

Emerging Strategic Collaboration between the USA and India in the Indian Ocean: A Move Towards Chinese Containment

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ABSTRACT

Background: To counterbalance Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean, the USA established a strategic alliance with India. Geographically, the majority of India's territory is located in the middle of the Indian Ocean's Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs). Through these SLOCs, major commerce, trade, and exchange of goods occur. Strategically, the USA needed a partner that was capable of balancing China regionally. The location of India made it of pivotal significance for the USA. By the 1990s, the USA had started to conduct naval exercises with India. The USA also increased its naval forces and power projection capability to contain growing Chinese influence over the SLOCs of the Indian Ocean. The USA also provided India with the latest technology and training for increasing the capability of the Indian navy.

Aim of the Study: study aim to find out how does the USA balancing Chinese power in the Indian Ocean? What are the factors that are shaping the USA offshore balancing policy in the Indian Ocean? What is the response of India in the offshore balancing of the Indian Ocean?

Methodology: methodology of this study includes interviews. First, the triangulation of the questionnaire was carried out, Secondly, purposive sampling was done to select the experts for the interview. A semi-structured interview was conducted. The data has been analyzed Using the content analysis method.

Findings and Conclusion: The USA is still the only hegemon in the world. As a result, no major change has been brought due to the rise of China as one of the major powers in Asia. The interests of the USA and India converged with the announcement of the USA policy of rebalancing to Asia in 2011.

Keywords: SLOCs, Maritime Security, Naval Exercises, USA, India, China, Strait of Malacca.

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Introduction

There were two key reasons why the Indian Ocean was significant to the USA at the time. Firstly, the Korean War brought USA forces into the Indian Ocean. Secondly, the USA wanted to keep its access to the oil resources of the Middle East unimpeded. During the Sino-India war of 1962, the USA tried to convince India to join the western alliance USA. During the China and India border dispute of 1962, the USA convinced India to join the western alliance against the Communist regime of the United Soviet Socialist Republic (USSR). The USA made it clear that in the Sino-Indian conflict of 1962 USA was standing on the Indian side. As a result, Nehru asked Washington for military assistance on 9 November 1962 (Samuel, 2007)

Even after the cessation of hostilities between China and India, the USA continued its efforts to bring India into the Western alliance. President Kennedy approved military aid for India to convince India that the USA would secure India's interests in Asia. The USA has also begun resolving the Pakistan-India conflict over Kashmir. The USA policymakers envisaged peace between the two belligerent nations once the Kashmir conflict was resolved. As Pakistan has already joined the Western Alliance, the cessation of hostilities between India and Pakistan would strengthen the position of the USA in Asia.

The USA had not intervened in the India-Pakistan war of 1965. However, it implicitly assisted Pakistan militarily in countering India. The USA permitted Libya, West Germany, and Iran to provide military assistance to Pakistan. The USA endeavored to normalize the relations between India and Pakistan to bring India into the Western Alliance.

However, the efforts of the USA proved Useless because of the initiation of another war between India and Pakistan in 1971. The USA sent an aircraft carrier to the Bay of Bengal to evacuate its citizens from the war-trodden region. India perceived the arrival of the USA aircraft carriers as a threat to its interests in its war against Pakistan. It increased distrust between USA and India. However, as the USA began to view India as an ally of the USSR, ties between the two countries hit their lowest point (Jones, 2015.). By the year 1990, USSR disintegrated, and the cold war rivalry between USA and USSR ended. The USSR withdrew its forces from Afghanistan and the Indian Ocean, leaving the USA as the sole power. The USA, however, began a Strategic alliance with India in the Indian Ocean as a result of the growing importance of China and India in the region during the post-cold war period (Crumplin & William, 2010)

Literature Review

The USA in the Indian Ocean

The geopolitics of the Indian Ocean concerns the increasing influence of China and India and the role of the USA. Although the author has argued that the USA, to counter China, has increased cooperation with India, it has ignored to consider India's response to the USA, policy of offshore balancing (Mukherjee, 2017). The focus is more on the ASEAN countries' role in creating an environment of peace in the Indian Ocean. The role of India in the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) has not been discussed in the article by the author. On the one hand, India has been signing strategic cooperation with the USA in the Indian Ocean and conducting military exercises with the USA; on the other hand, it is also increasing its engagement with the littoral states of the Indian Ocean, not exclusively with the ASEAN states.

The Indian Ocean region is faced with the challenges of human trafficking, unregulated fishing, and sea robbery. To establish peace and cooperation in the Indian Ocean region, the states adjoining the Indian Ocean region should work together to build infrastructure and invest in human capital to make a functional maritime force. The authors have focused more on the power play between the major powers in the Indian Ocean, providing the foundation for the present study. Much attention has not been paid to the growing strategic partnership between the USA and India in the Indian Ocean. The growing partnership between USA and India has resulted in the modernization of the Indian Naval forces. India has been stepping up its multilateral collaboration with neighboring littoral governments in the Indian Ocean.

USA-India Defence Cooperation

Growing India-USA Strategic Cooperation: An Analysis, her dissertation, examined how the USA-India strategic alliance has evolved after the end of the Cold War. The India-USA strategic partnership was strengthened when both countries signed a civil nuclear deal in 2000. By 2005, both countries signed a Mutual Defence agreement that cemented the strategic partnership (Khan, 2015). This mutual defence agreement was renewed in 2015. The author focuses on the developments in the strategic partnership between India and USA under the Trump administration. The strategic partnership included: the sale of US arms to India under defence cooperation, The exchange of cyber technology and security, maritime defence cooperation, and joint military exercises.

The author has argued that the India-USA strategic partnership is aimed at containing China, in which India has diverged from its policy of non-alignment to become a USA ally. It is undeniable that both countries share the same threat perception of the rise of China and its implications on the balance of power in Asia. It is argued that India has not become an ally of the USA by signing certain defence agreements and participating in military exercises. India is seeking to succeed China as the dominant country in the area, and it has supported the USA strategy of offshore balancing to counterbalance China regionally. India is also expanding its relations with the littoral states of the Indian Ocean in the same manner as China has expanded. Therefore, it is important to take into account India's response to the USA's offshore balancing policy.

