



# China's Maritime-strategic Presence in IOR: Geopolitical, Geoeconomic and Security Import

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*Developments of the past few years clearly indicate China's quest to establish a permanent maritime-strategic presence in the Indian Ocean Region. With China fast emerging as a global super-power with the potential to challenge the primacy of the USA, this is accompanied with significant geopolitical, geoeconomic and security ramifications for the regional countries. This article attempts to examine the possible implications in terms of regional stability, regional balance of power, maritime security, maritime safety, economics and the adversarial potential in India–China relations. For an objective analysis, the study is based on two contrasting theories of international relations. When viewed in context of the Realist theory, China's presence in the region may lead to zero-sum outcomes. On the other hand, the premise of Constructivism could lead to "win-win" outcomes. The paper concludes that the outcomes are likely to lie somewhere between the aforesaid extremes, depending upon the actions of all states that have stakes in the region. It also attempts broadly to suggest the way ahead for all stakeholders in the region.*

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## Introduction

Until the middle of the preceding decade, the global academic discourse on China's maritime strategy was largely focused on the two island chains in the Western Pacific,<sup>1</sup> and the modernization of the naval forces of the People's Liberation Army (PLA) for a conflict over Taiwan or Beijing's maritime-territorial claims in the China Seas. The "String of Pearls" concept propounded in 2005 drew the attention of analysts to China's strategic intent in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) to develop nodes of influence in the region. However, the anxiety over China replicating the erstwhile US approach of establishing overseas bases was superimposed on the concept. The doubtful validity of China's quest for such bases 'hijacked' the otherwise valid concept of "String of Pearls". Hence, the academic void on China's maritime strategy for the IOR continued for some years, until the likes of Robert Kaplan (2010)<sup>2</sup> and C. Raja Mohan (2013)<sup>3</sup> led the enquiry into the subject. These writings did serve to initiate academic enquiry, but the discourse has gathered momentum only since 2013, after China published its own 'Blue Book' on the Indian Ocean<sup>4</sup> and the PLA Navy significantly enhanced its footprint in the area.

The "Blue Book" affirms that if adversarial powers impede the attainment of China's "commercial" and "economic" objectives in the IOR, it would not desist from resorting to confrontation. It also asserts that China would not permit any single power to dominate the region and is prepared for jostling to establish a favourable regional balance of power. China has also been seeking to be part of collective policy-making in Indian Ocean affairs through participation in multilateral forums like the *Indian Ocean Rim Association* (IORA) and the *Indian Ocean Naval Symposium* (IONS).<sup>5</sup> Lately, it has even sought hub-and-spoke Logistics Support Agreements with the IOR states.<sup>6</sup> These are ample indicators that China seeks to establish a permanent maritime-strategic presence in the IOR.

This paper aims to examine the broad geo-political, geo-economic and security implications of China's established maritime-strategic presence in the IOR for the region. In the attempt to undertake an objective analysis devoid of pre-conceived notions, the analysis bases its arguments on two contrasting theories of international relations. At one end lies the Realist theory, which is essentially premised on assumption that the international system is anarchic, wherein states, as discrete political units, are the primary actors possessing power that is used competitively to meet their basic objective of survival and upholding their sovereignty. When viewed

in this context, China's presence in the IOR is more likely to be accompanied with zero-sum outcomes, where the gains for China come at the expense of the national interests of the IOR states, or vice versa. At the other end lies the Constructivist theory, which rejects the basic assumption of Realist theory, and argues that "Anarchy is what states make of it".<sup>7</sup> The premise of Constructivism could potentially lead to "positive-sum" or "win-win" outcomes for China and the IOR states.

### **Positive-sum Outcomes**

The positive-sum outcomes of China's enduring maritime-strategic presence in the IOR may accrue in the form of maritime security and safety, its attendant gains of economic integration, and regional stability. The case of maritime safety is best exemplified by the event of May 2014, when Chinese warships on anti-piracy mission rescued the crew of Italian cargo vessel MV *Altinia*, which caught fire in the Gulf of Aden and had to be abandoned.<sup>8</sup>

## **Maritime Security, Maritime Safety and Economics**

### **Stakes and Challenges**

The convergence between the interests of China and the IOR states lies in the security of international shipping lanes (ISLs) for sea-borne trade, particularly the flows of hydrocarbon resources across the Indian Ocean. Attendant to this is good order at sea and the safety of shipping and seafarers. A related commonality of interest rests in furtherance of economic connectivity of the IOR, both within the region and with extra-regional players. It must be noted that the much touted "21st century belonging to Asia"<sup>9</sup> cannot be sustained without realizing the full economic potential of the IOR. The key challenges to these common interests are examined below.

