

POWER REALIGNMENT IN SOUTH ASIA – AN OUTCOME OF BRI (CPEC)

Asma Shakir Khawaja and Imran Raza*

Abstract

Pakistan and China, through CPEC, have uplifted decade's old and time-tested bondage to the zenith of economic cooperation on a win-win basis. In the Chinese equation, BRI (CPEC – an integral part of BRI) is an initiative for the economic integration of the global community in the 21st century. In contrast, the US endeavours to ensure the implementation of international order at sea through its Indo-Pacific strategy. Considerable academic work has been undertaken distinctly on the US Indo-Pacific strategy and BRI (CPEC); however, scanty academic efforts have been made on future power realignment in South Asia. By employing Mahan's theory of sea power, this paper explains the future maritime scenario in South Asia, which will evolve due to the power contestation of global players in the Indian Ocean and the formulation of two distinct power blocks with the US and China as leading players. It also answers how Indian Ocean littorals will align themselves in this great powers' contestation. An in-depth understanding of the economic interests of Indian Ocean littorals through BRI and gaining benefits through a strategic partnership with the US will provide insight into future power realignment in South Asia. The paper concludes that China will likely formulate collaborative maritime security arrangements with BRI partners who will become Chinese allies to secure energy requirements. Likewise, India, Japan, South Korea and the US (under QUAD) will endeavour to impede China's economic progress, forming a power block in the Indian Ocean region.

Keywords: BRI, CPEC, Indian Ocean Region, Realignment, Maritime Interests.

States seek survival in an anarchical system through power balancing but not as an aim; instead, it is a by-product of the aim to survive.¹ Similarly, the anarchic system pivots on a self-help basis in which powerful states define international rules for themselves and others to follow.² These states are commonly referred to as poles. Hence, the international system revolves around the polar system, which sometimes remains uni- or bi- or multi-polar depending on the number of significant players. Balance of power between two states can be achieved when one correctly perceives the intentions and threats of another. In the international system, smaller or relatively weaker states align themselves with powerful ones to leverage their power in regional and global matters, resulting in an alliance. The alignment process is continuous, fluid and

*Dr Asma Shakir Khawaja is Executive Director of Center for International Strategic Studies, Azad Jammu & Kashmir. Imran Raza is MPhil Scholar at the Department of Strategic Studies, National Defence University, Islamabad.

oscillatory. It is a two-way process in which a weaker state mostly gets more benefits than a powerful state.

South Asia plays a vital role in regional and global politics. After nuclearization, its significance in global politics has increased manifold.³ Out of nine declared nuclear states, two states, Pakistan and India, are located in this region. Due to this fact, the involvement of global players in this region has become a new normal. Since WW II, the US has maintained its presence in this region through various Naval commands, bases, and deployment of its aircraft carriers. The US has also formed QUAD in the region to deal with any upcoming requirements and implement its Indo-Pacific strategy. Similarly, China has given a new global connectivity concept through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Various Indian Ocean littorals, including Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Bangladesh, are partners with China in BRI. Upon materializing BRI and advancement of QUAD and US-India strategic partnership, the water space of the Indian Ocean will see a noticeable change. Most of the academic discussions have discussed distinctly QUAD⁴ and BRI but did not discuss the issues in light of the future outlook of the Indian Ocean. A clear understanding of the maritime interests of littorals of the Indian Ocean region (IOR) and the interests of global players in this region will facilitate the possible prediction of future power alignment of South Asia.

