

Indian Maritime Doctrine: Implications for Pakistan's Security

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Abstract: *The Indian strategic mindset has traditionally remained preoccupied with continental defence owing to the exigencies on its land; hence, the Indian Navy received little attention beyond providing coastal defence. As its economy has improved and the international milieu has turned favourable towards India in face of a rising China; its maritime ambitions have also expanded. These will have far reaching implications for regional peace and security. In the short span of about a decade, the outlook of the Indian Navy has changed considerably, while holding steadfast to the basic tenets that determine its strategic priorities in the maritime domain. The Indian maritime strategy has come a long way since the first maritime doctrine was issued in 2004. Subsequently, the Indian maritime doctrines 2009 and 2015 highlight a significant role for the Navy in the Indian Ocean and also point towards India's increased interest in the Western Pacific. This paper aims at analysing the salient features of these maritime doctrines and the corresponding roles that the Indian Navy has envisioned for itself. It also seeks to highlight the extent of India's maritime interests, the likely course that it is expected to take in the future and the ensuing implications at regional and global level besides Pakistan.*

Keywords: Naval Doctrine, Maritime Strategy, Indian Ocean, Pacific, Geostrategic.

Indian Navy's Maritime Orientation

Sitting astride the Indian Ocean, India's geostrategic location thrusts it into a wedge-like extension into the Indian Ocean. While, the Indian Ocean is clearly not India's Ocean; a close look at the evolution of the Indian maritime doctrine suggests that in all its intentions, India looks towards maximizing its role in the Indian Ocean and beyond into the Western Pacific. India has a coastline that stretches for 7516.6 km and over 3 million square km Exclusive Economic Zone.¹ It shares its maritime boundary with seven states including Bangladesh, Indonesia, Maldives, Myanmar, Pakistan, Thailand and Sri Lanka. Owing to its geostrategic location and its ambitions to play a more influential role in world affairs, India has embarked upon a strategy to increase its influence in the maritime domain. This is likely to raise anxiety among regional states that do not view India's intentions of regional hegemony favourably. Moreover, India's trade with the rest of the world is heavily

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dependent upon the seas. More than 90 percent of its trade by volume and 70 percent by value is transported over the seas.² In 2014, India was the fourth highest oil consumer in the world after the US, China and Japan, however, as of June 2016, it became the third largest consumer of oil bypassing Japan according to BP Statistical Review of World Energy,³ therefore, ensuring energy security has become a core national interest.⁴ These figures not only indicate the importance of the maritime realm for India, but also suggest that India's reliance on the sea routes is likely to increase in the future.

Likewise, the Indian Ocean has acquired a strategic significance for virtually every state that relies on seaborne trade owing to its geostrategic location. Oil shipments are transported from Southwest Asia to the thriving economies of South and East Asia. In addition, an approximate one-third of the world's population lives in or near the Indian Ocean Littoral, including most Muslims and virtually all Hindus.⁵ Robert D. Kaplan, acknowledging the importance of the Indian Ocean, asserts that "It is my contention that the Greater Indian Ocean, stretching eastward from the Horn of Africa past the Arabian Peninsula, the Iranian Plateau and the Indian subcontinent, all the way to the Indonesian archipelago and beyond, may comprise a map as iconic to the new century as Europe was to the last one."⁶

Undeniably, the importance of the Indian Ocean has increased manifold owing to the changes in the global repositioning of economic and military power. As the "shift in worldview from a Euro-Atlantic to an Indo-Pacific" takes place, India aligns its maritime strategy with that of the great American naval strategist, Alfred Thayer Mahan. He asserted that "whoever controls the Indian Ocean will dominate Asia; the destiny of the world will be decided on its waters."⁷ This is particularly true in the context of the struggle for gaining maritime influence in the region. The latest Indian Maritime Doctrine 2015, entitled "Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy" aims to highlight India's contemporary maritime security considerations and reflect the incontrovertible link between secure seas and India's resurgence in the 21st century.⁸ Utilizing the advantage of its geostrategic location, India aspires to become the leading Indian Ocean power based upon the principles of Alfred Mahan's concept of sea power. In spite of India's aspirations to become the leading maritime power in the Indian Ocean, its aggressive posturing towards neighbouring states is likely to draw the region into a complex security dilemma, thereby, threatening regional peace and security.