The Indian policy of Act East and the USA policy of Rebalance has been united in the Indian Ocean. (Mishra, 2018) discusses the Bilateral defence trade during the Obama administration in detail. Besides the bilateral defence trade increase, joint activities have increased during the last decade between India and USA. The USA assists India in developing its local aircraft carrier by providing technical expertise. The joint military exercises, including the naval exercise MALABAR, which was started in 1990, also continued. The USA has also provided India with the P-8 aircraft, which can detect the movement of submarines. Since 2010, the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal have seen the presence of Chinese nuclear submarines. The defence cooperation continued between the two countries with the establishment of President Trump's administration.

Mishra has discussed the recent development in the USA-India strategic cooperation concerning the Indian Ocean. However, the response of India to the USA policy of offshore balancing has mainly been ignored by the author, India and the Indian Ocean littoral states have begun cooperating more on a multilateral basis. It has acquired a central position in regional cooperation organizations like IORA and IONS. These organizations are disseminating cooperation between India and the other littoral states of the Indian Ocean on diplomatic and naval levels, respectively.

India's Role in the Indian Ocean

In 1958, Although Nehru emphasized increasing India's naval capability, the focus of India remained on its north-eastern and north-western borders of the Himalayas. India realized the naval capability and the need for modernization of the Indian navy in the 1990s.

The Indian policy shifted due to the rise of the Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean. Although the author has discussed the change process in India's strategy towards the Indian Ocean, the USA policy of offshore balancing has not been considered during the Cold War and post-Cold War periods. Moreover, the future engagement of the USA with India also needs to be incorporated into the discussion of the geopolitics of the Indian Ocean.

India and the Changing Geopolitics of the Indian Ocean, the changing geopolitics of the Indian Ocean as a result of the growing influence of China and India. The rise of India and China differs from that of Russia because unlike Russia these countries have been connected to the world economy (Mohan, 2011). The contestant for power in the Indian Ocean is U.S.A, India, and China. Under these circumstances, India's position is ambivalent; on the one hand, it is joining hands with the USA for strategic cooperation,

and on the other hand, it is also trying to make the world a multilateral world. The more China and India are growing economically, the more they need to develop their naval power to secure their SLOCs in the Indian Ocean. The author recommends that there should be cooperation among the powers in the Indian Ocean rather than aspiring to become the central power. Indian Ocean is a global common in which all countries have stakes, and cooperation leads to a peaceful environment. However, unlike India, China is aspiring to influence the Indian Ocean as a critical principle of their national interest. Regarding India's options in the Indian Ocean, Mohan suggested that India must not aspire to extinguish the USA presence or confront the Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean; rather, India must deal with these two powers peacefully.

In the Indian Ocean China's primary interest in the Indian Ocean is safeguarding its energy supply's SLOC from Bab-al Mandeb, Strait of Hormuz, to the Strait of Malacca. The Chinese submarines have started to be spotted by India during the last few years in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian sea, due to which the anxiety in New Delhi has increased.

China has also started to construct the port facility in Gwadar, Pakistan, along with investment in other infrastructural projects,(Jakobson, 2015) has argued that China's position is not more robust than the USA and India. China should cooperate with these significant powers to bring peace in the Indian Ocean instead of confrontation. Jakobson has discussed the emerging influence of China in the Indian Ocean vis-à-vis the USA and India. The author hasn't given much attention to the USA policy's offshore balancing in the Indian Ocean. The report also omits to mention the strategic conversation between the USA and India. In reaction to China's growing sway in the Indian Ocean, the USA and India have formed a strategic alliance. But by working with the other Indian Ocean littoral governments, India also hopes to establish itself as a regional hegemon. The collaboration with other littoral states of India and China must also be taken into consideration while discussing the geopolitics of the Indian Ocean, which is not solely centered on China and India.

It has been explored by (Upadhyaya, 2017) that expanding Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean and the subsequent impact of these developments on the naval capabilities of India in his research, Expansion of Chinese maritime power in the Indian Ocean: implications for India. Because China's main oil imports run across the Indian Ocean, it is modernizing its naval capabilities and constructing new ports there to preserve its Special Legal Obligation. Surface combatants, submarines, aircraft carriers, and anti-ballistic missile technology are all part of the Chinese navy's modernization effort. The development of the port in Pakistan could provide India with significant difficulties. The Indian trade through the Indian Ocean may be vulnerable due to the presence of Chinese naval troops in the Arabian Sea.

in his study (Medcalf, 2017, Imagining an Indian National Security Strategy: the sum of its parts, he discussed India's increasing tilt toward strategic diplomacy. Under the Modi government, India has changed its previous ideological stance of non-alignment(Kaura, 2021). Now India is adopting a more cooperative attitude with the US This growing sense of thinking in terms of strategic cooperation is a product of the emergence of China's assertive role in Asia, and as an equal to a global power like the US, India has remained aloof of China's project of One Belt One Road (OBOR), through which China is contemplating to reach the Indian Ocean through Pakistan. India has strained relations with China due to the border disputes between the two countries. China has been economically and militarily assisting the neighboring rival of India, Pakistan. India has been suffering from a lack of institutional arrangements to make and pursue an effective national strategic policy. Medcalf suggests that India should include military personnel in formulating the national security policy on similar lines to which it exists in Australia. Moreover, India needs to include different sections of society for consultation in devising the national security strategy(Medcalf, 2017). The political parties and the civilians are not enough to formulate the national security policy.

Medcalf has covered the recent changes in the strategic policy of India concerning the Indian Ocean. However, the author's argument that India has changed its previous policy of non-alignment by extending

cooperation with the USA is questionable. However, India has signed several agreements with the USA regarding strategic cooperation in the Indian Ocean. However, India has not signed any treaty or pact with the USA. Moreover, India is also contemplating itself as a regional hegemon vis-à-vis China. It has assumed a central role in regional cooperation organizations such as IORA and IONS. In these cooperation organizations, India cooperates with the littoral states of the Indian Ocean to extend its influence and counter the Chinese influence. Moreover, India's strategic policy change must be seen against the backdrop of the USA offshore balancing policy.