Theoretical Argument

Command of the sea is not naval. It is one of national policy, national security, and national obligation. — Alfred Thayer Mahan⁵

This paper is based on Mahan's concept of sea power which provides the principle to rule the world through command at sea, a chief and cheap source of trade. According to Mahan, any littoral state's national power lies in achieving sea power because a state with reasonable control over the seas will control the trade and thus control the world. Concurrently, the geography and history of any state also play a decisive role in its international relations. Mahan analysed the function of sea power in the emergence and expansion of the British Empire. In his famous book, "The Influence of Sea Power upon History," Mahan declared the sea as a 'great highway' and 'wide common' with 'well-worn trade routes' over which humans pass in all directions. He also acknowledged various narrow passages commonly known as strategic chokepoints, which provided Great Britain command of the seas. He gave six core pillars of sea power: geographical position, physical conformation, the extent of territory, size of the population, character of the people, and character of the government. Based on these pillars, Mahan envisioned the US as the geopolitical successor to the British Empire.

Mahan's theory of sea power scholarly defines the relationship of a state's power with its sea power. Mahan used dependent and independent variables in his theory; the state is a dependent variable, whereas sea power is an independent variable. Though Mahan has explained his theory through examples of ancient times, mainly from US history, where wooden sail ships were replaced with steel ships and proved that

a state would be powerful if it attained or exploited its sea power, the theory was basically for US decision-makers. However, Mahan's theory is still valid today and in times to come. Like Mahan, Julian Corbett⁶ also emphasized attaining sea power to achieve a nation's power. Corbett was the pioneer of maritime strategy in which he explained that states could tackle superior continental powers during the war through better maritime strategy. The concept of Mahan is still relevant in the contemporary era of the 21st century. The US and China follow Mahan's concept of sea power and build their muscles to achieve an upper edge in power contestation in IOR:⁷ the US through its Indo-Pacific strategy and China through BRI (CPEC). Hence, both are rapidly moving towards formulating alliances in the Indian Ocean.

Two or more states' common interests and goals are essential for successful alliance and alignment. Therefore, for the alignment of South Asian states, understanding their common interests and goals in the Indian Ocean is imperative. This paper provides a scholarly view to visualize the future scenario of maritime security in the Indian Ocean based on a hypothesis that the operationalization of BRI (CPEC) will lead to power realignment in the Indian Ocean. Pakistan and other smaller states in South Asia, which are part of BRI, have common interests and goals; hence, any opposition to this project by regional and global players will be common to all these South Asian states. Similarly, the US and other Asian states, including India, have common interests in Quad and strategic partnerships, so they have a common goal and objective to impede the economic progress of China covertly.⁸ This situation of power contestation in the Indian Ocean will further compound in the future⁹ and may become the *casus belli* for formulating two distinct power blocks in the Indian Ocean. As Pakistan is also a coalition partner with the US in the Indian Ocean, the maritime interests of Pakistan in future scenarios in the Indian Ocean will be used as the main argument to entice relevant lessons.

Significance of Indian Ocean – An Overview

The Indian Ocean, with more than 28 littorals, covers about twenty-five percent of the global space having five strategically significant choke points. It also contains nine sea routes, considered a lifeline for many littorals due to energy transportation from the Middle East to these littorals. The Middle East is the single largest source of oil export, situated at the Indian Ocean bank; hence, sea routes passing through this ocean are crucial for many states due to their dependence on imported oil.

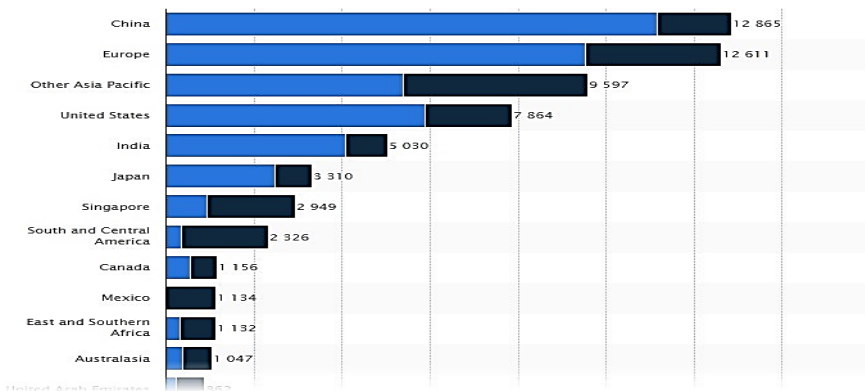
Table 1: Oil Export to World Markets – 2020

