

Indian Ocean and Indian New Tactics

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ABSTRACT

The Indian Ocean is one of the important Oceans of the world. It has great economic, political and strategic importance. It contains several important minerals, raw materials, natural resources and oil bearing regions. Strategically it holds an important position in the world nuclear warfare. The UN General Assembly has passed many resolutions to declare it a zone of peace, without success. This ocean is very important for India strategically and from the security point of view. America already occupies a dominant position in the region. But now China is also increasing its influence in the Indian Ocean region. To counter the increasing Chinese influence India is trying to reshape its foreign policy. It is maintaining close relations with the ASEAN countries. Due to the Chinese threat that India is bolstering its maritime partnership with the United States and is also trying to increase its nuclear submarine force to work as a reliable deterrent. India is also trying to improve relations with its neighbours and is insisting on taking important friends like, Australia, Japan, South Africa and Indonesia along in this process for greater development, peace and security of the Indian Ocean region.

Key-Words:-Indian Ocean, Marine, Strategic, UN General Assembly, Peace.

INTRODUCTION

The Indian Ocean is the third largest of the World's Oceanic divisions covering approximately 20% of the water on the Earth's surface. Its boundaries are connected to Asia on the North, on the West by Africa, on the East by Australia and on the South by the Southern Ocean. It has great economic, political and strategic importance and is rich in several important minerals, raw materials and natural resources.¹ It also contains large oil bearing regions and plenty of marine food, so the big powers are interested in exploiting raw materials, fishery and oil of the region.² It contains sea lanes and is an important area of navigation and marine trade and almost one-fourth of the entire cargo in the world marine trade and two-third of the oil are loaded and unloaded in the parts of the Indian Ocean.³ So any country or power who controls the Indian Ocean has a great influence in the regulation of trade.

Strategically the Indian Ocean holds an important position in the world nuclear warfare. Many big powers have placed great reliance on the fleet missile submarines carrying submarines launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs) for their striking power to become more capable and strong. That is why the UN General Assembly passed resolutions many times for Implementation of the declaration of the Indian Ocean as a zone of peace.⁴ The General Assembly noted the initiatives taken by the countries of the region to promote co-operation, in particular economic co-operation in the Indian Ocean area and the possible contribution of such initiatives to overall objective of a zone of peace.⁵ It was also convinced that the participation of all permanent members of the Security Council and the major maritime users of the Indian Ocean would assist the progress of a mutually beneficial dialogue to develop conditions of peace, security and stability in the Indian Ocean region.⁶ The General Assembly also expressed deep concern at the adverse economic, social and environmental impacts of the physical alteration and destruction of marine habitats that may result from land based and coastal development activities, in particular those land reclamation activities that are carried out in a manner that has a detrimental impact on the marine environment.⁷

¹Parkash Chander and Prem Arora, "International Relations", (Cosmos Bookhive Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi) P.447.

²Ibid.

³Ibid.

⁴The General Assembly Resolution 72/21, December 4, 2017.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Ibid.

⁷The General Assembly Resolution 72/73, December 5, 2017.

While to other countries, the Indian Ocean is only one of the important oceanic areas, to India it is the vital sea and her lifelines are concentrated in that area and her future is dependent on the freedom of that vast water surface.⁸ No industrial development, no commercial growth, no stable political structure is possible for her unless the Indian Ocean is free and her own shores fully protected and the Indian Ocean must, therefore remain truly Indian.⁹

The most littoral countries and the peace loving people of the world wanted Indian Ocean to be a zone of peace, instead it has become the most explosive region. The USA has expanded and modernized the most potential naval base in Diego Garcia and it has a vast influence in the region. Now the Indian Ocean is very 'active' Ocean, perceived by many as the emerging centre of gravity in the strategic world. The struggle for gaining maritime influence has increased among many powers of the world. The struggle has intensified as a consequence of the 'Imperial Overstretch' of US forces, and a commonly perceived erosion of US influence. There is growing participation on the area from other major players seeking primacy along with the US. The new players are mainly India and China, with Australia, Indonesia and South Africa occasionally playing the role of kingmakers.¹⁰

The region has become ripe for geostrategic competition due to the presence of mutually distrustful littorals, who have prevented the creation of an overall security architecture, despite similar priorities and common interests in maritime operations.¹¹ China has been making increased forays into the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) in the interests of energy, security and trade. Spiralling demand for energy from India, China and Japan has led to an inevitable and enhanced sensitivity around the security of the Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) and of choke points which dot the entrances of the Indian Ocean.¹²