The Indian Ocean's primary importance derives from the interest generated by the emerging and existing great powers. The Indian Ocean is increasingly being recognized as the realm of great power rivalry. The United States (US) maintains its status as predominant power in the Indian Ocean, however, due to the emergence of

a modernized blue water Chinese Navy, the need to ensure the balance of power in the region has prompted a loose coalition of the willing led by the US that seeks to offset the growing Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean and surrounding waters. In recent years, India has also shown interest in the maritime affairs of the Western Pacific. In particular, it has been vocal about raising the issue of freedom of navigation in the South China Sea. China's growing vigor in the South China Sea is looked upon worryingly by the littoral states as well as the US. Despite accusations of land reclamation, China has made deliberate efforts to resolve the matter peacefully with other claimant states and asked extra regional states to refrain from interfering in the dispute. On the contrary, since October 2015, the US has engaged in freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea to challenge China's assertions in the region. India is gradually but surely establishing a strategic foothold in the South China Sea and its littoral, however, the engagement so far has been deliberately kept low profile in order to avoid getting directly entangled in the US-China altercation on the South China Sea issue.

Indian Foreign Policy and its Impact on the Indian Naval Doctrine

The evolution of India's naval doctrine cannot be understood comprehensively without drawing reference to the development of its defence and foreign policy. During post-independence era, Nehru foresaw Indian role premised upon the principles of non-alignment, and for that India escaped from entrapment of the Cold War. Nehru's vision for India was embedded in his staunch nationalism, anti-colonialism and pan-Asianism. Some would argue that his thoughts were idealistic in nature, yet the converse also appears to be true. Two hundred years of colonialism have never escaped the Indian psyche and, therefore, no single state has ever captured the complete confidence of the Indian polity. The 1954-Panchsheel Agreement with China did not last long and soon after both states were locked in a war that would leave lasting impressions on the Indian mindset for many decades to come. The war shifted India's foreign policy to power politics and set into pace the development of a military strategy that aimed at overseeing the development and modernization of Indian armed forces.

Prior to 1962, due to financial constraints of the new state and also the presence of the British Navy in the Indian Ocean, India under Nehru assumed that Indian security would be ensured and it would not have an urgency to develop its own naval force. At such time, India focused more heavily on developing its industrial capabilities which in due course would provide the impetus to strengthen its navy. While Nehru's estimates resulted in a debilitating defeat for India, Indian maritime strategy was further affected by the British withdrawal East of the Suez in the 1960s. Since India did not have the economic resources or the military capacity

to act more influentially in the Indian Ocean, it proposed that it should be declared a 'zone of peace'; this was in effect a calculated move by the Indian leadership to prevent other states from developing ambitions within the Indian Ocean. On the other hand, the scope of India's own maritime operations underwent an expansion, when in 1974 the *INS Godavari* was deployed to evacuate Indian nationals from Yemen.⁹

The Indian Ocean littoral continued to dominate the Indian mindset with the result that it deployed its peacekeeping forces in Sri Lanka and sent troops to reverse the coup in the Maldives in 1988. Over time, India has shown the propensity to expand its sphere of security and demonstrated that the government is more willing to use military force in order to achieve political objectives. India's maritime security interests that had remained limited to coastal security and sea lines of communication until the early 1970s were now expanding into the vast Indian Ocean and its littoral. It was only until December 1991, when the international structure underwent a structural change with the sudden collapse of the Soviet Union and India was left with no choice but to open up to new partners with its Look East policy that India liberalized its economy and for the very first time in over 25 years resumed naval exercises with Western and South-East Asian Navies. As the character of a state's foreign policy is indicative of its power capabilities at any point in time, the modernization of its naval forces presented a new dimension to India's external relations.