Region	Oil Export to World Markets
Africa	7.8%
Asia Pacific	8.4%
North America	26.6%
Central and South America	6.6%
Europe and Eurasia	19.3%
Middle East	31.3%

(Source: www.statista.com¹⁰)

Table 1 depicts that the Middle East is the leading oil exporter to the world market and is expected to sustain its position in the future. The provision of oil plays a vital role in the economic growth of a state, whereas a rival state makes all efforts to slow down the economic growth of its adversary. According to Figure 1 (given below), China was the world’s biggest oil importer in 2020, thus indicating its economic growth. In order to obstruct China’s economic growth, efforts are required to slow down the oil supply to China.

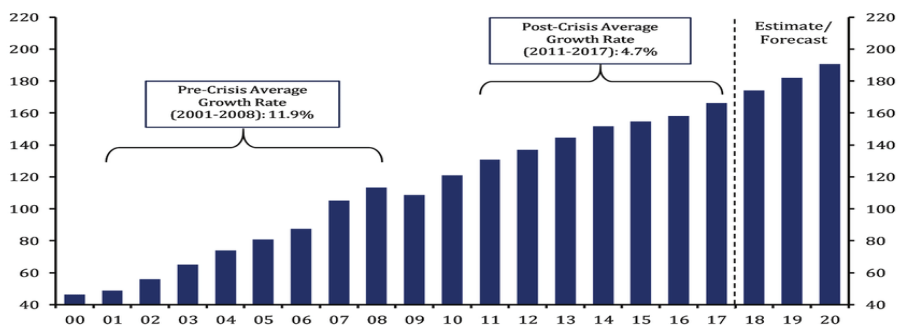
Figure 1: Leading Global Crude Oil Importers – 2020 (1000 barrels per day)



(Source: www.statista.com¹¹)

The Indian Ocean contributes to oil export to world markets and fuelling global economies, including Europe, Asia and the US, by transporting finished merchandise to these destinations and raw materials from Africa and other continents to various industrial hubs.¹² Sea routes transient through this ocean contribute maximum to the global maritime trade. It is pertinent to mention that this ocean has 25 out of the top 100 ports of the world that handle merchandise trade.¹³ Trade passing through the Indian Ocean is continuously rising as it was 166 million TEUs in 2017, which after an increment of about 12%, became more than 195 million TEUs in 2020. The same is evident from the below-mentioned graph:

Figure 2: Trade Passing through the Indian Ocean



(Source: UNCTAD, Maritime Transport Database¹⁴)

According to a US survey, about 20 million barrels of oil and 4 million barrels of LNG traversed daily through the Strait of Malacca, which has become the world's second highest transportation of oil and gas, following the Strait of Hormuz. Approximately 70% of Chinese oil and gas transportation crosses the Strait of Malacca; hence critical to China's economic growth. The shortest sea route to China passes through the Strait of Malacca, offering a minimum time between China and the Middle East, Africa and Europe. However, this route has a severe shortcoming as it passes through a choke point near Malacca, which may become vulnerable if exploited by the enemy. In 2003, Chinese President Hu Jintao termed it as 'Malacca Dilemma.'¹⁵ Other than oil, Chinese shipment of raw materials from Africa and export of finished goods to Asia and other continents are also traversing through this strait. The issue has been debated since then, and after lengthy discussions, a solution came out in the form of alternate routes other than Malacca.¹⁶ BRI is, therefore, an initiative to offset Malacca and have a safer alternative energy route for China. During the last decade, China promulgated its new military strategy,¹⁷ which diverted Chinese decision-makers towards safeguarding overseas interests, including Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs). Hence, shifting the Chinese focus from continental to maritime through optimum utilization of sea routes and overseas assets remains evident.