1. *Non-Traditional Security Threats.* For the stakeholders, realizing their maritime-economic objectives in the IOR has never been easy. The existence of non-traditional security threats like piracy poses a major challenge. The latest trends suggest a decline in the crime due to suppressive measures by the major navies and other 'reactive' measures adopted by the shipping community. However, the potential for the threat to rise again cannot be discounted until the time the fundamental causes are addressed. Other prevailing threats range

- from maritime crimes (drug trafficking, gunrunning, human smuggling and illegal fishing) to the adverse effects of climate change and maritime disasters.
2. *Geographical Constraints.* The geographical factor poses another challenge. For instance, China is geographically disadvantaged in terms of maritime access to IOR, both for commercial connectivity and for its naval access. India encounters similar predicament. The adversity in terms of its overland access to Central Asia and China is caused due to geo-physical barriers and India's underdeveloped north-east. As India's vital interests expand spatially into eastern Asia, similar to China's current predicament (in reverse), it would find itself increasingly constrained in terms of sea access to the Western Pacific for both economic activity and for its navy.<sup>10</sup>

### Facilitating Factors

China's government statements have lately laid much emphasis on the need for multilateral cooperation in the IOR as a prerequisite for positive-sum outcomes. Although "articulations" do not necessarily mirror "intentions", such statements emanating from Beijing do need to be factored.

1. *Harmonious Oceans.* The Chinese President Hu Jintao initiated the concept of "Harmonious Oceans" in 2009. During the 60th anniversary celebrations of the PLA Navy, he said, "From now on, the Chinese Navy will be more open, pragmatic, and cooperative to actively participate in the international maritime security cooperation, and go to great lengths to realize the lofty purpose of the harmonious ocean."<sup>11</sup> The concept broadly envisions international cooperation towards maritime security, to protect the ocean against damage from international conflicts and crises. It envisages practical measures like peaceful resolution of maritime disputes, security of sea-lanes, anti-piracy, and protecting the oceans' biology and environment.<sup>12</sup>
2. *Maritime Silk Road.* Another Chinese concept is that of "Maritime Silk Road", which was coined by the Chinese President in 2013. Also called "Southern Silk Road", the concept draws from historic times, and refers to the sea trading route that connected the Chinese ports to the European ports, mainly across the Indian Ocean and its intervening ports. In its contemporary avatar, the concept seeks to foster regional maritime and economic

- cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region. After first declaring the concept in Indonesia, China formally sought a favourable response from India.<sup>13</sup>
3. *BCIM Corridor*. With the objective of overcoming the hurdles to economic connectivity, Beijing proposed a multi-modal economic corridor connecting China to Bangladesh, Myanmar and India. The so-called Bangladesh–China–India–Myanmar (BCIM) corridor aims at a “greater market access for goods, services and energy ... (and is characterised by) ... elimination of non-tariff barriers, better trade facilitation, investment in infrastructure development, joint exploration and development of mineral, water, and other natural resources, development of value and supply chains based on comparative advantages, by translating comparative advantages into competitive advantages, and through closer people to people contact”.<sup>14</sup> While fructification of the BCIM corridor would undeniably lead to economic gains for all four countries, notably, it would enable China to have a strategic access to the Indian Ocean.
  4. *Instances of Maritime Cooperation*. The various instances of the PLA Navy's constructive role in maritime safety and security may also be seen as a facilitator of positive-sum outcomes in the future. Since December 2008, the Chinese warships deployed in the Gulf of Aden have been involved not only in counter-piracy coordination and information sharing with other navies, but have also provided security cover to the ships of World Food Program. Also notable is PLA Navy's contribution to the international Search and Rescue (SAR) effort in the wake of the Malaysian airliner MH-370 tragedy in the Indian Ocean.<sup>15</sup> The May 2014 incident involving Chinese naval assistance to the distressed Italian vessel MV *Altinia* in the Gulf of Aden was mentioned earlier.