India's Maritime Doctrines (2004 to 2009)

After considerable debate and discussion, the Indian Maritime Doctrine 2004 was issued by the Indian Navy. The doctrine aimed at transforming India's brown-water coastal defence force into a blue-water Navy with extended outreach. Technically, a blue water Navy has the capacity to operate 200 nautical miles from its sea shore into the deep sea for extended durations.¹⁰ While, the Indian Maritime Doctrine-2004 is considered a milestone in laying out the future role and task of the Indian Navy, the process had remained underway since the late 1980s. It went further and in 1998, India released "The Maritime Dimension- A Naval Vision".¹¹ The Indian Maritime Doctrine-2004 lays emphasis on the control of important chokepoints and routes in the Indian Ocean. It delineates the extent of Indian interest by stating that "the Indian maritime vision for the first quarter of the 21st century must look at the arc from the Persian Gulf to the Straits of Malacca as a legitimate area of interest".¹² Moreover, this doctrine identifies four types of roles for the Indian Navy to include military, economic, constabulary and benign. These roles are meant to secure India's interests in the face of rising traditional and non-traditional threats. The doctrine seeks to ensure that India's core security and economic interests are safeguarded

especially through the strategically located chokepoints such as the Strait of Hormuz, Bab el Mandeb and the Malacca Straits.

Four years later, the Indian Maritime Strategy-2007 was also issued. It draws a striking balance between India's response to potential threats and its peacetime orientation. Whereas, in previous maritime plans, the inability to deal with strategic exigencies triggered by extra-regional naval forces in the Indian Ocean remained less evident, it was aptly accounted for in the 2007 maritime strategy. Declared by Indian Naval Chief, in its foreword, India seeks to assure the stability of its surrounding environment which would allow the country to attain its 'manifest destiny'. He also reiterated the need to 'provide insulation from external interference' within the Indian Ocean so as to cultivate the right conditions for economic growth and the defence of the country's national security."¹³

It is worth noting that the emphasis on "India's need to maintain isolation from external interference" is a striking pronouncement and gives insight into the Indian maritime strategy taking inspiration from the Monroe Doctrine of the United States of the early 1820s. Nevertheless, the doctrine does not out rightly point towards the states that India would preferably see restricted in the Indian Ocean. In addition, India's cautious approach took into account the overall gambit of its relations with China since the early 2000s, which had witnessed a major improvement in the aggregate with the result that while China was recognized as a competitor, India sought carefully not to overstate Chinese threat in the Indian Ocean.¹⁴

According to the Indian Maritime Doctrine-2009, the Indian government assigned the Indian Navy the role and task to provide for coastal security and bringing both the State Coastal Police and Coast Guard under its wing and emphasized the coordination aspect of the maritime security strategy.¹⁵ In addition, the 2009 doctrine was also significant in that it went ahead by defining the primary and secondary areas of interest for the Indian Navy. The former included the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal as well as the Cape of Good Hope and the Mozambique Channel. Its secondary areas of interest included the South China Sea and other areas of the Western Pacific based on considerations of diaspora and overseas investments although these areas were not classified further.¹⁶

According to the Maritime Infrastructure Perspective Plan-2025, the status of India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands is being upgraded to that of a strategic center that would be the nucleus of India's activities within the Indian Ocean and simultaneously provide an edge in the expansion of its influence east of the Malacca Strait.¹⁷ The islands command was set up in October 2001. The tri-service command serves as the fulcrum of India's naval interactions with the Southeast Asian navies.

India coordinates with the navies of Thailand and Indonesia for coordinated patrols as well as carrying out coordinated exercises with Singapore under the SIMBEX. It is also engaged in MILAN, which are multilateral naval exercises.¹⁸ The Maritime Infrastructure Perspective Plan–2025¹⁹ aims at developing India's island territories and there is strong possibility that the Andaman and Nicobar Islands could soon be turned into a strategic fulcrum of India's maritime ambitions.

Indian Maritime Strategy-2015

For many years, the Indian strategic and political community strongly believed that there was a need to focus on developing an expansive naval strategy, however, lack of consensus on the nature and direction of the Indian strategy prevented concrete progress in this regard. The debate centred on whether India should pursue a sea-denial strategy or one that stressed the development of a blue-water Navy. Since India did not want to sound alarmist for any of the neighbouring states as well as the major powers, it opted for the latter, whereas, "sea control still remained a central priority in Indian maritime strategy."²⁰ This approach was founded on the basis that a less aggressive approach would invite little resistance and remonstrations from other Indian Ocean littoral states, whereas, in time India would gradually come to dominate the IOR through its naval expansion.

