and Policy Options for India

In order to keep India's primary position in the region and to avoid the region from a power rivalry, following options are to be taken into consideration.

(1) **India has to be a credible power in the region**: India has increased its military preparedness considerably in recent times to face any sort of threat, but the focus needs to be for emerging as a ''credible and relevant power'' in the region. It gives India a recognised position in the region and will be able to play a significant role in any security crisis whether traditional or non-traditional. A resurgent India can also avoid power rivalry in the IOR and can ensure the region as a ''zone of peace''.

(2) **India ought to be the driver of any security mechanism in the region**: India must take the initiative in creating sustainable security architecture in the IOR. In this regard, India should cultivate the IONS as a practical and vibrant forum for discussion on various security issues of the region.

(3) **Strengthen various multilateral frameworks**: although multilateralism has not yet emerged as a dominant security system in the region, a collaborative approach to this format is useful in order to develop a multilateral approach to various economic, political, and security issues. In this way IOR-ARC has to be strengthened and be transformed from a meeting of foreign ministers to a summit of the heads of governments.

(4) **Strengthen cooperative security in the region**: cooperative security permits a deeper understanding of the mutuality of security as well as broadens the definition of security beyond the traditional military concerns. It is based on mutually assured survivability and acknowledgment of others' legitimate security concerns. It advocates increased "transparency" of military forces which can reduce the mistrust between states by facilitating effective threat assessment by participating countries. A major component of cooperative security is confidence and security building measures (CSBMs) which enhances more transparency throughout the region. CSBMs are made by means of reciprocal visits of senior military officers, joint exercises and training programs, sharing of military information, advanced intimation about internal military exercises, joint geological survey, and joint projects in disputed territory.

Thus, the security structure of the IOR is expected to change in many ways. The United States' might reduce its physical presence in the Indian Ocean region along with its tactical retreat from Afghanistan. At the same time, China is seeking to enlarge its profile in the Indian Ocean, both in terms of energy security and anti-piracy operations, which will eventually help China to consolidate its position in the region in consonance with its great power ambition. In this regard, a strong Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean could lead to a power rivalry.

Thus, it is in all stakeholders' interest to ensure that the SLOCS in the IOR remain secure, without generating a power rivalry. To achieve this, India must play a leading role in establishing cooperative security architecture in the region by bringing all the littoral countries and other stakeholders on board so that an inclusive and open mechanism can be brought into place that will eventually preserve enduring peace and stability in the IOR.

Notes

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2. *Ibid.*, p. 83.
3. Harsh V. Pant, "India in the Indian Ocean: Growing Mismatch between Ambitions and capabilities," *Pacific Affairs*, 82, no. 2 (2009).

4. ''China's Defense Budget to Grow 12.7 pct in 2011: Spokesman,'' *Xinhua*, March 4, 2011. http://news.xinhuanet.com/english2010/china/2011-03/04/c_13761030.htm (accessed March 21, 2011).
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7. *Ibid.*
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21. Li Zhodong, ''China's Long-term Energy Outlook and the Implications for Global Governance,'' *Asia-Pacific Review*, 14, no. 1 (2007), p. 17.
22. Joshy M. Paul, ''The Role of Energy Security in China's Foreign Policy: A Maritime Perspective'', *Maritime Affairs*, 6, no. 2 (2010), p. 60.
23. Robert Kaplan, ''Centre Stage for the 21st Century: Rivalry in the Indian Ocean'', *Foreign Affairs*, 88, no. 2 (2009), p. 22.
24. This argument originally appeared in an unpublished paper presented by Ian Clark to the conference on ''The Indian Ocean: Perspectives on a Strategic Arena'' (organised by Dalhousie University's Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, Toronto, Canada, October 14–16, 1982), and is quoted in Dowdy, *The Indian Ocean Region as Concept or Reality*, p. 15.
25. Mohammed Ayub, ''The Quest for Autonomy: Ideologies in the Indian Ocean,'' in *The Indian Ocean Region as Concept or Reality*, ed. Dowdy, p. 32.
26. Kumar, *Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace*, p. 53.
27. *Ibid.*, p. 54, originally from the Resolution 2832(XXVI) of the UN General Assembly.
28. Kumar, *Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace*, p. 54.
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