## Possible Outcomes

As the major power navy, the PLA Navy could effectively complement the collective naval capacities of IOR states to undertake constabulary and benign missions with the overall aim of maintaining maritime safety and security, besides freedom of navigation for unhindered economic activity at sea.

The initiatives that China has proposed to the IOR countries in terms of economic connectivity may be driven by geo-political objectives. But these proposals

are emerging to be irresistible for the IOR countries, including India, who envision the positive prospects of economic cooperation with China. Such multilateral cooperation could spur sea-borne commerce in IOR in a major way. According to Zhou Bo of the Chinese Academy of Military Sciences, China's BCIM initiative could "fundamentally change the political and economic landscape of the Indian Ocean and benefit all countries in the region".<sup>16</sup>

## **Regional Stability**

### **Stakes and Challenges**

China and the IOR states share a multitude of common interests linked to regional stability. These include China's access to natural resources, markets and agricultural land of the IOR, predominant in Africa. The safety and security of Chinese citizens, and economic assets and investments in IOR states, is also premised on regional stability.

Barring volatility in a few localized areas of the West Asian sub-region, the IOR is a relatively stable area. However, the potential for regional instability in the IOR cannot be ignored. The potential flows from socio-economic disparity among and within states, cultural divergences and the fragility of political systems, coupled with separatist tendencies within some states.

### **Facilitating Factors**

In 2004, the then Chinese President Hu Jintao articulated four components of PLA's "New Historic Missions", which were later codified in a 2007 amendment to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Constitution. While two of these were inherently passive,<sup>17</sup> the other two necessitated proactive effort, as follows:

- "Provide a powerful strategic support for safeguarding national interests", and
- "Play an important role in safeguarding world peace and promoting common development".

These tenets have since guided the PLA's overseas missions and foreign engagement. The PLA's increasing involvement in UN peace-support and stability operations and humanitarian missions are reflective of these proactive measures. The various missions undertaken by PLA Navy in the recent past like anti-piracy (Gulf of Aden), Libya

Non-combatant Evacuation Operation (NEO), hospital-ship deployment<sup>18</sup> and escorting sea transportation of Syrian chemical weapons may also be seen in this context. According to Gabriel Collins, China's increasing capability demonstration in the IOR (through such naval missions) will discourage it to be a "free-rider" during a regional crisis.<sup>19</sup>

### **Possible Outcomes**

In addition to ensuring maritime security, it is highly conceivable that the PLA Navy complements the naval capacities of IOR states and even other extra-regional navies to respond to a regional crisis through stability operations. Over the years, the realization of convergence and enhanced multi-national interactions may spur multi-faceted regional integration within and beyond the IOR. This could transform regional geopolitics in a major way, paving the way for crystallization of 'norms of conduct' for regional and extra-regional stakeholders. In the future, this could further enhance China's stakes in the IOR, thereby further reducing the risks of regional instability through an iterative and mutually reinforcing process.

### **Zero-sum Outcomes**

In contrast to the above, based on Realist theory of international relations, the possibility of zero-sum outcomes of China's presence in the IOR cannot be discounted. There are nascent indicators of such manifestation, as exemplified by the February 2009 reports in Chinese mainstream media that the PLA Navy ships on anti-piracy deployment in Gulf of Aden "were stalked by an Indian attack submarine". The reports added that the submarine trailed the ships all across the Indian Ocean, and that the ships eventually forced it to surface.<sup>20</sup> There are good reasons to believe that the incident never occurred, as also confirmed by Indian naval sources.<sup>21</sup> The operational non-tenability of the incident has also been aptly argued.<sup>22</sup>

### **Facts and Assumptions**

China's quest to "displace" the US influence in IOR has never been stated explicitly. However, based on the Realist approach, it may be assumed that China cannot possibly meet its strategic objectives in the IOR with a concurrent strong US influence that currently exists. Such contest may also be seen in context of the

erstwhile concept of ‘balance of power’, albeit under vastly altered conditions of strong economic interdependence. China’s increasing economic interactions with the IOR littorals could bear positive-sum outcomes, as discussed earlier. However, its effort to enhance its arms sales to IOR littorals is likely to be guided merely by self-interest, without sufficient consideration to its adverse effect on regional stability. The IOR littorals – particularly the relevant IOR powers like India – cannot possibly remain unaffected by the ongoing contest.