The latest maritime doctrine issued by the Indian Navy is entitled "Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy."²¹ The previous edition issued in 2007 was entitled "Freedom to Use the Seas: India's Maritime Military Strategy,"²² The name in itself indicates a change in the priority for the Indian Navy. While, the earlier document stressed the need to have freedom of navigation in the high seas, the subsequent document places a greater emphasis on the role that the Indian Navy can perform in ensuring that such standards are met. The document adds a more active role for the Indian Navy, which is commensurate to its growing naval capabilities. As per the available sources, the latest Maritime Doctrine-2015 marks a vivid departure from previous editions in a number of significant ways, which are discussed ahead.

The Indo-Pacific Discourse

Firstly, the Indian Maritime Doctrine-2015 draws reference to the concept of the Indo-Pacific; a term, which has begun to gain traction in political rhetoric within states, such as, the United States, Australia, Indonesia and Japan. It has also become evident in the discourse of Indian military and political leadership. The 'use of the Indo-Pacific' concept was first made in an article by Gurpreet S Khurana; an Indian naval officer, who has written extensively for the Institute of Defence and Strategic Analysis (IDSA).²³ Khurana specializes in India's maritime strategy and has an

influential voice on issues relating to India's role in the Indo-Pacific region. While, defining the Indo-Pacific region, he refers to it as the 'maritime space comprising the Indian Ocean and the Western Pacific'. Officially, the Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe used the term of Indo-Pacific during his first term in office. He spoke about the 'dynamic coupling' of the Indian and Pacific Oceans. The Australian government went so far as declaring that the Indo-Pacific strategic arc is the country's official region in its Defence White Paper 2013.²⁴ Indian Chief of Naval Staff R. K. Dhowan, while, underpinning the need to revise the 2007 maritime strategy, stated that, "The shift in worldview from a *Euro-Atlantic* to an *Indo-Pacific* focus and the repositioning of global economic and military power towards Asia has resulted in significant political, economic and social changes in the Indian Ocean Region and impacted India's maritime environment in tangible ways."²⁵ Whereas, the idea of the Indo-Pacific is gaining greater acceptability especially in Indian strategic circles, there is an underlying assumption that while the Indo-Pacific serves to legitimize India's role in the concept of coupling the Indian and Pacific Oceans together, it is operationally difficult to accomplish due to the vastness of the maritime area under question.

Primary and Secondary Areas of Interest

The Indian Maritime Doctrine-2015 indicates that its primary and secondary areas of interest are expanding. According to the Maritime Doctrine of 2009, the Red Sea is identified for the Indian Navy as a primary area of interest. Moreover, "the Gulf of Oman, the Gulf of Aden and their littoral regions, the Southwest Indian Ocean, including IOR island nations therein and East Coast of Africa littoral regions"²⁶ have been recognized to fall into India's primary interest areas. While, some regions were previously identified as of secondary importance such as Africa and its surroundings, certain other areas were altogether omitted in the Maritime Doctrine, which included the Gulf of Oman, Aden and the South-West Indian Ocean.²⁷ The secondary area too has expanded to include the "Southeast Indian Ocean, including sea routes to the Pacific Ocean and littoral regions in the vicinity, the Mediterranean Sea, the West Coast of Africa, and their littoral regions."²⁸

Also, included within secondary areas of interest is the South China Sea, which in previous Maritime Doctrines remained at the same position, but interestingly, the scope of the secondary areas of interest was expanded to include the "East China Sea, Western Pacific Ocean and their littoral regions."²⁹ The expansion of interest in these areas indicates the intent and willingness of the Indian Navy to operate effectively in these areas based on priority of interests and its capability to operate in such waters. The new maritime strategy provides insight into India's new role in the Indian Ocean with a set of expanded responsibilities. The document not only

comprehensively revises the previous maritime doctrine, but adds new dimensions into the roles that the Indian navy is expected to play in the coming ten years. In addition, the Indian Maritime Strategy-2015 goes beyond the core areas and choke points of interest to India as previously highlighted to include two additional choke-points: the Mozambique Channel and Ombai-Wetar Straits, which are strategically located at the far end of the South-Western and South-Eastern Indian Ocean respectively.

