

The Place of the Indian Ocean in the strategic rivalry between India and China

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Abstract:

In recent decades, the rotation of international power has been slightly directed towards Asia; in the meantime, the emergence of two Asian powers, India and China, has attracted the most international attention. Although these two countries have a history of civilizational friendship, they currently see each other as rivals more than anything else. While both have unresolved border disputes, in recent decades, the Indian Ocean has become a place of strategic rivalry for both countries. Since the seas play an essential role in gaining the power of great powers, the dream of becoming a great power will only come true with the influence of the seas and water. This research, which investigated the rivalry between India and China in the Indian Ocean, shows that the rivalry of both countries in this region is more than anything else for the purpose and motivation of gaining power, which both countries are looking for.

A: Introduction and Problem Statement:

Mastering the waters is essential in gaining countries' power in international relations. Since most of the world is made up of water, with the development of industry and technology, a large part of world trade is transferred through water. This means that sea access can impact countries' economic growth and power. In recent decades, the world has witnessed the emergence of some Asian countries, among which the rise of India and China in the economic field is also significant. Two countries that dream of becoming world powers. Currently, they are more strategic rivals than friends. How these two countries, as emerging countries, can continue their progress and gain power is a considerable debate, but due to the

importance of water in gaining power, the great powers of these two countries have also focused on the Indian Ocean. In this research, I am trying to find the answer to this question by studying the strategies of these two countries: What is the place and significance of the Indian Ocean for the strategic rivalry of China and India?

B: Literature Review:

The ocean and the sea play an essential role in the ability of political units, and this issue has been emphasized by politicians, geographers, and political researchers over the last century. There is a famous quote from Walter Raleigh, the famous 17th-century British politician, who says: "Whoever dominates the sea will rule the trade, and whoever takes over the world's trade will rule the

world's rich and eventually the whole world (Heuser, 2017). Alfred Mahan, the most famous U.S. naval strategist in the 19th century, argues that no nation can aspire to become a great power without mastering the sea. For this reason, by emphasizing that the effective use of the sea for commercial and military purposes is the source of wealth and the position of British superiority, he encouraged the commanders to dominate the sea not only to block the enemy's trade ports and army and land. To get stuck, but to provide the platform for maritime trade and economic growth to gain global power as the primary goal of the navy (Manship et al.1964). Contemporary political science scientists have also emphasized the political importance of the seas in global governance. Berry Using the concept of sovereignty over the Great Sea, Posen argues that the United States has comprehensive sovereignty in the sense of exerting global power over the sea, and in this way, has perpetuated its hegemony (Posen, 2003) Historically, there are clear examples of There is a connection between international water areas and the empowerment of international actors. In the era of European supremacy during the colonial period, European countries dominated the open seas. The supremacy over the sea was one of the principal axes of the competition between the Soviet Union and the United States during the Cold War.

In the contemporary era, the United States' power acquisition in the international system has been made possible by access to all areas by dominating the high seas routes. These are examples that show that superiority and dependence in the international system are directly related to the dominance of global open water policy, so only a handful of states that are superior powers rule the seas if the open waters provide the capacity for easy communication route, prosperous existence, resources for easy expansion of the sphere of influence and imposing restrictions on rival countries and achieving the position of superior power in the international system. Political units through developing marine infrastructure of ports, stations, and offshore naval bases in open waters,

expanding communication networks (managing the flow of capital, goods, and energy through the development of investment and maritime trade networks), increasing expenditures, and upgrading the equipped navy and presenting the future maritime strategy and vision in pursuit of gaining superior maritime power (Ahmad, 2014). The theoretical propositions of sea power are not only a useful concept to explain the emergence of China as a sea power and the comprehensive measures of this country to gain supremacy in the Indian Ocean but also India's struggle to maintain and expand its traditional position and balance this country against It shows China's influence in the Indian Ocean through increased capabilities and maritime cooperation with China's competitors.

C: Research Methodology:

For this research on the strategic rivalry of India and China in the Indian Ocean, a secondary data analysis methodology was employed. Data was collected from various reputable sources, including academic journals and credible websites. The selection criteria for these sources focused on their relevance, credibility, and the recency of the information provided. The data was then systematically reviewed and synthesized to identify key themes and patterns in the strategic behaviors and policies of both India and the chain. This approach allowed for a comprehensive understanding of the geopolitical dynamics in the Indian Ocean, supported by a robust body of existing literature and expert analysis.