Chinese Projects in South Asia

Under its BRI, China has invested in Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan. China is laying a gas pipeline, establishing Special Economic Zones, and constructing a deep-sea port in Myanmar. Through a 750 km pipeline, this deep-sea port will connect with Maday Island of Chinese Yunnan province.¹⁸ China offered Bangladesh to join this initiative through the deep-sea port at Sonadia, which Bangladesh discarded mainly due to Indian pressure. However, after realizing its benefits, Bangladesh decided to accept the Chinese offer by constructing a multichannel tunnel at Karnaphuli.¹⁹

Until CPEC and other BRI projects are completed, China needs the safety of its cargo passing through the Indian Ocean; for that, China acquired the Hambantota port of Sri Lanka on lease. Acquisition of this port is a strategic decision due to its location almost midway between the Gulf of Hormuz and Chinese ports. Initially, this port was constructed on a Built-Operate-Transfer basis; however, it was transferred to Chinese authorities on 99 years lease.²⁰ Though this port does not have a direct road or railway link to China, its geographical location can create a strategic impact. Besides providing a springboard to the western Indian Ocean, this port may become another China's foreign naval base after Djibouti.

CPEC, a flagship project of BRI, is also considered a jewel in the crown of BRI. It will directly connect China with the Indian Ocean through Gwadar port. State of art with international standards port and special processing zones are the integral part of this project besides the network of motorways and rail links from Kashgar to Gwadar.²¹

US Presence in the Indian Ocean

Since WW II, the US has been maintaining its presence in the Indian Ocean, with Bahrain as a port hosting its Fifth Fleet.²² Many US Air Force aircraft like F-15, F-16, and B-2 bombers have been stationed in Bahrain since the Gulf War and Operation Enduring Freedom under the US-Bahrain defence cooperation agreement. As per the agreement, the Military Consultative Committee meeting is held regularly between the two states. In addition to Bahrain, US forces maintain their presence in Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait and Oman. Diego Garcia, a British-occupied Mauritius Island, is also under US utilization for decades through a bilateral agreement between the US and UK. This Island has long-range communication facilities, such as an aircraft landing strip from which nuclear weapons capable B-52 bombers, AWACS and maritime surveillance aircraft can operate. Furthermore, US SSBNs (Ballistic Missile Submarines) can also berth at Diego Garcia. Operations of nuclear-capable platforms from Diego Garcia provide significant leverage to the US while operating away from home ports.²³

While having a significant presence in the Indian Ocean, the US has military collaboration with India under a strategic partnership through various defence agreements. Salient of these agreements include BECA, an agreement for supplying high-end equipment besides sharing real-time intelligence;²⁴ LEMOA²⁵ is an agreement that allows both states to replenish each other's designated military facilities;²⁶ COMCASA is an agreement for maintaining a secure communication net between the states;²⁷ and GSOMIA is an agreement for sharing military information such as geomagnetic and gravity data, maps, nautical and aeronautical charts. QUAD is a platform for informal strategic talks between the US, Australia, Japan and India, and it may become another platform for sharing intelligence, logistics and joint military exercises.

The focus of the US on security structure in the Asia-Pacific region was manifested after Cold War. US military collaboration in this region came through the US-Japan²⁸ and US-South Korea military alliances.²⁹ Both alliances were boosted through a modified Australia–New Zealand–US (ANZUS) security treaty.³⁰ These alliances together provide a stronghold for US forces in the region. Although no treaty like NATO binds these security alliances, they provide military cover to these states, including a nuclear threat. Hence, it is a robust military arrangement against the common enemy in the region, presumably China. With China's economic prowess, this animosity will likely increase further. One point must be kept in mind that Japan and other western powers are also mindful of the century of humiliation. The Chinese leadership has often spoken in public gatherings that they have not forgotten that time.³¹

