

**CHINA'S MARITIME SILK ROAD INITIATIVE:
CHALLENGES FOR INDIAN HEGEMONIC AMBITIONS IN
THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION**

By

Zeeshan Shoukat

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY

Department of International Relations

To

FACULTY OF SOCIAL SCIENCES



NATIONAL UNIVERSITY OF MODERN LANGUAGES, ISLAMABAD

January, 2021

© Zeeshan Shoukat (2021)



THESIS/DISSERTATION AND DEFENCE APPROVAL FORM

The undersigned certify that they have read the following thesis, examined the defense, are satisfied with the overall exam performance, and recommend the thesis to the Faculty of Social Sciences for acceptance.

Thesis/ Dissertation Title: NORD STREAM-II: SECURITY IMPLICATIONS FOR UKRAINE

Submitted by: Zeeshan Shoukat

Registration #: 1661 MPhil/IR/F18

Masters of Philosophy

Name in Full

International Relations

Discipline

Dr. Maliha Zeba Khan

Research Supervisor

Signature of Research Supervisor

Dr. Rizwana Abbasi

HOD (IR)

Signature of HOD (IR)

Prof. Dr. Shahid Siddiqui

Dean (FSS)

Signature of Dean (FSS)

Brigadier Muhammad Badr Malik

DG NUML

Signature of DG

CANDIDATE DECLARATION FORM

I Zeeshan Shoukat

Son of Muhammad Shoukat

Registration # 1661 MPhil/IR/F18

Discipline International Relations

Candidate of **Masters of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis: **CHINA'S MARITIME SILK ROAD INITIATIVE: CHALLENGES FOR INDIAN HEGEMONIC AMBITIONS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION** submitted by me in partial fulfillment of MPhil degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

I also understand that if evidence of plagiarism is found in my thesis dissertation at any stage, even after the award of degree, the work may be cancelled and the degree revoked.

Dated

Signature of Candidate

Zeeshan Shoukat

Name of Candidate

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Contents	Page
THESIS AND DEFENSE APPROVAL FORM	ii
CANDIDATE DECLARATION FORM	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	vi
DEDICATION	vii
LIST OF ABBREVIATION	viii
ABSTRACT	ix
INTRODUCTION	10
Statement of the Problem	13
Objectives of Study	13
Research Questions	14
Literature Review	14
Theoretical Framework	18
Research Methodology	21
Significance of Study	22
Delimitations	22
Organization of Study	23
I. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF MARITIME TRADE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION: AN OVERVIEW	24
1.1 Trade During Ancient Indian Ocean	25
1.2 Trade During Islamic Rule	32
1.3 Trade in Early Modern Period	37
1.4 Maritime Trade During 19 th and 20 th Centuries	40
1.5 Role of the US and USSR in the IOR	44
1.6 Current Status of IOR in Maritime Trade of the World	45
Conclusion	46
II. 21st CENTURY MARITIME SILK ROAD IN INDIAN OCEAN	47
2.1 Chinese Perspectives on Maritime Silk Road Initiative	48
2.2 Ocean-Going Shipping Lines of MSRI in Indian Ocean	49
2.3 Important Choke Points in Indian Ocean	52
2.4 Maritime Silk Road Initiative Economic and Political Objectives & Challenges	54
2.5 Critical Analysis of Few Ongoing Projects Under MSRI in Indian Ocean; Kyaukpyo, Gawadar, Hambantota and Mombasa DI and its Effects on GDP and Industries	61
Conclusion	68
III. INDIAN HEGEMONIC AMBITIONS IN THE IOR: CHALLENGES FROM MSRI	70
3.1 Indian Hegemonic Ambitions in the IOR	70

3.1.1 Indian Ambitions and Regional Environment	71
3.1.2 Divergence of Chinese and Indian Interests in Indian Ocean	72
3.2 Challenges from MSRI	73
3.2.1 The Strings of Pearls Strategy	74
3.2.2 Economic Challenges from MSRI	78
3.2.3 Political Challenges	80
3.2.4 Security Challenges	87
3.3 Prospects of Dual-Use Port Facilities and Overseas PLA-N Support Hubs	88
Conclusion	91
IV. INDIA’S RESPONSE TO MSRI: COUNTER STRATEGIES	92
4.1 India’s New Strategies	92
4.2 Indian Participation Different Initiatives	96
4.3 India’s Response to China’s Strategic Vulnerabilities in Indian Ocean	102
4.4 India’s Andaman and Nicobar Islands	106
4.5 India’s Role in Strategically Important Recipient Countries of MSRI in the IOR	107
4.6 Chinese Perspectives on India and its role in Indian Ocean	110
Conclusion	113
V. CHINA-INDIA HEGEMONIC RIVALRY IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION: IMPLICATIONS FOR MAJOR REGIONAL ACTORS	114
5.1 China-India Hegemonic Rivalry in the IOR	114
5.2 Implications for Major Regional Actors	116
5.2.1 Pakistan	116
5.2.2 Sri Lanka	117
5.2.3 Iran	118
5.2.4 Bangladesh	122
5.2.5 Kenya	124
CONCLUSION	126
BIBLOGRAPHY	127

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I am thankful to Allah Almighty who gave me wisdom, knowledge, potential and courage to seek and search the facts existing in our surroundings, and bestowed me Determination to go through the complicated and obscure facts hidden in our world; gave me the sense of judgment to finalize it with my precise and justified find-outs for the complicated environment of international politics in my research work.

Special appreciation goes to my supervisor, Dr. Maliha Zeba Khan for her supervision, patience, sound judgment and constant support. Her invaluable help of constructive remarks, recommendations, advices and direction revealed me throughout the thesis works have contributed to the success of this research.

Last but not least, my deepest gratefulness goes to my beloved parents and also to my siblings for their endless love, supports, prestigious prayers and best wishes and to those who indirectly contributed in this research, your compassion means a lot to me. Thank you very much.

Zeeshan Shoukat

DEDICATION

With utmost devotions, I dedicated my whole work to my beloved and affectionate Parents, Sisters, Brother, Friends and Respected Staff of International Relations Department who have always been source of encouragement, knowledge, illumination and wisdom for me, whose pray and guidance showed me the right path and made the blessing of Allah shower on me.

LIST OF ABBREVIATION

IOR	Indian Ocean Region
MSRI	Maritime Silk Road Initiative
QUAD	Quadrilateral Security Dialogue
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
IORA	Indian Ocean Rim Association
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
SREB	Silk Road Economic Belt
SCO	Shanghai Cooperation Organization
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
ADB	Asian Development Bank
WTO	World Trade Organization
SEZ	Special Economic Zone

ABSTRACT

Thesis Title: China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative: Challenges for Indian Hegemonic Ambitions in the Indian Ocean Region

Indian Ocean has been least studied in the geopolitical and geo-economics history of the world. But the sea lanes of Indian Ocean have been playing a significant role for trade and commercial activities in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and beyond. Several trading networks in Indian Ocean, with the passage of time, resulted into integrated and organized networks in the region. From ancient Maritime Silk Road to the 21st century Maritime Silk Road, Indian Ocean Region has been a region of central importance. In the twenty first century, Indian Ocean has undeniable importance in the geopolitics of the world, even it is said that the future of the global politics would be decided in the waters of Indian Ocean. In present times, Indian Ocean holds the most important sea lanes and chokepoints of the world. More than half of the world's trade passes through the IOR. Regional as well as extra regional powers have their stakes in the region; therefore, they are actively involved in the region. The US has been a dominant extra regional force in the region for over several decades. China unleashed its plans in 2013 and announced Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI). Initially, China, under its MSRI, is involved in construction of various ports in the Indian Ocean Region and other infrastructure development projects in the participant countries of this initiative. Billions of dollars have been invested in these projects across the region with the declared aim to enhance economic connectivity and integration of the region. Parallel to this development, China has also increased its naval presence in the region. Chinese MSRI has significantly increased Chinese presence and influence over the littoral states of the IOR. On the other hand, India has been aspiring to become a dominant actor in the region and Indian influential strategists argue that dominance over Indian Ocean holds key importance in 'manifest destiny' of India. Chinese MSRI is challenging the Indian Hegemonic Ambitions in the IOR. The rise of China in the IOR has resulted in hegemonic rivalry between India and China in the region. To counter China, India is adopting various strategies, leading initiatives, and offering alternates to host countries of MSRI in the IOR. The rivalry between these two Asian giants, India, and China, has detrimental impact on the littoral states of the region, security, dynamics, politics, and status quo in the IOR.

INTRODUCTION

The research is based on the following core argument: “China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative has potential to change the dynamics of power politics in the Indian Ocean Region; consequently, challenging Indian hegemonic ambitions in the region resulting into increased hegemonic rivalry with certain implications for regional theatre.” In 2013, the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Initiative launched by China, this aims to enhance economic connectivity and maritime cooperation. Furthermore, this is a strategy to develop infrastructure throughout East Africa, Indian Ocean, Oceania, South Asia and Southeast Asia. While revealing the sea routes under the Belt and Road Initiative, the Chinese officials stated that China would establish three blue economic passages which include the China-Oceania-South Pacific Blue Economic Passage, the China-Indian Ocean-Africa-Mediterranean Sea Blue Economic Passage and third one will connect China to Europe through Arctic Ocean.¹

The Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) aims to develop infrastructure and revive overland ancient Silk Road and the MSRI is related to revival of ancient Maritime Silk Road. These two initiatives are collectively known as the Belt and Road Initiative. As majority of the countries in Indo-Asia-Pacific region lack infrastructure and also do not have required budget to develop infrastructure to boost their economies and enhance connectivity, therefore many of them have overwhelmingly welcome the opportunities coming from Chinese initiatives for infrastructure development and enhancement of economic integration in the region. China is also facing criticism on its various policies which are related to MSRI projects and questions are also being raised on the Chinese geopolitical and geostrategic intentions behind these projects. At present, China is involved in development projects and construction of ports mainly in the Indian Ocean Region. The heavy investments by China under MSRI raise the concern that China will have the leverage to influence policies of the countries which are highly indebted.²

¹ “China Reveals Three Routes Under Belt and Road Initiative,” *Safety4Sea*, 26 June 2017.

<https://safety4sea.com/china-reveals-three-sea-routes-under-belt-road-initiative/>

² Nicholas Szechenyi et al, “China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative: Strategic and Economic Implications for Indo-Pacific Region”, *CSIS*, 2018.

https://csis-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/180404_Szechenyi_ChinaMaritimeSilkRoad.pdf?yZSpudmFyARwcHuJnNx3metxXnEksVX3

It is not surprising that China is also increasing its naval presence in the region. This is the same traditional path which has been followed by other rising powers in the past. Major rising powers increase the sphere of military operations when they have interests outside their territory and region. The trade sea routes of Indian Ocean are highly importance for China as they are lifeline for Chinese economy; therefore, it is easily to comprehend that it is important for China to safeguard Chinese sea lines of communications in the Indian Ocean Region. But, it will, certainly, increase the Chinese presence and influence in Indian Ocean.

The Maritime Silk Road Initiative is offering tremendous opportunities for littoral states of Indian Ocean but the vulnerabilities also cannot be overlooked which can possibly be created during wartime in the region. Chinese military, economic and political influence in Indian Ocean will remain a major source of attraction for those who do research and concerned about developments in Indian Ocean. Indian Ocean is not only important for Indian interests but Japan, Australia and the US also depend on the sea routes of Indian Ocean. India has been referring to Chinese MSRI as a part of China's strategy to encircle India in the region.

The academic and strategic community in India, mostly, perceives the Chinese Belt and Road initiative as an initiative which is more about strategic and political objectives of China rather than economic development in the region. This specific perception is clearly visible in the writings and speeches of renowned people from these communities. In addition, the conferences in China, which have been organized to promote the BRI and the new silk roads, did not mention Indian contributions for development of ancient Silk Roads. Furthermore, India has been mentioned on the maps which are related to the Maritime Silk Road and Silk Road Economic Belt, but there has been rare acknowledgment of India's significance for success of the BRI in Chinese discussions while discussing the BRI, even in South Asian scenario.

While formulating of policies vis-à-vis Indian Ocean, Indian policy makers have been considering China as major concern in the way of India's ambitions in the Indian Ocean Region. There are several events and cooperation which have raised concerns in power corridors of India towards China; they include China supports Pakistan in economic, political and military domains, China defeated India in 1962 war, skirmishes at borders

such as in Doklam during summer 2017 and recently there was standoff between India and China in Ladakh. China has captured 38,000 sq km territory in Ladakh.³ Despite their bilateral economic ties, the aforementioned events particularly the recent ones and also the policies of India vis-à-vis Indian Ocean validate the argument that economic ties cannot temper their rising competition in the Indian Ocean Region to large extent, and these ties have been unable to deter the ongoing competition so far. Moreover, Indian media has also joined western media to spread propaganda against China. Moreover, India and China are members of BRICS and SCO; both the states are following same policies towards industrialized nations while negotiating the conditions for objectives towards Climate Change and also related to International trade. In addition to it, Like China, India has also been aspiring to become a great power. It has been striving to get permanent seat of UNSC, though, has not succeeded so far.⁴

India has been dreaming to become great power for over years. Till date, India has the potential to play its role as middle power at best due to its location, military and economic might. In 2019, India was ranked 129th by Human Development Index, while China was ranked at 85th position. In addition, it is hard for India to pursue its foreign policy initiatives with about 900 people in diplomatic services of India; this figure is lower than Japan and China. Despite the constraints in its history and present position, India is taking part, almost, in all the initiatives, even leading in one of them, which have been taken or being taken to counterbalance Chinese increasing influence in the Indian Ocean region. As part of counter measures by India, India has been actively participating in QUAD, IORA, constructing Chabahar Project, organizing exercises with its allies and friends especially the US, and involving in recipient countries of the Maritime Silk Road Initiative. Among these formations, projects and initiatives, QUAD has been considered as significant alignment to counterbalance China in the region.

The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (or QUAD) was not a new group which appeared in 2017. In 2004, a tsunami hit the states of Southeast Asia and to provide humanitarian

³ “China has illegally occupied over 38,000 square km of land in Ladakh: Rajnath Singh,” *Times of India*, 15 September, 2021. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/videos/news/china-has-illegally-occupied-over-38000-square-km-of-land-in-ladakh-rajnath-singh/videoshow/78125179.cms>

⁴ Raj Mittal, “Sino-Indian Relations in the Indian Ocean: Conflict or Convergence?” *FDI*, 26 November, 2019. <http://www.futuredirections.org.au/publication/sino-indian-relations-in-the-indian-ocean-conflict-or-convergence/>

assistance to these countries especially Indonesia India, the US, Japan and Australia came together. In 2007, these countries formally established the QUAD to enhance security cooperation in the region but it could not attract the governments of these countries as such. A decade later, in 2017, this Quadrilateral Security Dialogue was re-established as there was need for such platform increased due to exponential rise of China in the Indo-Pacific region. Although, apparently, the representatives from the member states of QUAD give the reason for reestablishment of this group as its purpose is to ensure free and open Indo-Pacific region, but their intention to counter balance China with this alignment is also quite visible.⁵

This research has focused on the projects in Indian Ocean Region (IOR), which are part of Maritime Silk Road Initiative. These projects will, ultimately, help China to become a decisive extra regional power in the region. The research has also focused on the Indian hegemonic agenda vis-à-vis IOR. The clash of interests between China and India has resulted in the hegemonic rivalry between these countries in the region. The study has included the implications of China's MSRI for the Indian hegemonic ambitions in IOR and the response of Indian government to counterbalance China in the Indian Ocean Region.

Statement of Problem

In the 21st Century, Indian Ocean has become an epicentre of global politics. China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative will connect Pacific, Indian Ocean and the east coast of Africa. It has increased the influence of China in the Indian Ocean Region. Under this MSRI, China is investing in developing littoral states of the region, which has led to China's significant influence over the policies of these respective states. This will, ultimately, support China to become a major actor in the Indian Ocean Region. On the other hand, India is also one of the fastest and largest economies of the world. It has the dream to become a hegemon in its region, at least. It feels threats from the China's emergence in the region because it perceives the China's increasing influence as a threat to its hegemonic ambitions in the Indian Ocean Region.

The clash of interests between China and India has resulted in maritime rivalry between

⁵ Cary Huang, "US, Japan, India, Australia...is Quad the first step to an Asian NATO?" *This Week In Asia*, 25 November, 2017. <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/opinion/article/2121474/us-japan-india-australia-quad-first-step-asian-nato>

these two in the Indian Ocean Region. India is playing vital role to counterbalance China in the region. The rivalry has impact on order, policies of littoral states of IOR, security, dynamics and ultimately people of the Indian Ocean Region.

Objectives of the Study

The objective of the study is

1. To evaluate the China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative in Indian Ocean Region
2. To analyse implications of China's MSRI for the Indian hegemonic ambitions in the region
3. To discuss the Indian strategies to counter China in the IOR vis-à-vis MSRI

Research Questions

1. How will Maritime Silk Initiative affect the regional order through increased Chinese role in the Indian Ocean Region?
2. Why does India consider Chinese Maritime Silk Road as a threat to its hegemonic ambitions in the Indian Ocean Region?
3. Which are the strategies being used by India to defy political dimension of Chinese plan of economic connectivity role for ascertaining its hegemony?

Literature Review and Research Gap

Literature Review is an essential part of a research as it provides the foundation knowledge and helps to gain understanding of the existing research and data available on the particular area of study or the topic. In addition, it helps to find research gap and prevent duplication. It identifies the need for the research and also helps the research to make the case for further need of study. Literature Review has been divided into three main categories; first category gives overview of history of trade and politics in Indian Ocean, second category provides the knowledge about on-going struggles between China and India to dominate the Indian Ocean Region and third category helps to identify and analyse potential of China and India and future possible outcomes of hegemonic war between them.

In the first category, a book by Admiral James Stavridis has been reviewed. Admiral James Stavridis, in *Sea Power: The History and Geopolitics of World's Oceans*, has stated that that Indian Ocean has been characterised primarily as a zone of trade with less

geopolitical significance and history.⁶ It has been notorious for piracy and slavery. The US and its NATO allies along with Russia, China, Iran, India and Pakistan have successfully lessen the piracy in the Indian Ocean. This is the only one example of major cooperation among the adversaries. Persian Gulf became important after the World War II with the rise of global shipping and export of oil from the gulf. The US has its fifth fleet, the largest of all, in the centre of Persian/Arabian Gulf with the headquarters in Bahrain. The US has been dominating the IOR since WW II as a major external actor.

In addition, with economic rise of China and India in Asia, the politics of Indian Ocean is witnessing significant changes. Now, both, China and India, are competing with each other to become a dominating power in the Indian Ocean Region. In the current global political environment, Indian Ocean has become epicentre of World's politics. Robert D. Kaplan, in his book "Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power", rightly explained the significance of Indian Ocean.⁷ He writes in his book that Indian Ocean will be the centre of World's politics in 21st century.

Moreover, Alfred Thayer Mahan, in *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History*, stated that power and prosperity of nation depends on control of sea lanes of the world. "Whoever rules the waves rules the world," Mahan says.⁸ Indian Ocean contains the most important sea lanes of the world as more half of the world's trade passes through Indian Ocean. This makes it, strategically, the most significant ocean of the world. It is one of the reasons that regional and major powers are interested in Indian Ocean Region.

Edward A. Alpers, in *The Indian Ocean in World History*, explains the history of trade from ancient times to twentieth century in a very comprehensive manner. The evolution of trade networks in East Asia, South Asia and West Asia are briefly explained. In addition, the role of Chinese Ming Dynasty in establishing trade routes throughout the Indian Ocean Region has been explained in details. Though, China has been known to be a continental power in history but it had also contributed a lot in evolution of trade

⁶James Stavridis, *Sea Power: The History and Geopolitics of World's Oceans* (New York: Penguin Publishing Group, 2017), 40-70.

⁷Robert D. Kaplan, *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power* (New York: Random House, 2011), 110-115.

⁸ David C. Gompert, "Sea Power and American Interests in the Western Pacific", *RAND*, 2013.

through Indian Ocean.⁹

In the second category, a book *China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative and South Asia: A Political Economic Analysis of Its Purposes, Perils, and Promise* edited by Jean-Marc F. provided detailed information about Chinese Maritime Silk Road Initiative and its role in South Asia. The book has also discussed the challenges which are being faced by Chinese initiative in the region.¹⁰ It discusses the economic objectives and political objectives of China behind the Maritime Silk Initiative in the region. In addition, it highlights the potential challenges which China is facing and will have detrimental impact on the success of its initiative of economic and infrastructure development in the region.

Chongwei Zheng, the main author of *21st Century Maritime Silk Road: A Peaceful Way Forward*, has written in the book that the Maritime Silk Road Initiative by China is a win-win situation for the countries which are participating in this initiative. Most of the countries in the Indian Ocean Region do not have proper infrastructure and the economic conditions are also not welcoming. To develop their economies and infrastructure, they need investment and the MSRI is offering them enormous opportunities to meet their needs. It will also result in the integration and economic connectivity of the region; therefore, it is a peaceful way forward for states of the Indian Ocean Region.

In *Belt and Road Initiative: Alternative Development Path for Africa*, edited by Thokozani Simelane, it has been written that Chinese Maritime Silk Road Initiative will promote economic development in the countries which are along the Maritime and overland Roads of the BRI. It will increase the mutual learning between different civilizations of the region. The peace will also be established through development and economic integration in the region.

In the third category, a research on the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Initiative has been conducted by Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI). The research has concluded that these initiatives will not only help China to develop more than 1.2 trillion USD blue economy but also to secure its sea lines of communication in

⁹ Edward A. Alpers, *The Indian Ocean in World History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 23-29.

¹⁰ Jean-Marc F. Blanchard, *China's Maritime Silk Road and South Asia: A Political and Economic Analysis of its Purposes, Perils and Promises* (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2018), 40-55.

the region and expand its influence to enhance its sphere as world power.¹¹ This Maritime Silk Road has the potential to shape order of global maritime trends and the Indian Ocean Region in particular. Similarly, like the major powers of the past and present, China is also trying to reduce the probability of hostile forces to affect the sea lines of communications and MSRI is playing a key role in this objective.

The seven experts were assigned by Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) to explore the possible geostrategic and economic implications Chinese MSRI across the Indo-Pacific Region.¹² They have concluded that Chinese initiative to develop infrastructure across the Indo-Pacific region will have economic and strategic implications for the countries of the region as well as extra regional countries which have interests in the region. They have further stated that Chinese military, economic and political will continue to rise in the region in coming years and it will remain a major concern for strategists and policy makers who focus on Indian Ocean. Indian Ocean has significant importance for the US and its allies in the region especially India, Australia and Japan. Japan has already been raising concerns over Chinese increasing influence and India has also shown serious concerns about Chinese increasing presence in Indian Ocean.

David Brewster, in *India's Ocean: The Story of India's Bid for Regional Leadership*, states that India has been dreaming to become a leading and dominant actor in Indian Ocean for over many years. Due to its economic and military might, India considers that it eligible to have dominating role in Indian Ocean. The US has been dominant extra regional actor and still it is dominant in Indian Ocean, but with the rise of Chinese influence in Indian Ocean, the challenges for India to fulfil its dream have further increased.¹³

In *Samudra Manthan: Sino-Indian Rivalry in Indo-Pacific*, Raja Mohan writes that the rivalry between India and China is restructuring the order in Indian Ocean. He has further explained that the idea of global governance has taken the back seat and Balance of

¹¹ Richard Ghiasy, Fei Su and Lora Saalman, "The 21st Maritime Silk Road: Security implications and ways forward for the European Union," *SIPRI*, 2018.

¹² Nicholas Szechenyi et al, "China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative: Strategic and Economic Implications for Indo-Pacific Region", *CSIS*, 2018.

¹³ David Brewster, *India's Ocean: The Story of India's Bid for Regional Leadership* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 15-19.

Power strategy is being used by the US in Indian Ocean. With the increasing presence of China in Indian Ocean, Sino-Indian rivalry in Indo-Pacific will likely to rise and intensify.¹⁴

Gopal Suri, in *China's Expanding Military Maritime Footprints in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR): India's Response*, has stated that Chinese Maritime Silk Road Initiative is playing key role for expansion of China's military footprint in the Indian Ocean. On the other hand, India dominates northern Indian Ocean and perceives China's increasing naval presence in Indian Ocean as a major challenge to its strategic and economic interests in region.¹⁵ In addition, while explaining the China-India rivalry, a specialist of Asian Affairs in Congressional Research Service has analysed that India-China rivalry is no more limited to Himalayan lands, now Indian Ocean has also become an important theatre for a hegemonic war between these countries.¹⁶

David Brewster, in his research paper titled as "Between Giants: The Sino-Indian Cold War in the Indian Ocean", states that rivalry between China and India is growing in Indian Ocean and it will have significant impact on security and stability of the region. China under its MSRI projects has significantly increased its influence in littoral states of Indian Ocean and also is encouraging the participating states to have close military and strategic ties with China. The increasing Chinese presence under MSRI is bringing new challenges for India's aspirations towards Indian Ocean. The rivalry between them will have significant impact on the small states of Indian Ocean.¹⁷

To counter balance China, India is taking part and even leading in some initiatives which have been taken to contain China in its region. For example, Kadira Pethiyagoda in his research paper "India's Pursuit of Strategic and Economic Interests in Iran" has written that India is building Chabahar port and investing in other infrastructure projects in Iran not only to have access to Afghanistan and Central Asia for economic reasons but it also

¹⁴ Raja Mohan, *Samudra Manthan: Sino-Indian Rivalry in Indo-Pacific* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012), 20-29.

¹⁵ Gopal Suri, *China's Expanding Military Maritime Footprints in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR): India's Response* (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2017), 88-110.

¹⁶ Specialist in Asian Affairs, "China-India Great Power Competition in the Indian Ocean Region: Issues for Congress," *Congressional Research Service*, April 20, 2018.

¹⁷ David Brewster, "Between Giants: The Sino-Indian Cold War in the Indian Ocean," *IFRI*, December 2018.

help India to reduce the Chinese increasing influence in the region.¹⁸

Although, abundance of written literature is available on geopolitics and changing dynamics of the Indian Ocean Region even on Maritime Silk Road Initiative but the literature available related to MSRI with special context to its challenges for Indian hegemonic ambitions in the IOR is insufficient and also not well organized. This research would fill this gap.

Theoretical/Conceptual Framework

Hegemony is established when one group has dominance over other groups. It can be related to political, cultural, and economic dominance of a nation-state over the other states or even dominance of a social class over other classes within a state. The field of relations which are built and supported by power, in these relations subordination and dominance contribute to hegemony. Hegemony often refers to a method which is used to gain and maintain the power by one over others. Hegemony has three basic features which are leadership, power and dominance.¹⁹

Hegemony has been defined in various contexts and dimensions by several International Relations' scholars and theorists. Here, the focus would be on gaining political and military dominance on International and regional political orders. The very basic idea about hegemony is that it has the ability to form the rules for order at global level. It is possible if one state is a predominant power in the international system which can ensure that other states will behave according to the will of the dominant power. The major powers compete with each other gain the ability to set the rules which benefit them. And they enforce the rules by using military might and also giving incentives to states for cooperation. When a state witnesses a relative decline, a challenger state arises to replace that state in international system. Military strength is a necessary condition for hegemony. For example, Joseph Nye describes hegemony as "holding the high cards in the international poker game." Hegemony is not determinant of any given outcome but provides an array of advantages. This is conceptually wrong, because a hegemon gets to

¹⁸ Kadira Pethiyagoda, "India's Pursuit of Strategic and Economic Interests in Iran" *Brookings Doha Centre*, 2018.

¹⁹ Richard Howson and Kylie Smith, *Hegemony: Studies in Consensus and Coercion* (New York: Routledge, 2008), 4-10.

determine what game card players are engaged in.²⁰

A hegemon must have the ability to enforce the rules of order, and in international relations, military force is the final arbiter of terms. Whether that military strength needs to be superior to the strength of every other state, or combinations of potential adversaries, depends on the degree to which military force alone is the means by which the hegemon exercises control. A superiority of material conditions is insufficient to defining hegemony. The supplementary tools of economic strength—trade, capital movement, currency, and a managed international monetary system—are valuable to a hegemon, diversifying the means by which it can coerce or incentivize behavior. But they are inadequate to produce hegemony.

Culture, too, can be a means of setting and enforcing the rules of international order. Patrick O'Brien and G. A. Pigman argue that during its primacy, Britain shaped other states' attitudes in favor of the free trade that provided Britain's prosperity. Shared ideology, like other incentives for cooperation, drive down the cost of establishing and sustaining hegemony. Robert Cox argues that ideas, material capabilities, and institutions are necessary for hegemony. But control alone is adequate to define hegemony. The amount of force hegemony requires is a useful measure of sustainment, but not definitional. It may be despotism, and an inferior model to Rome's more efficient imperium of making subjects out of the conquered, or a Pax Americana of consensual association, but control is sufficient for establishing and enforcing the rules of international order.

Moreover, few International Relations theorists have tried to bring further clarity in definition of hegemony and attempted to link hegemony with more liberal values. Robert Kelly and Richard Ned Lebow differentiate between control and legitimated leadership—and even steal realists' favorite historian, Thucydides, in support of the argument that justice as perceived by weaker states is an essential component of a hegemon's authority. When one or two states seek hegemony over International political system or even in a specific region, it results in the hegemonic war as it threatens the base of already established system. This concept was, initially, given by Thucydides in his Theory of

²⁰ Kori Schake, *Safe Passage: The Transition from British to American Hegemony* (London: Harvard University Press, 2017), 23-27.

Hegemonic War. The core idea of Thucydides' theory of hegemonic war is that such wars are caused by fundamental changes in the International system. The power distribution among states in system or structure of system can either be unstable or stable. System is said to be stable when changes can take place but they do not threaten to fundamentals of system or core interests of dominant states. He was of the view that in stable system there is an unchallenged hegemonic power in the system. On the other hand, system is said to be unstable system when economic, political and technological changes are threatening the fundamentals of system or challenging the hegemonic state. In unstable system, the events related to political, economic and strategic affairs will precipitate hegemonic war in system among the states and a new system will be result of such hegemonic war.

There are three propositions of the theory of hegemonic war. The first explains that hegemonic war is different from other types of wars and it is result of significant changes in economic, political and strategic affairs. Bilateral relations among individual states can also be considered as a system according to second proposition and the strategic interaction of state is analysed to understand the state's behaviour. As per third proposition, war is said to be hegemonic when it threatens to brings changes in fundamentals of system. This does not matter that whether the participants of such wars are initially aware of this conflict or not. In this war, ties among states and hierarchy of power in the system are at stake. These three propositions provide the basis for all formulations and conception of theory of hegemonic war.²¹

This Theory of Hegemonic War can be taken as a lens to understand the race for dominance between China and India in the Indian Ocean Region. India considers that supremacy over Indian Ocean is a fundamental part of India's desire to achieve a great power status, as it has gigantic population, an enormous military/maritime power, and is making rapid progress to be one of the world's biggest economies. Many Indians think that India ought to be the sole authority in the Indian Ocean as the ocean and the state share the same nomenclature. Therefore, India considers China's policies in the Indian Ocean Region as challenge to its hegemonic ambitions in the region. With the increasing

²¹ Robert Gilpin et all, *The Origin and Prevention of Major Wars* (United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 519-613.
<https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/204816.pdf?refreqid=excelsior%3A03b68fa566ec932cc664189a205e7d81>

influence of China in the IOR, China is in race with India to become hegemon in the region.

This maritime hegemonic rivalry between India and China will bring fundamental changes in the current political environment of the Indian Ocean Region. And the reasons behind the changes can be understood by the Theory of Hegemonic War. The hegemonic war, between China and India, has been started as there is significant change in the political, strategic and economic affairs of the Indian Ocean Region. Despite having good bilateral trade relations, China and India are standing at different positions in IOR. China is building sea ports of different countries in the Indian Ocean Region under its Maritime Silk Road Initiative. And India calls these projects as string of pearls; it says that China is building these ports to encircle India. The hegemonic war, between them, is threatening the prevailing political trends in the Indian Ocean Region. The maritime hegemonic war between China and India will have impact on order of the Indian Ocean Region.

As far as the current status of Indian Ocean is concerned, the US is a status quo power in the Indian Ocean Region that is on relative decline. Moreover, which state is hegemonic power when it comes to China and India, it all depends upon the outcome of this hegemonic rivalry. China has never claimed that it wants to establish hegemony in the IOR or never unilaterally tried to dictate the states' policies forcibly in the region, therefore, the word "hegemon" has not been used for China.

Research Methodology

The research is a qualitative type of research. It is explanatory in nature. Secondary and Tertiary sources like books, journals, reports, documents and article have been used to collect data for this research. The research is mainly based on the analysis of the maritime rivalry between China and India in the Indian Ocean Region, and also the impact of this rivalry on the order and politics of the region. Some quantitative sources have also been used to make research closer to factual reality.

Significance of Study

In global perspective, this research has analyzed the pattern of the rise of China as a major power in the world. China's MSRI will connect three continents and the larger water bodies (Indian and the Pacific Ocean) through sea routes. It will increase the China's influence globally. In regional perspective, China's MSRI is mainly concentrated

in the Indian Ocean Region. China is heavily investing in the littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region, from East Asia to the east coast of Africa. It will exponentially increase the China's presence in the Indian Ocean, which will help China to become an undeniable and a major factor in the region. On the other hand, India considers China's increasing involvement in the IOR as a serious threat to its ambitions to become a hegemon in the Indian Ocean Region. This research would discuss the China's rise and its Challenges for the Indian agenda in IOR. The maritime rivalry between China and India will significantly impact the whole region. The research would also focus on the impact of the maritime rivalry between these two countries at the regional level.

This research would benefit academicians, researchers and policy makers. The study would also help students of International Relations to have better understanding of maritime rivalry between China and India in the Indian Ocean Region.