India as Net Security Provider

The most important aspect of the new maritime doctrine has been the identification of India's role as a net security provider in the region, but leaves open the geographic extent of the region, where it aspires to perform such a role. The term 'Net Security Provider' in the Indian context was first introduced by the United States. While, speaking at the Shangri-La Dialogue in 2009, the US Secretary of Defence, Robert Gates, argued that "we look to India to be a partner and net provider of security in the Indian Ocean and beyond."³⁰ Within the 2010 Quadrennial Defence Review, the phrase was once again reiterated and predicted that "as its military capabilities grow, India will contribute to Asia as a net provider of security in the Indian Ocean and beyond."³¹

Within India, the concept of a 'Net Security Provider' was originally presented during the tenure of Manmohan Singh and later incorporated into the Indian Maritime Doctrine-2015 indicating that it has found support in both the Congress and BJP governments. The role of India as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean highlights two major points. Firstly, India has exhibited the intent to take upon itself the responsibilities that accompany the role of a net security provider; and secondly, this role has been clarified by the Maritime Strategy-2015, which was previously ambiguous. The document defines the concept as "...the state of actual security available in an area, upon balancing prevailing threats, inherent risks and rising challenges in the maritime environment, against the ability to monitor, contain and counter all of these."³²

Towards realizing the goal of becoming a net security provider, India under the Modi Government is reaching out to the Indian Ocean islands. During his visit to Mauritius, Sri Lanka and Seychelles, the Indian Prime Minister outlined a framework for cooperation, which was based on four parts that included defence of Indian maritime interests, enhancing and promoting economic cooperation, establishing a system of collective defence and joint efforts towards sustainable development.³³ India has signed agreements with Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Mauritius to install radar systems for the purpose of coastal defence. The proposed project includes the installation of eight surveillance radars in Mauritius, six in Sri

Lanka and 10in the Maldives. All these radar systems are then planned to be connected to the Information Management and Analysis Centre, which has been recently established. The Indian Navy and Coast Guard are responsible for jointly running the centre.³⁴ In addition, since July 2013, India is deepening its maritime security ties with Sri Lanka and Maldives by taking initiatives to share intelligence on issues such as counterterrorism and other illegal activities in the maritime realm. This trilateral maritime security agreement could be expanded by the inclusion of Mauritius and Seychelles.³⁵ The Indian government looks towards increasing security cooperation with the smaller islands in the Indian Ocean as an effort to legitimize and gain greater acceptance for its role as a net security provider in the larger Indian Ocean region.

The latest developments in the Indian Maritime Strategy are a cause of anxiety for regional states including Pakistan. There is a possibility that the civilian facilities may in time be upgraded and used as military posts aimed at carrying out surveillance and disruptive activities against Pakistan's interests in the Indian Ocean. This apparently benign and collective approach towards security by engaging the smaller island states within the Indian Ocean could, in future, lead to a more assertive Indian role within the Indian Ocean aimed at ensuring the security of India and its partners, while excluding and threatening the security of rival states such as Pakistan and China.

China's Strategy for the Indian Ocean

India is closely monitoring the changes in the Chinese strategy for the Indian Ocean. China has genuine interests in the Indian Ocean that include the shipment of vast quantities of crude oil from the oil rich Persian Gulf region across the Indian and Pacific Oceans before reaching China's coastal areas. Piracy remains one of the biggest threats within the Indian Ocean and the PLAN has gradually improved upon the quality of its ships used for antipiracy activities and increased the frequency of its submarine visits. The 21st Escort Task Force was deployed in the Gulf of Aden in August 2015 which included two Type 054A guided-missile frigates, equipped with advanced weapons like the YJ-83 anti-ships missiles.³⁶

In a recent development, China has started the construction of facilities in Djibouti on the Horn of Africa in order to satisfy its logistical needs in the Indian Ocean. It is the first of its kind since China does not have any naval bases elsewhere. It is noteworthy that Djibouti has the largest American military base in Africa and other states including Japan and France also launch operation from the Djibouti-Ambouli International Airport.³⁷ China has been particularly active in deploying ships in the Gulf of Eden since 2008 to conduct anti-piracy drills. The sheer size of these operations that include 21st Task Force totalling 60 naval vessels, places the