Maritime Security in IOR

Naval forces of the US, Europe, Asia and Australia are maintaining their presence in the region;³² significant among these are US coalition forces and independent players like China and Russia. US coalition forces, mainly NATO states,

maintain their presence near the Gulf of Oman under CTF 150 and 151. Chinese ships and independent players are maintaining their presence near the Gulf of Aden to protect respective merchandise from pirates. US coalition forces in the region ensure good law and order at sea; similarly, various naval forces operate near Somalia's coast to ensure the safety and security of international shipping. Currently, US coalition forces and independent players are operating in the region to protect their respective maritime interests, but in the future, when the maritime interests of these players take a turn towards competition, real contestation between the poles will emerge.

The emerging geo-economic situation in the region is affecting the geopolitical situation around the Indian Ocean as both the US and China are endeavouring to attain maximum influence in the region.³³ The US-Iran standoff in the Middle East,³⁴ US withdrawal from Afghanistan, re-emergence of QUAD after a gap of 10 years, the promulgation of US Indo-Pacific strategy, US-India military cooperation, and the fast-growing economic rise of China, including BRI and modernization of Chinese military, are few developments which can intensify friction between the US and China in the region.³⁵ This friction is becoming evident as US leadership overtly and Chinese leadership covertly talk about it at public forums. It is also taking geopolitics once again in the Cold War era. Both desire influence in the region, the US through Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP) and China through BRI. Economic prowess is becoming the decisive factor in the global arena, where significant issues are being resolved based on economic factors.

As the international system is anarchic in design, states act and react, keeping their national interests in view in the overall global political system. In order to have a viable maritime collaboration among littoral states of the Indian Ocean, there must persist a desire to have common goals, interests, objectives and thinking for a shared maritime environment which needs to be safeguarded by littoral states. Similarly, for robust collaboration, it is also essential that regional maritime security interests of littorals should converge. Likewise, common maritime security interests should not clash with the national interests of littoral states because the alignment of national interests is a pre-condition for maritime cooperation and collaboration.³⁶

The evolving strategic situation of IOR is predictable to be bifurcated into two distinct power blocks for maritime cooperation. The division of these blocks is apparent through a series of indications, including the re-emergence of QUAD, FIOP strategy, Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) and other various meetings, which usually comprise the US and its Asian allies.³⁷ The remaining littorals of the region will ultimately and systematically be pushed towards another alliance headed by China. Indeed, at this moment, China is militarily not in a position to contest the US in the Indian Ocean. However, with the fast-growing expansion of PLA(N), it can be anticipated that in the coming decades, with its naval prowess, China will be able to secure its maritime interests and SLOCs in the Indian Ocean right from the origin to its destination. Littorals of the Middle East are also expected to move towards these two possible blocks as per their national interests.

The existing maritime security mechanism in IOR may not serve its purpose in the future because it will be complex and multifaceted.³⁸ It will depend upon how QUAD and BRI will shape up in the future. Likewise, upon the culmination of the CPEC project, maritime security requirements for China and Pakistan will also shape up as per the requirement at that time. In any future scenario, there will likely be two leading players in the region: the US with its allies for maritime security and China with its allies to secure their maritime security. The objective of the US and its allies would be to impede China's economic progress to defer the process of China becoming the global power as far as possible. In contrast, China is expected to keep its pace of progress peacefully till the attainment of strong military capabilities.³⁹

Power Realignment in the Indian Ocean

Power is defined as a characteristic of a specific state in its interactions or a process that creates a state's social identities and abilities. The balance of power is the posture and policy of a state protecting itself against another state or group of states by comparing its power against the other side.⁴⁰ The theory of balance of power also envisages that in the international system,⁴¹ if one state tries to surmount a region or a state, then this action of the aggressor will provoke a counterbalancing action by the weaker state to maintain stability in relations between the states.⁴² The primary purpose of balance of power is to preserve weaker or smaller states. Balance of power ensures that none of the states is to be eliminated, whereas it demands the continued existence of all the states. In a balance of power, states feel secure because weaker states' interests are safeguarded, and weaker states support the stronger states' policies. Regarding alignment, various theorists like Stephen Walt and Stephen David defined it as a link between two or more states which pivots on the mutual coordination and expectation of a favor in each other's issues at the international level.