Statement of Problem

The USA's offshore balancing in South Asia was altered by the conclusion of the Cold War. The USA counted on Pakistan's backing to counterbalance India in the area. The economic growth of China and India altered the USA's interests in South Asia. With the end of the cold war, IOR became more significant for the USA. To offset Chinese dominance in IOR, the USA forged deeper ties with India. In IOR, the USA and India established their strategic alliance. India, on the other hand, formed a strategic alliance with the USA to rival China's dominance in the area. Additionally, India wanted to continue to be on an equal footing with the USA in IOR. To understand the U.S.-India strategic alliance in the IOR, it is important to take into account the aforementioned developments in the geostrategic and political dynamics of South Asia.

Research Questions

- How does the USA offshore balancing policy target the growing Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean?
- What are the factors that are shaping the USA offshore balancing policy in the Indian Ocean?
- What is the response of India to the offshore balancing of the Indian Ocean Region in the USA?

Research Design

The purposive selection of experts in Indian Ocean geopolitics is the first step in the study process. The interview protocol is first developed and validated. During the interview protocol, information was gathered from leading authorities on the geopolitics of the Indian Ocean, which was used to review the questions and create semi-structured interview questions. Initial interviews conducted following the interview procedure are used to assess the USA-Indian strategic collaboration in the Indian Ocean to restrict China. Interviews with the foremost authorities on the geopolitics of the Indian Ocean are then conducted. Next, for analysis, the information from the interview is combined with primary and secondary information. This paper adds to the body of knowledge on the geopolitics of the Indian Ocean by discussing the strategic alliance between the USA and India to restrict China from the perspective of the USA's offshore balancing policy.

Explanatory Study

This research study is explanatory. The explanatory research study is purported to explain the reasons and causes due to which a thing exists. The USA and India's defence cooperation has been explored. It is known that the defence cooperation between USA and India has started to contain China. However, the present study aims to explain the defence cooperation between the USA and India from the perspective of offshore balancing with a focus on the Indian Ocean (Neuman, 2007).

Triangulation

The primary aim of triangulation is to see things from different perspectives. The underlying idea is that looking at something from different points of view increases accuracy. The triangulation could be divided broadly into three categories: triangulation of measurement, triangulation of observers, and theory. In the triangulation of observers, the opinion of three people noticing a phenomenon is taken because all three of them would understand it differently (Neuman, 2007). In the present research, the triangulation of three

experts in the field of USA policy in Asia was conducted. The purpose was to bring accuracy to the questions that were formulated for the sake of conducting interviews.

Sampling

In the present study, ten experts have been selected through purposive sampling. The experts are not selected to make a representative sample. Instead, those experts are selected whose research area was related to the present study. (Neuman, 2007). In this research, those experts who are conducting their research on the US policy towards Asia were selected. Ten respondents who are experts on the geo-strategic and geopolitical dynamics of South Asia have been selected.

Data Collection

The semi-structured interview is conducted in the research study. The experts that are selected from purposive sampling are interviewed. The experts are considered as a group representing the different perspectives on the USA policy towards Asia. The experts are not considered as a single person from the population. Moreover, the interview was open-ended. The interviewee was not given fixed categories to select an option (Kvale, 1994)

Data Analysis

In content analysis, the analysis is done through categories. These categories are derived from the theoretical framework. This research study's theoretical framework has been constructed from the neorealist perspective. However, these categories are not intended to fix the data in them. Instead, these categories are used to elaborate the concepts of the theory through the primary data. (Kvale, 1994).

Theoretical Framework

In the present study, the neorealist perspective has been adopted for discussion. The neorealist perspective argues that there is anarchy in the international system because there is no authority above the state. The state is a sovereign authority in the international system. However, the States autonomy is not unfettered in the international system. According to the neo-realists, the anarchic setup of the international system affects the capability distribution among the states. As a result of this anarchic setup, the states must secure their interests (Mingst et al., 2018).

In this study, the perspective of Mearsheimer's offensive realism has been taken into account to discuss the power politics of the Indian Ocean. Mearsheimer has added the aspects of geography to the existing perspective of the neo-realist school of thought. Mearsheimer's theory of offensive realism is based on five assumptions derived from the neo-realist paradigm that includes: the international system is based on anarchy; great power possess the capability to destroy each other; there is uncertainty in the actions of the great powers; the goal of the state is to secure its survival, and the behavior of the state is rational. Taking these assumptions into account to explain the power politics of the Indian Ocean, Mearsheimer argues that the large areas of water constrain the capability of power projection of the great powers. Under this explanation, the USA becomes a regional power rather than global power due to the constraints imposed by water on its power projection.

It is vital to talk about the aforementioned theoretical presumptions concerning their application in the context of the Indian Ocean because the current study focuses on the power politics of the region (Rudolph & Hoeber, 2006). Rudolph has talked about the US policy of offshore balancing concerning the expanding strategic partnership between the US and India in Asia to restrain China. The authors contend that throughout the cold war, the US partnered with Pakistan to counterbalance India. However, the end of the Cold War altered world politics, which led to the beginning of the development of US-Indian relations. The 9/11 tragedy boosted ties between the US and India. As a result, the US and other countries have formed a strategic alliance to combat terrorism. It instead established a strategic alliance with India.

To counter China's expanding influence in Asia, India partnered with the USA. India, however, is less likely to rely on the US to counterbalance China given its non-alignment stance during the Cold War; instead, India aspires to become a regional hegemon (Rudolph & Hoeber, 2006).