While the Chinese have made inroads into Pakistan (Gwadar), Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Nepal, the Indian Ocean Islands and Bangladesh as part of its 'string of pearls policy' of encirclement, India has been trying to cast its strategic net well beyond the region and it is actively pursuing a multi-pronged response strategy, which seeks to neutralize Chinese influence in its immediate neighbourhood while simultaneously courting states on its periphery, many of which are apprehensive of creeping Chinese aggressiveness.¹³ India is enhancing its bilateral ties with South Korea to a strategic partnership, a strategic talk with Japan and the support to Vietnam on the South China Sea are all part of the Indian strategy against China. India is also enhancing its political-military ties with Singapore, Indonesia, the Philippines and Myanmar in accordance to the above strategy. India and Vietnam decided to work together for an open and prosperous Indo-Pacific along with an efficient and rules based regional security architecture, seen as a subtle message to China over its growing military expansion in the region.¹⁴ After talks between PM Narendra Modi and the Vietnam President Tran Dai Quang, the two sides inked three pacts aimed at cooperation in nuclear energy, trade and agriculture besides deciding to step up ties in oil and gas exploration.¹⁵ India is also trying to make cordial and strategic relations with other ASEAN member countries.

With strategic competition in South Asia shifting to the maritime space and nuclear weapon states increasingly relying on sea power, the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) has become a theatre for trilateral security competition between India, Pakistan and China and the developments over the past several years showcase the complicated nature of the situation in the IOR, and lead to a number of difficult questions about strategic stability.¹⁶ Furthermore, Beijing's naval assertiveness in the South China Sea (SCS) has raised concerns with Indian officials, who see a co-relation between aggressive Chinese patrolling in the SCS and the increasing deployments in the IOR.¹⁷

The challenge to New Delhi's domination in the Indian Ocean has led New Delhi to bolster its maritime partnership with the United States and the US-India Joint Strategic Vision for Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean serves as a roadmap for bilateral co-operation on safe guarding maritime security and preventing the proliferation of weapons

⁸K.M. Pannikhar, "India and the Indian Ocean: An Essay on the Influence of Sea Power on Indian History", (Macmillan Company, New York, 1945), P.84.

⁹Ibid., P.84.

¹⁰P.K. Ghosh, ORF, "Indian Ocean Dynamics: An Indian Perspective", April 5, 2011, East Asia Forum, (www.eastasiaforum.org/2011), Accessed on March 5, 2018.

¹¹Ibid.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid.

¹⁴"India, Vietnam to Jointly Work on open Indo-Pacific", Hindustan Times, Chandigarh, Sunday, March 4, 2018, P. 11.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Sylvia Mishra, "Nuclear Weapons and Capabilities in the Indian Ocean: An Indian Perspective", (www.orfonline.org/research/Nuclear-weapons-and-capabilities-in-the-indian-ocean-an-indian-perspective/) Accessed on March 5, 2018.

¹⁷Ibid.

of mass destruction.¹⁸ Due to the security threat perceptions in IOR India is trying to increase its nuclear submarine force to work as a reliable deterrent. As China, India and Pakistan employ nuclear weapons at sea, the Indian Ocean is slipping from a 'Zone of Peace' to a hot bed of nuclear politics. To help reduce tensions, India and the United States have engaged in cooperative discussions about India opening up its military bases to the United States in exchange for access to weapons technology to help it narrow the gap with China.¹⁹

New Delhi and Paris are both also worried about Beijing's ambitions in the Indian Ocean.²⁰ France has given a cautious welcome to China's Belt and Road Initiative but Paris has concerns about the flexing of Chinese muscles in the entire Indian Ocean region, a key worry for New Delhi.²¹ A stronger alliance between Paris and New Delhi can be in two nation's interests because France has major Indian Ocean Naval bases such as Djibouti or La Reunion and future strategic cooperation could persuade Paris to allow New Delhi access.²² China's increasing influence in Maldives is also a concern of worry for India. Now, China has certainly been developing ties and relationships throughout South-Asia and the IOR over the past decade, and has been expanding externally in terms of influence and funding throughout the region.²³

With the tacit agreement of the US, which insists on India's large and capable maritime force playing a larger role in Indian Ocean politics- and given the China threat factor, which looms large in minds of small and large nations alike- it is likely that India will enhance its influence in the region.²⁴ India's strategic ethos will, however mean that it will insist on taking important friends like, Australia, Japan, South Africa and Indonesia along in this process for greater development, peace and security of the region.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Vaiju Naravane, "Why Macron's Visit to India Matters", Hindustan Times, Chandigarh, Friday, March 9, 2018, P.16.

²¹Ibid.

²²Ibid.

²³Rezaul H. Laskar, "Honeymoon over in honeymoon islands", Hindustan Times, Chandigarh, Tuesday, March 6, 2018, P.11.

²⁴P.K. Ghosh, ORF, "Indian Ocean Dynamics: An Indian Perspective", April 5, 2011, 'East Asia Forum', (www.eastasiaforum.org), accessed on March 6, 2018.