Delimitation

China and India have been rivals for more seventy years, rivalry between these two also include the land of Himalayas, but their rivalry on land is excluded as area would be the Indian Ocean Region. There are three sea routes under MSRI, this research has focused only on part of the China-Indian Ocean-Africa-Mediterranean Sea Blue Economic Passage which is in the Indian Ocean Region. As maritime rivalry between China and India is falling in domain of power politics, thus, economic and strategic aspects have also been discussed.

Organization of Study

Introduction has included the research proposal which helps to explain the primary subject matter of the research and it also gives an over-sight of the research work.

Chapter 1: Historical Background of Maritime Trade in the Indian Ocean Region: An Overview

Chapter 2: 21st Century Maritime Silk Road in Indian Ocean

Chapter 3: Indian Hegemonic Ambitions in the IOR: Challenges from MSRI

Chapter 4: Indian Perceptions vis-à-vis China's MSRI

Chapter 5: China-India Hegemonic Rivalry in the Indian Ocean Region: Implications for Major Regional Actors

CHAPTER I

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF MARITIME TRADE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN REGION: AN OVERVIEW

Indian Ocean, for many years, has been least studied in the history and geopolitics of World's Oceans. But now the situation is changed. It holds significant position for the world's maritime trade routes and global flows, thus makes it centre of global politics. It has become area of primary focus for regional as well as extra regional powers especially for China and India which are contesting powers in the IOR and aspire to dominate the region. Indian Ocean through its sea routes connects Middle East, Africa, South Asia and East Asia with Europe and Americas. More than 50% of the global trade passes through Indian Ocean. It contains important strategic choke points in the world i.e Strait of Hormuz, Strait of Malacca and Suez Canal. It rims South Asia in the North, East Asia in North-East, Middle East in North-West, East coast of Africa in the West and Southern Ocean in the South.²² Indian Ocean has been characterised primarily as a zone of trade with less geopolitical significance and history. It has been notorious for piracy and slavery.

This chapter is divided into five sections; Trade during Ancient Indian Ocean, Trade during Islamic Rule, Trade in Early Modern History, Trade during 19th and 20th Centuries and Current Status of IOR in Maritime Trade of World.

1.1 Trade during Ancient Indian Ocean

This section describes the ancient trade routes passing through the Indian Ocean Region. From Harappa civilization of the Indus Valley (c. 2600–1900 BCE), vessels transported goods from what is today 1005km coast of modern Pakistan to the Arab or Persian Gulf—to the Red Sea, and eventually to Egypt. The Indonesian settlement of Madagascar also observed the reality that the entire area of the Indian Ocean Region was probably being traversed since the first century CE. As early as about 100 BCE there exists archaeological evidence of trade between the Mediterranean world and that of the Indian Ocean in the form of Roman coins and amphoras (ceramic vessels for carrying

²² James Stavridis, *Sea Power: History and Geopolitics of World's Oceans* (New York: Penguin Press 2017), 47-48.

wine and olive oil). By about 50 CE there is documentary evidence confirming that the Greco-Roman sailors and merchants had discovered knowledge of the monsoon winds, perhaps eight centuries after sailors within the Indian Ocean region had mastered them, which determine seasonal sailing patterns in the Indian Ocean. This document was written by an unknown Alexandrian Greek and is called the “Periplus of the Erythraen Sea”. The commercial wonders had beyond the waters and shores of the Red Sea, branching out to the coasts of both Africa and the Indian subcontinent.²³

The merchants of imperial Rome used to seek guidance from the Periplus of the Erythraen Sea to trade along major trading ports of western Indian Ocean in First-century CE. The author of this amazing work wrote about port of Muza which was located near Yemen. He stated, “The whole place teems with Arabs—ship owners or charters and sailors—and is a stir with commercial activity.” These commercial activities, using sea routes, in western Indian Ocean had link with African coast as well as the port of southern Gujarat in India. These activities contributed to historical developments regarding maritime trade in Indian Ocean and the outcome was in form of a well-organized trading network that spanned from eastern coast of Africa to China.²⁴

Although this evolution of trading network, often, does not carry tangible evidences but by connecting several sources from the region, historians understood and analysed that how this trading system came into existence from short open sea communication and limited coasting trade to such a big scale which was spanning across the entire region. One for major problems in reconstruction of history of sea trade through Indian Ocean is that, most of sources are derived from observations and documents of states and empires which existed during this period. These empires and states were mainly focused on continental Asia and Africa and sea going trade was of secondary importance for them. Moreover, no work belonged to ordinary sailors in this period.

As far as the navigation across the northern rim of the Indian Ocean is concerned, it may date to as early as about 5000 BCE. This navigation was not dependent on great civilizations; it was the result of local coasting exchanges in Red Sea, Gulf and the

²³ Edward A. Alpers, *The Indian Ocean in World History* (New York: Oxford University Press 2014), 44-59.

²⁴ Kenneth R. Hall, *A History of Early Southeast Asia: Maritime Trade and Societal Development* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2011), 59.

Arabian Sea. The archaeologists had found Ubaid pottery sherds from Mesopotamia along the western side of the Gulf; this is one of the earliest evidences which indicate the existence of trading networks in the Gulf. There was no centralized state in Mesopotamia before the migration of Sumerians which happened around 4000 BCE and the area also did not had basic materials such as wood and stone. At first, Sumerian merchants were trading between Qatar and Kuwait by using the same trading networks which resulted in exchange of pottery sherds, this area was known to them as Dilmun. The Sumerians were used to exchange potter, bitumen and pottery for dates, onions, timber, stone, pearls and copper form the Gulf.²⁵

The Euphrates was known to be “copper river” in Sumerian language and it was one of the major sources of Dilmun merchants for these materials. The interior of Oman Peninsula, also known as Magan or Makkan, was the main sources of stone, copper and especially alabaster. While northwestern India became source of wood for these lands. The pottery imports used in the cairn provides the evidence of trade of Magan with Sumereians. Although, Magan was an important maritime trade link to Indus Valley Civilization of Harrapa but it was considered as an outer area for Dilmun and Mesopotamia.

1.1.1 Harrapan Sea-going Trade Network

Akkadians called Harrapa as Meluhha. The evolution of state-building in Harrapa was primarily land based as it was in Mesopotamia but they were also actively involved in sea-going trade. The commercial society of Harrapa was well-organized and the state was controlling artisan production. The merchants of Harrapa were independent in their operations. Sokta Koh and Sutkagen Dor on Makran coast and the coast at Lothal in Gujarat were important areas of trading colonies at that time. Trading colonies were located at or near the coast at Lothal, in Gujarat, and Sutkagen Dor and Sokta Koh on the Makran coast of modern Pakistan. These settlements played an important role in evolution of trade network in the sea.

There are many Harappan goods including wood, weights, ghee, butter and pots which were traded to the Gulf. In the Gulf, Harrapan weights were used as standard weights and the style of Gulf seals was also influenced by Harrapan seals. Trade between the Gulf and

²⁵ Edward A. Alpers, *The Indian Ocean in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 22.

Harrapans revealed that Ships were following the coastline but 20 per cent of archaeological findings in Oman showed that they were also sailing across the open sea. It is said that this trade network paved the way for the development of trade networks in the Indian Ocean Region.

1.1.2 The Ancient Red Sea

The trading networks existed in the ancient Red Sea were much more self-contained as compared to networks between Mesopotamia and Harrapa. The coast of Eritrea and Sudan were known to be the land of Punt and the Pharaonic voyages to the land of Punt happened in the same period when there were developments of sea trade links between Indus valley and the Gulf. The Punt's trade goods which include ebony, incense and myrrh are the very early evidences of trade from Red Sea to Nile Valley. In the mid-second millennium BCE, the voyages of Queen Hatshepsut were a result of royal decision search for new opportunities in Red Sea for trade. Although, this initiative did not help the Queen to save her reign nor the Red Sea trade to connect with wider Indian Ocean but the struggle to expand sea trade links continued.

1.1.3 Overlapping of Red Sea, Gulf and Indus Valley

There are archaeological, linguistic and ethno botanical evidences which show that sub regions of northwest Indian Ocean which include the Gulf, Indus Valley and Red Sea had been overlapped around 2000 BCE. The scientific analysis of exchanged of plants and animals between Arabian Peninsula, Africa and South Asia provided the Botanical evidences. The land-based states were not involved in these exchanges as much it was mostly done by the small-scale trade being carried out by coastal communities in these areas. These small scale contributions cannot be overlooked as they have played their part in making this world which is now known as Indian Ocean World.²⁶

1.1.4 Evolution of Sea Trade Networks in Southeast Asia

The evolution of Sea Trade Networks in Southeast Asia can be traced back to 3000 BCE. During this period, the Austronesian language family was widely dispersed. They were present in Madagascar which is in Southwestern Indian Ocean and also in Hawaii and Eastern Island of the Pacific Ocean. Taiwan was the original home of this family and from Taiwan they began the process of settlements at islands and coast of Philippines,

²⁶ Edward A. Alpers, *The Indian Ocean in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 25.

Indonesia and Polynesia. Their first migration, probably, was towards Philippines and it was obviously in the boats as without boats it would not have been possible for them to reach there.

They were following a pattern while moving from one island to another, when they settled themselves on a particular island then few of them went out for the exploration of other islands. Today, the Malayo-Polynesian branch of Austronesian has dominating role in Southeast Asia in maritime domain, it is said that islands of Sulawesi Sea might have been detrimental for diffusing this process of populating the islands. Anyhow, the process did not stop and continued even in first century CE. This large scale human migration resulted in populating thousands of islands. As these settlements faced no major hurdle in these areas, therefore, the researchers assume that these islands were either inhabited in a sparse manner or completely uninhabited. The New Guinea was glaring example of resistance against the adoption of Austronesian languages. It was a hub of agricultural development and due to its dense population it succeeded to halt the expansion of new languages in its area. The Austronesian speakers played a major role in bringing the areas of eastern and western Indian Ocean which were at very large distance from each other.

In the late centuries BCE, the scholars called the vast area of eastern Indian Ocean as oceanic nomadism which was inhabited by the people who spoke Malayo-Polynesian languages. The sailors of this area were very experts and developed different methods to navigate. They were navigating by reading wave and swell patterns. They also used to observe cloud formations, winds and animal life and utilized these observations for navigating when they sailed across the sea. The Malay sailors were involved in trading pottery from Vietnam to different parts of eastern Indian Ocean, and this fact is supported by the Archaeological evidences. In addition to it, the Dong Son bronze ceremonial drums were made in Red River Valley and at the coast of northern Vietnam, the Malay sailors brought these drums to Malaysia and other nearby Islands. The warriors who used to sail in long boats were described by some of these ceremonial drums. The strong trade links between Vietnam and Southeast Asian Islands indicate that the function of monsoon in South China Sea had been discovered by the Malay sailors. Moreover, according to Chinese records, the Malay sailors come from the “Kunlun” islands. Chinese sources explain that Malays and Africans are included in this “Kunlun” as it was used to denote

blackness and otherness.²⁷

1.1.5 Alexander the Great's Era

When it comes to evolution of trade networks in western Indian Ocean, the era of land-based conquests of Alexander the Great cannot be ignored. The land-based conquests in Asia Minor helped the Alexander to influence the sea going trade in the western Indian Ocean. Various port cities were established by the armies of Alexander throughout the region. This development did not only increase the influence of Alexander's armies in western Indian Ocean but also opened trade opportunities for Greek merchants. Alexander the Great founded the city of Alexandria in Egypt which soon became of central importance for the trade activities in the Red Sea and wider Indian Ocean. In the similar period of time, Nearchus, who was fleet commander of Alexander, made a Greek colony at Falaika Island with the ultimate aim to march towards Indus Valley. There are now remains of a Greek temple in Kuwait and visitors can see them while visiting the Kuwait. Moreover, the archaeologists have also found various Greek pottery sherds in that area.

1.1.6 Ptolemy's Contribution

Berenike I port was founded by Ptolemy II of Egypt in 275 BCE. The port was located at western coast of the Red Sea and it was named after the mother of Ptolemy II. The Seleucid Persians were not allowing transfer of Indian war elephants through land routes; therefore, the primary purpose of this port was to bring African war elephants to Egypt, so that they could use them as an alternate to Indian war elephants. Greek trades were very active during the period of the Ptolemy rulers of Egypt, they did not remain limited to Red Sea or even Western Indian Ocean, and at that time they had reached Sri Lanka and impacted many societies across the region. There are many contributions which were attributed to Greek navigators but the discovery of the operation of Southwest Monsoon by Hippalus was considered as the most important development of this era. Before this discovery, ships were sailing along coastlines from Red Sea to India, but later on, the ships started to sail directly to India from Red Sea.²⁸

The Ptolemaic Egypt was conquered by the Romans in 30 BCE. This conquest resulted

²⁷ Edward A. Alpers, *The Indian Ocean in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 27.

²⁸ James Henry Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt, vol. 2: The Eighteenth Dynasty* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001), 286–88.

into further increase in trade activities between Indian Ocean and Mediterranean Sea. Alexandria, city of Egypt, became a trading hub for Mediterranean Sea in first century CE. In addition to it, the port named as Berenike was known to be the centre of trading activities in the Red Sea during this period that is why this time period was known to be the period of expansive trade by the Romans. Berenike was among the largest trading ports which were present across Indian Ocean at that time. The trade was being done throughout Ocean; even they were trading with China. For example, myrrh, pearls, textiles and spices were brought from China. Moreover, India and East Java were exporting glass beads to Alexandria. Ghee and oils were also important commodities which were being exported by India. Interestingly, literature of common person, in which goddess graffiti and Venus were represented differently, was written in Axumite, South Arabian, Palmyrene and Tamil-Brahmi and this literature was found at Berenike. Thus, it can be said that this is one of great examples which shows the cosmopolitan influences coming together from different points of Indian Ocean to Berenike.

1.1.7 Persian Role in Evolution of Sea Trade in Western Indian Ocean

The sixth century BCE witnessed the emergence of Achaemenid dynasty. The focus of this empire was on land; therefore, the rulers remained least interested in maritime borders. But it did not mean that there was no trade during this period in western Indian Ocean. The people living on coastal line continued the trade activities. Although, a major development was not observed during Achaemenid dynasty in maritime trade of western Indian Ocean but the successor dynasties such as Parthians and Seleucides had significant contributions in the evolution of Sea Trade in western Indian Ocean. The contributions of Sassanian Empire had been the most important in this regard. During Sassanian rule, the trade pattern of Persia was changed. They started to trade from eastern shores rather than western shores. Western shores were referred to Arabia and eastern shores were referred to Persia. This shift brought significant changes as it resulted into emergence of new ports and also new items were added to trade in Indian Ocean. These new commodities included horses, pearls, carpets and brocades. In the first centuries of CE, there were wars between Persians and the Romans and as a result, overland trade remained very limited in this period. Consequently, the value of sea-borne trade increased for the Persians which resulted into rise of trade activities in the Gulf and beyond. Many new maritime ports

were also constructed by the Persians at that time.

The Sassanian Empire was founded by Ardasir I in 224 CE. There was an event which influenced Ardasir to had interest towards sea and sea-coast. When he was fighting against the last king of Parthian dynasty, the coast helped Ardashir to save him from his enemies. During his rule, the trade activities in wider Persian Gulf were increased at very good pace. Moreover, the emergence of Siraf, which became a largest seaport in the Gulf, was an indicator of rising trade activities. There was no permanent plan to protect the entrance of the Gulf which was very narrow. During Sassanian rule, a town, which was known as town of Old Hormuz, was established at strategic position for the protection of narrow passage of the Gulf. Another major development was in the form of establishment of Masqat during the rule of King Xusro I; the purpose of Masqat was to assist trade between India and the Red Sea.²⁹

1.1.8 End of Harappan Civilization and Rise of New Ports in South Asia

The end of Harrappan civilization resulted in the rise of new states in the Indian subcontinent in particular and South Asia in general. This change also brought an era of emergence of new ports in the region. Magadha throne was established in 7th century BCE and lasted for more than three centuries. Alexander invaded India in 326 BCE but could not succeed. But, this invasion helped Chandragupta Maurya to end Magadha throne and he successfully established his own empire which was known as Gupta Empire. This empire lasted for more than one hundred years. The grandson of Chandragupta, whose name was Ashoka, was the ruler who further extended this empire. Under Asoka, southern parts of India were also part of Gupta Empire. Overseas trade was promoted and encouraged by Asoka. As a result, South Asian traders became very active throughout Indian Ocean. Socotra Island of Horn of Africa, Alexandria and Southeast Asia were important areas where these traders succeeded to establish outposts. During this period, the role of Roman and Greek traders in South Asian trade had also been very important.

Several South Asian major ports indicate the importance of trade during that period. In addition, the locations of these ports provide the evidence that the South Asian region was very much integrated due to maritime trade. For example, Barygaza port was at the

²⁹ Edward A. Alpers, *The Indian Ocean in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 31-33.

coast of Gujarat and port of Malabar was on coast of southeast India. Moreover, the Bay of Bangla had one of the busiest ports in the region which was known as Masalia. Surprisingly, there was also very important port on the coast of Sri Lanka which played a pivotal role for trade between western Indian Ocean and eastern Indian Ocean. All of these ports were established in the last centuries of BCE and these were not only linked with each other but also they had strong links with overland trade.

1.2 Trade during the Islamic Rule

This section describes the Sea going trade in Indian Ocean during Islamic Rule. An event in 878 halted direct trade between the Gulf and China. At the port of Guangzhou, the Arab and Persian merchants were killed by the rebel forces of Chinese regime, as they thought that these merchants would be dominating the Chinese overseas trade. Abu Azaid Hassan wrote an account from the port which was known to be Siraf in Persia, it stated, “They [the rebels] raised their hands to oppress the foreign merchants who had come to their country; and to these events was joined the rise of oppression and transgression in the treatment of the Arab shipmasters and captains. They imposed illegal burdens on the merchants and appropriated their wealth, and made lawful for themselves what had not been practiced formerly in any of their dealings. Wherefore God Almighty removed every blessing from them and the sea became inaccessible to them, and by the power of the blessed Creator who governs the world disaster reached [even] the captains and pilots in Siraf and ‘Uman.” The seventh century witnessed the rise of Tang dynasty in China and emergence of Islam in Arabia. Till 878, there was uninterrupted positive growth of trade activities between China and the Gulf, but this event halted this expanded trade for a major period.³⁰

Islam, in its beginning, brought social and religious revolution in Hejaz which was region of Arabia. Islam expanded in a very short time, the whole of Arabian Peninsula was dominated by Islam. Furthermore, Egypt and Persia were conquered within thirty years after death of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH). Islam, soon, became dominating faith in Red Sea, Arabian Sea and the Gulf. During Ummayyad rule, the Muslim merchants had been exploring different parts of western Indian Ocean such as east coasts of Africa and also

³⁰ George F. Hourani, *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 77.

the northern Indian Ocean which rimmed with Indian subcontinent. Islam had also spread in western part of Indian subcontinent during Umayyad rule in mid of eighth century.

1.2.1 Abbasid dynasty and Trade in Western Indian Ocean

Abbasid dynasty was established in 750 and lasted till 1258 and Baghdad was the centre of this dynasty. During this period, there was political stability which paved the way for the expansion of commercial activities. Although, the Fatimid Caliphate was challenging Abbasid Caliphate on western front between 10th and 12th centuries, but Abbasid remained dominant in western Indian Ocean. With the rise of commercial activities, the standard of living got better and it also increased wealth creation. It also increased the demand of luxury goods which compelled Muslim merchants to expedite their exploration to fulfil these demands through trade. Arabic was the language which became common language for trade in western Indian Ocean. In addition to it, there was no legal framework present to regulate the trade in western Indian Ocean, but Islamic law provided this framework for regulation.

1.2.2 Tang Dynasty and Trade through Indian Ocean

Tang dynasty was established in 618 in China and lasted till 907. This was also a long period of political stability which brought economic prosperity. During this period trade activities witnessed significant rise especially in South China Sea and eastern Indian Ocean. The imperial consolidation of Southern Sung and Northern Sung in mid of tenth century was the major development which resulted in the massive expansion of trade throughout Indian Ocean. The Muslim merchants and merchants of imperial China, together, transformed Indian Ocean into a single trading circuit. This single network lasted for more than three hundred years.

The direct trade between Tang dynasty and Muslim world was established in initial decades of Tang dynasty. No one knows the exact number of Muslim merchants who were at Guangzhou but it is said that there were thousands of Muslim merchants. Before the modern era, it was a trend which was followed by the stranger communities that they were self-governing mostly. The Muslim community at Guangzhou was following the same trend. Islamic institutions were established there to govern Muslim community; they had their Islamic jurist and built their mosques at Guangzhou. The mosque Huaisheng was very famous at Guangzhou as it was also used as guidepost for the ships

which had to enter the port of Guangzhou; therefore it was also called as a Lighthouse Mosque. One may call this story as a myth rather than a factual history but there are strong evidences that there was a very large community of Muslim merchants at Guangzhou.

The post was created by imperial China which was called as Superintendent of shipping trade, the purpose of this post was to regulate trade in Southern Oceans. In other records of China, this was also called as Superintendent of Barbarian Shipping; this title is an easy tool to understand the Chinese attitudes towards trade. Corruption had been very serious problems in China during this period especially in trade matters. The governor of Guangzhou was involved in cheating in goods and killing the merchants in 684. Such events resulted in decline of trade and the excessive charges imposed on foreign traders further aggravated the situation. The events of 878, as already described above, were considered to be the end of this single trading network between Guangzhou and Muslim world.³¹

1.2.3 Brief Overview Trade in Indian Ocean; from Tenth to Fifteen Century

Ibn Hawqal was an Arab who was very famous geographer and traveller in the tenth century. He said, about the community which was present at Siraf that inhabitants of Siraf remained busy in trade activities and had no free time. At that time, Siraf was the centre which was sending ships to East African coast, the Red Sea, China, Sri Lanka and western India. The glazed Sassanian ceramics and unglazed earthenware were manufactured at this place. And from Siraf, these ceramics were being distributed to other ports in western Indian Ocean. This is one of the major indicators which show that Siraf had central importance in trade of Indian Ocean at that time. Al Maqdisi was another Arab geographer who keenly observed Siraf and other places of trade and commerce. He was of the view that Siraf had wealth which was greater than the wealth of Basra. He also said, “In the whole lands of Islam there were no more remarkable mansions than those of Siraf.”³²

The Siraf’s glorious days and its dominance in the trade of Indian Ocean came to an end

³¹ Wang Gungwu, *The Nanhai Trade: Early Chinese Trade in the South Chinese Sea* (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2003), 34.

³² Abdul Sheriff, *Dhow Cultures of the Indian Ocean: Cosmopolitanism, Commerce and Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 157.

which a devastating earthquake hit Siraf in 977. The Qeys and Hormuz of Iran and Sohar of Oman became the new centres of trade in the very first centuries of second millennium CE and they surpassed Siraf in terms of commerce and trade during this period. The foundation of Sharma port was another major development and it was founded by Persians and Arab merchants. This port was located on the coast of Hadramawt which was linking the Red Sea and Arabian Sea. It remained an active port from 980 to 1140. The construction of large eighty buildings near the port showed the level of development and activities on the port which were commercial warehouses probably. The imports at Sharma were not limited to western Indian Ocean world but they were also including goods from China, Africa, Southeast Asia and Sri Lanka. The copal resins were used as incense; these were also exported from Africa to Sharma. The emergence of Sharma port was considered as prime example in regards with developments of different ports in the history of Indian Ocean for linking various water bodies of Indian Ocean.

The history had witnessed that the links between western India and other areas of western or eastern Indian Ocean developed mostly due to trade activities. But, there was also an important activity which played its part in developing these links. There was also a maritime route for pilgrims which were important to link Somnath to several ports. In Somnath, a temple was devoted for God Siva. There was huge number of people who were used to go to Somnath using the maritime route.

Although, there were many ports present on coast of Malabar but Calicut port was dominating port by all means. It was an important port for trade between Egypt and the East and Khambhat port was surpassed by this port in 13th century in trade activities and revenue generation. While writing about the significance of Calicut port, Ibn Battuta stated, “one of the largest harbours in the world. It is visited by men from China, Sumatra, Ceylon, the Maldives, Yemen and Fárs, and in it gather merchants from all quarters.” He visited Calicut for three months and observed the trading activities there. There were thirteen vessels only from China which were present there. The ships were waiting for Southwest Monsoon so they could return back to China. When they departed for China, soon, they were hit by a storm and this caused a serious damage to one of this ships and the ship was brought back to the port. This event helped Ibn Battuta to understand the reason behind the widespread news about Calicut that it was favourite port

of merchants of Indian Ocean. This event, everywhere, liked by the plunderers, but Ibn Battuta was witnessing a very different custom on this port. No one was allowed to pick up the goods, the people, who wanted to plunder, were being beaten up by police officers. There was a rule which was strictly followed on this land. Whatsoever came from a ship which was wrecked, it belonged to its owners. This was one of the main reasons that the merchants were more comfortable on this land and resultantly Calicut had become a prosperous city during this period.³³

In the fifteenth century, the emergence of Melaka was a major and important development for commerce and trade in the Indian Ocean especially in eastern Indian Ocean world. Paramesvara, who was a Malay prince and a dissident, was subordinate of Majapahit on the lands of Palembang. He shifted to Tumasik to have greater independence and he was the person who founded Melaka in 1390. He was facing pressure from Siamese, so to overcome this pressure he organized a group of Malays and also became a strong ally of China. His envoys were going to China for protection and support, but he visited China in 1411. Moreover, there were also several visits of Melaka by Chinese Muslim Zheng who was an admiral. Later on, the Melaka's ruler became Muslim and the Muslims were controlling the trade in western Indian Ocean. This Muslim ruler was pushing the Muslim merchants that the Melaka should be their centre for trade activities in eastern Indian Ocean. Due to Melaka's geostrategic importance, it became a dominating port in Southeast Asia and it also had developed strong relations with Tamil as well as Gujarati merchants. In addition to it, it was the wealthiest port in the region.

1.3 Trade in Early Modern Period

This section highlights the evolution of sea-going trade in early modern period in Indian Ocean. The spice trade had been controlled by Muslims and the Venice for more than a century and they were dominating eastern Mediterranean Sea. Portuguese were trying to take over the control in the Early Modern Period. North Africans had stronghold on Ceuta but the Portuguese conquered Ceuta in 1415 and then they moved towards western coast of Africa. Around 1488, they were roaming near the Cape of Good Hope which is

³³ Ibn Battúta, *Travels in Asia and Africa, 1325–1354*, ed. and trans. H. A. R. Gibb (London: Darf Publishers, 1983), 110–11.

at extreme southern part of Africa. The regional pirates had been disturbing the sea-going trade but actions of Portuguese were different.

In sixteenth century, external powers were trying to take control of trade in Indian Ocean and the Portuguese were just one of them in this game. The control of Ottoman Empire came under serious threat within two decades. The Portuguese were conquering the important choke points in Indian Ocean. Between 1507 and 1518, they had captured Columbo, Melaka and Hormu. They had also established Viceroyalty at Goa, surprisingly; this Goa was also captured after defeating a Muslim ruler. The Ottomans were unable to defend their control over trade in Indian Ocean.³⁴

The Ottomans conquered Mamluk Egypt in 1517 and after that they were trying to develop strategies which would help them to reclaim their control over seaways of Indian Ocean. To pursue their interests in Indian Ocean, they were developing their navy and gathering important intelligence. The Ottoman Empire was, basically, a land-based great power which was aspiring to become a maritime power too. And Portuguese had small kingdom but their maritime empire was spanning across two oceans. These both great powers had been struggling to win war against each other and ultimately to have control over trade in Indian Ocean throughout sixteenth century.

The Portuguese were struggling to take Aden and attempted many times but did not succeed. In the first fifty years of 16th century, they were sending navy to the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, regularly. These patrols were threatening the control of Muslims, and it had become challenging for Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman Empire took control of Aden in 1549, Suakin in 1524, Hejaz port in 1525 and Mocha in 1535 to mitigate this emerging and real challenge by Portuguese. Although, this was a short period of tussle between the Ottomans and Portuguese but it badly affected the trade activities in Indian Ocean. Anyhow, it was said that the trade gained its normal momentum by 1540.

The performance of Ottoman fleets, near the coast, was effective but it could not bring the same results if they challenged Portuguese vessels in open seas. Therefore, the Ottomans mostly avoided to attack in open seas. The control of Basra was taken by Ottomans in 1546 as a result of standoff in the Red Sea. After that, Portuguese and

³⁴ R. B. Serjeant, *The Portuguese Off the South Arabian Coast: Hadramī Chronicles*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 43.

Ottomans went for a diplomatic settlement for coexistence. Later on, although for a short period, there were no direct conflicts between Portuguese and the Ottomans in Indian Ocean for the control over trade and trade routes.

The attempts to challenge the Portuguese in several areas of Indian Ocean brought damaging results for the Ottoman Empire. Seventy vessels were sent by Ottomans to defeat Portuguese in Southeast Asia but the attempt went in vain as it did not get the desired results. The Ottomans did make another plan to launch attack and this time it was at Hormuz. The outcome of this offence was no different than the previous one. But, these attempts brought damaging consequences for Ottoman Empire as it lost Aden in 1645 and Mocha in 1636 which was the evidence that Ottomans had no more a role in Indian Ocean.

1.3.1 Trade During European Advancement in Indian Ocean

With the passage of time, the indigenous merchants had developed very strong trade networks throughout Indian Ocean. When Portuguese came in Indian Ocean, soon they reached a conclusion that the indigenous merchants could not be challenged by them, so they changed their way to make money. The Portuguese imposed taxes on ports and also introduced licenses for non-Portuguese vessels. And they were also stopping their rivals, due to this; Tamil merchants, non-Muslim Chinese and Gujarati banyas became important communities in Indian Ocean. The trade at Mozambique was dominated by Gujarati banyas and Melaka was increasingly under the influence of non-Muslim Chinese.

The seventeenth and eighteenth centuries witnessed almost the same stories. The trading companies of European powers came to Indian Ocean and played a key role for transformation of the Indian Ocean into an ocean which remained dominated by colonial powers for hundreds of years. Portugal became an enemy of Netherlands and England when it was incorporated by Spain. The merchants of England and Netherlands were organized as trading companies and come to Indian Ocean. Their purpose was to earn and also challenge the monopoly of Portuguese in trade and control of Indian Ocean. Initially, it was the English East India Company (EIC) which came to this region in 1600 and Dutch East India Company followed EIC after two years. The Verenigde Oostindische Compagnie (VOC), which is also known as Dutch East India Company, came with the

same purpose as EIC had come for trade but its actions were different from the EIC as soon it started to threatening the position of Portuguese in Indian Ocean.³⁵

Both the companies came to this region mainly for trade but they did not take much time to show their real intentions. The Dutch had taken control of Colombo in 1658 and Melaka in 1641. Moreover, they had conquered all the Malabar ports by 1660s. The port of Jakarta was taken over by the Dutch in 1619 and they made it a centre for their activities throughout Indian Ocean. VOC was also engaged with the trade which was called as inter-Asian; this was one of the major factors of its success as trade to Europe was dependent on this intern-Asian trade. Security of ships had been a serious issue; therefore, a station at Cape Town was established by VOC for surveillance. Portugal had established foothold in Africa but the developments by Dutch were proved to be significant for integration of Indian Ocean and South Africa.³⁶

To take the control over trade spice had been a major interest of European powers in Indian Ocean. VOC was succeeding in this goal but it was facing issues in Banda Islands. They took a brutal decision and destroy the population of these Islands, and loyal Dutch, Indonesians and slaves were brought by VOC to these islands in 1621. As pepper production was widespread and could not be controlled by VOC, therefore VOC struggled to have control over pepper trade in coastal markets and they were able to do this by the end of seventeenth century.

The appetite of Euro-Americans for coffee grew dramatically in early eighteenth century. VOC had monopoly over spice trade and now they were also providing coffee to Euro-Americans. Yemen and Ethiopia were producers of coffee, originally. It was not first time that coffee was being demanded in international market, before Euro-Americans, Persians and Ottomans were importing coffee. Mocha and Al Hudaydah were famous Yemeni ports which remained important for coffee traders. VOC made another development and brought coffee plants in Indonesia in 1696. They used the land of Java for the cultivation of Coffee in 1725. They also introduced java as a coffee name and it was considered as reason of Dutch success in exporting Coffee.

³⁵ R. J. Barendse, *The Arabian Seas: The Indian Ocean World of the Seventeenth Century* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 2002), 130.

³⁶ Pedro Machado, *Ocean of Trade: South Asian Merchants, Africa and the Indian Ocean, c. 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 151-155.

The two important events paved the way for New Julfan Armenians to trade in Indian Ocean: Portuguese were defeated by Safavids and Bandar Abbas port was also established in 1622. New Julfan merchants had established themselves in form of communities' at all major ports and cities of Indian subcontinent by the late seventeenth century. Goa, Madras, Calcutta and Mughal Saidabad were important to mention in this regard. They were also place themselves near Hugli. This was considered to be the most important settlement as they were exploiting Bengali silk production. The became so powerful in trade activities that they were able to sign a treaty with East India Company change the overland route to London for their silk trade.³⁷

Every external power was creating its own trading network in Indian Ocean but the VOC established a network which was more effective than the networks which were built by others. It had linked Cape Town, Colombo and Batavia; Colombo represented an important node between Cape Town and Batavia. VOC established stronghold in trade of Indian Ocean world as well as the choke points in Indian Ocean but it did not last for a longer period as Great Britain emerged as a dominating power in Indian Ocean in mid of eighteenth century. The Great Britain continued to have control over the trade and sea routes of Indian Ocean for almost next hundred years.

1.4 Maritime Trade during 19th and 20th Centuries

From the beginning of British rule in India, a turning point in history that is usually referred to Battle of Plassey in 1757 where Nawab of Bengal was defeated by EIC. The aim of this battle was to increase the safety of sea routes of Indian Ocean and ultimately to expand the territory of empire. Industrial revolution in second half of 19th century resulted into several important developments but these two are important to mention as these developments have historic influence in Indian Ocean. First, the construction of Suez Canal in 1869 and second is the success of steamships in open seas.³⁸

1.4.1 Transformation of Islamic Sea into British Lake

The British Empire, with unchanging pace, took control over Indian Ocean. The lands of Indian subcontinent were also introduced to a new system in which a colonial power was controlling everything. Production remained in the hands of local people but it was

³⁷ Edward A. Alpers, *The Indian Ocean in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 91-92.