In this way, the framework indicated above serves as the foundation for the explanations in this study. By establishing a strategic alliance with India in the Indian Ocean, the US is counterbalancing China. In contrast, India and the USA are working together to counteract Chinese dominance in the Indian Ocean. Obama's planned USA policy of rebalancing to Asia calls for stepping up strategic collaboration with Asian regional states and building up naval assets in the Indian Ocean (House, 2022). It can be interpreted as a sign that the USA is putting more emphasis on maritime security. The USA might counterbalance China in the Pacific Ocean if India serves as a partner in the Indian Ocean.

Discussion and Analysis

The Indian Ocean offers channels for trade, commerce, and transportation. Increasing the USA's strategic cooperation with India in the Indian Ocean became a matter of crucial interest. Control over SLOCs consequently became the USA, India, and China's top priority. Nearly two-thirds of all petroleum in the globe travels across the Indian Ocean.

Moreover, the Indian Ocean sees the passage of half of the world's containerized freight each year. Nearly two-thirds of all petroleum in the globe travels across the Indian Ocean. And every year, the Indian Ocean sees the passage of half of the world's containerized freight (Hilali, 2015). The Gulf of Aden (Yemen), Bab al-Mandeb (Saudi Arabia), the Strait of Hormuz (Iran), and the Strait of Malacca are the most important shipping lanes for petroleum (Malaysia). The Strait of Hormuz, where about 40% of all oil is moved, is the most important petroleum shipping route (Shepard & Pratson, 2020).

Nearly 40% of global trade and 40% of the world's crude oil transit via the Strait of Malacca and Strait of Hormuz, respectively. Furthermore, from the Persian Gulf to the Pacific region, nearly 70% of petroleum products transit across the Indian Ocean. The shipping lanes of the Strait of Hormuz are thought to carry close to \$200 billion worth of oil, and the shipping lanes of the Strait of Malacca are thought to carry close to \$600 billion worth of oil. The three largest developing economies in the world—China, Japan, and South East Asia—need oil to meet rising energy demands (Hilali, 2015).

China has historically had the weakest naval force. However, it was forced to project electricity outside of its borders to protect its SLOCs. To maintain its position as the global hegemon in the balance of power, the USA was forced to alter its policy towards the Indian Ocean as a result of China's expansion. China's overall commerce reached RMB40.7 trillion by the year 2021 (Chen & Yuan, 2021), and the country became the biggest importer of petroleum products and the second-largest economy with a substantial trade surplus thanks to a trade surplus of \$46.5 billion. The Strait of Malacca receives more than 80% of China's oil imports (Yin & Lam, 2021). However, China does not only depend on the Middle East for its oil imports.

Beginning in the 1990s, China's GDP climbed by 10% annually. With an economy worth more than \$ 11 trillion as a whole, China rose to become the second-largest economy in the world. Due to its expanding economy, China was able to devote a sizable portion of its budget to defence spending. By raising the defence budget, China would be able to maintain both a sizable army and a potent naval force. China's defence spending surged from \$58.8 billion in 2008 to \$ 215 billion in 2016. Unquestionably, China's military spending showed an extraordinary rise. China spends less on its military than the USA does, nevertheless. The US military expenditure for 2016 was \$611 billion, about three times that of China (Gen & Mallick, n.d.). Bipolar disorder was eliminated during the Post-Cold War era. The USSR has ceased to serve as its worldwide equalizer. China has instead become the USA's new rival on the new landscape of power politics. To counter the expanding Chinese dominance in the Indian Ocean, the USA began to strengthen its strategic alliance with India (Pant, 2007). India has begun to project power in the Indian Ocean to protect its SLOCs, prompting the USA to forge a relationship with India. The statistical results

indicate that, after the USA, China, and Japan, India would become the fourth-largest energy consumer. To satisfy its 33% energy demands, India imports 65% of its oil. The Indian Ocean is the route taken by that oil. LNG and coal are used to meet the remaining energy requirements. India imports coal from Indonesia, Australia, South Africa, and Mozambique. However, India also imports LNG from Malaysia, Indonesia, Qatar, Malaysia, and South Africa. By 2030, there will be a 45% increase in energy demand, with India and China accounting for 50% of that increase (Li et al., 2020).

The Genesis of the USA-India Strategic Partnership

The USA started naval cooperation with India in 1991. The Commander of the USA army has visited India. Consequently, USA and India decided to conduct naval exercises (Samuel, 2007). The first naval exercise with MALABAR was held in 1992, which continued between India and USA every year (USANavy, 2017). However, much progress was not achieved in the naval cooperation between USA and India between 1992 and 2005. In 2005, Pranab Mukherjee, minister for India's defence, and Donald Rumsfeld, Defence Secretary of the USA, signed a Defence Framework Agreement to strengthen the defence relationship between the two countries. The two countries agreed to control the dissemination of weapons of mass destruction, work together to maintain security and stability, wage war against terrorism and religious extremism, and safeguard the commercial routes both sea and land (Samuel, 2007).

It was something that later on developed the concept of the Indo-Pacific region. It helped both countries to supplement each other in their strategic zones (Grare, 2020). The main reason for increasing USA naval power in the Indian Ocean was to provide security to the SLOCs. The increasing traffic in the Indian Ocean has increased the importance of the Indian Ocean for the major powers. Hence, the increase in the USA naval forces aimed to secure the SLOCs and the important choke points of the Indian Ocean. It was also an answer to the power projection of the PLAN in the Indian Ocean (Hilali, 2015).

However, there was a slight shift in MALABAR exercises. The USA forces also started to conduct Malabar exercises in the Pacific Ocean in addition to the Indian Ocean. In 2009, the military exercise was held at the coastal regions adjoining the island of Japan. In this military exercise, Japan also participated. It was the second time that Japan also participated in the Malabar exercise after 2007). India declared that there is a need to control the choke points, essential islands, and vital trade routes. India outlined the region that they aspire to dominate. They declared that their strategic circle starts from the Persian Gulf to Malacca Strait and the South East Asian region. This policy of India towards the Indian Ocean was known as the "Look East Policy" (Scott, 2006).