Finding and discussion:

A: China's and India's Strategies in the Indian Ocean:

As we know, the Indian Ocean is one of the three largest oceans in the world. This ocean ranks third after the Pacific Ocean and the Atlantic Ocean. This ocean borders the countries of East Africa, the Arabian Peninsula, East Asia (Australia), and Southeast Asia, and in the north with the Indian subcontinent, which through three important straits (Hormuz, Bab al-Mandab and Malacca) to South China, the Red Sea. and the Persian Gulf are connected (Weimar, 2013). Due to its geographical

location, this ocean is vital for empowering new emerging powers such as China and India.

One of the events of the contemporary century and the recent decades is the emergence of China as an Asian and regional power. The position of the Indian Ocean is significant for China's power-building, and this country knows it plays an extraordinary role in continuing and gaining more power (U.S.EIM, 2022) means that China must have influence in this ocean for its growth. This country is dependent on this ocean in many ways, and as the largest importer of energy in the world, a large part of it is transferred through the Indian Ocean. They need this ocean to ensure the security of their property. According to some data, more than 90% of China's foreign trade is carried out by sea, and a large part of this trade is related to the routes that must be transferred from the Indian Ocean (Kunsheng, 2014). For example, the European Union is China's second-largest export partner through this ocean. The volume of China's exports reached 2.59 trillion dollars in 2020. The countries of the Middle East, South Asia, and Central and South Africa are also China's customers who have to transfer their goods through the Indian Ocean.

Considering that China needs to export from the Indian Ocean, it is noteworthy that, on the one hand, the lines of the Chinese Sea that connect China to the Indian Ocean are long. Despite the countries' efforts, this ocean is still entirely of threat. Security is facing issues such as terrorism, piracy, etc. On the other hand, China's competitors, such as India and the United States, are trying to limit China's position, which can multiply the vulnerability and challenges of this country. For this reason, China knows how vital its presence in the Indian Ocean is. This means that the Indian Ocean is still not a stable region in terms of security, and the efforts of external and extra-regional powers such as America have not been able to remove these threats altogether (Lou, 2012). Now it is necessary to know why and how this region and the ocean are essential for India.

India's strategic thinking against the fear of China and Pakistan from the north and west is land-

oriented. Since these threats are not temporary and stable, in the last few decades, the Indian Ocean has become an essential place for India to limit China's activities. China considers India the successor of the British Empire, and they believe that India is trying to take over the entire Indian Ocean and India is dreaming of this (Frankel et al. (2011).

India's only goal is to defend against China's invasion. It is not the ocean, but this country dreams of gaining power and becoming more considerable in the region and maybe even in the world; this is if India is deadlocked in terms of territory and they see the Indian Ocean as a place where they can follow their strategies. Moreover, it gets closer to its goal. Of course, this is not only about India, but both countries have a dream of growing up in the region. The dream of growing up is something that, according to Tan Chung, lies in China's religious and civilizational beliefs (Chung, 2009). India, while dreaming of greatness, is in trouble territorially because it is surrounded by countries through which it cannot do anything. and Myanmar is isolated (Sikri, 203: 250). In his article, Tan Chung mentions India and China as two twin civilizations, both of which were great civilizations in the past, and according to their civilizational past, both countries dream of growing up again (Chung, 2009). According to what was mentioned, India currently considers the Indian Ocean a place where superior power can be achieved. According to the emphasis of "Pranab Mukherjee," the former foreign minister of India, after many long years of internal focus and land-oriented price policy, we once again look to the sea for our development not only as a maritime power but as a result as a world power. (Ganapathi, 2015). The Indian Ocean is vital to India because it is seen as an economic gateway and a cultural bridge connecting India to the surrounding countries—90% of the trade volume and all oil imports. The sea does India and the Indian Ocean play an important role.

In addition to the fact that India considers the Indian Ocean geographically and historically significant for itself, the rise of China in this region has created concerns for this country. India fears that China wants a complete blockade of this sea.

Although China is not a power based in the Indian Ocean, it has had much influence in this region in recent decades. From the trade and investment network to the modernization of naval forces and the development of seaports, it has played an active role in the Indian Ocean (Sikri, 2014).

B: China's Economic and Military Influence in the Indian Ocean:

China appears to be the economic and military leader in the Indian Ocean, and this has created concerns not only for India but also for many countries in South Asia and around the Indian Ocean (Frankel et al. (2011). Sino-centralism provided the ground for China's investment in the Indian Ocean to obtain natural resources. At least in the last decade, China's economic strategy for playing a role in the Indian Ocean has been increasingly influenced by the Belt and Road Initiative. This is the grand initiative of China's strategy in transit, connectivity infrastructure, energy, industrial trade cooperation, and investment to realize the Chinese dream and national rejuvenation of China. The proposal of this initiative was first proposed in 2013 by Chinese President Xi Jinping and approved by China's State Council in 2015 as the "Belt and Road Initiative (Wang, 2027).

