

## **New Dynamics in Indian Ocean: A Study of Pakistan, China and India under Regional Security Complex**

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### **Abstract**

The Indian Ocean is significant for the South Asian region and the world powers. The power politics and security challenges are interlinked from an international perspective. India holds an important position due to its vast coastal line. The major challenge for India in the Indian Ocean region is the growing influence of Pakistan and China under the CPEC and the BRI flag. Relations between India and Pakistan have historically been tense, and the future does not appear to promise improvement. At the same time, China is India's largest trading partner and shares a long border. The paper will analyze the growing scenario and effects in light of the Regional Security Complex approach by Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver. The security challenges in the Indian Ocean are not confined to the three states (China, Pakistan and India) but continuously evolving with the involvement of power politics of the regional and international players. The paper will explain three leading states' actions in the Indian Ocean region and perceptions through the RSC model. According to RSC, threats travel from state to state and region to region. The group of states in a region have a main concern about their national security linked with each other such that they cannot be handled separately. Here, the question arises of how regional ties address the conventional dangers and

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provide the framework for assessing the response by the three major powers concerning their interest in the Indian Ocean.

**Keywords:** Regional Security Comple, Indian Ocean, Triangle, China, Pakistan, India

## **Indian Ocean Significance**

The third biggest body of water on earth, the Indian Ocean has 34 littoral states. Similar to this, the international community and the littoral governments place great emphasis on the world oil that travels through the Indian Oceans via crucial Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs) (Hassan 2019). When analysing Asia's foreseeable security issues, the Indian Ocean is gradually becoming spotlight. Tensions are anticipated to increase as China and India both escalating their naval existence in the Indian Ocean and China's concern in the area shielding its maritime trade network with India's goals becoming the central force and security provider in the region (Hornat 2016). Despite its importance, the "Great Powers" have historically paid it very little attention; this was particularly clear during the Cold War era, when manoeuvres, conflict, and trade took place in the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) become the substantial part of global politics as the world politics are also shifting. It is more important and significant element for global powers (Hassan 2019).

The United States has a well-established presence in the Indian Ocean, and how it responds to the conflicting interests of India and China may be crucial in preventing tensions. Due to these changes, many observers predict that an East Asian and Indian Ocean region balance of power scheme is parallel to the nineteenth-century European one would soon emerge. This paper is directing towards the implications of Indian Ocean region with regards to regional and international powers and show that it may not promise harmony and stability but, with "power transition" theory that is leading to rather the opposite by offering the interaction between the three significant stakeholders of the Indian Ocean (Hornat 2016). The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) has recently developed as a strong strategic pivot for fleets from numerous nations.

Conflicts between riparian and other Asian governments over gaining influence have been made worse by this (Qayuum 2021).

The Indian Ocean has seen an increase in competitiveness between China and India. Deep-water port construction in littoral states and military patrols are just two of the actions taken by the two regional leading states to establish influence in the ocean. Although experts maintain that there is little chance of a military confrontation between China and India, escalating actions (such as port construction and military drills) and rhetoric might jeopardize peace in a crucial area for international commerce flows. However, the various unconventional security concerns in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) also present opportunities for China and India to work together with other regional countries (Albert 2016).

"Geopolitics is the battle for space and power played out in a geographical setting," said Robert D. Kaplan in 2014. Energy geopolitics exists in a similar way to military geopolitics, diplomatic geopolitics, and economic geopolitics. Geographical study is crucial because of natural resources and the commercial channels that transport them to consumers. In the years to come, the Indian Ocean will serve as the genuine focal point of conflict between major international powers, according to Kaplan's claim in his book "Monsoon: Indian Ocean and the Future of the American Power in year 2010."

### **Pakistan and China collaboration in Indian Ocean**

China's "one belt, one road" initiative, which includes CPEC, was announced in 2013 to establish land and sea trade lanes for regional and international economic ties. The project is crucial because of its links to the "economic belt" to the maritime Silk Road of the twenty-first century. It offers a crucial terrestrial route connecting China and Pakistan along the Gulf region.

Given the dramatic decline in foreign direct investment, the development of Gwadar Port is essential for Pakistan's financial development. Once it is connected to the rest of Pakistan, China, Afghanistan, and Central Asia via road and rail links, Gwadar will benefit economically because of its nearness to the Strait of Hormuz as a major shipping terminal and trading hub. Pakistan plans to transmit energy and trade to China, Afghanistan, and Central Asia through the Gwadar Port (Saeed 2016).