However, it was not until 2004 that India gave more attention to developing its naval capability. In 2004, the Indian Maritime Doctrine was formulated, under which it was stated that the Indian navy would move forward from its coastal areas into the Indian Ocean. In 2007, the naval doctrine was revisited by India, and India extended its national interests to the vast stretches of the Indian Ocean. (Scott, 2006). In November 2011, USA President announced a new policy for Asia, "pivot to Asia". The policy's purpose was to deepen the diplomatic, economic, political, and security partnership with the countries of Asia. This USA "Pivot to Asia" was later named the rebalance policy. Although Obama has not mentioned that the aim of the rebalance policy was to contain China. However, China perceived that the USA would encourage other states to contain the rise of China in the Asia and Pacific region.

Nevertheless, the rebalance to Asia policy primarily focused on the region that was part of the Pacific Ocean that is east of the Strait of Malacca. Indian Ocean was not a central concern for the USA. Instead, it was a secondary concern under the USA's rebalance to the Asia policy. The USA has an Island in the south of the Indian Ocean, inherited from the British rule in Asia that is Diego Garcia. Moreover, USA's fifth fleet is also present in the Indian Ocean. Hence the control of the USA was to be handed over to some regional state capable of defying the influence of China (Jones, 2015).

The Chinese were apprehensive of the implications that the policy of rebalances could have for China. China saw the US policy of rebalancing to Asia as a move to contain the Chinese influence in the Indian

Ocean. China understood that India was balancing the influence of China in the Indian Ocean (Hilali, 2015). By 2010, the Chinese submarines were spotted moving in the Indian Ocean, which caused a great deal of anxiety for India and the U.S. (Mishra, 2018).

The USA aircraft P-8 was used to track the movement of the Chinese submarines in the Indian Ocean. The P-8 has a sensor that can identify the submarine's underwater movement. The USA also equipped India with the Anti-submarine warfare technology P-8 to track down the Chinese submarines (Mishra, 2018). The Indian navy reported that the Chinese submarines were spotted after every three months around the Malacca Strait, which is closer to India's Nicobar and Andaman Islands (Miglani & Torode, 2016).

The Chinese submarines were not the only naval modernization that brought India closer to the U.S. Rather, it was also the development of the aircraft carrier by China that caused anxiety for India to contemplate the construction of an aircraft carrier by itself. China has improved the capabilities of its aircraft carrier Liaoning for battle and commissioned it in PLAN in 2012. China is about to complete the construction of its second aircraft carrier, name Type 002. The China Central Television reports that it would be commissioned to plan by the year 2020. China is contemplating constructing at least six aircraft carriers to increase its maritime capability for battle. Meanwhile, the construction of the third aircraft carrier is also going on in Shanghai (Gurung 2018).

Although the USA started to increase the capability of the Indian army, compared to China, India lags in terms of naval capability. China has more naval forces than the USA deployed in the Indian Ocean. China is purchasing more submarines as compared to the USA. China has acquired the naval mines ballistic missile. These missiles can attack and destroy moving ships. China has also acquired the capability to block the Global Positioning System. The USA navy relies for its communication on the Global Positioning System. China has also introduced the fleet of Xian H-6 anti-shipping aircraft, Su-30MKK Flanker G and J-16 Sino Flanker, which has increased the strike capability of China in the Indian Ocean. Despite acquiring these capabilities, China still lacks refueling stations in the Indian Ocean. Although it plans to construct the refueling stations close to the Bay of Bengal, it has still to be done (Hilali, 2015).

In the year 2012, during the 18th Congress of the Communist Party of China, it was decided to make China a rich maritime country (Mukherjee, 2017). In 2013, China published a "blue book" that outlined the increasing geo-strategic importance of the Indian Ocean for China and declared that Chinese interests would be secured in the Indo-Pacific region (Hilali, 2015). It was emphasized that China must safeguard the security of its SLOCs in the Indian Ocean. China also started to envisage for alternative SLOCs to eliminate the threat that is posed by the other powers in the Indian Ocean (Jakobson, 2015).

Similarly, the white papers published by China related to their naval modernization also emphasize the need to assert power in the South China Sea as well as in the Indian Ocean. The tensions in the South China Sea, which provide the route for oil transportation from the Strait of Malacca, are on the rise, and China has to secure its SLOC. The white paper argues for increasing the defence capability of the Chinese navy to become a maritime power in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean. The Chinese naval upgradation was started in the early 1980s to 1990s. By 2013 and 2014 China launched more naval ships, eliminating older ones, compared to any other country. The modernization of Chinese naval power includes anti-ship ballistic missiles, anti-ship cruise missiles, submarines, air crafts carriers, surface combatants, UAVs, and state-of-the-art C4ISR systems (Upadhyaya, 2017). China increased its naval forces and capabilities due to the increase in the encirclement of China by the US policy of rebalancing to Asia. In the policy of rebalancing to Asia, the US has established strategic cooperation with Japan to contain China in the Pacific Ocean. While in the Indian Ocean US has been relying on strategic cooperation with India to contain China

Moreover, China is developing ports at a different strategic location in the Indian Ocean and modernizing its naval power. China is providing military and economic assistance to the littoral states of the Indian

Ocean to get access to the ports. China has been confronted with the problem of what analysts have termed the “Malacca Dilemma”. As discussed earlier, the primary petroleum from the Gulf and Africa reaches China from the Strait of Malacca. If the hostility in the Indian Ocean against China increased and this Strait was blocked, China would not be able to get the required petroleum for its consumption. China recently launched CPEC (Mukherjee, 2017) under the OBOR initiative to overcome this problem. China has developed a port in Gwadar, bordering Iran, in Pakistan. In 2015, President Xi Jinping of China announced a project of \$45 billion that would be developed along the corridor connecting the Chinese province of Xinjiang with Gwadar port city of Pakistan. China pledged another \$28 billion for the investment in the development of ports, roads, and power plants. The investment offered by China to Pakistan was equal to the aid Pakistan received from the US to support the latter in Afghanistan (Jakobson, 2015).