India is a resident major power in the IOR. Hence, ever since the texture and potential of India–US strategic relations have become palpable in Beijing, China has been ill at ease. Beijing has, therefore, made all attempts to woo New Delhi to develop vital stakes in China, with the aim of displacing the growing US influence in India. In 2005, for example, when the then Indian petroleum minister Mini Shankar Aiyer proposed an extension of the Iran–Pakistan–India (IPI) gas pipeline to China, it was seized and encouraged by Chinese state-controlled think-tanks.<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately for China, the project was still-born. The BCIM project (examined earlier) presents a new opportunity for China to capitalize on.

The above notwithstanding, it is difficult to ignore China’s adversarial relations with India, largely centred on the unresolved land border and Beijing’s India-centric strategic convergence with Islamabad. These are major irritants that aggravate other facets of bilateral ties, including for example, the benign competition for natural resources. Given the growing power asymmetry between the two in China’s favour, India’s only resort is to develop deterrence against China, while also prepare for the worst-case scenarios. On this account, China’s strategic vulnerability in IOR in terms of its energy imports, presents an opportunity to India, as it does to other major naval powers – regional or extra-regional – that have opted to “keep their powder dry”.

### **Aggravating Factors**

As alluded to earlier, the 2005 concept of “Chinese String of Pearls” was interpreted by some analysts as China’s strategic intent to develop overseas military bases in the IOR.<sup>24</sup> Even though there is no firm evidence yet of such an intent, China’s emerging “nodes of influence” and “peacetime access facilities”; in the IOR is a given fact. Therefore, the potential of the “String of Pearls” as “sleeper facilities” of military utility (through implicit agreements with host governments) cannot be discounted. It is important to note that China is investing much in blue-water naval platforms, but

not in underway replenishment (UNREP) ships, or anything akin to the current US Navy's concept of "sea-basing", and may, therefore need such overseas facilities.

Another factor is the increasing demonstration of Chinese naval power in IOR. Presently, much of Chinese naval activity in the IOR is related to diplomatic, constabulary and benign missions. However, the likelihood of the PLA Navy upgrading its missions to maritime power projection cannot be ignored. The incremental growth of PLA Navy missions in this direction needs to be noted. What began in 1985 as goodwill visits of warships to IOR ports, in 2014 developed into a demonstration of naval access through Lombok straits and naval exercises off Australia's Christmas Islands.<sup>25</sup> Ironically, only a week later, China invited India to join its "Maritime Silk Road" initiative, leading to some analysts casting aspersions on China's 'benignly' economic intentions in the IOR.<sup>26</sup>

The steadily declining US strategic commitment to IOR is another reckonable factor. This assumption flows from the focus of the US rebalance strategy on Eastern Asia and Western Pacific, the potential military overreach of the USA in terms of its increasing strategic commitments elsewhere (Ukraine/Eastern Europe), and the reduced American stakes in hydrocarbon resources of the IOR (due to energy self-sufficiency). The concurrent financial constraints to expand US military power is likely to result in a concomitant leeway to China. This may hasten the shift of regional balance of influence in China's favour, and embolden Beijing to use its naval power in the IOR in a more assertive manner.

It is also pertinent to note that while asserting its maritime-territorial claims in the Western Pacific, China has demonstrated its disregard for global norms like freedom of navigation, and the established tenets of international maritime law with regard to resolution of the disputes. It justifies this on account of "historic factors". In the future when it establishes itself as an IOR power, it may adopt a similar approach if developments in the region are perceived by Beijing as not favourable to its national interests. China has also demonstrated that its stance with regard to interpretation of United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) would change based upon its changing national imperatives. For example, while it has always been objecting to maritime powers undertaking military activities in its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), the PLA Navy has lately begun doing the same in the US EEZ off Hawaii.<sup>27</sup> These developments in the Pacific Ocean realities may be replicated in the IOR. Furthermore, it is pertinent to note that unlike the Western Pacific wherein a nascent Code for Unplanned Encounters at Sea (CUES) was instituted in April 2014,<sup>28</sup> the IOR has no such arrangement as yet.