In the future, the prime need of China will be to secure its SLOCs emerging from the Middle East to sustain the energy flow, which is the main requirement for economic and industrial progress.⁴³ In order to fulfil this national objective, China needs to have a considerable presence of its naval fleet in IOR; hence, the presence of PLA(N) in this region will increase in the future. Such an enhanced PLA(N) presence in the region may ring bells for US Asian allies as a net security provider; ultimately, it will result in the enhanced presence of the US and its coalition forces in the region. Most US allies have apprehensions that with the increased involvement of China in the region through BRI (CPEC), this region will become Sino-centric, and their grip on the region will dilute as the economic interests of regional states will be linked with the Chinese interest.

On the contrary, as per the Chinese approach, BRI is an outcome of attaining the strategy of self-reliance for its energy security, and diversification of energy resources is the main driver behind BRI.⁴⁴ Hence, energy security is the apparent objective of BRI. In order to have energy security in the Indian Ocean, China will require robust collaborative maritime security arrangements along the lines of the US maritime

coalition. Those South Asian states with partnerships or stakes in BRI with China will become the natural allies of China for collaborative maritime security arrangements in IOR. Therefore, if any collaborative maritime security arrangements are formed in this region, the partner states will have enhanced diplomatic and military activities with China due to BRI's convergence of interests and patronage. Similarly, the presence and bilateral military drills of PLA(N) in this region and port visits will also become more frequent.

India, Japan and South Korea, major economies of Asia, depend on a smooth and steady flow of energy to their doorstep to sustain their economic progress.⁴⁵ These states receive energy from the Middle East via the Indian Ocean; however, the region has a classical geopolitical situation. These states are trying to impede the economic progress of China, and for that, their playing field is the Indian Ocean, whereas they depend on a steady flow of energy from the same region. Therefore, energy security wisdom will be the top priority in the strategic calculation of these states. Resultantly, a stability-instability paradox between China and other South Asia states will remain there, further fuelling the overt contestation between the two blocks in the Indian Ocean. Similarly, to counter BRI, the US and its allies have formulated a FOIP strategy which will also have some implications in the future because if the US and its allies put hurdles in front of China to use its front yard, i.e., South China sea then it will further increase the contestation and both blocks will undertake measures to enhance their grip in the region.⁴⁶

Implications for Pakistan

Pakistan has maintained close relations with China and the US for decades as per strategic dictates. Pakistan has been a strategic ally of the US in the first Afghan war against the former USSR and the US-backed GWOT. Repeatedly, different US Presidents, on various occasions, have publicly admired the role Pakistan had played as a coalition partner. Pakistan also remained a key player in peace talks between the US and Taliban in Doha, Qatar. Upon its troops' withdrawal from Afghanistan, the US took help from Pakistan for the safe recovery of coalition troops after taking over Kabul by the Taliban.

On the other hand, in the 1970s, Pakistan introduced China to the western world. After the imposition of sanctions on military hardware from the western world in the late 1990s, besides indigenization, China was the sole foreign source of military collaboration with Pakistan. Since then, Pakistan and China have undertaken many joint military projects, including Al-Khalid Tanks, F-22 Frigates, and JF-17 Thunder fighter jets.⁴⁷ This bond of friendship between China and Pakistan is further cemented by CPEC worth \$62 billion, providing China easy access to the North Arabian Sea. Strain relationship between the US and China in the Indian Ocean is expected to affect Pakistan the most. Pakistan has to cautiously navigate its future course of action in the Indian Ocean. Pakistan is one of the significant littorals of the Indian Ocean; for decades, Pakistan has been a member of US-led coalition forces in the Arabian Sea and

several times commanded these coalition forces in the region.⁴⁸ At the same time, Pakistan is also a partner of China in the CPEC project. Hence Pakistan is handling both the powers simultaneously in the region and must articulate its maritime security policy carefully and cautiously due to its considerable sensitivities. Therefore, Pakistan has to accrue optimum success by keeping the national maritime interest.