In recent decades, China has significantly evolved its military strategy to protect its interests in the high seas. Presenting new naval strategies in official documents shows new dimensions of China's naval orientation in the new era. For a large part of the post-Cold War era, the foundation of China's naval strategy was based on the close sea defense strategy of Admiral Liu Huaqing, the founder of China's modern navy. The same strategy was to implement the maritime denial tactic to defend territorial integrity when attacking China by sea and by the seas near the geographical area, the first island chain from the Kuril Islands, the Japanese archipelago to the Ryukyu Islands, Taiwan, and the Philippines was included (Wang, 2027).

In the last decade, Chinese leaders have pursued the realization of China's interests in the high seas by

managing the seas and oceans. That is, the traditional mentality of the superiority of land over sea should be abandoned by China, and primary attention should be paid to the management of seas and oceans, as well as the protection of maritime rights and interests. In the next step, the Chinese authorities began to formulate China's new maritime orientation under the title of protection of the high seas, which paved the way for the presence of the Chinese navy on the high seas as the primary mission in the coming decades (Frankel, 2011).

As China's transit bridge with South Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe, the Indian Ocean is essential in China's maritime trade and investment network. During the last decade, this vital thing has been done in the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative through financial investment and strengthening trade relations in the marginal and island countries of the Indian Ocean. In this regard, China has promoted its relations with some marginal and island countries of the Indian Ocean in the framework of the land corridor economic packages "Silk Road Economic Belt and Sea Corridor of the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road" (Khurana et al. (2008).

China's tangible presence in the Indian Ocean in the framework of new historical missions by carrying out anti-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden started in 2008 and has continued in the following years through forming a chain network of maritime infrastructure. In 2016, China established its first military base in Djibouti and developed logistics ports in South Asia and East Africa to support its naval fleet in the Indian Ocean. From Bangladesh to Sri Lanka, the port of Kyakpur, Myanmar, the port Karachi and Gwadar, Pakistan, Malé Port, Sudan Port, New Massawa Port, Eritrea, Zanzibar New Port and Dar es Salaam Port, Tanzania, Lamu Port, Kenya, Technobanin Port, Mozambique, Durban Port, South Africa are all ports that show the development of the China Sea. The context has become too much that I just mentioned the names of these ports (Wang, 2017).) What can be seen is that China continues to expand its influence and develop ports, but what is India's place in this regard?

The position of the Indian Ocean in the production of India's national power is such that many in New Delhi believe that the Indian Ocean should be the ocean of India. Therefore, New Delhi's belief in leadership and dominant influence in the Indian Ocean as its backyard is what the United States has done in the early stages of its rise in North America and the Western Pacific Hemisphere (Berlin, 2006). Therefore, the Indian authorities adopted the idea of the exclusive belonging of the Indian Ocean to New Delhi by adapting the Monroe Doctrine of the 19th century of the United States, emphasizing the illegality of the presence of foreign powers in India's neighborhood and the need for India's global policy neighbors to rely on India as a security provider under the title Kaplan, 2010. Meanwhile, India dreams of dominating the waters close to its shores, including the North Indian Ocean, the Bay of Bengal, and the Arabian Sea in the short term and the entire Indian Ocean in the long term, which, with the growing presence of China in this ocean area and its neighborhoods is facing; For this reason, the increasing activity of this country in the political-economic equations of the Indian Ocean has had a direct impact on the perception of India's threat against China and the turning of this country's land-based approach to the sea-based approach (Frankel et al. (2011).

India's primary concern in this field is the complete dominance of China on the Indian Ocean and completing its maritime encirclement. With the significant increase in patrolling and the deployment of Chinese naval forces in the Indian Ocean, the concerns of Indian policymakers are focused on China's policy towards their country and its growing influence in the Indian Ocean. From their point of view, China's effort is to gain permanent access to these waters and the strategic blockade of India.

The blockade of India by China is carried out in two economic and security ways around this country. Economically, Beijing's capture of the emerging economic markets around the Indian Ocean interests threatens New Delhi's economy in this ocean. China's trade with emerging markets such as Africa, the Persian Gulf Cooperation Council, and

the ASEAN group is much more than that of India. In terms of security, India's primary concern is development. China's "string of pearls" strategy is around India. China is working to create a series of seaports under the name of "Strings of Pearls," which starts from China's coastline and stretches through Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean to the east coast of Africa (Frankel et al. (2011).