The alliance will play vital role in IOR. Three major corridors under BRI CICPEC (China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor), CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor), and BCIM (Bangladesh, China, India, and Myanmar Economic Corridor) are reshaping the region's future strategic landscape and security trends. With the opening of these routes and the dominance of one nation as an economic superpower, lengthy travel times and distances will be avoided. With the start of the Belt Road Initiative, China is growing as the significant capitalist stakeholder in the Indian Ocean region under the hegemonic shadow. On the one hand it is dealing with extra-regional powers through the use of strategic military force and on the other hand guiding domestic society through the acceptance of socioeconomic driving forces. The OBOR flagship project CPEC's development of the port city of Gwadar may alter the position of the Pakistan Navy and the dynamic Chinese Navy's existence. Focus on regional maneuvering is intensified as a result of its strategic placement at the navigation point to the Middle East and Hormuz Strait (Qayuum 2021).

Pakistan and China are on uphold of utilizing the best possible prospects of the Indian Ocean Via the CPEC project. There are opportunities for a convergence of Pakistan, India and China are emerging on the surface under complex interdependence by recent regional economic developments.

China and Pakistan have improved their marine cooperation in the Indian Ocean over the past 20 years for their mutual benefit. Pakistan has promoted China's expanding interests in the Indian Ocean because of its strategic location and extensive marine experience. In exchange, China has provided Pakistan with economic, scientific, and military support. In response to these developments, India has increased its naval strength, added a nuclear component, and allied with other nations which share its views (Ali 2019).

### **Insecurities of Three Powers with Respect to Indian Ocean**

The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) has recently developed as a strategic pivot for navy fleets from numerous nations. Conflicts between riparian and other Asian governments over gaining influence have been made worsen. As the USA and China seem to be strategic adversaries, the clash of hegemons in IO is intensifying. In order to redress the balance of power in the region due to the growing shadow of Chinese authority, the USA has an active military presence there. The US's concerns in the Indian Ocean are also influenced by the long-standing rivalry between the US and Iran and Middle East worries. Strategic oversight shows that India wants to become a regional power, and the only viable choice is a potential coalition with the US to achieve its military and economic goals. Though maritime security measures and the expansion of the contemporary Australian navy may have a harmonizing effect on the manifestation of increasing influence in IOR. Concerns about maritime security, such as the protection of SLOCs, the security of maritime chokepoints, Pak-Indian conflicts, and Sino-Indian rivalry, are endangering the stability of the area and could determine the future dominance of IOR. The Mediterranean and Red Seas, the Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf, the China Sea, and the West and East African Seas are all connected by the Indian Ocean. The 21st century will be known as an era of Asian states as a result of the rising

geopolitical and geostrategic significance of these waterways as a forthcoming determining aspect for international politics and commercial economy (Qayuum 2021).

Along with the Soviet Union, the United States played a significant role in the IOR region during the Cold War, but by the early 21st century, Washington had scaled back its involvement. There are currently fresh opportunities and challenges due to the US's goal to rebalance China in the IOR, where both Russia and China are exercising their military and economic strengths. The US is giving India cutting-edge military hardware and helping to construct it as a counterbalance to China's role as the region's primary security supplier. Pakistan's security and economic interests may be badly impacted by India's shifting role in the greater Indian Ocean. It will continue to be crucial to put more effort into enhancing Pakistan's capacity to handle new challenges, safeguarding our exclusive economic zones, and preserving freedom of navigation. We have a chance to increase our exports and industrial via the China-Pakistan economic corridor. The length of Pakistan's coastline offers potential for trade, connectivity, resource exploitation, and economic creation. Therefore, in order to fully utilise the economic potential of our maritime industry, a comprehensive maritime strategy is required.

India and China have pursued economic and geopolitical collaboration, there have been several difficulties in the relationship. Since 2020, India and China have stationed ground and airborne armies along their disputed western frontier. Additionally, the two states have heightened maritime rivalry in the Indian Ocean (Levesques and Solanki 2022). "Security dynamics" in the IOR are equally important when discussing geostrategic importance. According to the some relevent argument, the Persian Gulf in the Arabian Sea (northern Indian Ocean) similarly has a significant

impact on India's security. India's main objective in this sector is to safeguard SLOCs, that face numerous piracy threats in the Red Sea and Horn of Africa. For the safety of Indian-flagged ships operating in the area, the Indian Navy keeps warships stationed in Persian and Gulf of Oman (Ghosh 2020).