Maintaining good order at IOR, including the North Arabian Sea, favours the international community and Pakistan. Keeping its international obligation, Pakistan may continue its contributions to the coalition forces. This participation will also provide Pakistan an opportunity to work in close liaison with western as well as eastern naval forces, including German, the UK, Japan and South Korea, and close operations with these forces as a coalition commander will also improve the bilateral relations with these states through visits of ports of each other wherever the opportunity arises.

Regional and extra-regional forces are present in the region, and engagement with these forces through bilateral exercises will enhance cooperative engagement. Among these bilateral exercises, AMAN is an important naval exercise conducted biennially. It provides an excellent opportunity for Pakistan to showcase its real image to the world by inviting almost all the world's major navies, including the US, China, Japan, the UK, Australia, Germany, etc. Pakistan should keep engaging all the leading regional and extra-regional navies in the Indian Ocean through exercise AMAN. Quad was initially formed to provide disaster relief in the region after the 2004 Tsunami, and this forum has now been transformed into a platform for regional maritime coordination.⁴⁹ Pakistan, one of the significant littorals of the Indian Ocean with a sizeable armada of naval force, may become part of QUAD if asked by founding members to provide necessary assistance in maritime cooperation and coordination for safe navigation in the region. Bilateral naval exercises provide exceptional opportunities for working together for safety and security at sea.⁵⁰ Hence Pakistan may continue to engage regional and extra-regional states for bilateral naval exercises. Besides bilateral exercises with regional and extra-regional countries, Pakistan is also maintaining an independent Maritime Security patrol in the area of responsibility and interest. Pakistan may also offer other regional states to be benefitted from this maritime patrol by joining military collaboration in this regard.

Though CPEC will be fully materialized by the end of the current decade, work on maritime security requirements in the region needs to be done prior to the completion of the project. For maritime security of CPEC, provision of ISR of the area of interest is considered essential. It requires substantial resources, including the provision of requisite security mechanisms. Currently, PLA(N) is only maintaining its presence near the Gulf of Aden in the domain of anti-piracy. In order to curb the menace of piracy in the North Arabian Sea, the presence of Chinese Naval Forces near the Gulf of Oman is also expected in the future.⁵¹ Various South Asian states have become part of BRI; hence maritime interests of all these states are converging in nature. South Asian states, including Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and the Maldives, may be engaged through naval exercises to achieve common interests of maritime security under the patronage of

CPEC. Upon investment in CPEC projects, various states of the Gulf region, including Saudi Arabia and UAE, may also become part of the project; hence their maritime interests will converge with Pakistan and China. Therefore, naval engagement with these states is also a requirement of CPEC.

Conclusion

In the near future, China's main concern will be to secure its SLOCs, primarily emerging from the Middle East, to sustain its hydrocarbon requirement for economic and industrial growth. In order to fulfil its national obligation, China will require a considerable presence of its naval fleet in IOR; hence, the presence of PLA(N) in IOR is expected to be increased in the future. This enhanced PLA(N) presence in the region will result in naval collaboration with like-minded littorals of the region and will lead to the formulation of a clock under Chinese patronage. However, at the same time, it may ring bells for US Asian allies, which presumed themselves as net security providers; ultimately, it will further enhance the presence of the US and its coalition forces in this region. Most US allies have apprehensions that with the increased involvement of China in the region through BRI (CPEC), this region will become Sino-centric, and their grip on the region will dilute as the economic interests of regional states will be linked with the Chinese interest. Therefore, as a counter move, these US allies will increase their naval activities under the sponsorship of QUAD or any other alliance in the future. The time has arrived that all participating BRI (CPEC) states may join to form a coalition in IOR for maritime safety and security. The menace of piracy and terrorism is currently restricted to the north of Somalia's coast. However, in the future, when economic activities in this region will increase after the operationalization of CPEC, these menaces may move up towards the north Arabian sea; hence the partner states of BRI (CPEC) are required to visualize this threat and must act for the safety and security of SLOCs passing through this area.