However, the construction of the Chinese ports at different littoral states of the Indian Ocean could not only be seen as a strategic move. China does not intend to build a naval base in Gwadar port. Instead, the construction of the port and the influx of Chinese capital is based solely on economic reasons (Jakobson, 2015). The construction of the ports by China in the littoral states is intended: to cater to its growing working population; secure its SLOC; and safeguard significant-scale investment (Upadhaya, 2017). However, India perceives the growing Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean as a threat to its strategic interests in the Indian Ocean. The Chinese submarines have started to increase patrolling in the Indian Ocean. The presence of Chinese submarines in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea caused a great deal of nervousness for India (Jakobson, 2015).

China’s growing influence has implications for the balance of power in the Indian Ocean. The gap between USA and China is decreasing in the latter, posing a strategic challenge for the former. The littoral states of the Indian Ocean are also concerned about the increasing strategic competition between the USA and China. Under this context, the USA perceives itself as the provider of maritime security in the Indian Ocean. The USA has a naval presence in different places in the Indian Ocean to assure the littoral States of the Indian Ocean that the USA is always there to balance China in the Indian Ocean. The USA has a naval presence in Bahrain, Djibouti, and Diego Garcia. The USA also conducts naval exercises with states in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. Presently, China is the primary threat to the USA in the Indian Ocean, and the USA is trying to balance the growing influence of China in the Indian Ocean by cooperating with different littoral states of the Indian Ocean (Hilali, 2015).

Response of India

In 1991, the USA and India began to cooperate militarily. The USA army commander recently traveled to India. USA and India decided to conduct naval exercises as a result (Samuel, 2007). 1992 saw the inaugural MALABAR naval exercise, which India and the USA conducted annually Between 1992 and 2005, however, there was little advancement in USA-Indian naval cooperation. A Defence Framework Agreement was signed in 2005 by Donald Rumsfeld, the USA Defence Secretary, and Pranab Mukherjee, India's minister of defence, to improve the two nations' defence cooperation. The two nations decided to fight against terrorism and religious extremism, collaborate to maintain security and stability, restrict the spread of WMDs, and protect maritime and land-based trade routes (Samuel, 2007).

The Mutual Defence Agreement of 2005 explicitly seeks to forge a partnership between India and the USA so that they can work together to fight their mutual enemy if China ever again violates any of their agreements in the future. It was something that helped shape the idea of the Indo-Pacific region in the future. It enabled the two nations to complement one another in their vital areas (Jain, 2004). By forging a defence alliance with India, the USA strengthened its control over the Indian Ocean. Additionally, the USA began to expand its fleets in key maritime hotspots across the globe. This deployment strategy also applied to the Indian Ocean Increasing USA naval force in the Indian Ocean was primarily done to protect the SLOCs. The importance of the Indian Ocean to the main nations has increased due to the increase in maritime commerce. To protect the SLOCs and significant strategic sites of the Indian Ocean,

USA naval troops were increased. Additionally, it was a response to the PLAN's power projection in the Indian Ocean (Hilali, 2015).

But there was a little change in the MALABAR drills. In addition to the Indian Ocean, the USA forces have begun to undertake Malabar drills in the Pacific Ocean. The military exercise took place in 2009 around the coastlines next to the island of Japan. Japan took part in this military exercise as well. In 2007, Japan took part in the Malabar exercise for the second time. The helicopters took off from one fleet and landed on another during the surface, subsurface, and air operations. India said that it was necessary to maintain control of key islands, commerce routes, and coke terminals. India described the area they want to control. They announced that the Persian Gulf, the Malacca Strait, and Southeast Asia are the beginning points of their strategic circle. The "Look East Policy" was the name of India's approach to the Indian Ocean (Scott, 2006).

India did not pay more attention to expanding its naval capabilities until 2004, though. The Indian navy would advance from its coastal areas into the Indian Ocean, according to the 2004 Indian Maritime Doctrine, which was established. India revised its naval strategy in 2007 and expanded the scope of its national interests to include the enormous expanses of the Indian Ocean. (Scott, 2006). "Pivot to Asia," the new US policy for Asia, was unveiled by the US president in November 2011. The goal of the program was to strengthen our relations with Asian nations on all fronts, including diplomatic, economic, political, and security. Later, the rebalance policy was known as the USA's "Pivot to Asia." Obama hasn't acknowledged it, but the rebalance policy's objective was to limit China. China, however, believed that the USA would urge other nations to restrain China's expansion in the Asia and Pacific region.

Nevertheless, the Pacific Ocean region east of the Strait of Malacca was the main focus of the rebalancing to Asia program. The USA did not prioritize the Indian Ocean as a top priority. As part of the USA's objective of rebalancing to Asia, it was instead of secondary importance. The USA holds Diego Garcia Island in the southern Indian Ocean as a legacy of British control in Asia. Also present in the Indian Ocean is the USA Fifth Fleet. Therefore, control of the USA was to be transferred to some regional state competent to resist China's influence (Jones, 2015).

The potential consequences of the rebalancing approach for China alarmed the Chinese. China viewed the USA's intention to reorient its foreign policy toward Asia as an effort to restrain Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean. China recognized that India was counteracting its power in the Indian Ocean (Hilali, 2015). In 2010, Chinese submarines were discovered moving in the Indian Ocean, which greatly alarmed India and the United States (Mishra, 2018).

The movement of the Chinese submarines in the Indian Ocean was monitored using the USA P-8 plane. A sensor on the P-8 can detect the submarine's movement underwater. Additionally, the USA provided India with the P-8 anti-submarine warfare system to find Chinese submarines (Mishra, 2018). Chinese submarines were reportedly detected every three months in the vicinity of the Malacca Strait, which is closer to India's Nicobar and Andaman Islands (Miglani, 2016).