Due to China's large economic and military capabilities, India has been anxious about not nudge China. Additionally, India's territorial security may one day be in jeopardy due to the security challenges posed by Pakistan and Afghanistan. There are huge investment projects in South Asia under the Belt and Road initiative are in progress. Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, Srilanka and Maldives are the countries part of BRI. China secured the sea Line of Communication under the BRI in the region of Indian Ocean via presence in the Gwadar and Hambantota ports (Paul 2019). These developments may be alarming for India and drive the regional states to create some convergence in the IOR, which is pivotal for economic prosperity and harmony.

Geographically, the Indian Ocean is located at the core of the globe. It controls strategically significant sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) that connect the Africa, South Asia, Middle East with Europe, East Asia, and the USA. The choke points in this area are where almost 80% of the world's energy transportation flow. Pakistan is alarmed about the frightening upgrade of India's ballistic missile and nuclear weapon capabilities. On the march 31<sup>st</sup> 2016 the demonstration of the K-4 submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM), Which would be necessary to emphasise that India's strategy for establishing an underwater deterrent is well taken. It was a locally produced nuclear-powered submarine (Altaf 2017).



## **Emerging Trilateralism**

For more than 60 years, a triangular connection between India, Pakistan, and China has moulded the geopolitics of South Asia. One anchored in India's division and subsequent Indo-Pakistan wars (the "1947 structure"), and the other in a persistent and frequently adversarial Sino-Indian competition, including a border confrontation in 1962, have given rise to two fundamental and enduring security systems. Exogenous powers, such as the United States and the Soviet Union, tried to use or influence these formations during the Cold War in order to further their political goals. However, in the long run, the 1962 structure is likely to take over as the region's primary security framework. This development can be attributed to China's expanding economic and military might, Beijing's growing closeness to Islamabad, and the Chinese navy's expanding influence in the Indian Ocean (Smith 2013). China rise and Indian economic position in the region have changed the relationship status of region. the strategic triangle in the south Asian region between Pakistan, China and India has rised the concerns even both India and China have sustained their focus on expanding trade and economic growth as a long-term security requirement. Yet, there exist tensions on the security, political, and economic pillars of southern Asia that might have a significant impact on the region's development, bring in the return of geopolitics, and sever linkages between national political and economic systems around the world (Ayres, Elizabeth, and Markey 2016).

Recently China hosted the first "China-Indian Ocean Region Forum," which included 19 nations from the area, including all of India's neighbours with the exception of India, which was the lone country to decline to participate in the new Beijing strategic initiative. According to a statement from the forum's organisers, the China International Development

Cooperation Agency (CIDCA), participants came from 19 nations, including Indonesia, Pakistan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal, Afghanistan, Iran, Oman, South Africa, Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania, Seychelles, Madagascar, Mauritius, Djibouti, and Australia. China "stood ready to provide appropriate financial, material, and technical support to nations in need," according to a statement from CIDCA, and "suggested to build a marine disaster prevention and mitigation cooperation mechanism between China and countries in the Indian Ocean region." China "suggested, with the assistance of Yunnan, the formation of a blue economy think tank network for China and nations in the Indian Ocean region." In the statement, it was stated that the participating nations had made a commitment to working together to "strengthen policy coordination, deepen development cooperation, increase resilience to shocks and disasters, and enhance relevant countries' capacity to obtain economic benefits through use of marine resources such as fisheries, renewable energy, tourism, and shipping in a sustainable way" (Krishnan 2022). According to Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver's Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), regional security complexes mature inside regional borders that are physically detached from adjacent regions.

These readily recognisable barriers contain belongings like mountains, oceans, and, occasionally, a neutral zone between two sites. The theory holds that security concerns differ by region, and as a result, each region's influential security complexes have sway over the security concerns and policies of the nations within that region (Buzan and Waever 2003). India's holy alliance with USA in IOR is under debate for the rest of regional states. As regional states are gathered to come on a point regarding the IO long run policy, India as long coastal state can't be neglected. As the regional state the India's

security challenges in IOR are linked to other players of region and compel to cooperate and provide the base for regional complex.