For India, to the growing military asymmetry *vis-à-vis* China across land border, there is an emerging consensus among the Indian strategic community that India offsets such asymmetry through building naval capabilities to undertake a distant blockade of China's energy shipping in the Indian Ocean.<sup>29</sup>

## Possible Outcomes

China's established strategic presence in the IOR along with its increased regional influence could potentially lead to regional instability owing to many factors. The foremost is premised on China's perception of the ideal model of state governance, based on the evolution of its own system. Dr. Prem Mahadevan of the Center for Security Studies, Zurich avers that through its growing influence in Africa, China is drawing local politics away from democratic models of governance.<sup>30</sup> Also, given its current arms export policy, China may trigger a major arms race in the IOR.

China's recent compulsions to sustain naval forces in Indian Ocean have led to domestic debates in China on reconsideration of its erstwhile policy of "no overseas bases". If the "pearls" translate into "bases" leased to China, adverse implications could increase manifold. China could claim to be a regional power with a legitimate demand for membership of IOR security arrangements. Being the most influential power, it would be natural for China to lay the ground rules for multilateralism in its favour, the way it is doing so in the BRICS (Brazil–Russia–India–China–South Africa) forum.<sup>31</sup>

As China establishes itself as a maritime power in the Indian Ocean, the following adverse scenarios for the IOR are also conceivable:

- If unable to shape a "favourable" environment in the IOR through its influence, China resorts to politico-military coercion or even intervention against an IOR state.
- China interprets UNCLOS in its favour, with PLA Navy units undertaking military surveys and intelligence collection within the maritime zones of IOR states that it considers adversarial.
- A China–USA maritime conflict in the West Pacific spills over into IOR, disrupting sea-borne commerce in the IOR, with particularly enhanced risks for international shipping transiting through the Indian Ocean choke-points.

With regard to China–India adversarial relations, unless Beijing provides adequate reassurance to New Delhi in terms of the key irritants mentioned earlier, the Indian Ocean could witness a major maritime conflict in the future, with India–China armed conflict across the land border horizontally escalated to Indian Ocean. This could deny the region the envisaged economic dividends through sea-borne commerce.

## **Conclusion**

The comprehensive approach adopted in this essay is considered necessary, not only for a thorough academic analysis, but also for formulating a national policy-making prescription. The essay articulates two extremes, in terms of both positive and adverse outcomes of China's increasing strategic presence in the Indian Ocean. But the reality, nearly always, is not "black" or "white", but "shades of grey". What shade of grey would finally emerge is contingent upon the actions of all stakeholders in the IOR, not merely the major powers like the USA, China and India.

The suggested way forward would be to amalgamate China in the IOR security architecture, albeit on terms dictated by the best interests of the region. However, these are early days for such architecture, since the precise terms are still being formulated among the IOR littorals under the IONS framework. Notwithstanding, an analysis aptly avers that IONS can be instrumental in providing an environment conducive to socializing China into cooperative security in the IOR. It adds that China's presence at the IONS, even as an observer, would enable China to understand the IOR states' perspectives with regard to their concerns relating to itself.<sup>32</sup>

Concurrently, the countries with vital stakes in the IOR would need to continue to develop military deterrence capabilities, including strategic deterrence through deftly balancing their partnerships with diverse major powers. Specifically in context of India–China relations, a standing agreement for mutual assistance is recommended. However, a reciprocal sea-line security agreement – as suggested by some Chinese scholars<sup>33</sup> – may be counter-productive for regional security since this would limit India's military options against China, and thereby dilute its deterrence versus the emerging super-power. In sum, it would ultimately be test of the national policymakers of all these states to formulate their respective actions to optimizing the underlying potential for win-win positive-sum outcomes.