³⁸ Michael Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (London: Routledge, 2003), 196.

controlled by British Empire. It is said that India was the brightest jewel in the crown of Great Britain. The control of Britain over Indian subcontinent and the sea routes of Indian Ocean resulted into the transformation of Islamic Sea into British Lake.

France won war against the Netherlands in 1795 and the Great Britain did not miss this opportunity to take Java, Ceylon, Cape Town and Melaka from Netherlands. It also took Ile de France and Mascarene Islands (La Reunion) from France. The Great Britain was controlling Mauritius, Cape Town, Melaka and Ceylon by 1815 but it gave La Reunion back to France under Paris Treaty. In 1819, Stamford Raffles occupied Singapore without any authorization but the formal possession was done in 1823 by Great Britain. The economic importance of Jakarta and Melaka was significantly reduced due to this possession.³⁹

The imposition of modern colonial regimes upon the countries of the Indian Ocean rim had a dramatic impact on indigenous societies. Colonialism both expanded the access of Western capital to these areas while restricting it to national businesses. Production and transportation were reorganized for the extraction of colonial primary products, such as sugar, cotton, coffee, tea, and rubber.

The European powers imposed new territorial borders that artificially cut through historic or fluid frontiers and frequently divided ethnically discrete societies. A circuit of Indian Ocean shores at the conclusion of World War I reveals that the British Indian Ocean empire—consisting of Crown colonies, protectorates, and League of Nations Mandate territories—included Tanganyika, Zanzibar, Kenya, Somaliland, Sudan, Egypt, Oman, the Trucial States, the sheikdoms of Bahrain, Qatar, and Kuwait, Iraq, Mauritius, India, the Malay States, Singapore, and Hong Kong; France controlled the Comoro Islands, Madagascar, La Réunion, the tiny enclave of Pondicherry on the Coromandel coast of India, and Indochina; Portugal retained Mozambique, Diu, Daman, and Goa in Portuguese India, and East Timor at the far eastern reaches of the Indonesian archipelago; the Netherlands claimed the vast island universe of the Dutch East Indies; latecomer Italy had Somalia and Eritrea. Settler South Africa had gained its independence from Great Britain in 1910, but in every other sense remained a colonial territory. Saudi Arabia, Iran,

³⁹James Francis Warren, *1768–1898: The Dynamics of External Trade, Slavery, and Ethnicity in the Transformation of a Southeast Asian Maritime State* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2007), 164.

and Siam were the only significant independent states among those whose coastlines were washed by the Indian Ocean.

By mid-nineteenth century, Great Britain possessed a necklace of critical ports around the greater Indian Ocean littoral from South Africa to southern China. The oldest of these were located in India—most notably Calcutta, Bombay, and Madras; others were added following the British victory during the Napoleonic Wars—Cape Town, mid-ocean Port Louis, Mauritius, and Colombo; while the last lot were acquired to fill in the interstices of the “British lake”—Durban, Aden, Karachi, Singapore, Hong Kong, and Fremantle, in southwestern Australia. Although the ports of the Trucial states, Masqat, and Zanzibar were technically independent, British political domination of all was undoubted, while the final partition of East Africa formally added Zanzibar Town and, more significantly, Mombasa. A few of these ports had natural harbors that could accommodate the rapidly expanding generation of steamships that now plied the waters of the Indian Ocean, but many did not. Modern engineering transformed all of these into modern deep water ports. Unquestionably, the most significant civil engineering project of the nineteenth century for the entire Indian Ocean was the construction of the Suez Canal. Financed by both British and French capital, dredging of the Suez Isthmus commenced in 1854 and the canal was completed in 1869. The canal route significantly reduced travel time between Indian Ocean and Europe. Moreover, it, exponentially, increased volume of shipping and number of ships passing through Indian Ocean.

In the late 19th century, travel time from London to Great Britain’s major Indian Ocean ports was cut by more than 40 percent to Kuwait and Bombay, by more than 32 percent to Calcutta, by almost 28 percent to Singapore, and even by some 14 percent to Fremantle. In particular, Aden—blessed with its natural deep water port—and Singapore— with its critical location astride multiple sea lanes—benefited from the increased traffic and the refueling requirements of coal-driven steamships. Initially restricted to carrying passengers and mail, in the long run steamships also became the principal transporters of trade goods. For most of the century, however, both luxury and bulk commodities, as well as people, continued to be carried in sailing ships, both indigenous and Euro American.

From mid of 18th Century to the mid of 20th Century, Britain had been a dominating

power in the Indian Ocean Region. Most of the maritime trade routes were protected by the Great Britain. Colonial European Powers continued to control and take benefits from their respective colonies. Britain had been also controlling the opium trade to China. With the beginning of 20th Century, the world witnessed significant event of human history. In the second decade of Twentieth Century, WWI started in 1914 which ended up with the Paris Peace Treaty. After the collapse of Ottoman Empire, British and French influence increased in the Middle East. Oil exploration, after WWI, in the Persian Gulf significantly further increased the importance of maritime trade routes of Indian Ocean Region.⁴⁰

1.4.2 Oil Production and Volume of Trade through Indian Ocean

From the beginning, exploration and production of oil were dominated by British and American firms; the appearance of the latter in this domain was the result of two major developments. First, American presence in global politics was increased significantly in post WWII period and secondly, the US had gained experience in exploration of oil in North America. The oil industry initially depended exclusively on foreign capital, management, and labor. Educating local men to work as skilled labor in the industry and regional political leaders to support the development of modernized states was one aspect of how oil transformed the Gulf States, including Saudi Arabia. In the last decade of 20th century, combined nationalization and globalization of oil production in Saudi Arabia yielded a labor force that was almost three-quarters Saudi and less than 6 percent American, with the remaining roughly 21 percent including employees from more than forty countries. A different demographic impact can be seen in Qatar, Kuwait, UAE and Bahrain, where wealth produced by oil attracted thousands of foreigners to come and fuel urbanization.⁴¹

Oil demand in South East Asia, Americas and Europe exponentially increased the trade volume which was passing through Indian Ocean. Till the end of WWII, Britishers had been in dominant position in controlling sea routes throughout the Indian Ocean Region. UK wasn't in position to continue after WWII, therefore the US was asked to replace UK in Indian Ocean. After the end of WW II, the United States moved to contain what it

⁴⁰ Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 37.

⁴¹ Edward A. Alpers, *The Indian Ocean in History* (New York: Oxford University Press 2014), 128.

believed to be the Soviet threat in the Indian Ocean. This Great Power competition played itself out in many places, from Ethiopia and Somalia in the 1970s to Afghanistan in the 1980s.

1.5 Role of US and USSR in IOR

However, the most striking example of how big power manipulations have affected the people who are inhabitants of small islands in the Indian Ocean, for example in the case of Diego Garcia, a coral atoll with an entrance channel on its northern side. The United States initially explored the establishment of a secure base from which to operate in the 1960s. The first candidate was uninhabited Aldabra Island, a British possession located to the north of Madagascar, but the British refused because it was and remains a protected breeding ground for rare giant tortoises. Instead, secret negotiations were carried out between the two allies to give the United States rights over tiny Diego Garcia, the largest island of the Chagos archipelago just south of the Maldives and south of the Equator. In exchange for the United States underwriting research and development costs for the British acquisition of Polaris missiles, the United Kingdom leased Diego Garcia to the United States for ninety-nine years without reference either to Parliament or Congress.

In 1971 the United States began construction of a naval communication facility on Diego Garcia, upgrading it in 1977 to a complete military support facility. The Iranian Revolution in 1979 accelerated expansion of the base and, at a cost of half a billion dollars the full naval base was completed in 1986. It played a major air and naval support role during the first Gulf War, as well as during the second Gulf War. Whether the justification for these wars was to secure Middle Eastern oil or to fight against Islamic terrorism, the price paid by the people of the Chagos Islands was steep. The islands had been a dependency of British Mauritius since 1814. Their tiny population was the descendants of enslaved Africans who had been landed there to work on coconut plantations. As a precondition to Mauritian independence in 1967 the Chagos were removed from Mauritian jurisdiction in 1965 and renamed the British Indian Ocean Territory. Between 1967 and 1973 all the Chagossians, perhaps as many as 2,000 individuals, were forcibly removed from the islands and relocated to Mauritius, about 1,200 miles away, where today they are an impoverished and somewhat despised urban enclave in Port Louis simply called “Ilois,” or islanders.

Both nations, the US and the USSR, competed with each other to control the maritime trade routes in the Indian Ocean Region. In the late 20th century, this competition met came to an end. Soviet Union collapsed and the US emerged as a sole super external power in the IOR. The US continued to control and protects the trade routes in Indian Ocean for next twenty years without any major threat in the Indian Ocean Region.⁴²

1.6 Current Status of IOR in Maritime Trade of World

Historically, India Ocean has not been a peaceful Ocean especially in its history of modern era. It has been witnessing constant conflicts and competition since Vasco da Gama came to Indian Ocean. Portuguese actions in Indian Ocean disturbed the peace of Indian Ocean world. Then, the Great Britain dominated the region for more than hundred years. The Dutch East India Company set its own rules in trade of Indian Ocean. In post WWII period, it becomes an interesting area for Soviets and Americans. The oil exploration in the Middle East further increased the significance of the Indian Ocean Region. Now, the global economy is dependent on sea lines of communication of Indian Ocean.⁴³

Due to the rise of India and China as fastest growing economies in the Asian region, the trade through waters of Indian Ocean witnessed another significant increase. Now, more than 50% of global trade passes through the Indian Ocean Region. Although, regional countries are also contributing to security of SLOCs in the IOR, but the US has dominating role in controlling the sea routes of this region. It has its fifth largest fleet in Persian Gulf which has its headquarters in Bahrain. With the increasing trade activities across the region, the geopolitical importance of Indian Ocean has also increased. It has become hub of global politics. The US and China are competing with each other in the region. China, under its Maritime Silk Road Initiative, is increasing influence and presence in the Indian Ocean Region.

Conclusion

Historically, Indian Ocean has been important for trade purposes and the sea trade networks were present even during ancient times. But, it has been not in geopolitical

⁴² Edward A. Alpers, *The Indian Ocean History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014) 141-142.

⁴³ James Stavridis, *Sea Power: The History and Geopolitics of World's Oceans* (New York: Penguin Press, 2017), 48.

history of Oceans significantly. With the passage of time, Indian Ocean has also gained important position in geopolitics of the world. Now, it is not only an ocean which provides important sea routes for global trade but also has become strategically important for regional as well as extra regional powers.

CHAPTER II

21ST CENTURY MARITIME SILK ROAD IN INDIAN OCEAN

The revival of ancient sea routes, especially the Silk Road had been a dream for several countries due to monetary benefits and political incentives, and numerous efforts were made in form of bilateral and multilateral agreements of modern age. It was China which revived the centuries old concept of Silk Roads and trade routes for maritime cooperation and economic connectivity through the Twenty First Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR) in 2013. This initiative is strategy for development which aims to foster infrastructure connectivity throughout Oceania, Indian Ocean, East Africa and Southeast Asia. While revealing map for Maritime Silk Road under MSRI, the Chinese officials stated that three blue economic passages would be selected under Chinese MSRI which are, China-Oceania-South Pacific Blue Economic Passage, China-Indian Ocean-African-Mediterranean Sea Economic Passage and third passage would connect China to Europe through Arctic Ocean.⁴⁴

The east coast of Africa, West Asia, South Asia, East Asia, South China Sea and Mediterranean Sea will be connected by economic passage which is known as China-Indian Ocean-Africa-Mediterranean Sea passage. From Strait of Malacca to Suez Canal, this passage is in Indian Ocean. Indian Ocean holds central importance in the Chinese Maritime Silk Road Initiative. The proposed projects under MSRI are mostly located in the Indian Ocean Region. China has several interests in Indian Ocean Region. China's economy depends on the oil imports from Persian Gulf. China is importing 80% of its oil from the gulf. This region is also important for Chinese's exports. Both, Sea Lines of Indian Ocean and the littoral states of IOR as well as hinterland, have significant importance for China.

This section discusses immense opportunities which MSRI offers to China as well as to regional states in the IOR and several emerging challenges in this region due to MSRI.

⁴⁴ *Safety4Sea*, "China reveals three sea routes under Belt & Road initiative," June 26, 2016.

https://safety4sea.com/china-reveals-three-sea-routes-under-belt-road-initiative/?_cf_chl_jschl_tk_=f9f566a9d4187a3484a02f37db9bb5203c8b2df1-1598440030-0-AafHyMmRIgQRL_zZzI5prqC3iayGfk5HZxEmgjfC0a7b94kjA_djdEhzcGJp1RZKVMUGwDX4IwONgQOn6v0WH0x2IU30Hw3mT5Xr1ya0KPWEXizhhBE8aqVgcizye9ru82-boKTM--Yq11mYAxqYJkqjz9RZhOHzzIBnTJLgcXJ3atzuESKLWa5FzIsVEFEnHzfL1hyDqvH6uLxFi04auisDeAYZFAEbV6WEMXJO1ztYcGx8ZZ381_3TIJJoqvlTNn1QRIQISiM2Q44CHdUFBC72IelLk4hCukoDs_sTV3bodeS1CIHbwiASexp3f0hipagPrUwSJE3FWCSHCpsSI6G28LEd1eB9-KrC1a1rMu

This chapter is divided into four parts; Chinese Perspective on MSRI, Shipping Lines of MSRI in Indian Ocean & Major Choke Points in IOR, MSRI's Economic and Political Objectives & Challenges, and Critical Analysis of Few On-Going Projects under MSRI in Indian Ocean.

2.1 Chinese Perspective on MSRI

This section elaborates the twenty-first century Maritime Silk Road Initiative. President Xi Jinping proposed this initiative in 2013 and it has got attention of many countries across the world. The initiative aims to enhance economic cooperation, promoting peace, fostering communication among states and developing infrastructure. A new chapter for win-win situation, mutual assistance, equality, cooperation and human connection might be begun by the Maritime Silk Road Initiative.⁴⁵

The ocean covers more than 70% surface of the earth. The importance of ocean cannot be overlook at any level, it has important role to regulate natural environment and also among the major sources which are useful for economic and social development. Oceans are no more considered as mere origin of living things and a reservoir for resources, now they have become important for sustainable development. The Maritime Silk Road Initiative is offering great opportunities for countries across the region but it is also facing challenges. There are several issues which are increasing difficulties for construction of MSR, these issues include; different cultural and political bases, persistent conflicts, maritime disputes, lack of freshwater and electricity and the testing environment.

The Maritime Silk Road is not limited to shipment and customary seafaring, the other areas such as anti-terrorism cruises, anti-piracy escort, search and rescue operations, tourism, cultural exchange programs, preventing disasters, humanitarian relief and marine energy are also part of this initiative. The human society is witnessing rapid growth and development which has resulted into exponential rise of energy requirements, consequently, the states are facing environmental and energy crises. In the recent years, these serious crises have gained more attention.

The search for new energy resources is now the focus of world now as the world is running out of conventional forms of energies such as oil and coal. The climate change

⁴⁵Chongwei Zheng et al, *21st Century Maritime Silk Road: A Peaceful Way Forward* (Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore, 2018), 122-36.

has further restricted the options it is also a serious issues at present. Therefore, the resources would be considered best which will not only fulfil energy requirements but also will be suitable for environment. This new strategy is now following by most of the countries. The Maritime Silk Road Initiative has included generation of marine energy in its working areas. This area will be considered as best feature of the initiative as it is now a proven fact that the sustainable development will be guaranteed by Marine resources.

If the wave energy is used and exploited rationally, it will significantly contribute to reduce crisis in energy sector. Resultantly, the standard of living of the people will be improved. There is a dire need for evaluation of resource and also advance planning to work in right direction. For the evaluation of resource, advance technology and data hold central importance. Unfortunately, there are difficulties in using advance technology and the data available is also very limited. Moreover, there are also very few systematic and details analysis on energy.

The safety and security of marine construction primarily dependent on the knowledge of marine environment, while the energy is used in efficient and reasonable manner with proper understanding about features of energy which is generated from marine resources. Adding more to it, the legal counsel is important to provide help to host countries of Maritime Silk Road for the protection of their interests and rights. There are several issues in the region such as lack of freshwater resources, disturbing environment, and different cultural bases, shortage of electricity and maritime disputes, which can probably be problematic for the Maritime Silk Road. Therefore, these issues need permanent solutions on urgent basis.

2.1.1 Thought behind MSRI

The ocean has always been providing a natural linkage to countries for promoting economic activities and exchanging culture. The Maritime Silk Road will connect China to the world which is going through changing patterns in trade and global politics. The Maritime Silk Road Initiative is not restricted to ASEAN countries nor it is limited the countries which concluded deals with China under this initiative. Any country which is interested in being part of the Maritime Silk Road, it is welcomed. The Maritime Silk Road will connect North Africa, Europe, West Asia, South Asia, South China Sea and ASEAN countries; this will result in more connectivity and integration in the whole

region and ultimately the development for common people.⁴⁶

China is among the largest marine countries of the world with more than area of 3 million km² in Ocean as its territory and has coastline of 18,000 km. The marine economy of China had an important role in the overall economy of China during ancient times. In addition, economic development of China was largely dependent on Maritime Silk Road in ancient period. The ports of Guangzhou, Quanzhou and Ningbo were known to be beginning points for Maritime Silk Road; this was the time when Yuan, Tang and Song dynasties of China were growing at good pace.

During Tang dynasty, people moved from north to south for trade because the war had blocked the Silk Road which was on land. Resultantly, south became the new economic centre for China. In this period, the land-based Silk Road was replaced by the Maritime Silk Road because the MSRI became main channel through which trade was happening between Song dynasty and other parts of the region. Due to rise of trade activities, the Maritime Silk Road became a major source for communication. The era of great voyage of China had reached at its peak during voyages of Zheng He in Ming dynasty. Ming China emerged as a pre-eminent naval power during these voyages. It was externalizing its power to south and also to the west.

China has good opportunity, due to its Maritime Silk Road Initiative, to enhance cooperation, promote peace and create a friendly environment to increase collaborations with foreign countries. This enhanced cooperation and integration will build a community which will have shared future and common destination.⁴⁷ There is dire need for promoting policy communication, trade flow, road connection, mind connection and currency circulation, this will not only advocate common prosperity but will also bring progress in marine energy, trade, economy, scientific innovation, human communication and shipping.⁴⁸

2.1.2 Win-Win Results

The third largest ocean of the world, Indian Ocean, provides shortest sea routes to

⁴⁶ “Multi-country official thanks China for assistance in evacuating,” *People’s network*, 8 April, 2015. <http://world.people.com.cn/n/2015/0408/c1002-26813718.html>

⁴⁷ “Xi Jinping put forward the strategic concept: One Belt and One Road to open the dream space,” *Xinhua net*, 11 August 2014, “http://news.xinhuanet.com/fortune/2014-08/11/c_1112013039.html

⁴⁸ “The 21st century Maritime Silk Road: a great maritime road to realize Chinese Dreams,” *Qiushi net*, 16 June 2014. http://www.qstheory.cn/culture/2014-06/16/c_1111154145.html

Oceania, Asia and Africa for transportation of goods. Although, the ocean holds centrality to global politics and half of the world's trade passes through its waters but it did not bring major change for most of the littoral states because they lack in developed and advanced infrastructure.⁴⁹

The Belt and Road Initiative will be able to relocate eastern superfluous capital to African countries, Southeast Asia, South Asia and Central Asia which will increase economic connectivity and development along the Road. In addition to it, these developments will enhance the cooperation between China and other regional countries. The initiative will establish a community which will have same destination; it will transform the lives of people who are living along the BRI by improving their life standards.

The US economist, Richard Freeman, has said that China's GDP will be more than 20 trillion US dollars by the end of 2020. At present, China is spending 5% of its GDP as foreign direct investment. If this FDI reaches to 10% then it will be 2 trillion dollars. These heavy and massive investments will transform the economies of countries and in return China will also get benefits. Moreover, the raw material of the countries is favourable for China as it has great importance for its surplus production. In addition to it, the economic and infrastructure development in countries will bring prosperity for the people. Thus, this mega initiative is a win-win situation for both the parties.

2.2 Ocean-Going Shipping Line of MSRI in Indian Ocean

This section highlights the existing trade relations of China with countries which are present along ocean-going shipping line of MSRI in Indian Ocean. The sea routes which connect China's ports with the Arabian Sea, the Red Sea, East Coast of Africa, the Persian Gulf and the Bay of Bengal are called as Ocean-Going shipping line of Maritime Silk Road in Indian Ocean.

2.2.1 China-Bay of Bengal

Chennai, Kolkata, Chittagong and Yangon are the main ports which are present in the Bay of Bengal. China is exporting machinery, chemicals, seeds, consumer goods, equipment, textiles and fertilizers to Bangladesh while Bangladesh is exporting raw materials, frozen food, jute products, processed leather and shrimp to China. Myanmar is

⁴⁹ Zhang R, "The South China Sea marine environment risk assessment and emergency response in the Indian Ocean," Beijing: *National Defense Industry Press*, 2014. 12-20.

exporting mineral products, timber and agricultural products to China, while China is exporting electromechanical products, motorcycle accessories, chemical products and equipment to Myanmar. China exports fertilizers, cultural relics, mechanical products, mechanical equipment and organic chemicals to India, while China imports building materials, organic chemicals, copper products, and cotton and mineral products from India.⁵⁰

2.2.2 China-Sri Lanka

Colombo is the largest port of Sri Lanka. China is importing crocheted dresses, knitted products, rubber products, fibre products and tea from Sri Lanka. China exports steel products, mechanical equipment, cotton, knitted fabrics and electromechanical products to Sri Lanka.

2.2.3 China-Arabian See, Persian Gulf

Basra, Doha, Khalk Island, Kuwait, Abbas, Dubai, Karachi and Mumbai are main ports in Arabian Sea and the Persian Gulf. The Persian Gulf provides lifeline to China as China imports almost 80% of oil from the Gulf. Moreover, the sea route passes through Arabian Sea has great importance for India, Pakistan and China.

2.2.4 China-Red Sea

Sudan, Jeddah, Aqaba and Aden are major ports in the Red Sea. China is exporting light industrial products, oil foods, grain, electromechanical products and textiles to Yemen, while Yemen is exporting crude oil to China. Kingdom of Saudi Arabia exports petrochemical products and petroleum to China and imports home appliances, clothing and IT products from China. At present, KSA is the most stable and a major crude oil supplier. China is the largest buyer of Saudi crude oil and also the largest trading partner of KSA. Sudan also enjoys good and strong trading relations with China. From Africa, Sudan is the third-largest partner of China in trade. China imports oil from Sudan which makes 6% of China's oil imports.

2.2.5 China-East Africa

Port Louis, Maputo, Mombasa, Dar es Salaam and Mogadishu are major ports of east Africa. China is exporting chemical raw materials, building materials, hardware,

⁵⁰ Chongwei Zheng et al, *21st Century Maritime Silk Road: A Peaceful Way Forward* (Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore, 2018), 70-99.

pharmaceuticals, tools, daily necessities, mechanical equipment, household appliances and textiles to Kenya, whereas Kenya exports sisal, sawn, wood, animal leather and logs to China. China is exporting steel, electrical equipment, products, mechanical equipment, industrial products, vehicles, foodstuffs and chemical products to Tanzania, while Tanzania exports wooden handicrafts, crude copper, raw leather, seafood and logs to China. China is mostly exporting transport equipment, vehicles, products and steel to Mozambique whereas Mozambique exports to China include minerals, primary products and logs. Cargo volume has been increasing as there is rapid and exponential rise in trade between China and Tanzania and also between Mozambique and China.

2.3 Important Choke Points in Indian Ocean

Important trade routes of MSRI in Indian Ocean also contain busiest choke points of the world which include Suez Canal, Bab el Mandab, Strait of Malacca and Strait of Hormuz.

2.3.1 Strait of Malacca

A narrow body of water which is present between Sumatra Island and the Malay Peninsula is name as Strait of Malacca. The Andaman Sea is on the west side of strait and South China Sea is in the east. The length of strait is 1080km and the width is almost 370km.⁵¹ The Malacca Strait offers the shortest trading rout which links Pacific Ocean with Indian Ocean, therefore, it holds significant position in routes for global shipping. The statistics show that the number of ships which pass through the Strait of Malacca every year is greater than 80,000. This amounts of 25% of global trade which happens in maritime domain. Moreover, 85% of Chinese oil imports pass through this strait. At present, it is Malacca strait which is providing an important route for trade among Africa, China and Europe. Therefore, it is considered as key node for the Chinese Maritime Silk Road Initiative.

2.3.2 Strait of Hormuz

A strait between the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf is known as Strait of Hormuz. It has Arabian Peninsula in the west and Iran in the east. The length and width of the Strait of Hormuz is 150km and 56-125km respectively. The Persian Gulf has only one exit point and that is Strait of Hormuz, which links the Gulf with open sea. This strait is one of the busiest choke points in the world and holds significant strategic and economic

⁵¹ James Stavridis, *Sea Power: Geopolitics of World's Oceans* (New York: Penguin Press 2017), 47-48.

importance. It provides the only sea lane which is used for transporting oil from the Gulf to East Asia, Europe and America. For China, the Strait of Hormuz is like a bloodline for Chinese economy as 40% of Chinese oil imports pass through the Strait.⁵²

2.3.3 Bab-el-Mandeb Strait

The strait which is present between the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden, it is known as Bab el Mandeb Strait. The length and width of this strait is 50km and 26-32km, respectively. The Mandeb Strait has been very important since ancient times because it links the Red Sea, Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden. The construction of Suez Canal significantly increased the importance of Bab el Mandeb as it offered shortest route between Indian and Atlantic Ocean for trade and travel. Now the number of vessels which are passing every year from this strait has crossed 20,000, therefore it is also called as “world’s strategic heart” to describe its importance in global trade and travel. The Bab el Mandeb Strait offers an important trade route for China to North Africa, Saudi Arabia and Yemen for its oil imports and also has significant importance for Chinese trade with Europe.⁵³

2.3.4 Suez Canal

An artificial waterway which connects the Red Sea with Mediterranean has been named as Suez Canal. The construction of Suez Canal was completed in 1869. The width and length of this canal is 280-345km and 190km, respectively. It has significant strategic and economic value in the international trade and commerce activities as it is most suitable gateway for connecting Indian Ocean, western Pacific and the Europe. Therefore, the route passes through this canal is busiest in the world as the trade passes through Suez Canal amounts to 20% of global trade volume. Moreover, 80% of European trade passes through this important choke point. Suez Canal also holds important value for Chinese Maritime Silk Road as it is among the key nodes of this road.

2.4 MSRI Economic and Political Objectives & Challenges

2.4.1 Economic Objectives and Challenges:

The Maritime Silk Road Initiative aims to increase Chinese exports and surplus production capacity which will help China to further boost its economy. According to Chinese government, this initiative will result in reducing the tariff barriers, integrated

⁵² Chongwei Zheng et al, *21st Century Maritime Silk Road: Way Forward* Springer (Singapore: Nature Singapore, 2018), 44-47.

⁵³ Zhang MS, “Important sea lanes in the Arab world,” *Jianghuai Tribune*, 12 June 2014.

trade activities, establishment of Special Economic Zones, and the economic boost of participating countries and enhancement of FDI by China. Moreover, the infrastructure development projects, which are important part of this initiative, will also play significant role in the economic growth as it will enhance the Chinese capability to sell its products overseas in more efficient way. In addition to it, the Maritime Silk Road Initiative will be playing important role for motivating people, capital and services which are important for economic exchange. And the opportunities, which will be generated for companies and firms of China, in development of hard infrastructure, are of greater importance for China.⁵⁴

The Maritime Silk Road Initiative is offering a great opportunity to China for utilization of its surplus currency reserves to further boost its economy as 61% of the global population is being touched by BRI, the combined GDP of the BRI countries is 29 trillion dollars, and the trade between BRI states and China is 6 trillion dollars. The infrastructure needs of these countries are around 26 trillion dollars, and China has pledged to invest 1 trillion dollars in the countries.⁵⁵ The positive outcomes from the Chinese backed projects are also being reported. For instance, recently, despite the COVID-19 Crisis it has been reported that Chinese-backed Hambantota port has witnessed 186% increase in the cargo volumes in only first half of 2021.⁵⁶ The financial institutions of China such as CDB, SRF and AIIB will get money from China and lend it for projects which are under the MSRI. China will be able to make money through the loans which will be given by these financial institutions. It will also increase the probability that the projects under the MSRI will also be completed sooner or later. Beijing is also trying to internalize its currency; the MSRI will also be contributing in this regard as the participants in this initiative will likely use Chinese currency for credit insurance, trade pricing, swaps, debt issuances and investment which will also help them to reduce costs of transactions.

The Chinese businesses, which are not directly under Chinese government, also consider the MSRI as a great opportunity. They are of the view that this initiative will result in

⁵⁴Jean-Marc F. Blanchard, *China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative and South Asia: A Political Economic Analysis of its Purposes, Perils, and Promise* (Singapore: Springer Nature Singapore, 2018), 88-110.

⁵⁵ China Power Team, "How Will the Belt and Road Initiative Advance China's Interests?" *China Power*, May 8, 2017. Accessed July 15, 2021. <https://chinapower.csis.org/china-belt-and-road-initiative/>

⁵⁶ "Sri Lanka's China-backed Hambantota port volumes up 186-pct in 2021 first half", *Economy Next*, July 11, 2021. Accessed 15 July, 2021. <https://economynext.com/sri-lankas-china-backed-hambantota-port-volumes-up-186-pct-in-2021-first-half-83892/>

expansion of markets which will be available for their services and manufactured products. Moreover, they think that the access for raw materials will be easier for Chinese companies, they will have new opportunities to expand their client base and also they will be able to further increase the joint ventures across the region. It will also result in enhancement of regional bases for production and transfer of technology.

Specifically speaking, a China based multinational company Alibaba is now building partnerships with private and public entities along the Maritime Silk Road which will further boost the revenue of this e-commerce platform. In addition to it, IZP Technologies is one of the leading companies of China, it is working on credit cards with use of dual-currency, transnational payment systems, to support medium enterprises financially and also to develop networks for marketing. The largest and oldest food process company in China is COFCO; it is of the view that the Maritime Silk Road is offering opportunities for building supply chains of food across the region. The CRRC Corporation is the state-owned limited company of China, according to them, the Maritime Silk Road will not only increase the opportunities for construction of railway systems and selling the trains but also the companies will also be able to establish and set up the manufacturing units overseas which will ultimately result in increasing the revenue for companies and also services to people.⁵⁷

The most of participants in the Maritime Silk Road Initiative are facing serious economic issues. They lack infrastructure, scarcity of energy, the integration with neighbouring countries is also poor and above all they do lack in capital too. Therefore, the Maritime Silk Road initiative may be able to boost the economic conditions of these countries. There are two major contributions which can China make for these countries by using the Maritime Silk Road Initiative. First of all, the heavy investments for development of hard infrastructure will significantly improve the condition of infrastructure in the countries. This will bring multiple benefits for them. Pakistan can be an important example in this regard. China's investments in energy sector of Pakistan will not only end the energy crises but it will also increase industrial capacity of Pakistan which resultantly enhance the growth of its economy. Secondly, the loans will also be provided for infrastructure development. Thirdly, FDI by China will be helpful to boost economies of host countries.

This investment will also encourage others to invest in these countries. The better and improved growth of countries, which are participating in the MSRI, will bring benefits for China as well.

There are multiple variables involved in the success of the Maritime Silk Road Initiative, therefore, it would be challenging to analyse the prospects for success of the MSRI. The size of this initiative, variation in transportation, financial and logistics systems in the region and huge infrastructure projects are a challenge for concrete analysis. Moreover, the Maritime Silk Road is developing in the region where the legal institutions are weak and infrastructure is backward. Above all, the economic conditions of China as well as of other participants of the MSRI will directly have impact on success of this initiative. Even, if the MSRI does not grow at expected level, there are multiple reasons which are supportive to remain positive. Pakistan is a key participant in the MSRI, if it does not succeed in mitigating the economic problems, it will be detrimental to slow the progress. It is still uncertain that whether the all projects under the MSRI make an economic sense or not. For example, there are doubts about the system based on train that whether it will be really more cost effective at that level.

India is a major actor in the Indian Ocean Region as well as among the largest economies of the world, therefore, it is said there are little chances that the MSRI will reach its expected potential without full participation of India. Till now, no one is much sure about Indian full participation in the MSRI, the reason behind this hesitation is the emerging challenges from the MSRI which are being faced by India in its way to become a dominating state in the Indian Ocean Region. To promote the MSRI, China is closely working with Pakistan. They have strengthened military, political and economic ties with each other. This has further increased concerns for India towards the MSRI. Therefore, India has been struggling to counter or at least slow the projects which are under the MSRI. It has taken various steps in this way, for example, India is not only building and strengthening relations with host countries of the MSRI like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Maldives but also has launched Project Mausam which they believe that can be an alternative to the MSRI. They are also building ties with extra-regional powers

such as Japan, Australia and the US to counter increasing influence of China.⁵⁸

Presently, the actions by Chinese firms have become one the major challenges for successfully implementing the policies of China under the MSRI. Chinese firms have not been operating at this level before. Therefore, they do lack in understanding the culture, social, regulatory procedures, bureaucratic issues and legal mechanisms in the host countries. In addition to it, sometimes the vested interests of firm result in the waste of financial resources. It will not be an easy task for China to ensure that the companies will work according to expectations of the government.