India and the United States have become closer all because of naval modernization, not just Chinese submarines. Instead, India's hesitation to consider building an aircraft carrier on its own was prompted by China's development of the aircraft carrier. China's Liaoning aircraft carrier was upgraded for combat in 2012 and put into service with the PLAN. The Type 002 aircraft carrier, which is China's second, is set to be finished. According to China Central Television, a strategy would be required by the year 2020. China is considering building at least six aircraft carriers to improve its naval combat readiness. Shanghai is also actively engaged in the third aircraft carrier's development at the same time (Gurung, 2018).

India remains behind China in terms of naval capability, despite the USA beginning to upgrade the Indian army's capabilities. In the Indian Ocean, China possesses more naval troops than the USA. Comparatively speaking to the USA, China is buying more submarines. The ballistic missile for naval mines has been obtained by China. These missiles can engage and obliterate moving ships. China now can interfere with

the Global Positioning System. The Global Positioning System is a communication tool used by the USA Navy. Additionally, China has added a fleet of J-16 Sino Flanker, Su-30MKK Flanker G, and Xian H-6 anti-shipping aircraft, increasing its capabilities to launch strikes in the Indian Ocean. China currently lacks refueling facilities in the Indian Ocean despite obtaining these capacities. Although it intends to build refueling stations along the Bay of Bengal, it still has to be completed (Hilali, 2015).

Making China a wealthy maritime nation was decided upon during the 18th Congress of the Communist Party of China in the year 2012. (Mukherjee, 2017). A "blue book" outlining the growing geostrategic significance of the Indian Ocean for China was published in 2013 and stated that Chinese interests would be protected in the Indo-Pacific area (Hilali, 2015). The need for China to protect the security of its SLOCs in the Indian Ocean was emphasized. To counter the threat that the other powers in the Indian Ocean pose, China has also begun to consider alternate SLOCs (Jakobson, 2015)

Similar to this, China's white papers on naval modernization emphasize the need to project power both in the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. China has to protect its SLOC since the South China Sea is where oil is transported from the Strait of Malacca and tensions there are rising. For China to become a maritime force in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean, the white paper makes the case for improving the Chinese navy's defensive capabilities. Beginning in the early 1980s and continuing into the 1990s, China began to upgrade its navy. China commissioned more navy ships in 2013 and 2014 than any other nation, while also retiring older ones. Chinese naval forces are being modernized with anti-ship ballistic missiles, anti-ship cruise missiles, submarines, aircraft carriers, surface combatants, unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and cutting-edge C4ISR equipment (Upadhyaya, 2017). China increased its naval troops and capabilities as a result of the US policy of rebalancing to Asia increasingly encircling China. The USA has created a strategic collaboration with Japan as part of its goal of rebalancing to Asia to limit China in the Pacific Ocean.

Additionally, China is modernizing its naval force and building ports in a different vital area in the Indian Ocean. To get access to the ports, China is assisting the Indian Ocean's littoral governments militarily and economically. China is currently dealing with what analysts refer to as the "Malacca Dilemma" dilemma. As was previously said, China receives the majority of its petroleum from the Gulf and Africa through the Strait of Malacca. China would not be able to obtain the necessary petroleum for its Usage if the animosity in the Indian Ocean toward China escalated and this Strait was shut. To address this issue, China just started CPEC (Mukherjee, 2017) as part of the OBOR program. In Pakistan's Gwadar, which borders Iran, China has built a port. Chinese President Xi Jinping announced a \$45 billion project in 2015 that would be built along the corridor between the Chinese province of Xinjiang with the Pakistani port city of Gwadar. China promised to contribute an additional \$28 billion to Pakistan's investment in the construction of ports, roads, and power plants; this investment was equal to the assistance Pakistan received from the USA to assist the latter in Afghanistan (Jakobson, 2015).

Chinese ports being built in several Indian Ocean littoral states could be viewed as more than just a tactical choice, though. China has no plans to erect a naval facility in the port of Gwadar. Instead, the port's development and the influx of Chinese cash are purely motivated by economic considerations (Jakobson, 2015). China is building ports in the littoral states to accommodate its expanding working population, secure its SLOC, and protect large-scale investment (Upadhyaya, 2017). However, India sees a threat to its strategic interests in the Indian Ocean from the expansion of Chinese dominance there. The number of Indian Ocean patrols by Chinese submarines has begun to rise. India was extremely anxious due to Chinese submarine activity in the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal (Jakobson, 2015).

The Indian Ocean's balance of power is affected by China's expanding influence. China is closing the gap with the USA, which presents a strategic threat to the former. The rising strategic rivalry between the USA and China worries the Indian Ocean's littoral states as well. In this framework, the USA sees itself as the Indian Ocean's primary maritime security provider. To reassure the Indian Ocean's littoral states that the USA is constantly present to counterbalance China in the region, the USA maintains a naval

presence in several locations. Bahrain is home to a USA naval base. Diego Garcia and Djibouti. Additionally, the USA engages in naval drills with nations in the Middle East, Asia, and Africa. China is currently the main threat to the USA in the Indian Ocean, and the US is working with other Indian Ocean littoral governments to counteract China's expanding influence there (Hilali, 2015).

Reaction of India

The USA did not, however, anticipate India becoming a regional hegemon earlier. In terms of economic growth, India has not done well. India needs to achieve an economic growth rate of 7 to 9% if it wants to take the lead in the region. In this instance, India must sustain this rate of economic growth for close to 20 years. However, compared to India, China has a far faster growth rate. Some US leaders contend that foregoing a relationship with India in favor of sharing hegemony with China is much more practical. According to this line of thinking, the USA is protecting India from China and Pakistan.

However, the sustained strategic alliance with the USA in the Indian Ocean is also necessary for India's growing claim of regional hegemony in the Indian Ocean on platforms like IORA, IONS, and IOC (Panda, 2014) IORA was founded primarily to foster economic cooperation between its member states by bringing together their respective academic institutions, business, and governments. India established the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) in 2008 to foster greater cooperation between the navies of the Indian Ocean's littoral states. The main reason for founding IONS was to give the navies of the Indian Ocean's littoral states a forum for discussing maritime issues and problems. It was developed to function in concert with IORA. To comprehend and propose practical solutions for the problems of the Indian Ocean, IONS organized workshops, essay contests, and lecture series (Bateman et al., 2017).