## Notes

1. China's modern naval strategy based on the island-chain concept was postulated by Admiral Liu Huaqing, the former commander of the PLA Navy. In 1982, he laid down the imperative for the Chinese navy to control the First and Second island chains by 2010 and 2020, respectively.
2. Robert D. Kaplan, *Monsoon – The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power* (New York: Random House, 2010).
3. C. Raja Mohan, *Samudra Manthan: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific* (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2012).
4. "Development Report in the Indian Ocean", Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), June 6, 2013.
5. China is currently a "Dialogue Partner" at IORA. It has been pushing hard for at least an "Observer" status in IONS. This is to be decided in the next IONS "Conclaves of Chiefs" in 2016.
6. "Strengthening Exchange, Deepening Cooperation and Building the Safe and Harmonious Indian Ocean", Presentation by Rear Admiral Li Yunqing, Vice Chief of Logistic Department of PLA Navy, at 3rd IONS Conference at Cape Town, South Africa, April 2012, at <http://ions.gov.in/sites/default/files/Presentation%20by%20China.pdf> (accessed July 12, 2014).
7. Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is what States Make of it: The Social Construction of Power Politics", *International Organization*, 46, no. 2 (Spring 1992): 391–425.
8. "17th Chinese naval escort taskforce rescues Italian crew in distress", *Ministry of National Defence of the People's Republic of China*, May 7, 2014, at [http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Photos/2014-05/07/content\\_4507395.htm](http://eng.mod.gov.cn/Photos/2014-05/07/content_4507395.htm) (accessed July 4, 2014).
9. As opposed to the 20th century that belonged to the USA, and the 19th century when Europe thrived. According to an ADB report, by the middle of 21st century, Asia could account for half of global output, trade and investment, while also enjoying widespread affluence. "Asia 2050: Realizing the Asian Century", *Asian Development Bank* (ADB) Report, August 2011, at <http://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/asia2050-executive-summary.pdf> (accessed July 12, 2014).
10. It is pertinent to note that as per the *Indian Maritime Doctrine* (2009), the Western Pacific is among India's maritime areas of interest, albeit the secondary area. Indian Maritime Doctrine (INBR-8), *Maritime Doctrine and Concept Centre* (MDCC), Mumbai/Integrated Headquarters MoD (Navy) (August 2009), p. 66.

11. "Strengthening Exchange, Deepening Cooperation and Building the Safe and Harmonious Indian Ocean", Presentation by Rear Admiral Li Yunqing, Vice Chief of Logistic Department of PLA Navy, at 3rd IONS Conference at Cape Town, South Africa, April 2012, at <http://ions.gov.in/sites/default/files/Presentation%20by%20China.pdf> (accessed July 12, 2014).
12. Zhou Shixin, "Harmonious ocean, harmonious world", china.org.cn, April 27, 2009, at [http://www.china.org.cn/china/opinion/2009-04/27/content\\_17680562.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/china/opinion/2009-04/27/content_17680562.htm) (accessed July 10, 2014).
13. Ankit Panda, "China Invites India To The 'Maritime Silk Road'", *The Diplomat*, February 15, 2014, at <http://thediplomat.com/2014/02/china-invites-india-to-the-maritime-silk-road/> (accessed July 10, 2014).
14. Mustafizur Rahman, "BCIM Economic Corridor: An Emerging Opportunity", *The Daily Star*, March 15, 2014, at <http://www.thedailystar.net/23rd-anniversary-2014-economy-investment-and-business/bcim-economic-corridor-an-emerging-opportunity-15533> (accessed July 10, 2014).
15. The effort was undertaken by the PLA Navy's 17th Task Force. The Task Force was assigned to relieve the 16th Task force for counter-piracy mission. To undertake the SAR mission, it sailed off from its home-port on March 24, 2014, 10 days earlier than scheduled. "17th Chinese naval escort taskforce departs", Ministry of National Defense of the People's Republic of China, March 25, 2014, at [http://eng.mod.gov.cn/DefenseNews/2014-03/25/content\\_4499952.htm](http://eng.mod.gov.cn/DefenseNews/2014-03/25/content_4499952.htm) (accessed July 10, 2014).
16. Zhou Bo, "The String of Pearls and the Maritime Silk Road", *China-US Focus Digest*, February 11, 2014, at <http://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/the-string-of-pearls-and-the-maritime-silk-road/> (accessed July 10, 2014).
17. These were (1) "Provide an important guarantee of strength for the CCP to consolidate its ruling position, and (2) "Provide a strong security guarantee for safeguarding the period of strategic opportunity for national development".
18. In 2010 and 2011, the PLA Navy hospital ship *Ark Peace* provided medical care and services to various IOR countries and beyond. "Strengthening Exchange, Deepening Cooperation and Building the Safe and Harmonious Indian Ocean", Presentation by Rear Admiral Li Yunqing, Vice Chief of Logistic Department of PLA Navy, at 3rd IONS Conference at Cape Town, South Africa, April 2012, at <http://ions.gov.in/sites/default/files/Presentation%20by%20China.pdf> (accessed July 12, 2014).
19. Gabriel Collins, "An Oil Armada: The Commercial & Strategic Significance of China's Growing Tanker Fleet", in *Asia Looks Seaward: Power and Maritime Strategy*, ed. Toshi Yoshihara, James R. Holmes (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2008), p. 112.