C: China's Influence and India's Maritime Balance in the Indian Ocean:

The global policy of China's influence in the Indian Ocean has been an important factor in guiding New Delhi's strategic plans in this ocean. India's set of actions to increase its competitiveness and balance against China can be done by increasing India's capabilities and maritime actions, deepening relations with peripheral countries and an island in the Indian Ocean, and strategic partnership with extra-regional countries in the framework of the Indo-Pacific approach (Bastos, 2014).

To become the leading maritime power in the Indian Ocean, India has increased its military spending and modernization of its navy (Khurana et al. (2008). Increasing military spending provides India with a counterbalancing capability against China's naval influence across the Indian Ocean. In response to China's expansion in the Indian Ocean, the Indian Navy seeks to control the straits in this ocean as a bargaining tool in the international power game to protect its strategic interests and transform the existing naval units in the island territories. The country's global policy has created new infrastructures in the strategic islands of Andaman and Nicobar (Pandit, 2019). In response to China's presence in the Indian Ocean, India is expanding its naval bases in strategically located countries to counter China. The India-Seychelles agreement on the development of a naval base on the island of Asamishen, the India-Iran agreement for the construction of Chabahar port in 2016, the India-Indonesia agreement in 2018 for India's access to the port, Sabang, and the India-Oman agreement in 2018 for the establishment of a base in Duqm port. It shows the development of Indian naval bases in the marginal countries of the Indian Ocean. Some believe that India is creating a

diamond necklace strategy for the strategic encirclement of China by developing naval bases in the mentioned countries and strengthening relations with Japan, Mongolia, and Central Asian countries (Bhattacharya et al. 2021).

Against China's string of pearls, India has expanded the so-called coastal radar chain to know about China's maritime presence in the coastal and island countries of the Indian Ocean. The network was launched to enable surveillance of the high seas, especially threatening trends, and to help increase India's influence in the coastal countries of the Indian Ocean, including Maldives, Myanmar and Bangladesh, Mauritius, Seychelles, and Sri Lanka. India plans to increase the installation of these radar stations in 20 countries by 2030 (Peri, 2020). India considers China's dominance over the South and East China Seas as the basis for exercising this country's maritime power in India's neighborhood.

China's territorial claims in the South China Sea, its aggressive behavior in the East China Sea, and its rapid advance into the Indian Ocean through the Belt and Road Initiative have challenged international law. Indian strategists consider India's presence in the South China Sea to be influential in restoring the strategic balance with China (Peri, 2020). While China increases the presence of its global maritime policy in the Indian Ocean, New Delhi's authority in the coastal areas of South Asia is felt to decrease. The Indian Navy should expand its presence in the eastern seas and be in the western Pacific, China's strategic backyard. India has increased its presence in the Pacific waters during the last decade. For example, two months after the Galvan Valley border clashes, one of its front-line warships was sent to the South China Sea in August 2020.

One of the balancing ways for India is to increase cooperation with countries along the Indian Ocean. The marginal and island countries of the Indian Ocean are traditionally considered India's sphere of influence. As mentioned, India has faced China's massive influence in these regions over the past decade (Bastos, 2014). In response, India seeks to challenge China's influence in the Indian Ocean

marginal countries by deepening its relations with the marginal and island countries while maintaining its traditional position.

During Modi's visit to Bangladesh in June 2015, the \$54.27 million India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline project and the new Dhaka-West Bengal railway were inaugurated. Also, during Hasna's visit to New Delhi in April 2017, 22 agreements were signed by the parties in the fields of nuclear energy defense, cyber security, and media. The two countries' presidents held a virtual summit in December 2020 and March 2021 in Bangladesh. In these meetings, the two countries signed various cooperation documents in agriculture, trade, information and communication technology crisis management, and development projects (Quader, 2019). India's trade with Bangladesh has steadily increased. During the last decade, India has granted three lines of credit to Bangladesh for 8 billion dollars to develop roads, railways, shipping, ports, and defense purchases (Quader, 2019).

Since 2014, India has made many efforts to restore relations with Sri Lanka, which had previously been mistrusted, and only Modi has visited Sri Lanka four times; in 2020, India became the second largest trading partner in the world with a trade of about 3.6 billion dollars. Became Sri Lanka's trading partner. India's foreign direct investment in Bangladesh has also increased dramatically and has contributed significantly to Sri Lanka in the last 15 years in railways, transport, connectivity, and defense procurement. For example, India has paid 450 million dollars for constructing the eastern container terminal, the lease of Colombo airport, and the development of Trincomalee Port and Matala Airport to reduce China's dominance over Sri Lanka (Quader, 2019). The Indian Ocean has also increased, and in 2015, a memorandum of cooperation in the ocean was signed between the two countries. In 2016, the Indian government provided Maris with financial assistance worth 353 million to complete infrastructure projects. The two countries signed a comprehensive cooperation and economic partnership agreement in 2021. India's trade relations with Mauritius have increased over the past decade (Quader, 2019). We have also seen

an increase in India's cooperation in recent years. All these measures show how India is trying to interact with the countries bordering the Indian Ocean to prevent the establishment of relations and the expansion of China.