The role of Pakistan in the developing strategic alliance between the USA and India has not been covered in the paper. Under the CPEC initiative, China has made significant investments in Pakistan. Pakistan has consistently been the USA's friend in Asia. Pakistan had a role in easing tensions between the United States and China during the cold war. Additionally, the relationship between India and Pakistan is characterized by a history of small-scale skirmishes and wars (Rizvi, 2004). In this situation, Pakistan also acts as a counterbalance to India in South Asia. The USA and Pakistan continue to work together. Therefore, it is important to talk about Pakistan's involvement in the Indian Ocean's shifting geopolitical landscape. The USA policy of rebalancing seeks alliances with other nations in Asia in addition to forging a strategic engagement with India. India has not fully embraced the USA alliance despite the USA and India's rising strategic convergence in the Indian Ocean. India is also thinking about collaborating with other nations to realize its goal of becoming the dominant nation in the area. Additionally, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has made it clear that India is not anticipating playing a balancing role. India, on the other hand, wants to take the lead. India wants to rise to global power status and transform the unipolar global order into a multipolar one. India would become a pole in its own right by 2050, but it would be weaker than China, the United States, and the European Union. India's ambition to become a pole in the future rests on its rapid economic development, increased state capacity, and thriving democratic regimes. (Tellis, 2015)

Conclusion

If India is furnished with the most modern military technology. To defend SLOCs and guarantee freedom of navigation in the Indian Ocean, the USA declared its intention for India to work together strategically on the submarine rescue system, the USA and India began their joint exercises in 2012 under the name INDIAEX 2012, which included Indian submarines. The USA submarine rescue diving and recompression system (SRDRS) was used in this drill for the first time in conjunction with the Indian submarines. Along with participating in combined naval drills with Indian submarines and the SRDRS, Additionally, India and the USA have agreed to build an aircraft carrier to compete with China. In 2012, the USA sought to collaborate with India in the production of defence technology (Frankel, 2011) With domestic help from the USA, India build the aircraft carrier Vishal and it joined in 2018. (Beckhen, 2018). The relevance of India for the USA policy of rebalancing has therefore increased as a result of China's

growth in the Indian Ocean. To strengthen its relationship with India, the USA has begun to enhance bilateral trade and military sales, similar to how China has done with Pakistan and Sri Lanka (Chung, 2018). By forming strategic alliances with the USA in the Indian Ocean, India also began to project dominance in the region. Nearly 50 nations took part in a naval drill that the Indian navy hosted on February 4th, 2016. The objective was to increase mutual trust and confidence among the world navy and to demonstrate to China that India is expanding its naval drills with other nations. The presence of the USA in the Indian Ocean also prompted India to improve ties with other Indian Ocean littoral governments. Indians had a strong interest in regional organizations like IORA and IONS. Only those nations that border the Indian Ocean geographically are allowed to join IORA, according to its constitution. Only nations that border the Indian Ocean geographically may join IORA and be obligated to uphold its ideals and objectives, as specified in specific language in the organization charter. (IORA, 2017). However, when the USA joined IORA as a discussion partner, India welcomed the USA. The USA took seriously the Indian declaration that it would work with other Indian Ocean countries to bring about peace and prosperity in the region. That is clear from the US-India strategic conversation in the Indian Ocean, which started to take shape in 2012. After forging a strategic alliance with the USA, India began to combat Chinese influence among the Indian Ocean littoral states. Through Chabahar (Conrad, 2017) China's access to the Strait of Hormuz could be restricted by India. Furthermore, the western side of the Chabahar port is where the Strait of Hormuz is situated. India has acquired control of the Duqm port in Oman (Hassan, 2019) in addition to the Iranian port of Chabahar, which might have a significant impact on Chinese dominance in the Strait of Hormuz. India has gained another important position through the Duqm port, from which it could repair its military ships and obstruct Chinese passage across the Strait of Hormuz. India has positioned itself as the blue-water navy equipped to counteract Chinese dominance in the Indian Ocean. Additionally, India has established listening posts in Mauritius and Seychelles (Rashid, 2015). The Strait of Malacca is also becoming a problem for China due to India as well. India and Indonesia have formed a strategic partnership. India and Indonesia have agreed in a strategic deal to buy the Sabang port, similar to how Iran bought the Chabahar port. It has given India a prime location from which to prevent China from entering the Indian Ocean via the Strait of Malacca. India and Indonesia have both stated that they will not participate in the China OBOR project. India has begun to roll out infrastructure development projects in those littoral states of the Indian Ocean alongside China. These listening posts have already been established. China, for instance, built a port in Sittwe, Myanmar (Rashid, 2015). The Kaladan Transport project, which would build a route to Myanmar Sittwe port, was started by India. In addition, India began building the Trilateral Highway, which will connect it to Thailand via coastal ports, inland rivers, and modernized railways. India is also thinking about building ports in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh. Additionally, India has begun to lend and provide money to these states. Among the countries to whom India provided loans were Bangladesh (\$3 billion), Sri Lanka (\$2.7 billion), Myanmar (\$1.75 billion), Mauritius (\$960 million), the Maldives (\$128 million), and Seychelles (\$60 million) (Chaturvedy, 2017). For both China and India, the nations that border the Strait of Malacca are extremely important. However, India has been successful in securing Indonesia backing in its opposition to the Chinese Project OBOR. From a geostrategic perspective, Indonesia might also prevent the Chinese from traveling through the Strait of Malacca when they are returning and when they are traveling to the Indian Ocean. China and India, meanwhile, are expanding their cooperation with Bangladesh and Myanmar. However, Indonesia is situated where China may enter and leave the Indian Ocean, if India and Indonesia form a strategic partnership, a conflict between India and China in the Indian Ocean (Joshi, 2022) may become a possibility.

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Conflict of Interest


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