2.4.2 MSRI Political Objectives and Challenges:

There are multiple views about the Maritime Silk Road Initiative. Many see this Maritime Silk Road Initiative as a plan of China to secure resources and protect the sea lines of communications (SLOCS) which are lifeline for Chinese economy. Due to this initiative, Bangladesh, Pakistan and Myanmar are offering alternatives routes to China for supply of energy and other commodities. The security of resources does not mean that China will have an easy access to them only; it also means that the production of resources will also meet the needs of China. Therefore, under the MSRI, China is investing for in infrastructure development as well as in energy sector. The Chinese investment in gas and oil sector will be advantageous for China and its industrial sector.⁵⁹

Furthermore, few people think that China wants to build good relations with other countries and the MSRI will be playing a greater role in this regard. The increased trade activities between the countries under the MSRI will result in binding these countries together. In addition to it, the loans to recipient countries of MSRI will certainly increase the Chinese influence. The countries which have limited options for acquiring technology, weapons, equipment and capital from other countries will be the important examples of Chinese display of influence. Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Bangladesh, Kenya and Pakistan can be taken as one of the examples in this regard. China has been seen as a country which is aggressive and offensive in South China Sea. The MSRI is offering another lens to world China also believes in economic connectivity and integration. It

⁵⁸David Brewster, "An Indian Ocean dilemma: Sino-Indian rivalry and China's strategic vulnerability in the Indian Ocean." *Journal of the Indian Ocean* 11, no. 1 (2015a): 48–59.

⁵⁹Christopher Len, "China's Twenty-First-Century Maritime Silk Road Initiative, Energy Security, and SLOC Access," *Maritime Affairs* 11, no. 1 (2015): 9–10.

will help China to have increased cooperation with other states and bring positivity about China's image.

There is also a strong opinion that the MSRI actual aim is to help China in its dream to become a global power. Garver and Kondapalli are one of writers who propagate this view. In addition to it, the leadership role of China is an aspiration which has been mentioned in the Chinese dream by Xi Jinping who is the president of China. Few of these writers are of the view that this is not actual dream behind the Maritime Silk Road Initiative, China wants to be a hegemon and also to have control over Eurasian heartland. Moreover, the countries' sovereignty will be compromised as they will be under strong influence of China and the MSRI will be a key factor in this. It will not stop here, it is also said that China will eliminate Western-created institutions and weaken the values and standards which are advocated by these institutions. While, Chinese representatives say that this MSRI is not limited to few countries or the countries which are close to China but it is an open opportunity for all the countries regardless of their location. Those who are interested in this initiative can become part of it. The only thing they need to do is to understand the actual spirit of the MSRI.⁶⁰

There is also a view that China is using the MSRI to achieve its strategic objectives in the region. Chinese officials have said it many times that they do not seek to use their economy to gain their political interests and they also say that financial institutions of the MSRI should be resembled with the Marshall Plan as China has no political objectives involved in it. Anyhow, it is said that today's world politics is revolving around economics and the MSRI is glaring example in this regard. Under this Maritime Silk Road Initiative, the host countries will not only bring economic benefits for China but also support China in political domain. Although, like Marshall Plan, the Maritime Silk Road Initiative does not include any political or strategic goal but it can play a leading role for China to achieve strategic goals indirectly. China will remain a central actor in integration under the MSRI and have significant influence in exchange programs and institution-building. Apart from benefits in political domain, China will be able to use this influence for sort of agenda-setting to gain more power in the established

⁶⁰Blanchard, Jean-Marc F. "Probing China's 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI): An Examination of MSRI Narratives." *Geopolitics* 22, no. 2 (2016): 246–268.

international political system. Moreover, the private and public sectors of China will be more involved in economic and political sectors of host countries of this Maritime Silk Road Initiative.

Some say that China has political objectives which are country-specific, which it wants to achieve through the MSRI. For example, Pakistan is China's strategic ally since years but it is facing serious economic problems. With the help of MSRI and CPEC, Pakistan will be able to stabilize its economy and it will result in a strong and stable ally of China. In addition to it, China-Pakistan relations have been based on political and security interests but under this MSRI, Pakistan-China will have strong cooperation in economic domain too. China is interested to build strong ties with Maldives because of the geo-strategic importance of Maldives in the Indian Ocean Region.

In contemporary era, the economics is not detached from politics; therefore, international political economy has become the leading discourse in International Relations. China's MSRI will be facing and in fact, already facing political challenges. These political challenges will be of different nature. Firstly, due to increased flow of Chinese goods and firms to the host countries of the MSRI, the local workers and companies will be paying the cost. As a result, political rift will be generated against the MSRI. Secondly, the countries which are rich in resources will have reservations as they can become dependent in their exports. Thirdly, trade deficit of participants of MSRI with China will also be a major concern for these countries. Fourthly, the economic dependence of these countries on China will create the fear of Chinese dominance. Last but not the least; the Maritime Silk Road can create new options and ways for environmental degradation, separatism and crimes.⁶¹

The participant countries of the MSRI have, mostly, weak legal systems and poor political structure. This is also one of the political challenges for the MSRI as China will need approval from these countries. There are also cases in which domestic issues, maritime disputes and identity issues will have damaging impact on the countries' handling of the MSRI projects. Moreover, the involvement of other countries in host countries of MSRI can also affect the progress of the MSRI. For example, as China is

⁶¹ Blanchard, Jean-Marc F. "Chinese MNCs as China's New Long March: A Review and Critique of the Western Literature." *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 16, no. 1 (2011): 91–108.

expanding its footprint in the Indian Ocean Region under the MSRI, India is also now further strengthening its ties with countries especially which are part of the MSRI in Indian Ocean like India has taken various initiatives to further improve its relations with Sri Lanka. India is assisting Sri Lanka to increase activities of resource exploitation, improve surveillance of territorial waters and also to promote regional institutions.

Even if every country accepts the projects being offered by the MSRI, it will be a taxing task to implement the MSRI. There are countries, included in the MSRI, which have boundary conflicts and also facing internal problems. They have weak policies, lack technocrats and leaderships are not stable. For example, BLA in Baluchistan is creating security problems which can be problem for projects especially the construction of special economic zones in Baluchistan. The change in leadership of Sri Lanka has affected the relations between Sri Lanka and China as the MSRI projects in Sri Lanka are facing delays. Myanmar is also one of the most countries for success of the Maritime Silk Road Initiative in the Indian Ocean Region. Therefore, anything that happens in this country will have implications for the MSRI in Indian Ocean. Myanmar is facing minority issues which have caused disruption in foreign direct investments. Similar situation is prevailing between China and Myanmar. Myanmar internal issues are also creating hurdles for the projects to some extent.⁶²

The attitude of Chinese company towards the projects can be an obstacle for the implementation of projects under the MSRI. Many people think that China has complete hold and control over the companies and it can force them to work, all the time, in the directions given by the government of China. Well this is not the case actually. Due to unfavourable political and commercial environments in most of the countries of the MSRI in the Indian Ocean Region, there is low potential for the investment returns. Consequentially, the Chinese firms will be very concerned about these issues. If this happens, then it would be a major issue for the MSRI to achieve the desired results. It would be a taxing task for China to have complete control over Chinese companies especially in case of Special Economic Zones (SEOs) as there options for these companies to have influence over policies.

⁶²“Prospects and Challenges on China’s ‘One Belt, One Road’: A Risk Assessment Report,” *Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)*, 2015, 3–4.
http://www.eiu.com/public/topical_report.aspx?campaignid=OneBeltOneRoad

In addition to it, the behaviour of these firms in the host countries will also be of great importance as it will have significant impact on the progress of the MSRI. The Chinese companies will not know much about the dynamics of politics in the host countries and also they might have insufficient knowledge about living and cultural environment in these countries. Moreover, the negative externalities, which will come from projects such as activities of energy extraction, port construction and mining projects, might be of least concern for these companies. Therefore, this has the potential to prevent projects approval from countries as it can turn the people against the projects of the MSRI. Such events have already been seen in Peru and Cameroon which are not part of the MSRI and also in Myanmar which is participant of the Maritime Silk Road Initiative. The government of China is also aware about these issues, therefore, in Feb 2015, the Vice Premier Zhang, who was addressing in a conference, said that the Chinese companies should be well informed about social responsibilities of corporations and also play their role to protect the environment.⁶³

2.5 Critical Analysis of Few On-going Projects under MSRI in Indian Ocean; Kyaukpyu, Gwadar, Hambantota and Mombasa

The states, present in the Indian Ocean Region, are mostly developing and lack infrastructure development and capital too. Several nations have overwhelmingly welcomed the opportunities which are being offered by the MSRI. There also a number of states and individuals who are opposing this initiative and raising questions about feasibility of these projects and the possible aims of China behind the MSRI. Till now, the MSRI is focusing on littoral states which are present in Indo-Pacific region. At present, mainly, the projects of port construction are on-going in the region under the MSRI. The questions are being raised about the nature of these investments in these projects. There also reservations of the countries and individuals about these projects that can potentially influence the foreign policies of the host countries.

China is heavily investing in different littoral states of Indian Ocean for ports development. These are the leading projects which are going-on under the Maritime Silk Road Initiative in the region. In this section, construction of several ports such as

⁶³“China sketches out priorities of 'Belt and Road' initiatives,” *China Daily*, Feb 02, 2015. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2015-02/02/content_19464329.htm

Gawadar in Pakistan, Chittagong in Bangladesh, Mombasa in Kenya, Hambantota in Sri Lanka and Kyaukpyu in Myanmar will be analysed critically.

2.5.1 Kyaukpyu

Kyaukpyu is among the famous and important towns of Myanmar. It is a major city in the Rakhine state which is located on the western coast of Myanmar. The CITIC Group Corporation and China Harbor Engineering Company are the Chinese companies which won contracts of two projects in Myanmar in 2016. These major projects are related to dredging of a port and building a Special Economic Zone. The cost of the port project and SEZ project is 7.3 billion USD and 2.7 billion USD, respectively. According to the terms and conditions, CITIC will complete this project and will be able to run and control the project for time period of fifty years. And this period can be extended for another twenty-five years.

The city holds significant importance for China because it is important station for natural gas pipeline and a parallel oil pipeline of 1.5 billion USD worth which is flowing from Kyaukpyu to the capital of Yunnan Province of China, Kunming. This is considered as a primary reason behind Chinese commitment to projects in Kyuakpyu. Therefore, local opposition against construction on pipelines could not affect the progress. The pipelines were constructed by stated owned companies of China and Myanmar, Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise and China National Petroleum Corporation. The construction started in 2010 and completed in 2015. More than 12 billion cubic meters gas can be sent through these pipelines to China, yearly. More than 22 million barrel oil can be sent to China, annually, through the oil pipelines. This project can be seen as part of strategic thinking of China as China wants to reduce its dependence on the Strait of Malacca for trade of oil and goods. Because, the rivals of China like the US can block the Strait of Malacca to stop energy supply of China during the war like situation.⁶⁴

China has launched the plans to develop the inland provinces; therefore, the importance port construction at Kyaukpyu for China can also be seen in this context. If the goods are coming from the Middle East, Europe and Africa and use Kyuakpyu port to transfer goods to China, it will save time as well as thousands of miles. This route would be more

⁶⁴ Nicholas Szechenyi, "China's Maritime Silk Road Strategic and Economic Implications for the Indo-Pacific Region," *CSIS*, March 2018.

suitable and efficient to transfer goods to inland provinces especially which are present near Myanmar rather than the long route which passes through the Strait of Malacca. This Chinese dream start taking the practical shape, when China and Myanmar signed an agreement to establish China-Myanmar Economic Corridor in December 2017, which will connect Kunming to Kyaukpyu. The details of this agreement were not released but it is estimated that Mandalay would play a central role in this economic corridor. The gas and oil pipelines project was a first step for Chinese policy makers and now the implementation of this agreement can bring dramatic change for Kunming.⁶⁵

For the greater benefits of Myanmar, the success of SEZ matters as if it does not succeed then Kyaukpyu will be just a way station for the goods which will be transferred from Kyaukpyu to Yunnan. Three SEZ related projects had been launched by the previous government of Myanmar with the aim to increase economic growth of the country. Out of these SEZs, Thilawa SEZ is running. This SEZ is located outside Yangon and being led by the Japanese. Dawei project is another case which is joint venture of Thailand and Japan in Myanmar, the continuous financial issues has significantly halted the progress of this project. The history of such projects in Myanmar is not giving a good sign and the internal issues of Myanmar cannot be overlooked.

The countries like India are raising concerns about the increasing involvement of China in Myanmar. They are of the view that China can use the port for its military purpose, but objections untimely. It does not seem that Myanmar will allow a military presence for long period whether it is from China or any other country, as the leaders of Myanmar are famous for resistance against any external force which can push them to compromise on their sovereignty. But, the naval forces of China could visit the port for a short time as they visit Hambantota port in Sri Lanka.

Anyhow, If Myanmar could not pay back the loans then it will be a worrisome issue. As China could be able to gain economic leverage over Myanmar and use this influence for Chinese interests. The investments and loans of China have already become controversial in other host states of the MSRI. In Maldives, China has been, allegedly, using economic leverage to compel the government of Maldives for economic and political adjustments

⁶⁵ “Xi meets Aung San Suu Kyi, calls for more party-to-party cooperation,” *China Daily*, 01 December, 2017.

https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2017-12/01/content_35161902.htm

which were against national interests of the host country. At present, the stakes of Myanmar government in Kyuakpyu port are 30 per cent which need of 2.2 billion USD of investment in the project. If the government of Myanmar cannot deal with this high level of investment, it will be asking China for loans.⁶⁶

In a nutshell, China has ambitions to speed up the development of its inland provinces such as Yunnan and it also wants to reduce Chinese reliance on the Strait of Malacca, therefore, Kyuakpyu port holds economic and strategic importance for China. The construction of rail and roads, which will connect Yunnan to Kyuakpyu port, is equally important. As far as the benefits for Myanmar are concerned, they will be linked, primarily, with the successful Special Economic Zone.

2.5.2 Hambantota

The government of Sri Lanka wanted to transform the small town into hub of shipping. Sri Lanka welcomed Chinese financing to fulfil this dream. The inability of the government of Sri Lanka to pay back the loans resulted into a new agreement between China and Sri Lanka. Under this agreement, Sri Lanka handed over Hambantota port to China on lease for 99 years. The day when Sri Lanka handed the port over to China, the tweet by China's state news agency was, "Another milestone along path of #BeltandRoad." This agreement resulted into local protests in Sri Lanka and accusations were made that the government of Sri Lanka was compromising on sovereignty of the country. Chinese investments are resulting into the economic dependence of host countries on China, and China is using this dependence to gain strategic objectives. Colombo is the capital of Sri Lanka and also headquarters of its navy, it suddenly became a trending city when a submarine of China was docked there in 2014. Chinese vessels can have more independence at Hambantota as it is far away from navy headquarters of Sri Lanka.

In August 2017, Prime Minister of Sri Lanka Ranil Wickremesinghe said, "Sri Lanka headed by President Maithripala does not enter into military alliances with any country or make our bases available for foreign countries." In February 2018, commander of Sri Lankan Army Mahesh Senanayake said, "There had been this widespread claim about the

⁶⁶ Nicholas Szechenyi, "China's Maritime Silk Road: Implications for the Indo-Pacific Region," *CSIS*, March 2018.

port being earmarked to be used as a military base. No action, whatsoever will be taken in our harbor or in our waters that jeopardizes India's security concerns." Anyhow, the agreement between China and Sri Lanka regarding Hambantota port was approved by the Sri Lankan parliament but it has not been made available for the public yet.⁶⁷

The fate of Hambantota port is a lesson for all the countries which have signed or signing infrastructure projects with China under the MSRI. The assessment of the projects is essential for host countries. The long-term success of the projects highly depends upon their integration and compatibility with wider networks, whether they are related to information, transportation or energy. The sustainability of debt can also be analysed with broader approach. As the political leaders, mostly, look for political incentives, it results into hasty decision to start projects without taking the risks into consideration.

Hambantota port was not a new project; Sri Lanka government had been taking decisions about this port for over many years. Since 2002, the governments of Sri Lanka were including the construction of Hambantota port in their development plans. The feasibility report of Hambantota port was made by a French engineering company, SNC Lavalin, in 2003. A task force was appointed by the government of Sri Lanka to review this report. The task force rejected this study ultimately and commented that the study had ignored impact of this port on Colombo port. Colombo port, now, controls 95% trade of Sri Lanka.

A second feasibility report was completed by Ramboll in 2006 which was a Danish firm. This report was relatively giving an optimistic view about the potential of Hambantota port. At first, the port will be handling break bulk and dry cargo and that would remain the major traffic source by 2030 and then container traffic would increase. The port will be managing nearly 20 million TEU (twenty-foot equivalent units) of trading goods by 2040 which will make this port as one of the busies ports in the world.⁶⁸

Mahinda Rajapaska was elected as President in 2005 in Sri Lanka. During his campaign, he promised his people that he would work for the development of southern districts of Sri Lanka especially the Hambantota. After assuming office in 2005, he started to work on development projects in these districts. For Hambantota, he announced to build an

⁶⁷ Meera Srinivasan, "Ranil defends Hambantota deal," *The Hindu*, August 31, 2017.
<https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/ranil-defends-hambantota-deal/article19595879.ece>

⁶⁸ <https://ramboll.com/projects/group/hambantotaport>

airport, a cricket stadium and construction of the port. These projects were being done with Chinese investments and Chinese contractors. The rates of Chinese loans were higher than the rates which are usually offered by development banks. China was offering loans at 6.3% interest instead of 2 or 3% which is typically offered by multilateral development banks. China was successful in getting interest rate of 6.3% because there was no better alternative available for the government of Sri Lanka. No one was offering, even, at the Chinese rates. Anyhow, the deal concluded with China and 307 million USD were provided as Chinese loans in the first phase. There was no competition for acquiring this project which suggests that the other lenders were not considering this project as a potential project which could bring desired results.⁶⁹

The demands of the market were ignored due to political incentives, as a result this turned to be a failure for the government of Sri Lanka. Importantly, the port of Colombo, in 2016, was handling 5.7 million TEU and was not using its full capacity. If the government of Sri Lanka realized the potential of Colombo port, its capacity would be increased and, by 2040 it could handle 35 million TEU. Initially, the fuel services were to be offered at Hambantota port but Rajapaksa ordered to use the port for other activities as well which were already happening at Colombo. In short, the government of Sri Lanka itself created challenges for the Hambantota port.

Maithripala Sirisena defeated Rajapaksa in elections of 2015 but he had very limited options. The new government re-examined the agreement and stopped the work on Hambantota port. This decision also blocked the generation of revenue at the port which added more difficulties for the government of Sri Lanka to pay back the loans. The government of Sri Lanka started renegotiations with China because 95% of total revenue was being used pay back loans to China by 2015. These negotiations resulted into a new deal under which Sri Lanka gave the port to China on lease for 99 years.

It is rightly stated that to highlight mistake is easier than to give a solution. The government of Sri Lanka should learn from this lesson and it can prevent similar outcomes for the next time. The leaders should not prefer short term political gains at the cost of long term problems and do not be hasty to start risky projects. In addition to it,

⁶⁹Nicholas Szechenyi, "China's Maritime Silk Road: Implications for the Indo-Pacific Region," *CSIS*, March 2018.

there is need for better financing alternatives with less interest rate; this will prevent countries from higher interest rates and tough conditions for the projects. CBMs can help to train the governments, so they can learn to assess the projects and deal while negotiating the terms.

2.5.3 Gwadar

The deepest port of Pakistan is Gwadar which is now under construction. It has strategic and economic importance for Pakistan as well as for China. There are two ports which are fully operational in Pakistan, port Qasim and Karachi port. These two ports are handling more than 95% trade of Pakistan. They are being used in full capacities and also the further expansion of any of them is not possible. The construction of Gwadar port is divided in phases. After complete construction of Gwadar port, there will be one Ro-Ro (Roll on-Roll off) facility and number of berths will be three which will have length of 200 meters. Currently, 50,000 deadweight tonnage (DWT) is the handling capacity of Gwadar port.

The vision statement by Gwadar Port Authority says that Karakoram Highway is considered as first great monument of Pak-China friendship which links Pakistan and China, while the Gwadar port is second distinguished memorial of this great friendship. Chinese investments are not just limited to Gwadar port, China is also investing in industrial zones, infrastructure development, transport and power plants. The total investment by China has crossed 60 billion USD. COPHC is a Chinese company which is developing the Gwadar port. In April 2017, Pakistan gave Gwadar port on lease for 40 years to China Overseas Port Holding Company (COPHC).⁷⁰

Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the government of China will provide soft loans for the construction of Gwadar port. The COPHC will be receiving 91% shares from the revenue generated by the port and 85% free zones until China recovers its investment in these projects. Gwadar port will be handling 1 million tonnes of cargo every year and in Pakistan many people think that China will get all the benefits. There are also a group in Pakistan who says that the investments under CPEC can be a debt trap for Pakistan. The episode of Hambantota port has also sought attention of Pakistani elite

⁷⁰ “Pakistan Gives China a 40-Year Lease for Gwadar Port,” *Maritime Executive*, April 27, 2017. <https://www.maritime-executive.com/article/pakistan-gives-china-a-40-year-lease-for-gwadar-port>

and they must be observing the developments along the Maritime Silk Road.

2.5.4 Mombasa

The visit of President Uhuru Kenyatta to China, in 2013, resulted in signing an important economic deal with China which amounted to 5 billion USD. The President of China and Kenya in a joint statement announced the China-Kenya Comprehensive Cooperative Partnership. The premier of PRC, Mr. Li Keqiang, paid a visit to Kenya in 2014 and the visit concluded with signing of 17 new deals between China and Kenya. Under these deals, China would provide funds for multiple infrastructure projects. The commitment to establish the China-Africa Development Bank was also included in these deals. President Kenyatta and President Xi Jinping, in May 2017, jointly announced to enhance their relations and build a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between China and Kenya.

Kenya is strategically important for China as it provides Maritime Silk Road an entry point into Africa. Kenya is home to 46 million people and its GDP amounts to 63.5 billion USD. There several projects which are being funded by China in Kenya, but the up gradation of Mombasa port, construction of Lamu port and construction of new railway line which will connect Nairobi and Mombasa port with land-locked countries are considered to be major projects. Oil fields of Uganda and South Sudan will be connected to ports of Kenya through railway and pipelines. In the first phase, 2700kms will be covered. 25 billion USD is the estimated cost for the railway line project and 90% financing will be done by Chinese EXIM Bank. Moreover, details about finance source of port and pipeline are still not clear.⁷¹ After Hambantota, Mombosa has been hitting the discussion panels. The Kenya's is being called as next Hambantota.

Conclusion

The main focus of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Initiative is the Indian Ocean Region. Although, MSRI is facing serious emerging challenges in the IOR but with Chinese investment, under MSRI, in strategically important littoral states of the IOR, influence and presence of China is significantly increasing. On one hand, China has its own objectives and ambitions in the region. But, India, historically, aspires to be hegemon in the IOR. India has been facing various challenges in its way to become a

⁷¹ Nicholas Szechenyi, "China's Maritime Silk Road: Implications for the Indo-Pacific Region," *CSIS*, March 2018.

hegemon, and now MSRI has added another major challenge for Indian ambitions in the Indian Ocean Region.

CHAPTER III

INDIAN HEGEMONIC AMBITIONS IN THE IOR: CHALLENGES FROM MSRI

The supremacy over Indian Ocean has been the key desire of India to fulfil its dream as major power, as it has a large population, a large military / naval power, and is one of the largest economies in the world. India is developing rapidly to meet aspires to be the sole authority in the Indian Ocean as the sea and the state share the same name. India was the centre of the British Empire's focus during the colonial era, and after a vast gap of sixty years since independence, India is now slowly trying to develop itself as a major world power. Its ever-growing financial and military power around the world is driving it to attract an expanding strategic role in the region. Indian PM Modi's government sees control of the Indian Ocean as a key condition for India's strategic influence on regional and global politics. In the 21st century, as the Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean region is increasing through the project of Maritime Silk Road Initiative, India is more concerned as it sees these developments as a threat to its regional and national interests.

This chapter is divided into sections. In the IOR, the hegemonic ambitions of India, whereas these ambitions are being challenged from the Chinese Maritime Silk Road Initiative in IOR.

3.1 Indian Hegemonic Ambitions in the IOR

Since 1947, India has been presenting itself as a hegemon in the Indian Ocean region, when the British India was divided into India and Pakistan. But, Indian economy was in turmoil, which prevented him from doing much practical work on the ground. But with the economic rise of India, it starts considering itself as the only sole authoritarian of the IOR. Mohan evaluates Indian power in the Indian Ocean region as fundamental to its desire for global power, which is a long-term desire of India. However, most Indians will vaguely reject the notion that India has any desire of hegemony in the Indian Ocean. Instead, they see India performing the role of a police man in the Region who has taken the responsibility of providing security and keeping the external harmful and undesirable

forces at bay.⁷²

The name “Indian Ocean” was first given by medieval and old geographers, not because of the Indian mariners ruled it, but due to the fact that it provided access to the coast of India and its wealth from the sailors of the Arabian Peninsula and various nations. But over time, the image presented by Indian rulers and scholars interpreted it as the Ocean of India. Indians view India as India’s Ocean which is largest regional actor in the Indian Ocean Region and the ocean name is after India.⁷³

3.1.1 Indian Ambitions and Regional Environment

The colonial experience of India created an idea that India should establish a forward defensive line in the Indian Ocean to prevent intrusion into the subcontinent or more regional powers should withdraw from the India’s vicinity. This is sometimes known as India’s ‘Monroe Doctrine’.⁷⁴ The idea accepts the concept which was applied by the British during their colonial era, but it also clearly appeals to the American Monroe Doctrine, proposed by the US in the 19th century to reject the European Colonial powers presence in America.

The reflection of the Monroe ideology is clear, yet at an early stage, in modern India, in strategic thinking and even used by Jawaharlal Nehru's determination to get rid of the remaining colonial influence in subcontinent and to completely exclude other powers from the whole region of South Asia. This was being done to strengthen the concept of newly independent India. It is not a government policy but an important core theme of Indian strategic thinking. This idea has been explained in numerous versions, but generally includes the claim that the military presence of 'external' forces in India's neighbourhood is necessarily illegitimate and India's neighbours should rely on India only in order to get security and protection from external powers.

The beliefs expressed in the ideology do not certainly fit easily with the absolute state sovereignty ideas. Pakistan, specifically oppose the concept that India has "exclusive rights" as the custodian of regional security. Although India's other neighbours also disagree sometimes with India's controversial tendencies about being hegemon, they are

⁷² C. Raja Mohan, “Revealed: India's Master Plan for the Indian Ocean”, *The National Interest*, 16 June 2016. <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/revealed-indias-masterplan-the-indian-ocean13198>

⁷³ Berlin, Donald L, ‘India in the Indian Ocean’, *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 59, No.2, 2014. 60

⁷⁴ “China and India At Sea: A Contest of Status and Legitimacy in The Indian Ocean,” *Australia India Institute*, September 2015.

generally more aware of the extent to which they enhance security ties with extra regional powers.

Although India's Monroe ideology aims at South Asia and its immediate sea routes, it has also had a significant impact on strategic thinking of India about the whole Indian Ocean region. A well-known Indian novelist, KM Panikkar has given a similar example to the Monroe Doctrine 1940s, about the Indian maritime thinking towards Indian Ocean.⁷⁵ Similar thinking was followed by the India's proposal of Indian Ocean Zone of peace in the 1970s, which excluded the extra- regional naval powers from the Indian Ocean. Holmes, Winner and Yoshihara argued that the declaration of the Indian Monroe ideology by Nehru, set the base for the first policy in the Indian Ocean and continued to form an important part of strategic lexicon of India. It reflects the believe of majority in India, who believe that if the Indian Ocean is not really an Ocean of India, then it should be in an ideal world.⁷⁶ But Indian strategic thinking about its important role in the Indian Ocean is not only defense oriented, as it reflects India's desire to be considered a major regional actor and even a global power.

Moreover, the successors of Nehru carried his legacy, and also strengthened the hegemonic thinking in India. For instance, though apparently the security and foreign policy response of Indira Gandhi was related to the new regional security arrangements in South Asia but the core of her doctrine remained the Indian aim to establish hegemony in the region as the Indian attitude was uncompromising, and tough against its large and small neighbors.⁷⁷ In addition to this, Davin Hagerty is of the view that the emphasize of Indira doctrine is that South Asian states should ask help from India if they need, and if they ask others for help, it will be considered as Anti-India.⁷⁸

The Indian maritime objectives are closely linked with the Indian ambitions to become a dominant power in the region and a major power in the world. The influential and prominent strategists like K. Subrahmanyam are of the view that dominance over Indian

⁷⁵ Raja Mohan, *Samudra Manthan: Sino-Indian rivalry in the Indo-Pacific* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment, 2012), 204.

⁷⁶ James R. Holmes, Andrew C. Winner and Toshi Yoshihara, *Indian Naval Strategy in the Twenty-First Century* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 45.

⁷⁷ Stephen Philip Cohen, *India: Emerging Power* (Washington D.C: Brookings Institution Press, 2002), 137.

⁷⁸ Devin T. Hagerty, "India's Regional Security Doctrine," *Asian Survey* 31:4 (April 1991): 352.

Ocean is an important part of ‘manifest destiny’ of India.⁷⁹ India has been struggling to promote itself as a security provider in the region. If it becomes a dominant force in Indian Ocean, it will be a first littoral state which will achieve this status in historical view.

The Indian ambitions about controlling the Indian Ocean strategically have now been taken as the Indian claims to be known as ‘net security provider’ in Indian Ocean region. The former PM Minister Manmohan Singh officially pronounced this role in 2013 and is more, now, followed by senior officials.⁸⁰

Last but not the least, in today’s India, the ruling party BJP has not only consolidated power in India by mainstreaming Hindutva Ideology in Indian politics but also inducted religious fanaticism in Indian hegemonic designs in the region. The BJP is following the agenda of AKHAND BHARAT or United India that includes whole region of South Asia. The domestic and foreign policies of Indian government led by BJP are the practical manifestation of their ultimate goal.⁸¹

Moreover, India is building regional groups to demonstrate and strengthen its leaderships, group like the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) and Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). Although India has done this in recent times by partnerships with other key regional actors such as South Africa, Australia, Indonesia, and Africa. There are elements of exception in India’s views on these organizations. For example, India has resisted inviting Pakistan to join the IORA or allowing China to become a full member of IONS.⁸²

3.1.2 Divergence of Chinese and Indian Interests in Indian Ocean

Due to differences between the two emerging powers of Asia, India and China, the Indian Ocean has become a theatre of great importance to the world powers. India's goal of emerging as a major power in the Indian Ocean is not particularly in line with China's key objectives, which are to secure its maritime communications (SLOC) in the Middle

⁷⁹ James R. Holmes, *Indian Naval Strategy* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), 55.

⁸⁰ Vinay Kumar, “India well positioned to become a net provider of security: Manmohan Singh,” *The Hindu*, 23 May 2013.

⁸¹ Strobe Talbott, *Engaging India: Diplomacy, and the Bomb* (Washington D.C: Brookings Institute Press, 2004), 98.

⁸² “IORA’s Doors Still Shut For Pakistan: Despite Repeated Requests, Islamic Nation Unlikely To Get Membership,” *Sawarajya*, April 10, 2019. <https://swarajyamag.com/insta/ioras-doors-still-shut-for-pakistan-despite-repeated-requests-islamic-nation-unlikely-to-get-membership>

East. The perception of the Indian Ocean is that it could be a focal point of security confusion, and for regional states, if India and China take steps with the aim to improve their own security, there could be major security threats. The US, which is an external great power in the Indian Ocean and probably is going to remain so for decades to come, will gradually impact the balance between the two growing powers. The tussle of this trio (India, US, Chins) will control the strategic stability of Indian Ocean in future.

Maritime rivalry between India and China has been a key component behind the rising key aspirations of India in Indian Ocean Region.⁸³ While the immediate naval objectives of India includes the control over India's selected maritime zone and to counter Pakistan, whereas the prospect of China's naval expansion in the Indian Ocean has become a long-term concern. In recent decades, India has expanded its security associations with several states in the Indian Ocean, including the Mozambique Channel in the south-western Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf in the northwest, and the Malacca Strait in the Upper Central.⁸⁴

Advances in political mind-set, financial vision, and effective decision making have reinforced India's statement towards the desire to rule the Indian Ocean. In addition, globalization has boosted its maritime development.⁸⁵ Furthermore the increasing indo-US ties followed by the 9/11 has given India the strength to move forward, to establish more friendly, security, political, and economic association with the US in the Indian Ocean and also in the region of Asia Pacific. India also wants to strengthen its regional / global position due to its large population, economic growth, and strategic force modernization. Therefore, the characteristics of being the largest democratic government, secularism, modernization and peaceful co-existence have been highlighted as its reasons. However, the above given Indian attributes have been widely challenged by various variables. Such as population explosions, religious, ethnic, and federal strife, massive humanitarian issues, and the rise of China on one side and Pakistan on the other. With a policy of great power and a specific goal of achieving great financial growth, India

⁸³ David Michel and Russell Sticklor, "Indian Ocean Rising: Maritime security and policy Changes", *Stimson Centre*, 17 June 2016, 12-16. https://www.stimson.org/sites/default/files/file_attachments/IOR_chapter1_1.pdf

⁸⁴ Arun Prakash, *From the Crow's Nest: A Compendium of Writings on Maritime and Other Issues* (New Delhi: Lancer, 2007), 99.

⁸⁵ A. Z. Hilali, "Cold War Politics of Superpowers in South Asia," *The Dialogue*, 19 June 2016. http://www.qurtuba.edu.pk/thedialogue/The%20Dialogue/1_2/4_Mr.%20Hilali.pdf

considers the Indian Ocean to be extraordinarily fundamental and necessary to its national interests.⁸⁶ Out of all these variables, the focus would be mainly on the rise of China. Maritime Silk Road Initiative is creating challenges for Indian hegemonic ambitions in the Indian Ocean Region.