20. Chow Chung-yan, "Chinese Navy sees off Indian Sub", *South China Morning Post* (Hong Kong), February 4, 2009, at <http://www.scmp.com/article/668780/chinese-navy-sees-indian-sub> (accessed July 12, 2014).
21. "India rubbishes reports of Navy submarine 'forced' to surface", *Hindustan Times*, Press Trust of India (New Delhi), February 4, 2009, at <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-rubbishes-reports-of-navy-submarine-forced-to-surface/article1-374781.aspx> (accessed July 12, 2014).
22. In 2009, the Indian Navy possessed only conventional submarines, which are severely constrained by their dived speed to trail surface ships. Besides, these ships could have been able to force the submarine to surface without using weapons, of which, there is no mention in the report. If so, the motive of the report leads to several questions, which are yet unanswered. Cmde Uday Bhaskar cited in Saurabh Joshi, "Reported Sino-Indian naval stand-off untenable: Naval Expert", *StratPost*, February 5, 2009, at <http://www.stratpost.com/reported-sino-indian-naval-stand-off-%E2%80%98untenable%E2%80%99-naval-expert> (accessed July 12, 2014).
23. The exuberance among Chinese think-tanks was personally witnessed by the author during his trip to Chengdu (PRC) for a seminar on "India–China Energy-Security Cooperation" in July 2005 conducted by the Sichuan University.
24. Gurpreet S. Khurana, "China's String of Pearls in the Indian Ocean and its Security Implications", *Strategic Analysis*, 32, no. 1 (January 2008): 1–39.
25. "China makes statement as it sends naval ships off Australia's maritime approaches", *The Interpreter*, February 7, 2014, at <http://www.lowyinterpreter.org/post/2014/02/07/China-makes-statement-as-it-sends-naval-ships-off-Australias-maritime-approaches.aspx?COLLCC=3619322590&> (accessed July 4, 2014).
26. Panda Ankit, "China Invites India to the 'Maritime Silk Road'", *The Diplomat*, February 15, 2014, at <http://thediplomat.com/2014/02/china-invites-india-to-the-maritime-silk-road/> (accessed July 5, 2014).
27. Annual Report to Congress on Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2013 (Washington, DC, May 2013), p. 39, at [http://www.defense.gov/pubs/2013\\_china\\_report\\_final.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/pubs/2013_china_report_final.pdf) (accessed July 5, 2014).
28. The CUES was adopted during the Western Pacific Naval Symposium (WPNS) held at Qingdao, China in April 2014.
29. Raja Menon, "A mountain strike corps is not the only option", July 29, 2013, *The Hindu*, at <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/a-mountain-strike-corps-is-not-the-only-option/article4963979.ece> (accessed July 14, 2014).

30. Prem Mahadevan, CSS Analyses No. 156, June 2014, Center for Security Studies, ETH Zurich, at <http://www.css.ethz.ch/publications/pdfs/CSSAnalyse156-EN.pdf> (accessed July 5, 2014).
31. A report indicates, for example, in the process of creating the new BRICS development bank, China sought greater capital participation ostensibly to assert greater influence over the \$100 billion bank. "The main challenge for BRICS success: China", *Reuters*, July 16, 2014, at <http://www.cnbc.com/id/101839306> (accessed July 16, 2014).
32. "China, India and the Indian Ocean Region: need to Move from balance of Power to Cooperation", *ICS Analysis*, No. 2 (May 2012), Institute of Chinese Studies, New Delhi.
33. Xia Liping, "Sino-Indian Maritime cooperation: strategic Environment", in *Military Confidence-Building & India-China Relations*, ed. Dipankar Banerjee and Jabin Jacob (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2013), p. 89.