The India-Pakistan-China triangle is one of the most important geopolitical relationships in the region. The proximity of the three nuclear-armed nations makes up this triangle, making any military standoff or conflict seem like it could result in the use of nuclear weapons and increase the probability of a two-front clash for India against a Sino-Pakistani joint military defence. India, Pakistan and China are part of a strategic triangle that includes the United States. Each state's regional posture is specifically influenced by the power disparities between it and China and Pakistan. New Delhi has contacted China's neighbours to forge alliances with nations in Southeast and East Asia. The triangle is also impacted by how China views a U.S. containment policy that includes India or other way the emerging complex may provide a base to collaborate to secure the IOR. The complex dynamics of the India-Pakistan-China triangle are also strengthened by the position of the United States in the region which make conflict a consistent phenomenon that has to be coped or abolished. This is true despite attempts at diplomatic manoeuvres and confidence-building methods to seizure of uncontrolled prosperous and unplanned conflict in the triangle (Tourangbam 2020). Finally, it may be argued that Pakistan has a keen interest in controlling the rivalry and tense times between China and India. There are undoubtedly a variety of variables that influence Pakistan to support China. This is unavoidable. Pakistan collaborates closely with China on defence matters in addition to their collaboration on the CPEC megaproject. Both nations have a long-standing strategic partnership that cuts across many different disciplines. The governments of India, China, and Pakistan should all be aware of the

tremendous effects that their actions and relationships have on one another. It is vital that everyone work together to gain the fruits of IOR.

The Indian Ocean, known as the source of "blue water" politics, has developed into a critical strategic region and is now seen as strategically important for regional and international powers to ensure the export of crude oil from the Persian Gulf to the world's most industrialised nations. Because of its potentially unstable location for geopolitical conflict, it is a major route for international trade and economic activity as well as a highway to conflict zones. The Indian Ocean strategic situation is altering the entire region dynamics because of the use of hard power diplomacy by US and China's aggressive natured soft power diplomacy impacting the region at wider level. But China has gained a lot of respect and clout among nations in the Indian Ocean region. The US appears committed to defending the important commercial sea lanes, sustaining defense-in-depth to keep key chokepoints open, and cleansing the area against more general geostrategic rivalry in the Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean. China has established itself as a strong ally for the island and littoral states in the Indian Ocean. The Maritime Silk Road has provided an extra arena for collaboration on business and security issues within Beijing's Belt and Road Initiative. Because the Chinese base hardens its situation as a new actor in the region. China has countered the strength of France, India, Japan, and the United States by establishing its first external military post in Djibouti (2017) on the coast of the Indian Ocean.

Regional security complexes may have an impact on the behaviour of global powers who may also be interested in these regions. The five categories of security complexes are economic, military, cultural, political and environmental. Each division has interacted with every other division to some extent and has a big impact on the regional security dynamics. Therefore, when

addressing issues relating to security, governments must take into account protecting all five aspects. Researchers from RSCT also advance the concept such a referent object. In the five dimensions of security complexes, the referent object may be utilised as an indicator to denote a security issue. A referent object can be used to investigate a problem, classifying it as a security problem. The referent object can be easily defined from some angles, such as the military, political, economic, rule of law, or ideologies, as well as from others, such as the economy and not going bankrupt. For nation-states, it may also mean the survival of economic chains that do not endanger the supply of essentials to the state. The criteria used to determine if a referent item poses a security risk and the level of complexity required to do this assessment are both unique (Buzan and Waever 2003).

## **Conclusion**

There are a number of non-traditional threats to maritime security and stability issues along the traditional disputes long-standing maritime hostilities between India and Pakistan, competition between India and China in the Indian Ocean environmental issues like pollution and water disputes, criminal threats, and the international threat of terrorism, insurgency, and organised crime are some examples of traditional maritime threats. The proliferation of nuclear weapons, terrorism, transnational criminal organisations, illicit fishing, human trafficking, illegal migration, food shortages, energy security, trafficking in weapons, and illegal migration are further non-traditional threats. Barry Buzan's typical explanation of RSC focuses solely on concepts of neighbourhood and geographical borders, both of which are wholly continental in character. The IOR greatly conditioned and significantly changes the nature of the regional complex. If it is included in that part and maritime body which is a vast water body with neutral status and more participants from Africa and

Southeast Asian countries greatly enhance the nature of SA-RSC from a highly securitize region to more mature region. As we already know, the maritime body permits excellent cooperation between the three powers (Pakistan, China, India) as well as other potential actors who can engage in the economic initiatives, the above work has examined the possibility of transforming the SA-RSC from a harsh region to economically mature cooperative region under the domain of IOR.

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