3.2 Challenges from MSRI

With the Maritime Silk Road Initiative, Chinese influence and presence in the Indian Ocean region is growing. The US has dominated the region for 70 years, and now Chinese influence is increasing in the IOR. India wants to dominate the region, but with the Maritime Silk Road Initiative, it now faces the challenges of a growing Chinese presence in the region. India sees the MSRI as a string of pearl strategy.

3.2.1 The Strings of Pearls Strategy

Defence Secretary Donald H. Rumsfeld requested a defence contractor, Booz Allen Hamilton, to write a report on future of energy in Asia. The report title was “Energy Futures in Asia” and it concluded that China is strengthening its strategic ties with states from South China Sea to Middle East along the sea lanes. This policy will help China not only to protect its interests to secure energy access but also broader security interests in the region.⁸⁷ Furthermore, the report highlighted that military facilities are being built by China in South China Sea and it also added that China’s submarines also often remain present in Indian Ocean. It was Hamilton who coined the term “String of Pearls” for the first time.⁸⁸

According to this term, China's maritime development strategy responded to plans of building military bases and diplomatic ties to support China's territorial claims. Therefore, investing in international ports will hide the real aspirations of Beijing. In fact, each port would represent a pearl and would be helpful in covering such infrastructures, like munitions stockpiles, which could be useful in the military activities. A “pearl” was defined as “a sphere of influence seeded, secured and maintained through the use of economic, geopolitical, diplomatic or military means”, in an article which was published

⁸⁶ Khalid Chandio “Major Powers' Interests in Indian Ocean: Challenges and Options for Pakistan” *Islamabad Policy Research Institute*, Autumn 2014, 3-4.: <http://www.ipripak.org/major-powers-interests-in-indian-ocean-challenges-and-options-for-pakistan/#sthash.g81TVhok.dpbs>

⁸⁷ “China Builds Up Strategic Sea Lanes”, *The Washington Times*, January 17, 2015.

⁸⁸ Martin E. Conrad, “Does China Need A “String Of Pearls”? California: *Naval Postgraduate School*, Monterey, September 2012.

by IDSA.

In 1990, a similar view has already been shared in a report, when China was accused of trying to secure its oil supplies by militarizing the key chokepoints. Before raising the threat of piracy and maritime terrorism, Pentagon reported that "China is not only making efforts to control the sea routes by preparing its blue-water navy, but it is also developing submarine and missile capabilities to prevent any potential threats to its energy supply, including the US Navy, and especially the conflict with Taiwan."

Strategies based on the String of Pearls model can be beneficial for the international projects of China. The "shield" of commercial investment prevents the negative reaction from the international community and assures a low international profile. Elsewhere, the trade partnerships, helps to open bases in foreign territories by establishing political ties with other countries. And most important thing is that the cost level would be convenient. Building trade links is actually less expensive than paying for a military base network, in contrast to the latter, first one will make an economic return on investment.

At the same time, it will have difficulty in using commercial ports for security purposes, as the required facilities for armed forces and military operations are not available at commercial ports. In addition, in case of any military emergency, the Chinese navy will be divided into different terminals and away from the Chinese coast.⁸⁹

Cambodia:

There is a very good relationship between Beijing and Phnom Penh. Both countries signed an agreement in 2003, according to that agreement the China had to provide training and equipment to the partner. China provides economic investment and military assistance to Cambodia, and both the governments always show loyalty with each even in case of international pressure. In 2009, Cambodia deported 22 Uyghur Chinese, which suspended the US investment, but received 1.2 billion dollars from the PRC. Beijing and Phnom Penh signed a government agreement in 2015, on cooperation in the development and management of the Sihanoukville port, strengthening its position against the US

⁸⁹ "Not an Idea We Have to Shun: Chinese Overseas Basing Requirements in the 21st Century," Washington: *NDU Press*, October 2014.
<https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratperspective/china/ChinaPerspectives-7.pdf>

presence in the country.⁹⁰

Thailand:

Thailand will also, allegedly, be part of the String of pearls. Beijing was ready to fund 20 billion dollars to dig a canal on the Kra Peninsula to reduce its dependence on the Malacca Strait. The United States Strongly opposed this; the plan is still under consideration, especially due to the volatile situation of domestic politics.

Myanmar:

China and Myanmar has always been close to each other, even the international community often calls Burma as a PRC satellite.⁹¹ China has its presence in Myanmar at the port of Kyaukpyu, which is important to transport gas to China. China may also have set up a base on Coco Island, which would be very helpful to monitor Indian naval activities and will decrease Chinese dependency on Strait of Malacca. Report says that China is building naval bases in Myanmar, and setting up electronic intelligence gathering facilities. In addition, billions of dollars will be used to support a real military alliance to help the armed forces.⁹²

Bangladesh:

According to the Financial Times, China has been investing in the second largest city of Bangladesh and countries' main port "Chittagong" from last many years.⁹³ The PRC is trying to strengthen trade relations with the Bengali government. Few international sources says that China will set up a naval base, especially in the port city near India, and therefore could represent a strategic area in case of any dispute. In addition, China will help build deep maritime facilities on Sonadia Island off the coast of Bangladesh in the Chittagong district.

Sri Lanka:

China is the second trade partner of Sri Lanka and first one for infrastructure investments. China is investing in the projects based in Colombo and Hambantota ports, as they both

⁹⁰ Dahles H., "Why China charms Cambodia," *East Asia Forum*, 24 August 2013.

<https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/08/24/why-china-charms-cambodia/>

⁹¹ "China Builds Up Strategic Sea Lanes," *The Washington Times*, January 17, 2015,

⁹² Ashay Abbhi, "String of Pearls: India and the Geopolitics of Chinese Foreign Policy," *E-international relations*, 26 July 2015. <https://www.e-ir.info/2015/07/26/string-of-pearls-india-and-the-geopolitics-of-chinese-foreign-policy/>

⁹³ Kiran Stacey, "Chinese investment in Bangladesh rings India alarm bells," *Financial Times*, August 06, 2018. <https://www.ft.com/content/1ab2ebe6-85c3-11e8-96dd-fa565ec55929>

are strategically very important for China.

In 2014, Chinese submarines were spotted at the port of Colombo, where the PRC was taking part in the realization of the artificial island. However, relations between the two countries have changed since the election of Sri Lanka, when President Matherapala Sirisena defeated Mahinda Rajapaksa in election. The present government is willing to maintain equal relations with both India and China, despite Chinese interests in the region, which face possible cancellation of island-related projects.⁹⁴

Maldives:

China has shown strong interest in the archipelago since 2009, and Chinese president Xi Jinping, in 2014, made an official visit to Maldives, he discussed the construction of Friendship Bridge, which was going to link the Male Island to the Hulhulé. The first official meeting between Maldives and China was also held in 2014, for the purpose of Economic and Trade Cooperation, and Maldives strongly believed in the rising Chinese tourism to the islands, during the coming years.

Maldives have received 3.2 million USD for betterment of security and 97 million USD as grant assistance from China. The archipelago has a potential access point to area of Gulf of Aden and Pakistan, which is very helpful for China. There are little chances that Maldives would be completely on the side of China because other important countries like the US and India have also significant influence in Maldives due to their role for the development of economy of Maldives.

Seychelles:

Military ships of China have been visiting the archipelago at various times since 2010, and following an official visit by Defense Minister General Liang Guangli in 2011, an agreement about the formation of first military base in Indian Ocean on Mahe Island, was signed between China and Seychelles. China also shown its willingness to take part in mission of piracy elimination in order to protect the trade routes, and the Chinese community on the island is expanding. According to some reports, China wants to build a strong base for military ships and aircraft in the region.

Pakistan:

⁹⁴ “Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative”, CSIS, 18 June 2015. <https://amti.csis.org/ports-power-indian-ocean/>

China gained the right to cooperate in the Gwadar port, a strategic hub, in 2015 due to its proximity to the Indian waters and Persian Gulf. China, from this point is likely to keep an eye on India's activities, and China will be able to avoid taking oil and gas supplies from the Strait of Hormuz through the port. In fact, the PRC is part of a pipeline that will deliver gas to China from Iran via Pakistan.

Though, the Chinese government has always projected the Maritime Silk Road Initiative as a road to peace in the region, the opinion from international community remained very strong about the various realities. The "string of pearls" expression is often used in reality and is a real strategy developed and announced by Chinese foreign policy. Numerous analysts have used it to refer to any Chinese navy's operations outside the Asia-Pacific region, any blue water navy progress, and any safe transfer of oil policy and other supplies of goods from the Africa and Middle East. According to a Pentagon report, "that China is developing its missile capabilities and submarines along with building blue water navy to get control over strategic sea routes, with another aim to avoid the external threats, including the navy of US, and conflict with Taiwan specially". Globally, the String of Pearl policy has provoked strong reactions, especially in countries that have historically been Chinese rivals.

The Indian government is deeply concerned about the strategically growing presence in all areas of the Asian coast. The United States is working to intensify dialogue with its Indian counterparts. They are both working for a new partnership in both economic and security sectors. In August 2016, both countries signed a military logistics sharing agreement, and the US declared its intention to share information on technology of carrier aircraft. Both countries have also been taking part in trilateral talks with Japan on strategic, and economic areas. All three countries agreed to co-operate on maritime security, freedom of navigation and joint naval exercises.⁹⁵

India, on the other hand, is deeply concerned about the growing presence of China on the land and sea routes. The escalation of China's ties, especially in East Asia, threatens India's role in the region and its position on the world stage. The economic ties of China with the Indian partners and its historical enemies (Pakistan), are being considered a

⁹⁵ Torbati Y., Wilkes T., "India, US reach preliminary agreement on sharing military logistics amid China challenge," *Reuters*, 13 April 2016.

threat to the Indian policy. China offered India to take part in its maritime Silk Road, but the response was negative from Modi's government. The former Indian PM, Manmohan Singh (2004 to 2014), always showed a better attitude towards the Belt and Road initiative as compared to Modi, and was interested and involved to cooperate when the project was announced in 2013. Modi show never any interest in this project, he visited three countries in IOR in 2015, and expressed his desire to oppose the Chinese plan with a parallel and disproportionate move, and tried to maintain an impressive character by developing or strengthen the partnership network with the littoral states of IOR.⁹⁶

3.2.2 Economic Challenges from MSRI

Different variations in the degree of domestic economic integration, regional trade, and supply quality and trade infrastructure are characteristics of the different economic geographies along the Maritime Silk Road. This defines the thinking of Indian and Chinese businesses to engage with the projects of MSRI. China and India, as the largest economies in South and East Asia, are not part of a consistent economic geography of the region. The greater Global trade of East Asia and existence in the GVC and its improved logistics are opposite to the situation in South Asia. Although commerce ties of India and South Asia with China and East Asia have increased with time, but India suffers from the characteristics of low economic integration and poor regional supply.

From a traditional Indian business point of view, MSRI offers exciting new maritime infrastructure prospects which include India and the Bay of Bengal. The similar Indian businesses are well aware of their limitations in playing an important role in MSRI, unless the current maritime infrastructure abilities of India are matched by China and other major economies in Europe, East Asia, and Southeast Asia. A major hurdle in this regard is the low capacity of large Indian ports, and poor domestic infrastructure, which has impacted their capabilities on the exploitation of MSRIs compared to their counterparts from China, Europe and Southeast Asia.

Due to these strategic locations between East Asia and Europe, Indian firms will be well aware of the opportunities created by the corridor. To become an effective curriculum in the supply chains between Europe and China, they will need to trade energetically in both

⁹⁶ Liu Z., "India's political goals hinder cooperation with China on Belt & Road," *Global Times*, 3 July 2016. <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/992047.shtml>

East and West. Their ability to do so will have a significant impact on facilitating trade at Indian ports linked to MSRI. The trade facilitation agreement (TFA) was approved in 2017, it was adopted in 2013, at the Bali Ministerial of the WTO, and will probably take few years to come to fruition. Till then, the operational activities of Indian firms, through MSRI will face hurdles due to lacking competent abilities of India's maritime infrastructure. As a result, they will be less competitive in MSRI than firms in other countries that have capable infrastructure.

China and many other Asian economies have been more successful than India in improving internal infrastructure. In India, the present government's main focus is on the improvement of "doing business" quality and the initial improvement are already visible. However, the Indian policy makers know the MRSI economic opportunities, as well as the disability of Indian companies on the new shipping lane. The Indian resistance towards this initiative project can be explained with this awareness. To enhance the port capacity is a strategic priority for India's government. This can be seen through the ambitious "Sagarmala" initiative of port-led economic growth, which has targeted capacity expansion and capacity building in major ports and the need to connect them to railways and roads without interruption.

The shortages of capacity and operational inefficiencies are major problems of government-owned ports of India; therefore, they are losing their shares in market as compared to private ports. But, this also a fact that due to high domestic capital costs and political hurdles to obtain land for infrastructure development have increased mistrust in private investors. Revamping the major ports and investments for new ports are important to improve the overall performance of port facilities.

India will also be involved in large-scale investment projects for MSRI in China, provided that China is investing heavily in South Asian maritime infrastructure (Colombo and Gawader). New advancements, such as agreement between Mandra, India's largest private port in the west of Gujarat, and China's Guangzhou port, are good for the future. But India sees the Chinese investment in Indian ports as a threat for its security concerns. Actually, the Indian doubts and concerns about the MSRI, whether it's geostrategic design to secure china's interest or an economic corridor, is actively involved in the India's reserved attitude to this project.

3.2.3 Political Challenges

India has political influence over its neighbour littoral states like Sri-Lanka, Maldives, Nepal and Bangladesh. And now the MSRI project is expanding the Chinese economic and political influence in the IOR, and this trade and investment ties of China with Indian Ocean Regional states is increasing the dependency of those countries on China and China is getting a strong position in IOR, which is creating difficulties for the Indian ambitions in the IOR. This project of MSRI might enable China to become the ‘undisputed power in Asia’.

The political influence arising from the infrastructure investment of China is clearly noted in the article of the Chinese Association for International Economic Cooperation (CAFIEC) for the Chinese Ministry of Commerce. In which the strategic value of infrastructure investment in the countries of the South Pacific has been identified, the countries of the Pacific are small, but in the United Nations they vote and together with other countries often raise a collective voice, which is a major force in global politics and has a significant impact on international affairs.

Cambodia and Greece are most political influential countries, which are Chinese allies in ASEAN and the European Union. In Cambodia’s case, in 2016, the statement by ASEAN foreign ministers had to include ruling of Permanent Court of Arbitration on South China Sea but Cambodia blocked this mention in statement. In 2017, during a meeting of UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, Greece blocked EU statement on situation of human rights in China and cited that it is unconstructive criticism of China.⁹⁷

The political decisions like these can be consider as the result of Chinese pressure, in anticipation of China's outrage and protests, or can be an attempt to get in better relations with China. However, the reports of Chinese diplomatic activity have surfaced ahead of statements from the ASEAN Summit and the European Union Council. Recently, the media reports have told Chinese officials to enter Papua New Guinea's foreign minister's office, allegedly to discuss the final draft of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation

⁹⁷ Ben Blanchard, “ASEAN deadlocked on South China Sea, Cambodia blocks statement,” *Reuters*, July 25, 2016. [https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-ruling-asean/asean-deadlocked-on-south-china-sea-cambodia-blocks-statement-idUSKCN1050F6#:~:text=ASEAN%20deadlocked%20on%20South%20China%20Sea%2C%20Cambodia%20blocks%20statement,-Manuel%20Mogato%2C%20Michael&text=VIENTIANE%20\(Reuters\)%20%2D%20Southeast%20Asian,in%20their%20statement%2C%20diplomats%20said.](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-ruling-asean/asean-deadlocked-on-south-china-sea-cambodia-blocks-statement-idUSKCN1050F6#:~:text=ASEAN%20deadlocked%20on%20South%20China%20Sea%2C%20Cambodia%20blocks%20statement,-Manuel%20Mogato%2C%20Michael&text=VIENTIANE%20(Reuters)%20%2D%20Southeast%20Asian,in%20their%20statement%2C%20diplomats%20said.)

(APEC) draft. After refusing a meeting to discuss the issue, Papua New Guinea and the Chinese Foreign Ministry have denied the incident.

Recent events in Panama and El Salvador cases points out the economic diplomacy use, to drive diplomatic allies away from Taiwan and further implementation of the one-China policy internationally. In these cases, the trend has been to sever diplomatic relations with Taiwan in return for diplomatic relations with China, followed by major investments and trade deals. Media reports on Panama and El Salvador have pointed to investment deals through Beijing following the change in diplomatic alliances, indicating that Beijing has resorted to chequebook diplomacy to trap the rest diplomatic allies of Taiwan. In fact, it seems that the port project have played a significant role in the case of El Salvador. Reuters quoted the Taiwanese foreign minister as saying that "Taiwan" would not be involved in "money competition" and did not provide El Salvador's funds for port development after believing the project inappropriate."⁹⁸

These are just some of the events that have taken place outside the IOR. They demonstrated that how effectively China can influence the countries of the IOR, where its investments are much higher than in these countries. India will have substantial political influence over regional states, in order to gain control of the Indian Ocean. But, with China's growing presence in the region, India is already losing out.

To evaluate the fact that how China is posing challenges for the political influence of India in IOR with the help of MSRI, two issues are being raised, the strategic ties between Maldives, Sri Lanka and China. The Maldives and Sri Lanka are the key important countries in the region and hold strategic geographical position in the IOR.

3.2.3.1 The Maritime Silk Road and China–Maldives Relations

The Vice President of China, Xi Jinping had visited only Dhaka (Bangladesh) in the region of South Asia, after becoming president, Xi visited Maldives during his a visit to South Asia in September 2014.⁹⁹ Before this the Maldives President had visited China for three times and it was a very first visit to Maldives from the Chinese president. It was clearly demonstrating that this region is getting important for the foreign policy of China.

⁹⁸ Nelson Renteria, "El Salvador says economy prompted diplomatic switch to China from Taiwan," *Reuters*, August 21, 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-el-salvador-china-taiwan/el-salvador-says-economy-prompted-diplomatic-switch-to-china-from-taiwan-idUSKCN1L62AA>

⁹⁹ Yang Yi, "Chinese President's Visit to Enhance Ties with Maldives, Sri Lanka: Foreign Ministry," *Xinhua Net*, September 9, 2014.

Chinese President came to South Asia with a business delegation comprises of 100-member, which points out that the main focus of the visit was the economic advancements. In a joint press release issued on September 15, 2014, China sought the approval of the Maldives to upgrade China's relations with SAARC.

During the visit of Chinese President (2014), China promoted the idea of growing ties between MSRI and China and the Maldives, indicating the strategic nature of such a relationship. A joint statement was issued during Xi jingping's visit to South Asia suggested that Maldives would be "ready to take an active part" in MSRI. Earlier, China had raised the issue of MSRI with the Maldives in various places and the latter had already showed interest to take part in the initiative.

According to China's Ambassador to Maldives Wang Fukang, in the Chinese context, the idea of an MSRI with the Maldives was first mooted during a meeting between officials of both countries in January 2014. Regarding the Maldives, in June 2014, Ali Hameed, member of the National Executive Committee of the Maldives Republican Party and a previous Deputy Foreign Minister, proposed the trade, tourism and culture can become the benefits from MSRI initiative for Maldives. After two months, President Yameen responded very positively towards the MSRI initiative.¹⁰⁰

The joint statement from the presidents of both countries in September 2014, stated that same towards the maritime cooperation issues. More specifically, it states, "We are agreed and committed to talk about the building the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road jointly and to increase cooperation in the areas of maritime economy, marine research, marine conservation, environmental protection, and disaster prevention." We are also eager to start some important projects which can give quick results.¹⁰¹

A Joint Committee between both countries on Trade and Economic Cooperation in 2014, signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for promoting the project of MSRI. And during the next meeting September 2015, both countries signed a MoU to start

¹⁰⁰ Yang Yi, "China, Maldives Eye Stronger Partnership with All-Round Cooperation," *Xinhua Net*, September 16, 2014

¹⁰¹ Abdullah Jameel, "China-Maldives Sign MOU for Free Trade Pact," *Haveeru*, September 9, 2015, <http://www.haveeru.com.mv/business/62166>

discussions on a free-trade area in Indian Ocean.¹⁰²

The Xi-Yameen talks in September 2014 resulted into signing of various projects and MOUs between China and Maldives. As per agreement, government of China would provide concessional loans for Housing Project and China Machinery Engineering Corporation will implement the project. Chinese aid will be provided to construct a 15.1km long road named as Laamu Atoll Link-Road and this project will be completed by Jiangsu Provincial Transportation Engineering Group Co. Ltd. A contract was signed to expand and upgrade the Ibrahim Nasir International Airport between China and Maldives. Moreover, several MOUs were signed which included construction of Male-Hulhule Bridge Project,¹⁰³ the Greater Male power station project, infrastructure development project related to tourism and to enhance marine cooperation.¹⁰⁴

The Maldives president visited China before a month of the Xi's visit to the Maldives, President Abdullah Yameen attended the second Summer Youth Olympic Games in Nanjing. Two meetings in a month from both leaders demonstrated clearly the depth of their strategic ties. During his visit, China granted an aid of 16 million dollars to the Maldives president. Which was expected to cover the cost of the projects including the Male- Hulhule Bridge.

This major Chinese aid package supported the construction of a building to house the Maldives' Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a National Museum, and the 1,000 Housing Units project. This huge aid package from China supported the construction of a building for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 1000 housing units' project and a National Museum. In addition to these efforts, China is also involved actively in different energy renewable projects, development of telecommunications networks and construction of Hotels.

Even before Yameen left for China, the Vice President of Maldives, Muhammad Jamil Ahmed was present in China in June. He also met with Vice Premier Wang Yang and attended the China-South Asia Expo and China-South Asia Business Forum in Kunming. The purpose of Ahmed's visit to China was to seek China's support for projects of

¹⁰² Wang Fukang, "China and Maldives: Partners in Building Twenty-First-Century Maritime Silk Road Together," *Miadhu*, January 15, 2015, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zwjg_665342/zwb_d_665378/t1228935.shtml

¹⁰³ "ChinaMaldives Friendship to Bridge Opportunity Gaps," <http://www.the-businessreport.com/article/china-maldives-friendship-to-bridgeopportunity-gaps>

¹⁰⁴ Zhao Minghao, "China Understands South Asia's Needs Better," *The Global Times*, September 16, 2014.

housing development, airport development initiatives and integrated development projects, including President Yameen's plan to establish a special orbital zone on the island, build ports and banking facilities, and diversified tourism.¹⁰⁵ Furthermore, in June 2015, to enhance the ties with China, the leaders from Maldives attended the China–South Asia Expo, and China’s Import and Export Fair at Kunming.¹⁰⁶ These investments will not only maintain a political influence over Maldives but also will help in accomplishing many political and economic goals of the both countries. The multidimensional Chinese interests in Maldives include both security and economic factors.

As for strategic concerns, which are impacting China’s posture strongly to the Maldives, China is agreed to its own dependence on IOR for its energy supplies. In this way, it is worth noting that Xinhua reported on August 15, 2014 that the Maldives' connection to MSRI is over the Ihavandhippolhu Cohesive Development Project, or Havana, which is located north of the Maldives.¹⁰⁷ This project design seeks to take advantage of Atoll's strategic location, which is located on a seven-degree channel through which important East-West shipping routes connect Southeast Asia and China with the Middle East and Europe.¹⁰⁸ The seven-degree channel transports goods worth of 18 trillion dollars annually.¹⁰⁹ China is also actively pursuing the MSRI, as part of its grand strategy to oppose the US restoration strategy in the Pacific, to expand its influence in the region and to strike a balance against India.

3.2.3.2 The Maritime Silk Road and China-Sri Lanka Relations

Chinese increasing influence, due to its MSRI projects in Sri Lanka, is affecting the Indian political influence over Sri Lanka’s government. Although, the size of territory and the population of Sri Lanka is very small as compared to these Asian giants, China and India, but it has important geostrategic location in Indian Ocean. The country is placed near the south-eastern coast of India and the Palk Strait separates Sri Lanka from

¹⁰⁵ “Maldives Gov’t Targets Special Economic Zones, Eyes Trade with China,” *Xinhua*, June 5, 2014.

¹⁰⁶ “Li Yuanchao to Attend 3rd China-South Asia Expo and 23rd China Kunming Import and Export Fair,” June 9, 2015, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/wsrc_665395/t1271758.shtml

¹⁰⁷ Teddy Ng, “Maldives Supports China’s Plan for ‘Maritime Silk Road,’” *South China Morning Post*, September 16, 2014.

¹⁰⁸ Yang Feiyue, “Maldives Reaches Out for Chinese Investment,” *China Daily*, October 21, 2015. http://africa.chinadaily.com.cn/travel/2015-10/21/content_22239499.htm

¹⁰⁹ Bi Mingxin, “Maldives Supports China’s Plan for ‘Maritime Silk Road,’” *Xinhua*, September 13, 2014

India.¹¹⁰ India and Sri Lanka has cultural similarities and historical ties with each other. A Tamil ethnicity is present on both sides of these countries and they have close link with each other. The groups of Tamils have significant influence in Sri Lanka.¹¹¹ Chinese increasing engagements with the Sri Lankan government have raised concerns among the Indian policy makers as these engagements can have detrimental impact of Indian influence in Sri Lanka.¹¹²

Unlike India, China has not been so close to Sri Lanka in recent history and geographically at larger distance from Sri Lanka. But, this island was an important node for ancient Silk Road which was connecting China to Mediterranean Sea for trade. The expeditionary force of Ming Dynasty under command of admiral Zheng landed on this island but it was that peaceful and ideal as China projects.¹¹³ China of today is very different from the ancient China as it seeking our resources supplies and foreign markets. In the recent years, Chinese interests in Sri Lanka have been increased dramatically because of Sri Lanka's geographical importance in the Indian Ocean Region for sea lines of communication. It is considered as an important node in Maritime Silk Road Initiative in Indian Ocean.¹¹⁴

The Island state, Sri Lanka, has undeniable importance as transshipment hub in Indian Ocean. Many shipping companies use Sri Lanka port to load and unload cargoes. The Colombo port witnessed 12.3% growth in 2014 and made it busiest port in South Asia. It is handling more than 4 million TEUs.¹¹⁵

The Sri Lankan government accepted Chinese connectivity plan as it was also important for economic growth and development of Sri Lanka. But in one way or the other, it has also become a ground for strategic and hegemonic rivalry between India and China in the

¹¹⁰ P.K. Balachandran, "Sri Lanka Scuttles Plan for Bridge Over Palk Strait," *New Indian Express*, December 19, 2015.

¹¹¹ Jayatileka, *The GeoStrategic Matrix and Existential Dimension of Sri Lanka's Conflict, PostWar Crisis and External Relations, in India and South Asia: Exploring Regional Perceptions* (New Delhi: Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 2015)

¹¹² David Brewster, *India's Ocean: The Story of India's Bid for Regional Leadership* (London: Routledge, 2014)

¹¹³ Tansen Sen, "Silk Road Diplomacy—Twists, Turns and Distorted History," *YaleGlobal Online*, September 23, 2014.

<http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/silk-road-diplomacy-%E2%80%93-twists-turns-and-distorted-history>

¹¹⁴ Tom Miller, *China's Asian Dream: Empire Building along the New Silk Road* (London: Zed Books, 2017)

¹¹⁵ "Sri Lanka: A Key Node on the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road," *Belt and Road*, August 06, 2015. <https://beltandroad.hktedc.com/en/insights/sri-lanka-key-node-21st-century-maritime-silk-road-0>

IOR. Sri Lanka will continue to get benefits from China which cannot be provided by India.¹¹⁶ But, still it is possible that India will also be offering commercial opportunities and also can use Tamils to exert pressure on Sri Lanka.¹¹⁷

Sri Lanka would be a key node for the MSRI. Chinese companies will construct the Port City Complex which is a 1.4 billion USD project.¹¹⁸ This complex will include hotels, shopping malls, a marina, one race track, a golf course, apartments and also commercial offices. Soon, this project became an important topic for debate inside Sri Lanka as well as in the regional media houses as it was largest ever project which has to be completed by foreign investment. Moreover, concessions in favour of China and unique tendering procedures added questions to the debate. To say the least, Sri Lanka has been considered as country where Indian traditional influence faced major setbacks due to Chinese MSRI.

3.2.4 Security Challenges

India has long dreamed of providing net security in the Indian Ocean Region. He has formed alliances with regional actors as well as non-regional actors to increase its power in the IOR. The MSRI has been creating hurdles against its dream of providing net security to the regional states. Even so, India faces security challenges in the IOR for energy security, and economic interests of its own. It is essential to know that 90% of India's oil imports and 90% of its trade volume comes through the Indian Ocean sea routes. So far, the major challenges for India are the development of ports under MSRI in the IOR, as these ports are considered a security challenge for Indian ambitions.

The growing presence of the Chinese navy in the Indian Ocean will affect the security order in the IOR significantly. It is noteworthy that Chinese ships stationed in the Gulf of Aden have regularly requested access to Salalah in Oman, Aden in Yemen, and other ports for replenishment / operational turn round (OTR). There are indications that these mentioned countries are inward for facilitating the PLAN. Of course, Pakistan is a preferred destination where in the recent past several Chinese ships had demanded to go

¹¹⁶ Charu Sudan Kasturi, "India Wrinkle on China Silk: Jaishankar Speaks Out on Absence of Consultations," *The Telegraph*, July 21, 2015.

¹¹⁷ Rani D. Mullen and Cody Poplin, "The New Great Game," *Foreign Affairs*, September 29, 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2015-09-29/new-great-game>

¹¹⁸ James Crabtree, "Sri Lanka Sees Benefits of China's 'Maritime Silk Road Plan,'" *Financial Times*, September 17, 2014.

to Karachi, and on this occasion a submarine was also reported to have entered there.¹¹⁹

3.2.5 Prospects for Dual-Use Port Facilities and Overseas PLA-N Support Hubs

The Chinese naval presence has been increasing in Indian Ocean for over few years especially since China has unleashed its Maritime Silk Road Initiative. Though, China is calling its facilities at Djibouti as military supporting facilities, but the Chinese interests in building military bases have been shown in construction of military base in Djibouti. China has also given justification for need of this facility. It says the base will offer better logistics and also help Chinese peacekeeping forces which are present near Gulf of Aden and provide humanitarian assistance for the UN's tasks in the region. Since 2008, China has been constantly taking part in anti-piracy missions in Gulf of Aden but the deployment of Chinese troops as part of UN peacekeeping tasks in South Sudan in 2015 was the first time in Chinese history as a part of UN peacekeeping missions.¹²⁰

In addition to it, it is considered that the construction of this military supporting facility is an initial step to enhance security cooperation between China and African Union. If anti-piracy missions continue in Gulf of Aden, then Djibouti will be playing a key role for refuelling. In addition, Maritime Reconnaissance aircraft can be deployed to assist efforts for anti-piracy and it depends upon the availability of airstrip in Djibouti. In short, not just for operations but also due to poor security situation in the region, there will be significant number of Chinese troops in Djibouti. Resultantly, it will help China in achieving its strategic objectives in the region.

A defence white paper was published by the State Council of China in 2015. This paper shows Chinese plans to become a naval power in the region. According to the paper, Chinese force will play a key role for the protection of overseas interests of China. Overseas Chinese assets, sea lines of communication and natural resources especially supply chain of energy are considered as major Chinese interests abroad. Chinese maritime assertiveness in South China Sea, in recent years, has raised concerns and doubts about the peaceful use of Chinese facility overseas.¹²¹

¹¹⁹ Abhijit Singh, "China's Maritime Silk Route: Implications for India," *ISDA*, July 16, 2014.

¹²⁰ "China deploys troops to U.N. force to protect South Sudan oilfields – WSJ," *Reuters*, September 10, 2014. <https://www.reuters.com/article/china-sudan/china-deploys-troops-to-u-n-force-to-protect-south-sudan-oilfields-wsj-idUSL3N0RB03Z20140910>

¹²¹ Alexander Sullivan, "The Big Story Behind China's New Military Strategy," *The Diplomat*, June 05, 2015. <https://thediplomat.com/2015/06/the-big-story-behind-chinas-new-military-strategy/>

This changing Chinese policy in South China Sea brought the Chinese military facility in Djibouti into limelight. While, Chinese reject the allegations and say that the purpose of for military facility is only to provide humanitarian assistance, help the UN's peacekeeping missions in Africa and to do emergency evacuations in the region. As there also other foreign bases present in Djibouti, it also supports China's justification for its own base there because all claim the same purpose. Djibouti is located at an important strategic location and makes it easier for China to access Bab el Mandeb which one of the important strategic chokepoints of the world. The recent ammunition drills and live-fire tank exercises by China are pointing that the ultimate objectives of China are different.

For a major power which has global interests, it is logical to understand the establishment of overseas logistic facilities for PLA. China is constructing terminals and ports in the Indian Ocean Region under its MSRI and also playing an important role to mitigate non-traditional security issues at international level. Xinhuanet News is a Chinese News outlet which published a report in 2015, in the report it was noted that the ports in the Indian Ocean Region can also provide refuelling services to Chinese Navy for steady operations against piracy. In addition, the foreign media outlets have already been raising questions on the military expansion of China in the region. A report by US National Defence University has concluded that the option for dual-use of port is more likely to be used by China especially during the conflict if it happens.

The Chinese companies which are working on MSRI projects have connection with the PLA. COSCO is among major Chinese companies and it is also major company which is providing logistical support to Chinese assets in the Indian Ocean Region. The Colombo port of Sri Lanka is an important example for dual-use of the port by Chinese Navy. A Chinese submarine was docked at Colombo port in 2014 and it resulted into a mega debate about Chinese intentions behind the Maritime Silk Road Initiative. Later on, another request was made to dock submarine in 2017 but it was rejected by the government of Sri Lanka.

In addition, the US Defence Intelligence Agency published report on China Military Power. The report says that the access of commercial ports in the Indian Ocean Region will fulfil the future needs for the Chinese naval assets in the region¹²². It further added

¹²² "China Military Power," *Defence Intelligence Agency*, November 2018.

that these ports are likely to be used by the PLAN for resupply, maintenance, logistic operations and replenishment. On the other hand, Chinese government has strongly rejected the report.