PLAN in a position to not only extend its operations into the distant parts of the Indian Ocean, but also acquaint itself with active naval operations, such as, those that include contingencies affecting freedom of navigation in and around the Persian Gulf. While, China's presence in Djibouti has raised some concerns about the possibility of establishing military bases in the region, China has categorically denied that it has any such intentions.³⁸ At the other end of the spectrum, there are also those within the Indian strategic community, who argue for a cooperative maritime approach with China based upon the experience of joint Sino-Indian efforts at counter-piracy efforts off the coast of Somalia. In 2014, INS Shivalik paid a visit to Qingdao for a multilateral naval exercise and India also extended an invitation to the PLAN for participation in the International Fleet Review at Visakhapatnam in February 2016. Since the increased activity of the Chinese navy in the Indian Ocean waters and greater engagement with Indian Ocean littoral states, India is in the process of recalibrating its maritime strategy.

India's approach towards the Indian Ocean has been to cooperate and coordinate with smaller Indian Ocean states as well as to conduct anti-piracy and disaster relief operations with the major states including the United States, Japan, Indonesia and Australia.³⁹ This allows for greater coordination and interoperability between the Navies of the afore-stated countries and could also become the basis of a joint response to any state-led effort to control or block the sea lanes of communication. In order to promote the aspect of interoperability in the Indian Ocean with the United States and Japan, India is in the process of upgrading its naval hardware. India bought P-8I maritime patrol aircraft from the United States and is negotiating to buy Japanese-made US-2 maritime reconnaissance aircraft.⁴⁰ In February 2016, India hosted the International Fleet Review in Vishakhapatnam, India. It was attended by more than 100 warships from 50 countries, including the United States, Russia, China, Japan, South Korea and Australia. It is the second time that India has ever organized the International Fleet Review; the first being in 2000 and was attended by 29 states.⁴¹ While, the theme of the International Fleet Review was "United through the Oceans", it was conspicuous that the event marked a show of Indian naval prowess; a sign that India is likely to play a far greater role in the affairs of the Indian Ocean and surrounding waters.

Implications for Pakistan

The implications of Indian naval strategy are evident at both the regional and global levels. As followers of Alfred Mahan's philosophy of the control of the seas; India aims to establish itself as the predominant maritime power in the Indian Ocean. India's own version of the Monroe Doctrine, which strongly detests extra regional involvements in South Asia and beyond, into the Indian Ocean appears to have been

relaxed for the United States for the time being due to the strategic leveraging that is a product of this cooperation, but looks upon China as a credible and potential threat. Nevertheless, in the long term, India expects that the US power will also wither away just as Britain's did⁴²; thereby, making way for India to establish its overarching influence in the Indian Ocean region.

India through an apparent 'benign maritime presence' aims to gain control over key choke points and SLOCs in the Indian Ocean, especially in areas surrounding the Strait of Malacca. Such control could potentially become a key factor in strengthening India's ability to bargain with China, with which it has an outstanding territorial border dispute.⁴³ India also considers its areas of strategic interest across the entire Indian Ocean and further into the South China Sea, which is already a source of contention between the other six claimants including China. India's efforts to control the strategically located choke points and sea lanes of communications in the Indian Ocean and its interest in the affairs of the Western Pacific are likely to generate greater anxiety on the part of China and could increase the spectre of conflict between the two Asian states.

Pakistan's traditional rivalry with India that often resulted in confrontation on land has also played out into the maritime domain. The lack of agreement on the demarcation of the Sir Creek estuary, a portion of sea boundary located at the mouth of Rann of Kutch, and Pakistan's bitter experience of 1971, once it was cut into half by India after effective naval blockade in the Bay of Bengal⁴⁴, has only served to escalate the two sides' apprehensions regarding each other. Since, Pakistan also witnessed a second attempt to block Karachi Port during the Kargil crisis, the country cannot cast aside the implications of India's increasing maritime footprint in the Indian Ocean.