In addition, in the framework of Indo-Pacificism, India is looking for a strategic partnership with Australia, Japan, and the United States to increase its competitiveness with China in international waters, especially the Indian Ocean. This section presents the conceptual foundations of the Indo-Pacific from the perspective of India and India's strategic participation in limited aspect-based arrangements.

India's Indo-Pacific Perspective The Indo-Pacific concept explains the growing economic, geopolitical, and security relations between the Pacific and Indian Ocean around an integrated strategic system. Since 2010, it has gradually entered the lexicon of strategic foreign policy issues, and the leaders of Australia, Japan, and the United States are increasingly using this term in speeches and official statements. Conceptualizing the Indo-Pacific is a reaction by the mentioned countries against China's maritime threats. (Lombard & Aubin, 2000). China is one of the leading promoters of this concept. By searching for the concept of "Indo-Pacific" on the Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of India, Indian officials in 90 speeches, statements, and press conferences from 2013 to 2022 acknowledged the change in the center of power. From the Euro-Atlantic area to the Indo-Pacific and being affected by the marine environment of this country in the Indian Ocean, it recognizes the strategic area and the base water of the Indo-Pacific.

India's promotion of the Indo-Pacific has taken shape at the same time as China's rise in the Indian Ocean. Therefore, India's approach to the Indo-Pacific is to increase its strategic and diplomatic depth by strengthening its strategic partnership with Japan, Australia, and the United States to balance against China in the Indian Ocean. In 2018, India's Prime Minister Modi described the country's vision for the Indo-Pacific in the Shangri-La Dialogue (Lee-Brown, 2018). While India does

not mention China as a threat in its vision, the components Modi mentioned, such as law-based order and respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity against China's territorial disputes in Kashmir and Tibet against India, the right to equal access to the use of sea and air against China's alleged sovereignty over the South China Sea, according to India, the free sea and Legitimacy of initiatives based on respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, consultation, good governance, transparency, durability, and sustainability, avoiding the trap of loans, etc., against India's opposition, the ratio of influence in the Indian Ocean and South Asia through the Belt and Road Initiative, is practically an Indo vision. - Leads the Pacific to a strategic plan against China (Lombard et al. 2000).

Indo-Pacific provides a platform for creating arrangements based on limited aspects of tripartite or quadrilateral security dialogues. These initiatives are a new type of regional architecture in response to the challenge of coordination among actors in multilateral arrangements and facilitating group coalition-building. It is limited by countries with a shared understanding of identity, political interests, and ways to reduce threats (Lee-Brown, 2018). Despite the differences in the approach of the political units of the alliance of like-minded maritime democracies, India, Australia, Japan, and the United States seek to create a balance against China, complicate the country's strategic calculations, and encourage Beijing to participate in an open and stable regional order.

Conclusions:

The findings of this research show that, firstly, both countries seek to gain power. After years of land-based competition, the Indian authorities have heard this issue; we are now looking at the Indian Ocean as a place to become not only a regional and continental power but also a global power. The Indian Ocean is vital for gaining strength and becoming an economic power because more than 90 percent of the trade of both countries is carried out by sea, most of which is transported through the Indian Ocean.

India dreams of becoming a great power if it has many problems with land-based strategies, and this also adds to India's greater focus on the Indian Ocean because it considers it the right place to realize this dream. Another noteworthy point is that India is culturally and historically associated with this ocean, so it dreams of controlling it. However, China's presence in this ocean can be justified for several reasons. First, considering that China does a large part of its trade through this ocean, considering the length of the lines that connect China to the ocean, this country feels vulnerable for several reasons. The instability and insecurity of the Indian Ocean from the point of view of terrorism and piracy and the sense of danger of restriction by India and America, who are China's main competitors, have made it necessary for this country to protect itself. The second reason is the dream of becoming a great power, which seems complicated without penetrating and dominating the ocean.

In general, the importance of the Indian Ocean for these two countries is vital in different aspects because of its location, which is connected with several other continents. These two countries, which both dream of becoming an excellent regional, continental, and global power, know the importance of the Indian Ocean for the research of this dream. For this reason, each spends a lot of effort and money to help expand its influence. They have to be in contact with the countries on the edge of this ocean and have an alliance. A clear example is Modi's four visits to Sri Lanka.

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