But, this is not mere a propaganda which is being repeated in the US based researches and reports. It is a policy objective of China and it is also shown in the writing of Deputy Chief of the Joint Staff Admiral Sun Jianguo. He states that overseas base construction is part of military strategic policy of China and it will contribute to improve the status of China at international level. About the use of Chinese forces abroad, he says that Chinese forces and the Chinese facilities overseas are for the help to mitigate shared challenges such as major pandemics, piracy issues and disasters. But, there is also possibility that the use of overseas facilities will not be restricted to such activities only.

Moreover, China is not only investing for infrastructure projects in developing or underdeveloped countries in the region but it is also increasing military-to-military cooperation in these countries. For example, in Tanzania, China has constructed facility for the training of armed forces of Tanzania. This training centre is named as Comprehensive Training Centre for Tanzanian People's Defence Force and officially it was opened in February 2018 and China funded this project.¹²³ This centre, as per media reports, would train the armed forces to counter present and future threats to Tanzania. This is not something new in context of defence cooperation between China and Tanzania, they have doing naval exercises and China has already been supplying military equipment to Tanzania.

Chinese engagements in Djibouti and Tanzania do not necessarily reflect that every port which is being constructed by Chinese companies will be surely used for military purposes too. But, these developments indicate that the Chinese increasing defence cooperation with the countries in the Indian Ocean Region can be important for the protection of Chinese interests in the region. Because, it is logical that a country will never help another country to build its armed forces if the former expects to be threatened or its interests to be threatened by the latter. Therefore, it is understandable that China

https://www.dia.mil/Portals/27/Documents/News/Military%20Power%20Publications/China_Military_Power_FINAL_5MB_20190103.pdf

¹²³ "Chinese-built military training centre opens in Tanzania," *Defence Web*, Feb 13, 2018.

<https://www.defencweb.co.za/land/land-land/chinese-built-military-training-centre-opens-in-tanzania/>

considers that countries like Tanzania will remain friendly.

Conclusion

India has been facing various challenges in the region in its way to become hegemon in the Indian Ocean Region. Maritime Silk Road Initiative in Indian Ocean has resulted in new emerging challenges for Indian hegemonic ambitions in the IOR. Under this MSRI, China is increasing its presence and influence in the region. To counter these challenges, India is actively participating in several initiatives which are meant to stop increasing Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean Region.

CHAPTER IV

INDIAN PERCEPTIONS VIS-À-VIS CHINA'S MSRI

Generally, Indian academicians and strategists are of the view that the Belt and Road Initiative is aimed to achieve Chinese strategic and political interests and the economic development is of secondary importance in this plan. From the Indian perspective, it is said that Indian contributions for development of ancient Silk Road has not been highlighted as much while advertising the revival of Silk Road. In addition to it, India has been shown on the maps, related to the BRI, released from Chinese sources but at the same time it was rarely seen that when there was acknowledgment of Indian importance for the Belt and Road Initiative.¹²⁴

While formulating of policies vis-à-vis Indian Ocean, Indian policy makers have been considering China as major concern in the way of India's ambitions in the Indian Ocean Region. There are several events and cooperation which have raised concerns in power corridors of India towards China; they include China supports Pakistan in economic, political and military domains, China defeated India in 1962 war, skirmishes at borders such as in Doklam during summer 2017 and recently there was standoff between India and China in Ladakh. Moreover, Indian and China are members of BRICS and SCO; both the states are following same policies towards industrialized nations while negotiating the conditions for objectives towards Climate Change and also related to International trade. In addition to it, Like China, India has also been aspiring to be become a great power. It has been striving to get permanent seat of UNSC, though, has not succeeded so far. Chinese MSRI in Indian Ocean has resulted in emerging challenges for Indian ambitions in the IOR. To counter these challenges, India has been taking part in various initiatives and also leading some of them to counter China in the Indian Ocean Region.

In this chapter, India's new strategies, participation in different initiatives and role of India in recipient countries of MSRI in the region to counter China in IOR have been discussed and analysed briefly.

4.1 India's New Strategies

Indian governments have been pursuing various policies for over few decades, these

¹²⁴ Jacob, Jabin. T., "China's Belt and Road Initiative: Perspectives from India", *China & World Economy*, Vol. 25, No. 5, September-October 2017, 78-100.

policies include Link West, Indo-Pacific, Focus Africa Plan, Act East and Neighbourhood First. These policies aim to increase Indian influence in the Indian Ocean Region. Broadly speaking, this will help India to have more strong connections with Africa, Australia and Asia.¹²⁵

Indian administration under Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been attempting to reformulate Indian policy towards Indian Ocean which will help India to further increase its influence in the IOR. It is also doing so under the garb of sustainable development, peace and security for the region. India has adopted new approaches to further strengthen its ties with friendly countries in the Indian Ocean Region. India is actively playing its role in the region since last two decades, but Mr. Modi has significantly strengthened India in maritime diplomacy. Modi's foreign visits are record high and these visits have increased urge and fervour in maritime diplomacy. One of the major successes of this new approach is that the government of India signed a historic agreement with the US, named as LEMOA, in 2016. As per this agreement, India and the US can use bases of each other.¹²⁶

India has been, strategically, become an important ally of the US in the Indian Ocean Region because both states have common concerns which are related to increasing influence and presence of China in the region. In addition to it, the strategic alignment between the US and India is also due other common objectives as well, these objectives include the overall security of the IOR, proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and terrorism. To achieve these share interests, the US and India have signed several defence agreements under which they have enhance cooperation in many sectors. In these agreements, Defense Framework Agreement holds significant importance in defence cooperation between India and the US. This agreement was signed in 1995 for 10 years and it was extended in 2005 again.

The importance of this agreement can be understood in this way that the general framework, is defined by this agreement, for all kinds of defence cooperation between the US and India. Under this agreement, they are arranging joint exercises, doing multilateral

¹²⁵ Guy Burton, "India's 'Look West' Policy in the Middle East under Modi," *Middle East Institute*, August 06, 2019.

¹²⁶ Ankit Panda, "India, US Sign Logistics Exchange Agreement: What You Need to Know," *The Diplomat*, August 30, 2016. <https://thediplomat.com/2016/08/india-us-sign-logistics-exchange-agreement-what-you-need-to-know/>

operations and working to improve and upgrade missile defense. The US also agreed to transfer technology to India which will help India in the region to counter China. The US and India have also agreed to develop reciprocated weapon systems which increases inter-operability between armies of these countries. In addition to it, the US and India have been doing joint naval, air force and military exercises, and also patrolling across the region jointly. These exercises and joint patrols are also supported by the defence agreement and these activities are aimed to train the forces to counter any hostile action by China in the region.

Earlier, Look East Policy was launched to strengthen relations with countries of South East Asia, but Mr. Modi renamed this policy as “Act East”. The previous government was not that much successful but Modi did not only change the name but also significantly brought actual changes in his policies. Mr. Modi undertook several visits to the countries of South East Asia. He tried to convince ASEAN countries that India wants to help the other countries to maintain security and peace in the region. He has been convincing that India has the capability to resist Chinese increasing in the region. It was also shown when Indian naval forces held joint exercises with the countries i.e Indonesia and Singapore. India did not stop here; it also signed two MOUs with Vietnam in 2015.¹²⁷ These MOUs were aimed to increase defence cooperation and also cooperation in coast guard. It was result of these MOUs that, in 2016, two Indian naval warships were present at Cam Ranh Bay for a visit. This Act East Policy proved very successful for Indian navy as it resulted in uplift of Indian naval forces and helped them to expand their influence in South East Asia.¹²⁸

There is no doubt that this Act East policy increased Indian maritime engagements in South East Asia and it helped India to further improve its relations with states in South East Asia. This, ultimately, has given more confidence to Indians that India has the ability to defend their interests in maritime domain. India has also redefined its policy of maritime security, the addition of submarines and an aircraft carrier named as INS

¹²⁷ “India and Vietnam Sign a Joint Vision Statement on Defence Cooperation,” *IDR*, 26 May, 2015. <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/news/india-and-vietnam-sign-a-joint-vision-statement-on-defence-cooperation/>

¹²⁸ Franz-Stefan Gady, “South China Sea Deployment: Indian Stealth Warships Visit Vietnam,” *The Diplomat*, June 01, 2016. <https://thediplomat.com/2016/06/south-china-sea-deployment-indian-stealth-warships-visit-vietnam/#:~:text=As%20part%20of%20the%20deployment,in%20a%20statement%20this%20Monday.>

Vikramaditya in naval assets of India has been done under this policy. The purpose of this policy is to ensure security for Indian interests in the region. The government of India announced this new policy in 2015 under leadership of Mr. Modi. The document released was titled as “Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy”.¹²⁹

Economically, the ASEAN member states hold significant importance for India. The ASEAN member countries represent more than 625 million people of the world and the trade between these countries amount to 35 per cent. The secret of success of ASEAN nations lies in their work on two things. They are focusing on manufacturing and the production is largely service oriented. India has strong ties with Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia and Thailand. These strengthening ties have significantly helped India to increase its footprint in the South East Asia and achieve its foreign policy objectives towards the Indian Ocean Region. The policy objectives did not only include economic interests of India, it has also strategic objectives to counterbalance China in the South East Asia.

The Bay of Bengal is another area which has significant importance for India. An organization, named as the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), is working in this area. India is has strong influence over members of this organization as it holds significant and important role in BIMSTEC.¹³⁰ The objectives of this organization includes, to overcome challenges emerging from global warming, countering terrorism, to enhance trade activities and cooperation in energy sector and also to strengthen relations to counter role of other powers in the region.

Furthermore, PM Modi has shown a strong urge and fervour towards the maritime policy of India’s neighbourhood. As China is increasing maritime presence, India, in response, is also consolidating its presence in the Indian Ocean. To achieve this goal, Mr. Modi, in March 2015, went to Mauritius and Seychelles and tried to convince the leaders of these island states that they should work with India to enhance security cooperation in maritime

¹²⁹ “Ensuring Secure Seas: Maritime Security Strategy,” *Naval Strategic Publication 1.2*, October 2015. https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian_Maritime_Security_Strategy_Document_25Jan16.pdf

¹³⁰ Sudha Ramachandran, “India’s BIMSTEC Gambit,” *The Diplomat*, May 31, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/05/indias-bimstec-gambit/>

sector to ensure security of the region.¹³¹ Modi's visit to Seychelles resulted into five agreements. According to these agreements, Indian government will assist Seychelles in infrastructure development, hydrographical surveys and renewable energy sector.

Moreover, the government of Seychelles gave land on lease to India for infrastructure development.¹³² The presence of India in Seychelles will help India to keep check on Chinese ships in area which is in surrounding of this Island state. In addition to it, a Radar System for Coastal Surveillance has been inaugurated by Mr. Modi which will increase maritime capabilities of Indian naval assets in the region. India wants to install the same system in Maldives, Sri Lanka and Mauritius. Mr. Modi, while emphasizing on increased cooperation between India and other littoral states of Indian Ocean, said, "We also hope that Seychelles will soon be a full partner in the maritime security co-operation between India, Maldives and Sri Lanka."¹³³

Seychelles, Mauritius and Kenya are important states in East African region for economic integration and dependence. Due to Indian diaspora in these regions, historically, the traders of these regions had good relations with India. When it comes to overall growth of fishery and tourism industries in Indian Ocean, Madagascar and Seychelles are important actors. Given the importance of these countries, India has been taking decisions to establish good ties with East African countries. For example, the objective of the Indian policy, "Focus Africa Plan", is to establish and further enhance cooperation with countries of Africa. Indian descendants also play an important role in these countries for strengthening ties of East African countries with India. For example, 68% of Mauritius people are Indian descendants and Mauritius has invested in India 73 billion USD as FDI between 2000 and 2013. In addition to it, Indian diaspora in Mauritius has also attracted Indian companies to invest in Mauritius which resulted in significant economic growth of

¹³¹ "Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrives in Seychelles on 3-nation tour of the region," *India Today*, March 11, 2015.

<https://www.indiatoday.in/india/north/story/pm-modi-seychelles-visit-victoria-james-alix-michel-ajit-doval-s-jashankar-243755-2015-03-11>

¹³² Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, "India and Seychelles agree on naval base at Assumption Island," *The Economic Times*, July 13, 2018.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-and-seychelles-agree-on-naval-base-at-assumption-island/articleshow/64731817.cms?from=mdr>

¹³³ "Modi's Media Statement in Seychelles," *The Hindu*, March 11, 2015.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/resources/modis-media-statement-during-his-visit-to-seychelles/article6982061.ece>

Mauritius.

For the states of Indian Ocean, Kenya holds strategic importance as it provides an important gateway to reach African continent. India enjoys good relations with Kenya and cooperates with Kenya to counter piracy in the region. The national economy of Kenya is mainly dependent on tourism and production of tea. As a part of Indian policy towards African nations, the status of MFN (most favoured nation) has been granted to Kenya by India. The trade relations between India and Kenya have witnessed significant improvement in recent times. The volume of trade, between Kenya and India, was 2.3 billion USD in 2016-17. Given the economic and strategic importance of Kenya, this country is not only important for IORA but also has vital value for the Indian interests towards African countries. Adding more to it, there are over 50 states which are member of African Union (AU) and these countries are key actors for cooperation in African continent. India has been collaborating with various countries of East Africa in defence, as it aims to counter Chinese influence in the region.

4.2 Participation in Different Initiatives

4.2.1 Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

For India, the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) holds central importance as it is a platform which has the potential to significantly assist Indian plans for security cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region.¹³⁴ The association has played an important role for India to further increase its cooperation with littoral states of Indian Ocean and also to secure naval presence in the region. This is the reason which has been pushing Indian government for its continuous support to expand IORA.

To counter the emerging strategic challenges from MSRI to India, the Indian Ocean Rim Association is among India's main tools which India can use. The organization is not new but the role of this organization has increased significantly in recent years. The increasing role of such organization is largely due to China-India hegemonic rivalry in the Indian Ocean Region. The organization was established in 1997 and aimed to promote regional integration and cooperation between states in Indian Ocean. The idea of this organization is not solely but partially attributed to Nelson Mandela, South African former President. India has been playing leading role in this association. There are 22 members of

¹³⁴ The Indian Rim Association, <https://www.iora.int/en>

organization. The most populated member state is India which is country of 1.3 billion people and it is the country which has been constantly promoting IORA as it sees it a useful instrument to enhance Indian presence and influence in the Indian Ocean Region. At first stage, tourism industry was the focus of the association and later on other areas like fishery industry and security cooperation also added. Now, the IORA is focusing on regional maritime development and also security of the region. Indian Ocean is playing vital role to connect the member states of IORA.

Although, the culture, religion, traditions, languages and art in the states of IORA are distinct and diverse, but still they are connected diplomatically, politically and economically with each other. These states represent 2.7 billion people of the world. Though, the states are located at distant locations in the Indian Ocean Region, all are not connected through land, Indian Ocean connects them. The Indian Ocean Rim Association has been constantly and actively promoting regional cooperation and economic integration. As India is the largest economy in the member states and also holds largest population, therefore, it has strongest influence over the states which are member of this regional organization. Thus, makes it an important organization for India to increase its influence and gain its strategic and security objectives in the Indian Ocean region. So far, the IORA has been unable to formulate a coherent and feasible strategy. This failure has been considered as one of the major failures of IORA.

Though, IORA has potential to integrate Australia, Asia and Africa to resist Chinese influence in the region.¹³⁵ But till now, this has only given benefits to India to deepen its relations with members of the organization. This is also an understandable that India cannot use these deepening relations to stop increasing influence of China as India has no comparison with China in terms of offering FDI and advancement in technology.

4.2.2 The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue

The states, in Indo-Pacific Region, which perceive China as threat to their interests in the region, are taking steps to counter China. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue is also an attempt in this regard. The representatives of India, Australia, Japan and the US met in

¹³⁵ Hema Ramakrishnan, "Why India must be leading player in Indian Ocean," *The Economic Times*, Sept 01, 2015.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/why-india-must-be-the-leading-player-in-the-indian-ocean-region/articleshow/48757789.cms>

Manila in November 2017 and decided to re-establish the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (or QUAD).¹³⁶ A tsunami hit Indonesia in 2004 which resulted in thousands of deaths in no time, and the states of QUAD provided humanitarian assistance. This QUAD could not get much attention later, even Australian government left this core group in 2007.

There are two main factors which have compelled the countries to re-establish QUAD; the foreign policies of countries have witnessed significant change in the region and changing geopolitics of the Indian Ocean region. In 2012, Mr. Shinzo Abe returned to power, who has been a proponent for free and open Indo-Pacific.¹³⁷ In addition to it, rebalance to Asia policy was announced by Obama and later on China has been declared as a challenger and strategic competitor to the US by Mr. Trump.¹³⁸ Manmohan Singh has been showing mixed feelings towards closer relations between the US and India but PM Narendra Modi has been passionate to further deepen ties with the US. Chinese increasing influence has played an important role in strengthening ties between the US and India. China has been blamed for interfering in domestic politics of Australia and China's role at international level pressurize Australian government to take steps. Therefore, to counter Chinese influence it has re-joined the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue.¹³⁹

Mainly, there are two key factors which have dragged QUAD members to establish close ties with each other; claims of China in East and South China Seas and Chinese maritime strategy towards Indo-Pacific Region. Although, international arbitration judgment invalidated Chinese claims over islands in South China Sea but the China is now using other ways to increase its influence in the region. Chinese government has launched

¹³⁶ Ankit Panad, "US, Japan, India, and Australia Hold Working-Level Quadrilateral Meeting on Regional Cooperation," *The Diplomat*, November 13, 2017.

<https://thediplomat.com/2017/11/us-japan-india-and-australia-hold-working-level-quadrilateral-meeting-on-regional-cooperation/>

¹³⁷ Andrew Shearer And Jesse Barker Gale, "The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and The Maritime Silk Road Initiative," *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, April 4, 2018.

<https://amti.csis.org/quadrilateral-security-dialogue-maritime-silk-road/>

¹³⁸ Prashanth Parameswaran, "US Rebalance to Asia Will Sustain: Obama," *The Diplomat*, August 02, 2016.

<https://thediplomat.com/2016/08/us-rebalance-to-asia-will-sustain-obama/>

¹³⁹ Lidia Kelly, "Australian politician says media revelations of Chinese spying disturbing," *Reuters*, November 23, 2019.

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-australia-espionage/australian-politician-says-media-revelations-of-chinese-spying-disturbing-idUSKBN1XX04M>

Maritime Silk Road Initiative and President Xi is leading this great initiative. As per Chinese perspective, this initiative will revive the old maritime Silk Road. In addition to it, in May 2015, the Chinese Military Strategy White Paper was released by China. According to this paper, there will gradual shift in China's defence policy. The Chinese Navy would not restrict itself to protection of offshore waters. The Chinese interests in open seas will also be protected by Chinese Naval forces. It has already been seen that China started patrolling in Indian Ocean.¹⁴⁰ China is heavily investing in the littoral states of Indian Ocean especially which are strategically important in the region. This is helping China to have strong influence and presence in the Indian Ocean Region. In this context, the revival of QUA group can be understood and analysed.

Indian Interests to Join QUAD

Ostensibly, the Indian government has two major concerns regarding the Maritime Silk Road Initiative in the Indian Ocean Region. India has, more than seventy years old, rivalry with Pakistan and Pakistan's CPEC is leading and flagship project of the BRI and holds significant importance for MSRI. India considers these developments as plans to encircle it. China is building Pakistani port named as Gwadar which is located in Balochistan, province of Pakistan. Gwadar port is near strategically important choke point Strait of Hormuz. It is proposed that Gwadar port will be linking overland routes with maritime routes of the Belt and Road Initiative. In addition to it, it will provide access to CARs to Indian Ocean. There is another issue which India has raised in this regard. It says that CPEC is passing through disputed territory of Jammu and Kashmir. Moreover, Gwadar port is meant to be used for commercial and trade activities in the region but Indian thinks that it can be used as military base for Chinese Naval Forces as China has already increased its naval presence in the Indian Ocean Region. Secondly, India has strategic interests and also hegemonic ambitions vis-à-vis the IOR but the Chinese MSRI is resulting in various new challenges for Indian aspirations. In larger context, with the increasing presence of China under MSRI, India's hegemonic ambitions are also under severe threat in Indian Ocean; therefore it has joined QUAD to contain China's strategic manoeuvring in the Indo-Pacific Region.

¹⁴⁰ Alexander Sullivan and Andrew S. Erickson, "The Big Story Behind China's New Military Strategy," *The Diplomat*, June 05, 2015. <https://thediplomat.com/2015/06/the-big-story-behind-chinas-new-military-strategy/>

QAUD 2.0

Chinese security exercises in eastern water bodies of Indian Ocean raised concerns among the nations which have larger political and strategic interests in the region. These exercises played an important role in initiating formal discussions for revival of QUAD. While giving interview to The Nikkei, Japanese FM Taro Kano talked about revival of QUAD, on 25th October 2017. On 27th October, two days after this interview, acting assistant secretary for South and Central Asian Affairs, Alice Wells said, “[I] think it’s hard to see a meeting of diplomats from four countries as a plan to contain China. I think it’s a natural expression and convergence of interests between democratic countries in the Indo-Pacific region and it’s a natural stepping stone from the very productive trilateral conversations, exercises, and cooperation that we’ve seen between India, Japan, and the United States.”¹⁴¹

On 12th November 2017, seven main themes were discussed in the first meeting of QUAD after its revival. These included terrorism, North Korean threat, non-proliferation, maritime security, maritime commons, increasing connectivity and regard for internationally recognized laws. But, official readouts were giving a different view of that meeting. Respect for the international law, maritime security or FONs were excluded in Indian statement; connectivity was not mentioned in the Japanese official statement and the word “quadrilateral” was only used by the US and Australia. Though, these divergences are small, but it shows the lack of clarity and vision of QUAD members. To make this group successful, the member states will have to work on broader interests of these states in the region.¹⁴²

Despite the challenges which are mentioned above, there is convergence of interests between members of this group as all want to counter Chinese increasing influence and maintain balance of power in the region. All these states have high-end capabilities and common values. In addition, they are located strategically. These all factors provide a strong base for these countries to enhance economic and security cooperation the region. Till now, QUAD has not been able to bring significant practical results, mere dialogues

¹⁴¹ “The Quadrilateral Dialogue and The Maritime Silk Road Initiative,” *CSIS*, April 02, 2018. https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/180717_GaleShearer_QuadSecurityDialogue.pdf?csNA9Z0fB6r4L9KKdBnc.a0LzXdNT7b

¹⁴² “The Quadrilateral Dialogue,” *CSIS*, April 02, 2018.

and agenda settings will not help them to achieve their objectives of deterring China in Indo-Pacific Region.

4.3 India's Chabahar Project

Chabahar port of Iran is being developed by India. Indian carried wheat and ship reached Chabahar port on October 29, 2017 and then it wheat was sent Afghanistan through overland roads of Iran.¹⁴³ On this important event, PM Modi said, "I congratulate Afghanistan and Iran on Indian wheat shipment being flagged off from Kandla to Afghanistan through Chabahar." The Chabahar project has significant importance for India; it is first step for India in its way to claim itself as major infrastructure developer in the region and it is also important for doing trade with Afghanistan. Though, this project has significant value for Indian ambitions in the Indian Ocean Region but it is facing various challenges as India is trying to balance its relations with Iran and the US. In addition to it, it is also trying to avoid challenges which are emerging from cooperation between China and Pakistan.

The representatives from seventeen countries were present when President Hassan Rouhani of Iran inaugurated the first phase of this project in December 2017. The presence of Pon Radhakrishnan, Indian minister for shipping, at inaugural ceremony of Chabahar project shows the interests of India in this project. This project witnessed another major development when in February 2018 President Rouhani visits New Delhi and signs agreement of lease with India. Under this agreement, the rights for operations of Shahid-Baheshti port of Chabahar were given to India Ports Global Private Limited (IPGL) for period of eighteen months.¹⁴⁴

The Indian firms have been hired by Iranian government for development of Chabahar port, since then India has become a leading actor in Chabahar project. India wanted to enhance trans-regional connectivity; therefore, a trilateral agreement for transit was signed between India, Iran and Afghanistan in May 2016. According to this agreement, Iran would be providing passage to export Indian goods to Afghanistan via Iran. In the same month, an agreement between India and Iran was signed for the development of two

¹⁴³ Harsh Pant, "India-Iran Cooperation At Chabahar Port: Choppy Waters," *AMTI CSIS*, April 04, 2018. <https://amti.csis.org/india-iran-cooperation-chabahar/>

¹⁴⁴ Manoj Kumar, "India, Iran sign pact during Rouhani visit on leasing port," *Reuters*, February 17, 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-india-iran/india-iran-sign-pact-during-rouhani-visit-on-leasing-port-idUSKCN1G10GS>

terminals at Chabahar port. Chabahar project is offering several benefits to India but as far economic benefits are concerned it will connect India to Central Asia and also enhance the trade between Afghanistan and India.

India's Strategic Thinking behind Chabahar Project

The distance between Gwadar port and Chabahar port is just 72km and Indians are investing for development of this port. This is indicating that China and India are in a strategic competition with each other in the region.¹⁴⁵ India considers this project as an important strategic asset that can help India to achieve its two major objectives which are to increase Indian influence in the region and also restrict cooperation between China and Pakistan in the western Indian Ocean. The distance between Afghan border and Chabahar port is 95km and Mumbai port is 768 nautical miles away from this port. There was an agreement signed between Russia, India and Iran in 2000 which can be viewed to understand geostrategic significance of Chabahar port. It was known as International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC), the corridor was aimed to connect India, Europe and Central Asia.

Iran, India and Afghanistan have been closely working for development of infrastructure and enhancement of connectivity between these countries. India has been playing central role in leading this campaign for integration of economies of these countries and investing in various projects in Iran as well as in Afghanistan. Zaranj-Delaram is a highway in Afghanistan which has already been completed by India. It seeks to smooth the trade of India with Kabul and also to CARs. India is also trying to build its own networks in the region as China is striving to revive the old Maritime Silk Road and also overland ancient Silk Road across the region.

Everything is not Ok for India in Iran as it is a taxing task for India to develop Chabahar port and complete other infrastructure projects. One of the reasons is India does not enjoy leverage to influence foreign policies of Iran. In addition to it, the economic sanctions on Iran by the US and security situation in Afghanistan are also detrimental for the success of the project. The case of Farzad-B gas field is an important example for showing India's limited influence in Iran. India wanted to have greater role in energy sector but

¹⁴⁵ Harsh Pant, "India-Iran Cooperation At Chabahar Port," *AMTI CSIS*, April 04, 2018.

the offers have been, repeatedly, rejected by Iran.¹⁴⁶ Despite the fact that, India stands at second in buying oil from Iran but Iran signed deal with Russia for development of a gas field. Though, India claims to have strategic partnership with Iran but it still has not developed strong relations as it has with GCC countries and Israel.

There has been mistrust between Iran and Pakistan on several occasions but the government of Iran has clearly given surety to Pakistan that Chabahar port would not be used by India or any state against Pakistan. It is not in interests of Iran, if Pakistan overtly shifts to the bloc led by Saudi Arabia, moreover, Iran has also shown flexibility towards CPEC and even offered Pakistan to participate in Chabahar project. In the same year, 2016, when a trilateral deal was signed between India, Afghanistan and Iran, ambassador of Iran to Pakistan Mehdi Honerdoost said that the deal is not finalized yet and also it is not restricted to three states.¹⁴⁷ Mr. Mehdi said, “The deal is not finished. We are waiting for new members. Pakistan, our brotherly neighbours and China, a great partner of the Iranians and a good friend of Pakistan, are both welcome.”¹⁴⁸ In addition to it, he added, “In fact, the Chinese firm Shanghai Zhenhua Heavy Industries Co. Ltd. (ZPMC) won the auction for supplying cranes to India Ports Global Private Limited (IPGPL), which is developing the Chabahar project.”

Furthermore, it is no easy for Iran to exclude China from Chabahar project. In recent several years, western countries reduced bilateral trade significantly due to economic sanctions and this vacuum has been filled by China to some extent. China is now Iran’s largest investor among the foreign investors. Adding more it, several infrastructure projects such as Tehran metro has been completed by China. Tehran-Mashhad railway is receiving 1.5 billion USD from China through EXIM bank for its electrification. In 2016, both Iran and China agreed to increase trade which would amount to 600 billion USD.¹⁴⁹ China is more experienced, in taking up and completing projects overseas, than India and

¹⁴⁶ “Iran won’t wait for India on Farzad-B gas project, *Tehran Time*, August 20, 2019.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/439430/Iran-won-t-wait-for-India-on-Farzad-B-gas-project>

¹⁴⁷ “Iran, Afghanistan, India sign three-way transit accord,” *The Express Tribune*, May 24, 2016.

<https://tribune.com.pk/story/1109014/iran-afghanistan-india-sign-three-way-transit-accord-2>

¹⁴⁸ Mateen Haider, “Chabahar not a rival to Gwadar, Iranian envoy tells Pakistan,” *DAWN*, May 27, 2016.

<https://www.dawn.com/news/1261006>

¹⁴⁹ Golnar Motevalli, “China, Iran Agree to Expand Trade to \$600 Billion in a Decade,” *Bloomberg*, January 23, 2016.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-01-23/china-iran-agree-to-expand-trade-to-600-billion-in-a-decade>

this factor also cannot be ignored. Indian government has been delaying the transfer of promised investment and soft loans; this has raised concerns among the policy makers in Tehran.

The President Trump has been very aggressive vis-à-vis Iran and this aggressiveness has further aggravated the relations between India and Iran. Moreover, the weak security condition and political instability in Afghanistan surely has significant impact on India's trilateral venture and it will hamper efficient utilization of Chabahar port by India to gain maximum benefits in terms of trade and connections. Though, the project is facing serious challenges but still Iranian and Indian leadership is committed to complete this project.

4.4 India's Response to China's Strategic Vulnerabilities in the Indian Ocean

The increasing presence of China in the Indian Ocean Region due to its Maritime Silk Road Initiative and Indian policies in the IOR provide suitable environment to intensify the strategic competition between China and India in the region. India is at weak position when it comes to economic strength, nuclear power or conventional military power in the region of Himalayas but in the Indian Ocean Region China is at risk while India has advantage in the region. India holds central position in Indian Ocean as northern Indian Ocean is dominated by India. The geographical position of India in Indian Ocean gives it strategic and military advantages especially it has easy and direct access to its own resources and bases. On the other side, China is at risky position in Indian Ocean as naval forces of China will be deployed through narrow choke point and also there will be a major challenge to deal with unsure logistical support.¹⁵⁰

In present situation of security environment of the Indian Ocean Region, it is hard to conclude that China would be able to defend its SLOCs from Strait of Hormuz to Strait of Malacca. Chinese are of the view that it is of no use if China can defend only a particular portion of SLOCs. They say that Chinese naval forces must have capability to defend whole length of SLOCs against all rival forces, whether they are non-state actors or state actors. The US and Britain had huge navies during WWII, yet they faced severe problems to defend even shorter SLOCs from German submarines in North Atlantic Ocean.

¹⁵⁰ James Holmes, "Inside, Outside: India's 'Exterior Lines' in the South China Sea", *Strategic Analysis*, Vol.36, No.3, (2012)', pp.358-363.

Therefore, the protection of SLOCs in the Indian Ocean would not be an easy task.

Although, mantra of encirclement of India is famous and widely spread in community of academicians and researchers, but there is also a perspective that India is facing no realistic security threats from China with its increasing naval presence in the Indian Ocean Region. They say that India is in stronger position in Indian Ocean against China. The former Indian Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Mehta said, “The weak area for China today is Indian Ocean. We sit in Indian Ocean and that is a concern for China and they are not happy as it is not so easy for them to come inside.”

Delhi understands the strategic value if a threat is created to stop/intercept Chinese SLOCs in the times of emergency. This understanding can be seen in India’s strategies to increase its naval presence in the Indian Ocean Region especially at entrance/exit points of Indian Ocean. John Garver, an American academician, is of the view that India may try to divert China from land to maritime domain because in Indian Ocean it is at stronger position. It may hamper Chinese trade in India Ocean.¹⁵¹ Therefore, it is suggested India should never overlook this option where it is at advantageous position.¹⁵² In this context, this strategic vulnerability can be an important factor for maintenance of balance of power, between India and China, in the Indian Ocean Region. Indian desire to use this strategic vulnerability as a bargaining chip has resulted into complex strategic relations between India and China in the region.¹⁵³

There are several grounds on which doubts emerge about India’s ability to stop Chinese SLOCs: which ship will be interdicted and which will be not, strategic consequences of this blockade, if China responds in the same way. Apart from these questions there are serious concerns in India and China too for the security of their SLOCs in the Indian Ocean Region, therefore, they have justified their strategy to increase naval expenditures. Moreover, both China and India are increasing their naval presence in the Indian Ocean Region to secure their own SLOCs in the region.

¹⁵¹ David Brewster, “India-China conflict: A move from the Himalayas to the high seas?,” *Lowy Institute*, July 10, 2020. <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpretor/india-china-conflict-move-himalayas-high-seas>

¹⁵² “Nonalignment 2.0: A Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in the Twenty First Century,” Report by *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, March 12, 2012. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2012/03/12/nonalignment-2.0-foreign-and-strategic-policy-for-india-in-twenty-first-century-event-3587>

¹⁵³ John W. Garver, *Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), 277.

As China has been developing maritime infrastructure in the Indian Ocean Region under its MSRI, it has strategic and security implications for India in the region. To meet the challenges emerging from Chinese MSRI, India is also increasing maritime cooperation with countries, in the Indian Ocean Region, which have similar concerns regarding increased Chinese presence in the region. These countries include Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia. Theoretically, hegemonic war theory explains this phenomenon which is occurring in the region between China and India. The detailed theoretical explanation is included in the introductory part of the thesis.