Pakistan's strategic partnership with China has acquired a new salience in the context of recalibrated Indo-US relations, which are viewed as undermining Pakistan's core security interests. The US is not only assisting India in the build-up of its naval fleet, it is also enhancing interoperability with India, which requires high levels of maritime coordination between the two countries. As the US maintains a robust fortified presence in the Indian Ocean, it would consequently lead to the expansion of Indian maritime prowess especially in the aftermath of the signing of the Logistical Exchange Memorandum of Understanding between the two sides. Under the terms of the agreement, India would subsequently acquire aircraft carrier technology, surveillance drones, patrol aircrafts, helicopters and anti-submarine equipment. It would also provide the two countries access to refuelling and refurbishing supplies at each other's bases. India by assuming the role of a net

security provider seeks in effect to become a 'regional policeman' at the behest of the US, thereby, upsetting the regional strategic balance at the cost of Pakistan.

Whereas, the Indo-US strategic cooperation is primarily aimed at countering China's growing influence within the Indian Ocean, it will also undermine and threaten Pakistan's security. An area in which Indo-US maritime cooperation is set to grow in future, is in anti-submarine warfare (ASW). Both the US and India are apprehensive about China's increased submarine activities in the Indian Ocean. In context of the Malabar exercises, the two states operate the P-8 Surveillance aircrafts. In a first, the Indian Navy in November 2015 inducted its P-81 aircrafts, which are equipped with US designed anti-sub technology, and US weapons systems including the Harpoon Block-II missiles, MK-54 lightweight torpedoes, rockets, and *Mark 82* depth charges.⁴⁵ In addition to this, the induction of India's indigenously built the INS Arihant into the Indian Navy is also bound to raise the spectre of conflict within the Indian Ocean. Pakistan has the option to respond by deploying its Hatf-VII/Baber nuclear capable cruise missile that is launchable from aircrafts and conventional submarines to counter India's moves.⁴⁶

India has expressed its reservation towards China's proposed OBOR of which the maritime Silk Road is an integral component. Considering it as a systemic expansion of Chinese maritime power into the Indian Ocean, its opposition to the Chinese involvement in Gwadar port is reflective of its own deep-seated insecurities. Viewing the port as an emblem of Pak-China strategic cooperation, India views the proximity of the port to the strait of Hormuz as a potential threat to India's energy and trade security leading some Indian strategists to even describing it as 'India's Hormuz Dilemma'. This security deficit coupled by loftier designs to convert the Indian Ocean into 'India's Lake' has prompted the country to embark on military modernization aimed at strengthening India's presence at sea.

Given that approximately 95 percent of Pakistan's trade and a major share of its energy imports are dependent on transshipment across the Indian Ocean; this presents a disquieting situation for the country. However, today, Pakistan's Karachi, Bin Qasim, Pasni, Ormara and Gwadar Ports could thwart Indian concentrated efforts to impose a naval blockade. Furthermore, China's investments in CPEC and consequently in Gwadar have also made it a stake holder in Pakistan's security. However, given the fact that Pakistan has not permitted the establishment of the PLAN bases at Gwadar, it could pose an operational challenge to defending the ports in case of a military exigency.

Conclusion

As Indian interests continue to increase over time within the maritime domain, the Indian Ocean remains the center of the Indian naval strategic planning. Nevertheless, its areas of primary and secondary interest are expanding with each passing day. India is now cooperating with the US Navy and other regional Navies to establish what it terms a 'benign' presence in the Indian Ocean aimed at countering threats emanating from piracy, terrorism and natural catastrophes; but such a presence can be used to support military missions against rival naval forces, such as, for the purpose of interdiction of the strategically important choke points and sea lanes of communication, if the need arises.

India has increased the frequency and scope of its maritime exercises alongside making investments in the upgradation of its naval fleet. It aspires to build a strong naval fleet of around 200 ships within the next decade. Discourse of India's role in the Indo-Pacific has also generated interest within the wider strategic community with the recognition that such a construct aims to legitimize India as a key player within both the Indian Ocean and Western Pacific. The South China Sea continues to remain a secondary area of interest, but India has upped the ante by raising the issue of freedom of navigation on several occasions. Despite such proclamations, it is likely to steer clear of any direct confrontation with China and concentrate on strengthening its presence in its primary areas of interest. India is undoubtedly looking towards the aggrandizement of its naval footprint in the Indian Ocean and surrounding waters. Apart from others, this Indian naval build-up and dominance in Indian Ocean will have serious implications for Pakistan and China, especially in the context of China Pakistan Economic Corridor.

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