To enhance maritime security cooperation, India has been organizing various exercises and joint patrolling in the region. These include joint exercises of India and Singapore named as SIMBEX, PASSEX include India and the US, India and Japan holds JIMEX, IBSAMAR is series of exercises in which India, South Africa and Brazil participated, SLINEX-II include India and Sri Lanka as participants, Coordinated Patrols by India and Indonesia (CORPRAT), India, Japan and the US participate in MALABAR exercises and MILAN exercises include navies from India, Thailand, Tanzania, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Seychelles, Philippines, Myanmar, Maldives, New Zealand, Mauritius, Kenya, Cambodia, Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia and Bangladesh.

4.4 India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands

Indian islands, named as Andaman and Nicobar, hold strategic importance as they are near Strait of Malacca.¹⁵⁴ Nicobar and Andaman Islands are 450km away from Malay Peninsula and at distance of 42km from Coco islands of Myanmar. The distance between Indian main coast and these islands is 1200km; therefore, these are known to be military facilities of India which are at greatest distance from its main land. MK-54 lightweight torpedoes, depth charges, Harpoon Block-2 Missiles and rockets have been installed by Indian forces on these islands, which have capability to counter Chinese actions in the Indian Ocean Region and have the capacity to protect SLOCs in the region.¹⁵⁵ In January 2009, India signed deal of 2.1 billion USD and under this deal it bought eight Poseidon-

¹⁵⁴ Sunil Raman, "The Strategic Importance of Andaman and Nicobar Islands," *The Diplomat*, January 03, 2016.

<https://thediplomat.com/2016/01/the-strategic-importance-of-andaman-and-nicobar-islands/>

¹⁵⁵ Ijaz Khalid et al, "India's response to Chinese String of Pearls Doctrine," *Global Political Review*, Vol II, N0.I, 2017, 27-35.

<https://www.gprjournal.com/jadmin/Author/31rvIolA2LALJouq9hkR/5NWVvHck0c.pdf>

81 naval aircrafts. These aircrafts are used to collect intelligence and have the ability to detect threats. They are also capable of targeting submarines and warships of enemies. In addition to it, the Andaman and Nicobar islands have developed India at a position that it can control access to Malacca Strait and also can have close eye to Chinese activities in the region.¹⁵⁶

4.5 India's Role in Strategically Important Recipient Countries of MSRI in the IOR

India is pursuing balancing policy to contain Chinese influence in the IOR and Myanmar holds significant role in pursuit of Indian policy against China. In addition, the geographical location of Myanmar makes it important for security interests of India in Andaman and Nicobar Islands and mainly in the Bay of Bengal. Myanmar is a buffer zone between southern provinces of China and north-eastern India and it can also be seen as land bridge which connects South Asia with Southeast Asia. China has significantly increased its influence in Myanmar due to its investments in various projects in Myanmar under Maritime Silk Road Initiative. If Myanmar becomes fully dependent on China, then it will be a big blow to Indian interests in Myanmar. Moreover, apart from Chinese factor, Myanmar is rich in natural resources and also has important geographical position, it makes it important for India to achieve its foreign policy objectives especially to achieve hegemony in the Indian Ocean Region.

India launched its Look East policy in 1990s and under this policy it established ties with Myanmar. But, under Modi administration, India's relations with Myanmar have strengthened rapidly. Under India's Act East Policy, the government of India has been investing in infrastructure projects in Myanmar. The Kaladan Multi Model Transit Transport project is being developed by India in Myanmar. There are two major components of this project; road component is between Paletwa and Zorinpui along Myanmar-India border and the length of this road is 109km and other component is waterways which is on Kaladan River between Sittwe and Paletwa and the length of this component is 158km.¹⁵⁷ Inland Water Transport (IWT) terminals, backup facilities, navigational channel and Sittwe Port represent the waterways component of the project.

¹⁵⁶ Dutta, A. "Andaman and Nicobar islands in light of Chinese actions in South China Sea", *Center for Land Warfare Studies*, 2017, 44-46.

¹⁵⁷ Archana Atmakuri and Mustafa Izzuddin, "Why Myanmar Should Matter to India," *The Diplomat*, January 08, 2020. <https://thediplomat.com/2020/01/why-myanmar-should-matter-to-india/>

This component has been constructed whereas the other component, road component, is still being constructed. The India-Myanmar border and Sittwe port will be connected through this project which will resultantly develop the Indian North-eastern states economically. The burden on Siliguri Corridor will also be decreased as this project will offer another route to North-eastern states of India. This project will not only serve the strategic, economic and commercial interests of India but also it will contribute to integration of Indian and Myanmar economies.¹⁵⁸

The India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway is another major project which will enhance economic dependence and cooperation between Myanmar and India. This mega project will link Thailand with Northern States of India through Myanmar and expected to be completed by 2023. Through this highway, North-eastern states of India will have access to the sea which will result in further development and increased connectivity of these states with Southeast Asia. India is pursuing the project while talking about its economic importance but it has strategic dimensions as well. It can also be seen as part of India's policy counterbalance China in the region as China, with its MSRI, is increasing its presence in Myanmar.

Another strategically important country for the Maritime Silk Road Initiative is Sri Lanka. India has historical relations with Sri Lanka. Sri Lanka has an important role in the Chinese MSRI. Indian analysts are propagating that the increasing Chinese influence in Sri Lanka is an effort for strategic containment of India by China. Therefore, Indian government is trying to have more close ties with the government of Sri Lanka. India had been providing assistance and aid to Sri Lanka in the past which helped it to have strong relations with Sri Lanka. For example, when a tsunami hit Sri Lanka in 2004, India sent aid, for reconstruction and disaster relief, to Sri Lanka. Furthermore, Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and Foreign Trade Agreement (FTA) between India and Sri Lanka are aimed to enhance bilateral trade and economic integration. There are also other areas, such as warship modification, intelligence sharing and defence cooperation, which are included in cooperation between India and Sri Lanka. Every year,

¹⁵⁸ "Implementation of The Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project In Myanmar," *Aviation and Defence Universe*, October 14, 2015. <https://www.aviation-defence-universe.com/implementation-of-the-kaladan-multi-modal-transit-transport-project-in-myanmar/>

since 2013, India and Sri Lanka have been doing joint military exercises which are known as Mitra Shakti exercises.¹⁵⁹

India has been enjoying friendly relations with Maldives since years. India has been cooperating with the government of Maldives in various areas especially health sectors and in the development of human resource. In addition to it, India and Maldives have been doing series of exercises, named as Dosti exercises, since 1990s. There is another unique area of Indian assistance to Maldives that is completely political in its nature. India has been involved in politics of Maldives as the several political leaders have sought help from Indian government. In November 1988, Operation Cactus was launched by India and it sent 1600 troops to stop a coup against the government of Maldives. Recently, naval crafts have been given to Maldives by India.

China cannot ignore Indian role in Maldives because India has been helping Maldives in many ways. When tsunami hit Maldives in December 2004, Indian government provided quick assistance to the government and people of Maldives. In addition to it, the desalination plant, which is in capital of Maldives, was vandalized in December 2014 and the government of Maldives called for help. The country which responded by supplying 900 tonnes of water to Maldives was India. INS Deepak was used for the transportation of water.

The year 2016 is marked as start of another level of cooperation between India and Maldives as they agreed and formulated a crucial plan to enhance defence cooperation in April 2016.¹⁶⁰ The statements coming from Indian officials show that this plan of action is highly valuable for ties between India and Maldives. For example, PM Modi said, “defense action plan will strengthen our defense cooperation and the main elements of the defence action plan will be capacity building, maritime surveillance, and the development of ports, continuous training and the supply of equipment.” For surveillance and maritime patrolling, Maldives is regularly getting help from Dornier aircraft and Indian warships. These developments can also be seen as a response to Chinese efforts in Maldives to expand China’s strategic footprints.

¹⁵⁹“Armies of India, Sri Lanka begin joint exercise in Pune,” *The Economic Times*, July 12, 2018. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/armies-of-india-sri-lanka-begin-joint-exercise-in-pune/articleshow/61073421.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

¹⁶⁰ Tanoli, J. R, “Comparative Analysis of Gwadar and Chabahar: The Two Rival Ports,” *Center for Strategic and Contemporary Research*, 2016, 14-34.

4.6 Chinese Perspectives on India and its Role in Indian Ocean

Chinese perspectives on Indian role especially in Indian Ocean are very different than Indian views on Chinese role in Indian Ocean. At present, China is acknowledging that the US has predominant role in Indian Ocean. This acceptance reflects that China assumes that Chinese SLOCs will not be disturbed by the US or the Chinese think that they could not be challenger to the US predominance in Indian Ocean. The case of India is entirely different from the US in Chinese view. India has been dreaming to have leading role in providing overall security in the Indian Ocean Region and China is, likely, to challenge Indian ambitions vis-à-vis Indian Ocean. Therefore, Chinese analysts are saying that there will be 'Great Game' between India and China in the Indian Ocean Region in coming years.¹⁶¹

The status of India in the international system is one of the factors which influence Chinese perceptions about Indian role and capabilities in Indian Ocean. Though, many Indians consider that India has capability to have status of a major regional power or even can become world power but Chinese view India as country which does not have that much national power and it cannot be compared, even, with Russia or Japan. Some of the Chinese thinkers and analysts view India as weak country.

There is an asymmetry in perceptions of India and China about each other. China is viewed as a significant and serious threat in India while this is not the case in China's perceptions about India. In China, India has never been taken as a serious security threat to China. Contrarily, China is perceived as a bigger threat for India's security than any other country in the region. Indian strategic analysts, like Raja Mohan, have also noted that China has been showing concerns about Indian policies towards Tibet but there is no doubt that India is weaker than China and existing perceptions in India and China about each other are asymmetrical.¹⁶²

At present, Chinese are not taking India as a detrimental threat to their security and other interests but India is expected to amplify Chinese threat to their interests. Many analysts think that this asymmetry in perceptions may witness reduction in near future. Some

¹⁶¹ Toshi Yoshihara, "Chinese Views of India in the Indian Ocean: A Geopolitical Perspective", *Strategic Analysis*, Vol.36, No.3 (2012), 489-500.

¹⁶² Raja Mohan, *Samudra Manthan: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012), 13.

Chinese academicians and analysts are already more serious about Indian threats. This changing in perception involved multiple factors such as Indian strategic partnership with the US, Indian hegemonic ambitions in the Indian Ocean Region and Indian desires to expand power in the region.¹⁶³

The perception that Indians want to achieve hegemony in the Indian Ocean Region is widespread in Chinese community of academicians and researchers. The US Centre for Naval Analyses (CNA), in a study, has concluded that most of the Chinese experts take the impression that hegemony in the Indian Ocean Region is the ultimate goal of India. They also say that Indians consider Indian Ocean as 'India's Ocean' and Indians want to dominate Indian Ocean.¹⁶⁴ A study by PLA has concluded that military and security policies of India aim to establish Indian hegemony in South Asia, become a top military power and to have control over Indian Ocean. Although, India is spending a small portion of its overall defence expenditures and it is very less than the Chinese budget for naval assets. Chinese, at present stage, do not think that India can be a major threat for Chinese interests in the region. But, Chinese analysts are concerned about the military facilities in Andaman Islands which can be used to have close eye or even control Malacca Strait. Some Chinese analysts are taking the view that India might be seeking a position which will help India to take revenge from China of its defeat in 1962 war with China.¹⁶⁵

India's strategic ties with the US have become one of the leading factors which are influencing Chinese perceptions about India's role in Indian Ocean. In addition to it, India's growing relations with Japan are also taken seriously in China. It is often said that the US want to use India as a counterweight to China in the Indian Ocean, therefore, the US is trying to intensify rivalry between China and India. The views on effects of nonaligned traditions of India on its policies are different among Chinese analysts. A number of Chinese analysts believe that realpolitik is being practiced by India and it will try to become a balancing force between the US and China while some say that nonaligned traditions will have significant impact on India's strategic relations with the

¹⁶³ M.Taylor Fravel, *Strategic Asia 2011-12 - Asia responds to its rising powers: China and India* (Washington D.C.: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2011), 65-98.

¹⁶⁴ Murray Scot Tanner with Kerry B. Dumbaugh and Ian M. Eastern, "Distracted Antagonists, Wary Partners: China and India Assess their Security Relations," CNA, September 2011, 36- 7.

¹⁶⁵ Liu Zongyi, "New Delhi-Beijing cooperation key to building 'Indo-Pacific Era'," *Global Times*, 30 November 2014.

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/894334.shtml>

US and also with other states. Chinese perception about India has changed significantly due to strategic alignment of India with the US in the Indian Ocean Region.¹⁶⁶

The strategic influence of India in Southeast Asia may be growing significantly due to its Act East Policy. But, the Indian Navy, at present, does not have the potential to become a major security threat for China in waters of South China Sea. At the same time, China is concerned about growing presence of India in East Asia and also its ties with Japan. The self-perceived duty of India in Indian Ocean is one of the major points of concern for China as Indians are of the view that India has the right to rule Indian Ocean and Indian Ocean belongs to India. India can play a major role to stabilize the Indian Ocean Region but it has no special liberty to rule the region.¹⁶⁷

The clash of interests between China and India in the Indian Ocean Region has resulted in the hegemonic rivalry between the two states. Both, China and India, want to dominate the region by increasing its presence and influence in the region. To become a hegemon in the region, both countries are taking various steps. The Chinese MSRI in Indian Ocean is challenging the Indian hegemonic ambitions in IOR. To counter these challenges, India is also taking several practical measures. This hegemonic rivalry has serious implications for regional as well as extra regional actors in the IOR.

¹⁶⁶ Wen Dao, "India, China mustn't fall into trap of rivalry set by the West," *Global Times*, 26 January 2015.

<http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/903927.shtml#:~:text=As%20for%20India%2C%20which%20has,to%20counterbalance%20China's%20growing%20influence.>

¹⁶⁷ Du De-bin, et al, "China's Maritime Transportation Security and its Measures of Safeguard", *World Regional Studies*, Vol.24, No.2 (2015).

CHAPTER V

CHINA-INDIA HEGEMONIC RIVALRY IN THE IOR: IMPLICATIONS FOR MAJOR REGIONAL ACTORS

India is not considered as a rival to Chinese interests in the Indian Ocean Region as per official sources of the Chinese government, while India takes different view of China as China has been identified as rival in official discourse of India. But, as far as strategic and hegemonic rivalry between China and India in the IOR is concerned, neither China nor India overtly accepts the existence of this rivalry. However, the Chinese and Indian initiatives in the Indian Ocean Region clearly indicate the existence of such rivalry in the region. China has been increasing its naval presence in the region and has closely established relations with Pakistan, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka with the help of its Maritime Silk Road Initiative. Under MSRI, China is building port facilities and other infrastructure development projects are also underway which will boost the Chinese influence in these countries. On the other side, India has direct access to Indian Ocean, and it is a key player in the region which aspires to become a predominant power in the IOR.¹⁶⁸ Chinese increasing influence in the Indian Ocean Region is being perceived as major challenge in India for Indian strategic, political and economic interests in Indian Ocean. To counter this challenge, balancing policy has been launched by India. India has increased its efforts to enhance cooperation with Iran, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka and especially with the US to stop Chinese rise in the Indian Ocean Region.

India and China, both want to be hegemon and dominant actors in the Indian Ocean Region. It is not only important due to voluminous 90% of trade of both nations pass through the sea routes of this region, but also due to strategic importance of Indian Ocean. The strategic importance of the IOR can be best explained and understood by Alfred Thayer Mahan who was an American Naval officer and a historian. He said, “Whoever controls the Indian Ocean will dominate Asia, the destiny of world will be

¹⁶⁸ Taylan Özgür Kaya and Fatih Kılıç, “Sino-Indian Strategic Rivalry in the Indian Ocean Region,” *The Journal of Humanity and Society*, 2017. 155-172.
https://www.academia.edu/38323028/Sino_Indian_Strategic_Rivalry_in_the_Indian_Ocean_Region

decided on its waters”.¹⁶⁹ Given the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean Region, China and India are striving to have dominating role over the region. Thus, it is zero sum game between India and China, being on the opposite sides, these two nations are opposing each other in the IOR which has resulted in the hegemonic rivalry in the Indian Ocean Region.

This chapter is divided into two major sections, in which first section discusses China-India hegemonic rivalry in the Indian Ocean Region and second section includes implications of this rivalry for the major regional actors of the IOR.

5.1 China-India Hegemonic Rivalry in the IOR

The Maritime Silk Road Initiative is playing an important role to enhance naval, economic and political presence of China across the Indian Ocean Region. This initiative is considered as key tool which can bring significant change in areas which are present along the Maritime Silk Road and it has the potential to bring fundamental changes in the regional dynamics. The increasing presence of China has resulted into intensified clash between India and China in the IOR. China is increasing its political and economic influence over the strategically important littoral states of Indian Ocean. In addition, the increasing Chinese naval presence is also not unusual because it is a traditional path which is being followed by China. It is traditional because it has already been followed by rising major powers in the past. Rising powers expand their military presence and operations to protect their interests in outside world. Indian Ocean is highly important for Chinese economy because it provides sea routes for trade and more importantly energy supplies to China. Thus, it is understandable that China will never want to see any disruption/blockaded in flow of commercial ships through these sea routes and seek to protect them by itself. Chinese leaders are concerned about the protection of supply lines as potential risks are present in Indian Ocean in the form of piracy and especially the threats which are emerging from Indo-US nexus in the Indian Ocean Region.¹⁷⁰

Chinese efforts to have strong military presence in the Indian Ocean are still evolving. A reliable and easy access to logistic facilities is essential for Chinese naval assets to sustain

¹⁶⁹ P K Gosh, “Indian Ocean Dynamics: An Indian Perspective,” *East Asia Forum*, April 05, 2011.

<https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2011/04/05/indian-ocean-dynamics-an-indian-perspective/#:~:text=The%20Indian%20Ocean%20is%20a,be%20decided%20on%20its%20waters.>

¹⁷⁰ Nicholas Szechenyi, “China’s Maritime Silk Road Initiative: Implications for Indo-Pacific Region,” *CSIS*, March 2018.

in the Indian Ocean Region. In this context, construction a Chinese military base in Djibouti is being seen as part of Chinese agenda to increase their military presence as Djibouti is being seen a strategically important base for China which can be used for power projection in the region. In addition, the construction of ports in Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Bangladesh and Pakistan is also underway under the Maritime Silk Road Initiative. On the other hand, for years, India has been aspiring to be a dominating power in the region. Both states want to dominate the region; this situation between the two has resulted in the hegemonic rivalry between them. As both powers are economically, politically and militarily stronger in the Indian Ocean Region, the rivalry between them will have severe implications for countries of the region.

There are several factors which are shaping the hegemonic and strategic rivalry between India and China in the IOR. These factors include Chinese increasing cooperation with Pakistan under the Maritime Silk Road Initiative. Pakistan and India has been arch rivals for over seventy years and still there is not peace between these two states. Under MSRI, China is investing in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Maldives, these developments are threatening the Indian strategic interests in the region. China is increasing its naval presence in Indian Ocean which is perceived as threat in India. India has not joined BRI and it is trying to offer alternatives to littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region. In addition, the evolving strategic partnership between the US and India is one of the most important factors which are intensifying the India-China rivalry. Moreover, India's hegemonic ambitions towards Indian Ocean change its attitude towards Chinese Maritime Silk Road Initiative in the region. And, the Indian involvement in recipient countries of MSRI in the IOR to counter Chinese influence in the region.

The hegemonic war between India and China is explained by the theory of hegemonic war. In this theory bilateral relations can be conceived as a system and a particular region can also represent a system. In the Indian Ocean Region, China and India are not directly at war with each other by using conventional means of war. As the states in hegemonic war try to establish their own hegemony for their benefits and to gain their own interests in the system, these two states are also doing the same. Chinese and Indian policies towards Indian Ocean are bringing broad changes in military, economic and political affairs of the region because to achieve their objective to dominate Indian Ocean they are

increasing their presence and influence in the littoral states of Indian Ocean. The rivalry between China and India in the Indian Ocean Region has the potential to change the order of the region. And this fundamental change in the system will also have impact on the states of the Indian Ocean Region.

5.2 Implications for Major Regional Actors in the IOR

This section analyses and explains the implications for the major regional actors the Indian Ocean Region from hegemonic rivalry between India and China. The hegemonic rivalry between India and China will have security, economic and political implications for major regional actors in the Indian Ocean Region. This rivalry between India and China is offering opportunities as well as challenges for the littoral states of Indian Ocean. To study these opportunities and challenges coming from India-China hegemonic rivalry in the IOR for major regional actors in the IOR, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Kenya have been take a case studies.

5.2.1 Pakistan

India has been an arch rival of Pakistan for over seventy years but the new arrangements between Pakistan and China under the BRI has further intensified enmity between these two arch rivals. India is leading actor in Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and it has stopped Pakistani entry into this organization. Pakistan is a major country in Indian Ocean and has its interests in the region. In addition to it, Pakistan has strong and close relations with China. Pakistan has an important position in the Belt and Road Initiative of China.¹⁷¹

The relations between India and Pakistan have not been cordial for a fine time period. The primary reason behind tense ties between these two countries is unresolved dispute about state of Jammu and Kashmir. It has been over seventy years and the issue is yet to be resolved. Moreover, an Indian spy was arrested by Pakistani LEAs from Baluchistan in 2017 which further deteriorated ties between India and Pakistan. In addition, India has been accused of violating the Indus Water Treaty 1960 which has contributed to worsening situation between Pakistan and India.¹⁷²

¹⁷¹ Muhammad Abbas Hassan, "Growing China-India Competition in the Indian Ocean: Implications for Pakistan," *ISSI*, No.1 2019.

¹⁷² Salman Masood and Hari Kumar, "Pakistan Sentences Indian Spy to Death for Operating Terrorism Ring," *The New York Times*, April 10, 2017.

Indian diplomatic front has been active to isolate Pakistan in the world. KSA and UAE have been known as traditional supports of Pakistan and now India has developed strong relations with these countries. These developments pushed Pakistan to work more actively in this domain and it was result of Pakistani diplomatic efforts that KSA has announced that it will invest 20 billion USD in Pakistan for various projects.¹⁷³

To stop CPEC projects and destabilize Pakistan, India has activated its proxies in the region. Pakistan has almost defeated them and pushed them to leave Pakistan. They are being operated and trained in Afghanistan. India is exploiting the faults lines of Pakistan. India is providing weapons and assistance to anti-Pakistan elements. Fake propaganda warfare is in full swing. Recently, Indian proxy TTP's separated groups have re-joined TTP. This indicates that they will again attack Pakistan with more force.¹⁷⁴

To cut the long story short, China-India hegemonic rivalry has resulted in serious implications for Pakistan especially in security and economic domains. This rivalry has further intensified the enmity between Pakistan and India.

5.2.2 Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka holds strategic significance in the Maritime Silk Road Initiative proposed by China. The China-India hegemonic and strategic rivalry has security, economic and political implications for Sri Lanka. Both, China and India, are investing in Sri Lanka and trying to increase their influence in their favour. This will have several opportunities and challenges for Sri Lanka. Due to this rivalry between China and India, it can extract maximum investment from both the nations. But, it also is facing challenges, as both China and India want to have dominating role than the other.

Sri Lanka, due to its important strategic location, is highly important for Chinese and Indian interests in the region. China and India are fastest growing economies in the world which are now playing significant role in changing economic structure of the region. Billions of dollars are being invested by China in several countries under its Maritime

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/10/world/asia/pakistan-india-death-sentence-spy-kulbhushan-yadav.html>

¹⁷³ Muzaffar Rizvi, "\$20 Billion Investment is Phase One: Saudi Crown Prince," *Khaleej Times*, February 18, 2019.

<https://www.khaleejtimes.com/international/pakistan/20-billion-investment-is-phase-1-saudi-crown-prince>

¹⁷⁴ Abdul Basit, "The Rebranded Pakistani Taliban May Pose a Renewed Threat," *TRT World*, August 21, 2020. <https://www.trtworld.com/opinion/the-rebranded-pakistani-taliban-may-pose-a-renewed-threat-39082>

Silk Road Initiative.¹⁷⁵ The strategic location of Sri Lanka has made it an important country for Chinese MSRI in the Indian Ocean Region. China is doing various port city and highway projects in Sri Lanka under MSRI. This increasing presence of China in Sri Lanka is being taken seriously in power corridors of India.

India, which is aspiring to become a hegemon in the Indian Ocean Region, observes all developments in the region which can directly or indirectly create hurdles for its ambitions in Indian Ocean. The increasing influence of China in Sri Lanka poses threats to Indian interests. Sri Lanka cannot ignore Indian interests while signing deals with China. Otherwise, India can use take actions to harm Sri Lanka as it did in 1980s. Tamil Nadu political influence can be used by India to pressurize Sri Lanka to change its policies. Therefore, Sri Lanka has to avoid any conflict due to clash of interests between China and India in Sri Lanka.¹⁷⁶ Instead of being a country which is facing problems due to clash of interests between China and India, Sri Lanka should develop new strategies that will help it grab and get benefits from both countries.

5.2.3 Iran

Iran has been facing economic problems for years due to economic sanctions. The Nuclear Deal gave a temporary relief to Iranian economy but it is again going through serious crisis as the US has imposed sanctions on Iran and pulled itself out of the Nuclear Deal. To cope with these economic issues, Iran has been looking towards other options. It has developed cordial relations with China as well as with India which are helping Iran to save its economy and also lessen the effects of sanctions against Iran.

India has broader strategic objectives in the region and its policies towards Iran are also to achieve these objectives. These objectives include; boost to Indian economy, expansion of Indian military power beyond its region and its rise as a major power.¹⁷⁷ In addition to it, Chinese increasing presence in the IOR has also enhanced Indian interests

¹⁷⁵ “Sri Lanka to play major role in Maritime Silk Road: China,” *The Economic Times*, 2017.

<http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/business/sri-lanka-to-play-major-role-in-maritime-silk-roadchina/articleshow/39059333.cms>

¹⁷⁶ “China’s state-run newspaper says India working against Beijing’s interests in Sri Lanka”, *Hindustan Time*,. 2017.

<http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/china-s-state-runnewspaper-says-india-working-against-beijing-s-interests-in-srilanka/story-gArIjHcUFEieg6wVLdWC2O.html>.

¹⁷⁷ George Perkovich, “Is India a Major Power,” *The Washington Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (Winter 2003–04): 129–44.

in Iran. CPEC is a flagship project of the BRI and India wanted to counter CPEC, therefore, India signed agreement with Iran for development of Chabahar port in 2016. As per the agreement, India would invest 85.21 million USD for construction of this port and two terminals would be built by India.¹⁷⁸

India aims to be an overall security provider in the Indian Ocean Region. Iran is considered as a key actor for Indian security interests because it is placed at very important geostrategic locations. India and Iran are cooperating with each other in maritime domain. India also supports Iran at Indian Ocean Rim Association. In the recent years, the defence cooperation has also increased between India and Iran.¹⁷⁹

Iran's geographical location is greatly important for India. India can be directly connected with Afghanistan and Central Asia through Iran, bypassing Pakistan. Moreover, the increased presence of India in CARs will significantly contribute to Indian agenda to compete with increasing Chinese influence in the region. It will also help India to contain influence of Pakistan in Afghanistan and Central Asia. Iran is considered as an important part of India's extended neighbourhood policy which aims to increase India's presence and influence in the Indian Ocean Region.

Furthermore, it is no easy for Iran to exclude China from Chabahar project. In recent several years, western countries reduced bilateral trade significantly due to economic sanctions and this vacuum has been filled by China to some extent. China is now Iran's largest investor among the foreign investors. Adding more it, several infrastructure projects such as Tehran metro has been completed by China. Tehran-Mashhad railway is receiving 1.5 billion USD from China through EXIM bank for its electrification. In 2016, both Iran and China agreed to increase trade which would amount to 600 billion USD.¹⁸⁰ China is more experienced, in taking up and completing projects overseas, than India and

¹⁷⁸ "India's 2019 budget allocates \$21m to invest in Chabahar development," *Tehran Times*, February 03, 2019.

<https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/432642/India-s-2019-budget-allocates-21m-to-invest-in-Chabahar-development>

¹⁷⁹ Ashok Behuria, "India's Renewed Interest in Chabahar: Need to Stay the Course," *Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses*, May 13, 2015.

https://idsa.in/issuebrief/IndiasRenewedInterestinChabahar_BehuriaRizvi_130515

¹⁸⁰ Golnar Motevalli, "China, Iran Agree to Expand Trade to \$600 Billion in a Decade," *Bloomberg*, January 23, 2016.

<https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-01-23/china-iran-agree-to-expand-trade-to-600-billion-in-a-decade>

this factor also cannot be ignored. Indian government has been delaying the transfer of promised investment and soft loans; this has raised concerns among the policy makers in Tehran.

Recent developments in Iran have further magnified the hegemonic rivalry between India and China in the IOR as news of Iran's ending Indian role in key railway project circulated on media. The delay in providing funds for the project by India is primary reason given by Iran for project cancellation. The agreement for this project was signed four years ago and according to the agreement a rail line of 628km had to be constructed by India along Afghan-Iran border.¹⁸¹ As a matter of fact, Tehran has to cooperate with both of them and decrease tensions between China and India. Up to now, plenty of projects and trades have been done among three countries which can prove Iran's collaborations with both countries.

5.2.4 Bangladesh

The big markets and strategic location of Bangladesh makes it important for both India and China for their interests in the IOR. Bangladesh has the opportunity to gain maximum benefits from both due to hegemonic rivalry between India and China in the region. The length of border between India and Bangladesh is over 4000km. The relations between these two neighbours have been cordial for years especially for improving the security conditions and managing the border. China also sees Bangladesh as an important actor for its interests in the region because it can get economic benefits from Bangladesh as it also provides a strategic point for China to monitor Indian activities in the region.

PM Modi visited Bangladesh in 2015 and the visit concluded with 22 agreements between India and Bangladesh. During this visit, PM Modi also announced to invest 5 billion USD as FDI in Bangladesh. Russia, Bangladesh and India signed a pact, named as civil nuclear tripartite, in April 2017. According to this agreement, nuclear power plant will be constructed in Bangladesh and India will play a key role in this construction.

¹⁸¹ "India shunted out of key Iran railway project, plot set to thicken as China's shadow looms in the background," *The Economic Times*, July 15, 2020.
<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/railways/india-shunted-out-of-key-iran-rail-project-plot-set-to-thicken-as-chinas-shadow-looms-in-the-background/articleshow/76952974.cms?from=mdr>

Moreover, four new projects have also been announced by Mr. Modi in March 2019.¹⁸²

Chinese government has been striving to establish close and strong relations with countries of South Asia as it aims to have leading role in the region. Chinese interests in the region and the Bangladesh's policy to reduce its reliance on India contributed to further increase the cooperation between China and Bangladesh. Since 2015, India has been replaced by China as largest trading partner of Bangladesh. Bangladesh signed 27 agreements with China in 2016 and became an important part of Chinese BRI. Chinese President pledged to invest around 24 billion USD in Bangladesh in various projects. All the neighbouring countries of India are now part of the Belt and Road Initiative except Bhutan.¹⁸³

The relations between India and Bangladesh have been deteriorated significantly since August 2019. The National Register of Citizens (NRC) was completed by the Indian government in Assam, north-eastern state of India. The purpose of this NRC was to verify and check the citizenship. This resulted in exclusion of over 1.9 million people from citizenship and they were called as illegal migrants. This has created serious concern for the government of Bangladesh as the Indian state will possibly force these people to go Bangladesh.¹⁸⁴

Now, amid China-India conflict along their shared border and hegemonic rivalry in the Indian Ocean Region, Bangladesh could leverage gains from both sides. There is visible change in Bangladesh's attitude in favour of China. 97% of products of Bangladesh have been given duty free access to Chinese markets since July 2020. A request has also been made to China in which Bangladesh has asked China to provide funds for infrastructure. The Investment Cooperation Working Group was used to make this request.¹⁸⁵

Hegemonic rivalry between India and China is bringing opportunities and challenges for

¹⁸² Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty, "PM Modi's visit to Bangladesh has set the tone for future cooperation to bring two countries even closer," *The Economic Times*, June 08, 2015.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/blogs/et-commentary/pm-modi-visit-to-bangladesh-has-set-the-tone-for-future-cooperation-to-bring-two-countries-even-closer/>

¹⁸³ Ruma Paul, "China signs deals worth billions with Bangladesh as Xi visits," Reuters, October 14, 2016. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bangladesh-china/china-signs-deals-worthbillions-with-bangladesh-as-xi-visits-idUSKCN12D34M>

¹⁸⁴ Ranjan Basu, "Assam NRC: Should Bangladesh be concerned?," *Dhaka Tribune*, September 03, 2019. <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/foreign-affairs/2019/09/03/assam-nrc-should-bangladesh-be-concerned>

¹⁸⁵ Mozammil Ahmad, "Bangladesh and the China-India Conflict," *The Diplomat*, July 08, 2020. <https://thediplomat.com/2020/07/bangladesh-and-the-china-india-conflict/>

Bangladesh. Investment is in the form of opportunity and the increasing influence of these two rivals in the host country will pose serious challenges to Bangladesh in terms of security and sovereignty.

5.2.5 Kenya

The objective to dominate the IOR has brought the two nations, China and India, at a point that they are countering each other in the entire Indian Ocean Region, from Strait of Malacca to East Coast of Africa. The largest source for Kenya's imports is China as it replaced India in April 2015. Chinese exports to Kenya has witnessed significant rise in 2014 as they increased from Sh63.6 billion to Sh93.6 billion whereas Indian exports to Kenya have declined from Sh84.5 billion to Sh80.6 billion in the same period. The National Bureau of Statistics in Kenya has published these details on their website.¹⁸⁶

Chinese exports to Kenya include vehicles, household goods, textiles, electronics and heavy machinery. Under Maritime Silk Road Initiative, Chinese are doing various mega projects in Kenya which are related to infrastructure development. Kenya is getting benefits from hegemonic rivalry between China and India as it is receiving billions of dollars as an investment which will help Kenya to grow its economy and improve the livelihood of its people. Although, the rivalry is between Asian countries but it has resulted into setbacks for western traditional trade partners of Kenya. For example, the shares of UK in market of Kenya have also been witnessing steady decline in the recent years.

Conclusion

Indian Ocean Region, with strategically important choke points and sea routes, has become an area of great interest for regional as well as extra-regional powers. It is rightly stated that, in 21st Century, the future of global politics will be decided in waters of Indian Ocean. Indian Ocean Region has been and still is dominated by the US, but emergence China and India as fastest growing economies are changing dynamics and geo-politics of the Indian Ocean Region. The Indian Ocean Region has become an epicentre of global politics. Major Powers of world are actively involved in the region. Given the geo-economic, geo-political and geo-strategic importance of Indian Ocean,

¹⁸⁶ "China beats India to become Kenya's top imports source," *Trade Law Centre*, June 15, 2015. <https://www.tralac.org/news/article/7544-china-beats-india-to-become-kenya-s-top-imports-source.html>

China is increasing its influence in the IOR. China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative will connect Pacific, Indian Ocean and the east coast of Africa. The Maritime Silk Road Initiative is increasing the influence of China in the Indian Ocean Region. Under this MSRI, China is investing in developing littoral states of the region, which will lead to China's significant influence over the policies of these respective states.

The Indian Ocean Region is primary focus of the Maritime Silk Road Initiative. Under MSRI, China is, initially, sending its capital in form of investment as well as loans for construction of various strategically important ports in the IOR which include Gawadar, Kyaukpyo, Hambantota, Bambusa, etc. and also for infrastructure development and EEZs. Despite criticism on nature and purpose of Chinese investments, the littoral states have welcomed Chinese initiative. Under MSRI, China has further strengthened ties with strategically important countries in the Indian Ocean Region.

Moreover, questions, which are being raised about intention of China's increasing economic, political and naval footprints in the IOR, are also based on empirical evidences. After Hambantota port which has been given to China on lease for 99 years, Mombasa is also being discussed that it can face the same fate as Kenya might not repay loans. Apart from these port construction projects and increasing Chinese influence in recipient countries, China is also expanding its naval presence in the Indian Ocean Region. It is building its first ever overseas military base under garb of "military logistic facility" at Djibouti. But, Chinese policies in the Indian Ocean Region should not be taken as surprise as China is following the same path as followed by other major powers in the past. It is expanding its military presence to protect its interests overseas and the ultimate interest is to become major actor and undisputed power in the Indian Ocean Region. Indian Ocean Region has also key role for Chinese global ambitions.

On the other hand, India is also one of the fastest and largest economies of the world. It has the dream to become a hegemon in its region, at least. It feels threats from the China's emergence in the region because it perceives the China's increasing influence as a threat to its hegemonic ambitions in the Indian Ocean Region. Both China and India are competing with each other to have dominating role in the Indian Ocean Region. To counter China in Indian Ocean, India is actively participating in various initiatives which are meant to contain China in the region. Indian Ocean Rim Association, Project

Mausam, revival of QUAD and Chabahar Project are glaring examples in this regard. In addition to it, India has increased its involvement in recipient countries of MSRI in the IOR to at least slow down MSRI projects. This conflict between China and India has resulted in hegemonic rivalry in the Indian Ocean Region as it has potential to have an impact on security, geo-politics, order, economy and ultimately people of the region. It also has implications for regional countries.

Hence, China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative has potential to change the dynamics of power politics in the Indian Ocean Region; consequently challenging Indian hegemonic ambitions in the region resulting into increased hegemonic rivalry with certain implications for regional theatre.

Findings

- Indian Ocean has become epicenter of global politics. Regional and extra regional powers are striving to have significant role in the Indian Ocean Region. More than 50 percent of global trade passes through SLOCs of Indian Ocean and it also holds one of most important strategic choke points of world, thus makes it attractive for world powers. It is right to say that future of world politics, now, will be decided in waters of Indian Ocean.
- Although, the Maritime Silk Road Initiative is far away from its success but it has significantly increased Chinese presence and influence in the Indian Ocean Region. China has forged strong ties with major actors of region with help of its Maritime Silk Road Initiative.
- China is not different from the other major powers; it is following the same path which has been followed by major powers in the past. China is expanding its naval presence to protect its interests abroad. The Chinese economy is highly reliant on trade routes that pass through the Indian Ocean, which serves as a vital pathway, particularly for energy supplies. It is natural, therefore, for the Chinese government to seek to protect its interests along these sea lines of communication. Moreover, the IOR also has strategic importance for China for its global power struggle.

- For decades, India has been striving to achieve hegemony in the Indian Ocean Region and to have status of a major power. It aspires to be net security provider and dominating power in the region but the MSRI has become major concern for Indian interests in the IOR. The Maritime Silk Road Initiative has potential to challenge Indian ambitions in the IOR.
- Chinese Maritime Silk Road Initiative has resulted in emerging challenges for Indian hegemonic ambitions in the Indian Ocean Region as per Indian perceptions. To counter these challenges, India is actively pursuing several plans and strategies. Indian counter strategies can slow down progress of MSRI projects, at least.
- India has started different projects such as Mausam and Chabahar, but it cannot offer an alternative to recipient countries of MSRI in the IOR when compared to Chinese heavy investments. Moreover, China has more experience in successfully executing overseas projects than India.
- Strategically, China is vulnerable in Indian Ocean and India has advantageous position. India has direct access to Indian Ocean and the northern part of Indian Ocean is dominated by India. Moreover, the Chinese SLOCs in Indian Ocean are lifeline for Chinese economy and India can easily block these SLOCs.
- Hegemonic rivalry between China and India is result of the clash of interests between these two countries in the Indian Ocean Region. It has brought broad changes in political, strategic and economic affairs of the region.
- The Maritime Silk Road Initiative has the potential to change maritime order in the Indian Ocean Region and is also challenging Indian hegemonic ambitions in the IOR.

Bibliography

Ankit Panad, "US, Japan, India, and Australia Hold Working-Level Quadrilateral Meeting on Regional Cooperation," *The Diplomat*, November 13, 2017.

<https://thediplomat.com/2017/11/us-japan-india-and-australia-hold-working-level-quadrilateral-meeting-on-regional-cooperation/>

Admiral James Stavridis, *Sea Power: The History and Geopolitics of World's Oceans* (New York: Penguin Publishing Group, 2017), 40-70.

A. Z. Hilali, Cold War Politics of Superpowers in South Asia, *The Dialogue*, accessed at: http://www.qurtuba.edu.pk/thedialogue/The%20Dialogue/1_2/4_Mr.%20Hilali.pdf (June 19, 2016).

Andrew Shearer and Jesse Barker Gale, "The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue and The Maritime Silk Road Initiative, *Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative*, April 4, 2018.

<https://amti.csis.org/quadrilateral-security-dialogue-maritime-silk-road/>

Alexander Sullivan and Andrew S. Erickson, "The Big Story Behind China's New Military Strategy," *The Diplomat*, June 05, 2015. <https://thediplomat.com/2015/06/the-big-story-behind-chinas-new-military-strategy/>

Ashay Abbhi, "String of Pearls: India and the Geopolitics of Chinese Foreign Policy," *E-international relations*, 26 July 2015. <https://www.e-ir.info/2015/07/26/string-of-pearls-india-and-the-geopolitics-of-chinese-foreign-policy/>

Ankit Panda, "India, US Sign Logistics Exchange Agreement: What You Need to Know," *The Diplomat*, August 30, 2016. <https://thediplomat.com/2016/08/india-us-sign-logistics-exchange-agreement-what-you-need-to-know/>

Ashok Behuria, "India's Renewed Interest in Chabahar: Need to Stay the Course," *Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses*, May 13, 2015.

https://idsa.in/issuebrief/IndiasRenewedInterestinChabahar_BehuriaRizvi_130515

Arun Prakash, *From the Crow's Nest: A Compendium of Writings on Maritime and Other Issues* (New Delhi: Lancer, 2007) p.99.

Abdullah Jameel, "China-Maldives Sign MOU for Free Trade Pact," *Haveeru*, September 9, 2015, <http://www.haveeru.com.mv/business/62166>

Ben Blanchard, "ASEAN deadlocked on South China Sea, Cambodia blocks statement," *Reuters*, July 25, 2016.

Bi Mingxin, "Maldives Supports China's Plan for 'Maritime Silk Road,'" *Xinhua*, September 13, 2014

Brewster, David. "An Indian Ocean dilemma: Sino-Indian rivalry and China's strategic vulnerability in the Indian Ocean." *Journal of the Indian Ocean* 11, no. 1 (2015a): 48–59.

Blanchard, Jean-Marc F. "Probing China's 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI): An Examination of MSRI Narratives." *Geopolitics* 22, no. 2 (2016): 246–268.

Blanchard, Jean-Marc F. "Chinese MNCs as China's New Long March: A Review and Critique of the Western Literature." *Journal of Chinese Political Science* 16, no. 1 (2011): 91–108.

"China Reveals Three Routes under Belt and Road Initiative," *Safety4Sea*, <https://safety4sea.com/china-reveals-three-sea-routes-under-belt-road-initiative/>

"China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative and South Asia," Edited by Jean-Marc F. Blanchard, Springer Nature Singapore, 2018

Cary Huang, "US, Japan, India, Australia...is Quad the first step to an Asian NATO?" *This Week In Asia*, 25 November, 2017. <https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/opinion/article/2121474/us-japan-india-australia-quad-first-step-asian-nato>

Christopher Len, "China's Twenty-First-Century Maritime Silk Road Initiative, Energy Security, and SLOC Access," *Maritime Affairs* 11, no. 1 (2015): 9–10.

"China sketches out priorities of 'Belt and Road' initiatives," *China Daily*, Feb 02, 2015. http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2015-02/02/content_19464329.htm

"China's Maritime Silk Road Strategic and Economic Implications for the Indo-Pacific Region," Edited by Nicholas Szechenyi, CSIS, March 2018

"China and India At Sea: A Contest of Status and Legitimacy in The Indian Ocean," Australia India Institute, September 2015.

'China Builds Up Strategic Sea Lanes', *The Washington Times* - Monday, January 17, 2005, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2005/jan/17/20050117-115550-1929r/>

"ChinaMaldives Friendship to Bridge Opportunity Gaps," <http://www.the-businessreport.com/article/china-maldives-friendship-to-bridgeopportunity-gaps>

Charu Sudan Kasturi, "India Wrinkle on China Silk: Jaishankar Speaks Out on Absence of Consultations," *The Telegraph* (Calcutta), July 21, 2015

"China deploys troops to U.N. force to protect South Sudan oilfields – WSJ," *Reuters*, September 10, 2014. <https://www.reuters.com/article/china-sudan/china-deploys-troops-to-u-n-force-to-protect-south-sudan-oilfields-wsj-idUSL3N0RB03Z20140910>

"Chinese-built military training centre opens in Tanzania," *Defence Web*, Feb 13, 2018. <https://www.defenceweb.co.za/land/land-land/chinese-built-military-training-centre-opens-in-tanzania/>

“China beats India to become Kenya’s top imports source,” Trade Law Centre, June 15, 2015. <https://www.tralac.org/news/article/7544-china-beats-india-to-become-kenya-s-top-imports-source.html>

David C. Gompert, “Sea Power and American Interests in the Western Pacific”, *RAND*, 2013

David Scott (2009) India's “Extended Neighbourhood” Concept: Power Projection for a Rising Power, *India Review*, 8:2, 107-143.

Dahles H., “Why China charms Cambodia,” East Asia Forum, 24 August 2013. <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2013/08/24/why-china-charms-cambodia/>

Dipanjnan Roy Chaudhury, “India and Seychelles agree on naval base at Assumption Island,” The Economic Times, July 13, 2018. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-and-seychelles-agree-on-naval-base-at-assumption-island/articleshow/64731817.cms?from=mdr>

David Brewster, “India-China conflict: A move from the Himalayas to the high seas?,” Lowy Institute, July 10, 2020. <https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/india-china-conflict-move-himalayas-high-seas>

Dutta, A. (2017), “Andaman and Nicobar Islands in light of Chinese actions in South China Sea”. Center for Land Warfare Studies, 44-46

Du De-bin, et al, “China’s Maritime Transportation Security and its Measures of Safeguard”, *World Regional Studies*, Vol.24, No.2 (2015).

Edward A. Alpers, *The Indian Ocean in World History*, Oxford University Press 2014.

Kenneth R. Hall, *A History of Early Southeast Asia: Maritime Trade and Societal Development, 100–1500* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2011), 59.

Edward A. Alpers, *The Indian Ocean in World History*, Oxford University Press 2014, Page 22.

Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU). “Prospects and Challenges on China’s ‘One Belt, One Road’: A Risk Assessment Report.” 2015, 3–4. http://www.eiu.com/public/topical_report.aspx?campaignid=OneBeltOneRoad

“Ensuring Secure Seas: Maritime Security Strategy,” Naval Strategic Publication 1.2, October 2015. https://www.indiannavy.nic.in/sites/default/files/Indian_Maritime_Security_Strategy_Document_25Jan16.pdf

Franz-Stefan Gady, “South China Sea Deployment: Indian Stealth Warships Visit Vietnam,” The Diplomat, June 01, 2016. <https://thediplomat.com/2016/06/south-china-sea-deployment-indian-stealth-warships-visit-vietnam/#:~:text=As%20part%20of%20the%20deployment,in%20a%20statement%20thi>

[s%20Monday.](#)

Guy Burton, “India’s ‘Look West’ Policy in the Middle East under Modi,” Middle East Institute, August 06, 2019.

George F. Hourani, *Arab Seafaring in the Indian Ocean in Ancient and Early Medieval Times*, revised and expanded by John Carswell (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 77.

Golnar Motevalli, “China, Iran Agree to Expand Trade to \$600 Billion in a Decade,” Bloomberg, January 23, 2016. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-01-23/china-iran-agree-to-expand-trade-to-600-billion-in-a-decade>

Golnar Motevalli, “China, Iran Agree to Expand Trade to \$600 Billion in a Decade,” Bloomberg, January 23, 2016. <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-01-23/china-iran-agree-to-expand-trade-to-600-billion-in-a-decade>

Harsh Pant, “India-Iran Cooperation At Chabahar Port: Choppy Waters,” AMTI CSIS, April 04, 2018.

Manoj Kumar, “India, Iran sign pact during Rouhani visit on leasing port,” Reuters, February 17, 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-india-iran/india-iran-sign-pact-during-rouhani-visit-on-leasing-port-idUSKCN1G10GS>

Meera Srinivasan, “Ranil defends Hambantota deal,” The Hindu, August 31, 2017. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/ranil-defends-hambantota-deal/article19595879.ece>

Harsh Pant, “India-Iran Cooperation At Chabahar Port: Choppy Waters,” AMTI CSIS, April 04, 2018. <https://amti.csis.org/india-iran-cooperation-chabahar/>

Hema Ramakrishnan, “Why India must be leading player in Indian Ocean,” The Economic Times, Sept 01, 2015. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/policy/why-india-must-be-the-leading-player-in-the-indian-ocean-region/articleshow/48757789.cms>

Ibn Battúta, *Travels in Asia and Africa, 1325–1354*, ed. and trans. H. A. R. Gibb (London: Darf Publishers, 1983 [1929]), 110–11.

“Iran, Afghanistan, India sign three-way transit accord,” The Express Tribune, May 24, 2016. <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1109014/iran-afghanistan-india-sign-three-way-transit-accord-2>

“Iran won’t wait for India on Farzad-B gas project, Tehran Time, August 20, 2019. <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/439430/Iran-won-t-wait-for-India-on-Farzad-B-gas-project>

Ijaz Khalid et al, “India’s response to Chinese String of Pearls Doctrine,” Global Political

Review, Vol II, N0.I, 2017, p 27-35.

<https://www.gprjournal.com/jadmin/Author/31rvIolA2LALJouq9hkR/5NWVyHCk0c.pdf>

James R. Holmes, *Indian Naval Strategy in the Twenty-First Century* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), p.45.

James Stavridis, *Sea Power: History and Geopolitics of World's Oceans*, New York: Penguin Press 2017, 47-48.

James Henry Breasted, *Ancient Records of Egypt, vol. 2: The Eighteenth Dynasty* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001 [1906]), 117, 286–88

Jayatileka, “The GeoStrategic Matrix and Existential Dimension of Sri Lanka’s Conflict, PostWar Crisis and External Relations,” in *India and South Asia: Exploring Regional Perceptions*, edited by Vishal Chandra (New Delhi: Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, 2015)

John W. Garver, “Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century,” (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2001), p.277

James Holmes, “Inside, Outside: India's ‘Exterior Lines’ in the South China Sea”, *Strategic Analysis*, Vol.36, No.3, (2012), pp.358-363.

“IORA’s Doors Still Shut For Pakistan: Despite Repeated Requests, Islamic Nation Unlikely To Get Membership,” *Swarajya*, April 10, 2019. <https://swarajyamag.com/insta/ioras-doors-still-shut-for-pakistan-despite-repeated-requests-islamic-nation-unlikely-to-get-membership>

Khalid Chandio “Major Powers' Interests in Indian Ocean: Challenges and Options for Pakistan” *Islamabad Policy Research Institute*, (Autumn 2014): pp. 3-4, accessed at: <http://www.ipripak.org/major-powers-interests-in-indian-ocean-challenges-and-options-for-pakistan/#sthash.g81TVhok.dpbs> (June 17, 2016)

Kiran Stacey, “Chinese investment in Bangladesh rings India alarm bells,” *Financial Times*, August 06, 2018. <https://www.ft.com/content/1ab2ebe6-85c3-11e8-96dd-fa565ec55929>

Ports & Power in the Indian Ocean, “Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative”, 18 June 2015. <https://amti.csis.org/ports-power-indian-ocean/>

Liu Z., *India’s political goals hinder cooperation with China on “Belt, Road”*, “*Global Times*”, 3 July 2016. <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/992047.shtml>

“Li Yuanchao to Attend 3rd China-South Asia Expo and 23rd China Kunming Import and Export Fair,” June 9, 2015, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjdt_665385/wsrc_665395/t1271758.shtml

“Maldives Gov’t Targets Special Economic Zones, Eyes Trade with China,” Xinhua, June 5, 2014.

Mateen Haider, “Chabahar not a rival to Gwadar, Iranian envoy tells Pakistan,” DAWN, May 27, 2016. <https://www.dawn.com/news/1261006>

“Modi’s Media Statement in Seychelles,” The Hindu, March 11, 2015. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/resources/modis-media-statement-during-his-visit-to-seychelles/article6982061.ece>

Nelson Renteria, “El Salvador says economy prompted diplomatic switch to China from Taiwan,” Reuters, August 21, 2018. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-el-salvador-china-taiwan/el-salvador-says-economy-prompted-diplomatic-switch-to-china-from-taiwan-idUSKCN1L62AA>

Lidia Kelly, “Australian politician says media revelations of Chinese spying disturbing,” Reuters, November 23, 2019. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-china-australia-espionage/australian-politician-says-media-revelations-of-chinese-spying-disturbing-idUSKBN1XX04M>

“Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrives in Seychelles on 3-nation tour of the region,” India Today, March 11, 2015. <https://www.indiatoday.in/india/north/story/pm-modi-seychelles-visit-victoria-james-alix-michel-ajit-doval-s-jaishankar-243755-2015-03-11>

“India and Vietnam Sign a Joint Vision Statement on Defence Cooperation,” IDR, 26 May, 2015. <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/news/india-and-vietnam-sign-a-joint-vision-statement-on-defence-cooperation/>

Jacob, Jabin. T., “China’s Belt and Road Initiative: Perspectives from India”, China & World Economy, Vol. 25, No. 5, September-October 2017, 78-100.

James Crabtree, “Sri Lanka Sees Benefits of China’s ‘Maritime Silk Road Plan,’” Financial Times, September 17, 2014.

“Implementation of The Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project In Myanmar,” Aviation and Defence Universe, October 14, 2015. <https://www.aviation-defence-universe.com/implementation-of-the-kaladan-multi-modal-transit-transport-project-in-myanmar/>

M.Taylor Fravel, “China views India’s rise: Deepening Cooperation, Managing Differences” *Strategic Asia 2011-12 - Asia responds to its rising powers: China and India* (Washington D.C.: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2011) pp.65-98

Murray Scot Tanner with Kerry B. Dumbaugh and Ian M. Eastern, “Distracted Antagonists, Wary Partners: China and India Assess their Security Relations,” CNA, September 2011, pp.36- 7.

“Multi-country official thanks China for assistance in evacuating,” *People’s network*, 2015.

<http://world.people.com.cn/n/2015/0408/c1002-26813718.html>

Muzaffar Rizvi, "\$20 Billion Investment is Phase One: Saudi Crown Prince," *Khaleej Times*, February 18, 2019. <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/international/pakistan/20-billion-investment-is-phase-1-saudi-crown-prince>

George Perkovich, "Is India a Major Power," *The Washington Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (Winter 2003–04): 129–44.

"India shunted out of key Iran railway project, plot set to thicken as China's shadow looms in the background," *The Economic Times*, July 15, 2020. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/railways/india-shunted-out-of-key-iran-rail-project-plot-set-to-thicken-as-chinas-shadow-looms-in-the-background/articleshow/76952974.cms?from=mdr>

Mozammil Ahmad, "Bangladesh and the China-India Conflict," *The Diplomat*, July 08, 2020. <https://thediplomat.com/2020/07/bangladesh-and-the-china-india-conflict/>

Jean-Marc F. Blanchard, *China's Maritime Silk Road and South Asia: A Political and Economic Analysis of its Purposes, Perils and Promises* (Singapore: Springer Nature, 2018), 40-55.

Specialist in Asian Affairs, "China-India Great Power Competition in the Indian Ocean Region: Issues for Congress," *Congressional Research Service*, April 20, 2018.

Wang Gungwu, *The Nanhai Trade: Early Chinese Trade in the South Chinese Sea*, (Singapore: Eastern Universities Press, 2003), 34.

Abdul Sheriff, *Dhow Cultures of the Indian Ocean: Cosmopolitanism, Commerce and Islam* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 157.

R. B. Serjeant, *The Portuguese Off the South Arabian Coast: Hadramī Chronicles*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 43.

Ibn Battūta, *Travels in Asia and Africa, 1325–1354*, ed. and trans. H. A. R. Gibb (London: Darf Publishers, 1983 [1929]), 110–11.

Michael Pearson, *The Indian Ocean* (London: Routledge, 2003), 196.

James Francis Warren, *The Sulu Zone, 1768–1898: The Dynamics of External Trade, Slavery, and Ethnicity in the Transformation of a Southeast Asian Maritime State*, 2nd ed. (Singapore: NUS Press, 2007 [1981]), 164.

Sugata Bose, *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006), 37.

Edward A. Alpers, *The Indian Ocean in World History*, Oxford University Press 2014, 128.

James Stavridis, *Sea Power: The History and Geopolitics of World's Oceans*, Penguin Press 2017, 48.

Safety4Sea, China reveals three sea routes under Belt & Road initiative, June 26, 2016.
Chongwei Zheng et al, *21st Century Maritime Silk Road: A Peaceful Way Forward*, Springer Nature Singapore, 2018.

Qiushi net (2014), “The 21st century Maritime Silk Road: a great maritime road to realize Chinese Dreams,” http://www.qsttheory.cn/culture/2014-06/16/c_1111154145.htm

Ruma Paul, “China signs deals worth billions with Bangladesh as Xi visits,” Reuters, October 14, 2016.
<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bangladesh-china/china-signs-deals-worthbillions-with-bangladesh-as-xi-visits-idUSKCN12D34M>

Ranjan Basu, “Assam NRC: Should Bangladesh be concerned?,” Dhaka Tribune, September 03, 2019. <https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/foreign-affairs/2019/09/03/assam-nrc-should-bangladesh-be-concerned>

Raja Mohan, *Samudra Manthan: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific*, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2012. Page 13.

Rani D. Mullen and Cody Poplin, “The New Great Game,” Foreign Affairs, September 29, 2015, <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/china/2015-09-29/new-great-game>

Raja Mohan, *Samudra Manthan: Sino-Indian rivalry in the Indo-Pacific* (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment, 2012), p.204.

R. B. Serjeant, *The Portuguese Off the South Arabian Coast: Hadramī Chronicles*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1963), 43.

Edward A. Alpers, *The Indian Ocean in World History*, Oxford University Press 2014, 91-92.

Rajesh Basrur, “Modi’s foreign policy fundamentals: a trajectory unchanged,” International Affairs, Vol 93, Issue 1, 01 January 2017.

Richard Ghiasy, Fei Su and Lora Saalman, “The 21st Maritime Silk Road: Security implications and ways forward for the European Union,” *SIPRI*, 2018.

Robert D. Kaplan, *Monsoon: The Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power* (New York: Random House, 2011), 110-115

Raj Mittal, “Sino-Indian Relations in the Indian Ocean: Conflict or Convergence?” *FDI*, 26 November, 2019. <http://www.futuredirections.org.au/publication/sino-indian-relations-in-the-indian-ocean-conflict-or-convergence/>

Xinhua net (2014) , “Xi Jinping put forward the strategic concept: One Belt and One Road to open the dream space,” http://news.xinhuanet.com/fortune/2014-08/11/c_1112013039.htm

“Xi meets Aung San Suu Kyi, calls for more party-to-party cooperation,” China Daily, Dec 01, 2017. https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/china/2017-12/01/content_35161902.htm

Chongwei Zheng et al, *21st Century Maritime Silk Road: A Peaceful Way Forward*, Springer Nature Singapore, 2018.

James Stavridis, *Sea Power: History and Geopolitics of World's Oceans*, New York: Penguin Press 2017, 47-48.

C. Raja Mohan, “Revealed: India's Master Plan for the Indian Ocean”, The National Interest, accessed at: <http://nationalinterest.org/blog/the-buzz/revealed-indias-masterplan-the-indian-ocean13198> (June 16, 2016).

Berlin, Donald L. (2006), ‘India in the Indian Ocean’, *Naval War College Review*, Vol. 59, No.2, p. 60

James R. Holmes, Andrew C. Winner and Toshi Yoshihara, *Indian Naval Strategy in the Twenty-First Century* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2009), p.45

Vinay Kumar, ‘India well positioned to become a net provider of security: Manmohan Singh’, *The Hindu*, 23 May 2013.

David Michel and Russell Sticklor, “Indian Ocean Rising: Maritime security and policy Changes”, Stimson Centre, (Spring 2008): pp .12-16, accessed at: https://www.stimson.org/sites/default/files/file_attachments/IOR_chapter1_1.pdf (June 17, 2016).

MacDonald, Donahue, and Danyluk, 'Energy Futures in Asia', 17. Quoted in Thesis, 'Does China Need A “String Of Pearls”? Martin E. Conrad, September 2012. Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey, California.

“Not an Idea We Have to Shun”: Chinese Overseas Basing Requirements in the 21st Century, “China Strategic Perspective”, October 2014. <https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/stratperspective/china/ChinaPerspectives-7.pdf>

Torbati Y., Wilkes T., *India, US reach preliminary agreement on sharing military logistics amid China challenge*, “Reuters”, 13 April 2016.

Teddy Ng, “Maldives Supports China’s Plan for ‘Maritime Silk Road,’” *South China Morning Post*, September 16, 2014

P.K. Balachandran, “Sri Lanka Scuttles Plan for Bridge Over Palk Strait,” *New Indian Express*, December 19, 2015.

David Brewster, *India’s Ocean: The Story of India’s Bid for Regional Leadership* (London: Routledge, 2014)

Tansen Sen, "Silk Road Diplomacy—Twists, Turns and Distorted History," YaleGlobal Online, September 23, 2014, <http://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/silk-road-diplomacy-%E2%80%93-twists-turns-and-distorted-history>

Tom Miller, *China's Asian Dream: Empire Building along the New Silk Road* (London: Zed Books, 2017)

"Sri Lanka: A Key Node on the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road," Belt and Road, August 06, 2015. <https://beltandroad.hktdc.com/en/insights/sri-lanka-key-node-21st-century-maritime-silk-road-0>

Abhijit Singh, "China's Maritime Silk Route: Implications for India," ISDA, July 16, 2014.

Sudha Ramachandran, "India's BIMSTEC Gambit," *The Diplomat*, May 31, 2019. <https://thediplomat.com/2019/05/indias-bimstec-gambit/>

Prashanth Parameswaran, "US Rebalance to Asia Will Sustain: Obama," August 02, 2016. <https://thediplomat.com/2016/08/us-rebalance-to-asia-will-sustain-obama/>

"The Quadrilateral Dialogue and The Maritime Silk Road Initiative," CSIS, April 02, 2018. https://csis-website-prod.s3.amazonaws.com/s3fs-public/publication/180717_GaleShearer_QuadSecurityDialogue.pdf?csNA9Z0fB6r4L9KkdBnc.a0LzXdNTr7b

"Nonalignment 2.0: A Foreign and Strategic Policy for India in the Twenty First Century," Report by Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, March 12, 2012. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2012/03/12/nonalignment-2.0-foreign-and-strategic-policy-for-india-in-twenty-first-century-event-3587>

Sunil Raman, "The Strategic Importance of Andaman and Nicobar Islands," *The Diplomat*, January 03, 2016. <https://thediplomat.com/2016/01/the-strategic-importance-of-andaman-and-nicobar-islands/>

Archana Atmakuri and Mustafa Izzuddin, "Why Myanmar Should Matter to India," *The Diplomat*, January 08, 2020. <https://thediplomat.com/2020/01/why-myanmar-should-matter-to-india/>

"Armies of India, Sri Lanka begin joint exercise in Pune," *The Economic Times*, July 12, 2018. https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/armies-of-india-sri-lanka-begin-joint-exercise-in-pune/articleshow/61073421.cms?utm_source=contentofinterest&utm_medium=text&utm_campaign=cppst

Tanoli, J. R. (2016), "Comparative Analysis of Gwadar and Chabahar: The Two Rival Ports," *Center for Strategic and Contemporary Research*, 14-34.

Toshi Yoshihara, “Chinese Views of India in the Indian Ocean: A Geopolitical Perspective”, *Strategic Analysis*, Vol.36, No.3 (2012), pp.489-500.

Liu Zongyi, “New Delhi-Beijing cooperation key to building ‘Indo-Pacific Era’,” *Global Times*, 30 November 2014. <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/894334.shtml>

Wen Dao, ‘India, China mustn’t fall into trap of rivalry set by the West,’ *Global Times*, 26 January 2015. <http://www.globaltimes.cn/content/903927.shtml#:~:text=As%20for%20India%2C%20which%20has,to%20counterbalance%20China's%20growing%20influence.>

Taylan Özgür Kaya and Fatih Kılıç, “Sino-Indian Strategic Rivalry in the Indian Ocean Region,” *The Journal of Humanity and Society*, 2017. 155-172. https://www.academia.edu/38323028/Sino_Indian_Strategic_Rivalry_in_the_Indian_Ocean_Region

P K Gosh, “Indian Ocean Dynamics: An Indian Perspective,” *East Asia Forum*, April 05, 2011. <https://www.eastasiaforum.org/2011/04/05/indian-ocean-dynamics-an-indian-perspective/#:~:text=The%20Indian%20Ocean%20is%20a,be%20decided%20on%20its%20waters.>

Muhammad Abbas Hassan, “Growing China-India Competition in the Indian Ocean: Implications for Pakistan,” *ISSI*, No.1 2019.

Salman Masood and Hari Kumar, “Pakistan Sentences Indian Spy to Death for Operating Terrorism Ring,” *The New York Times*, April 10, 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/04/10/world/asia/pakistan-india-death-sentence-spy-kulbhushan-yadav.html>

Abdul Basit, “The Rebranded Pakistani Taliban May Pose a Renewed Threat,” *TRT World*, August 21, 2020. <https://www.trtworld.com/opinion/the-rebranded-pakistani-taliban-may-pose-a-renewed-threat-39082>

“Sri Lanka to play major role in Maritime Silk Road: China,” *The Economic Times*, 2017. <http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/business/sri-lanka-to-play-major-role-in-maritime-silk-roadchina/articleshow/39059333.cms>

“China’s state-run newspaper says India working against Beijing’s interests in Sri Lanka”, *Hindustan Times*. 2017. <http://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/china-s-state-runnewspaper-says-india-working-against-beijing-s-interests-in-srilanka/story-gArIjHcUFEieg6wVLdWC2O.html>.

“India’s 2019 budget allocates \$21m to invest in Chabahar development,” *Tehran Times*, February 03, 2019. <https://www.tehrantimes.com/news/432642/India-s-2019-budget-allocates-21m-to-invest-in-Chabahar-development>

Pinak Ranjan Chakravarty, “PM Modi’s visit to Bangladesh has set the tone for future cooperation to bring two countries even closer,” *The Economic Times*, June 08, 2015.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/blogs/et-commentary/pm-modi-visit-to-bangladesh-has-set-the-tone-for-future-cooperation-to-bring-two-countries-even-closer/>

Wang Fukang, “China and Maldives: Partners in Building Twenty-First-Century Maritime Silk Road Together,” Miadhu, January 15, 2015, http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/wjb_663304/zwjg_665342/zwbd_665378/t1228935.shtml

Yang Yi, “Chinese President’s Visit to Enhance Ties with Maldives, Sri Lanka: Foreign Ministry,” Xinhua, September 9, 2014.

Yang Yi, “China, Maldives Eye Stronger Partnership with All-Round Cooperation,” Xinhua, September 16, 2014

Yang Feiyue, “Maldives Reaches Out for Chinese Investment,” China Daily, October 21, 2015, http://africa.chinadaily.com.cn/travel/2015-10/21/content_22239499.htm

Zhang MS (2014), “Important sea lanes in the Arab world,” *Jianghuai Tribune* 1:76–81

Zhao Minghao, “China Understands South Asia’s Needs Better,” *The Global Times*, September 16, 2014.

Zhang R, Hong M, Li X et al (2014) , “The South China Sea marine environment risk assessment and emergency response in the Indian Ocean,” *National Defense Industry Press*, Beijing.