References

- ¹ Ashley Thomas Lenihan, *A Theory of Non-Military Internal Balancing*, Cambridge University Press, 2018. p. 32.
- ² Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*, Massachusetts: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc. 1979. p. 109.
- ³ "Why South Asia Matters in World Affairs?" Interview of Professor Sandy Gordon conducted by Sergei De Silva-Ranasinghe in Mar 2011, published by *Policy* 28(1) Autumn 2012, p. 53.
- ⁴ Jagannath P. Panda, "India's Call on China in the Quad: A Strategic Arch between Liberal and Alternative Structures," *Rising Powers Quarterly* 3(2) 2018. p. 84.
- ⁵ Alfred T. Mahan, "The Importance of Command of the Sea: For an Adequate Navy and More," *Scientific American*, 105(24) December 1911. p. 512.
- ⁶ John B Hattendorf, "What is a Maritime Strategy?" *Soundings* 1, Sea Power Centre, Australia, October 2013, p. 4.
- ⁷ Shi Xiaoqin, *An Analysis of China's Concept of Sea Power*, Singapore: Institute for Security and Development Policy, 2012. p. 17.
- ⁸ H. D. P. Envall, "The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue: Towards an Indo-Pacific Order?" Policy Report, September 2019. p. 4.
- ⁹ Bruce Vaughn, "China-India Great Power Competition in the Indian Ocean Region: Issues for Congress," CRS Report, Congressional Research Services, April 20, 2018. p. 2.
- ¹⁰ "Distribution of Oil Production Worldwide from 2010 to 2021, by Region," <https://www.statista.com/statistics/269076/distribution-of-global-oil-production-since-2009/> (accessed July 2022).
- ¹¹ Ibid.
- ¹² Rupert Herbert-Burns, "Energy in the Indian Ocean Region: Vital Features and New Frontiers," in *Indian Ocean Rising: Maritime Security and Policy Challenges*, edited by David Michel and Russell Sticklor, Washington: Stimson July 2012. p. 87.
- ¹³ Pabasara Kannangara, Adam Collins and Barana Waidyatilake, "The Importance of the Indian Ocean: Trade, Security and Norms." LKI Explainer Sri Lanka, October 2018. p. 2.
- ¹⁴ "UNCTAD Review of Maritime Transport 2021," Geneva: UN, 2021.
- ¹⁵ Chen Shaofeng, "China's Self-Extrication from the "Malacca Dilemma and Implications," *International Journal of China Studies* 1(1) January 2010: 2.
- ¹⁶ Thitinan Pongsudhirak, "BRI as China's 'Manifest Destiny'? A Thai Perspective," CARI ASEAN Research & Advocacy, <https://www.cariasean.org/publications/chinas-belt-and-road-initiative-bri-and-southeast-asia-publication/the-bri-as-chinas-manifest-destiny-a-thai-perspective/> (accessed December 2021).
- ¹⁷ Anthony H. Cordesman and Steven Colley, "Chinese Strategy and Military Modernization in 2015: A Comparative Analysis," A Report of the CSIS Burke Chair in Strategy, October 5, 2015. pp. 625, 147.
- ¹⁸ Mi Mi Gyi, "The Belt and Road Initiative" (BRI) and Its Implication on Myanmar", *Mandalay University of Foreign Languages Research Journal* 10(1) 2019. p. 108.
- ¹⁹ IffatIshrat Khan, "Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and China's "Love" for Bangladesh: What Bangladesh Could Actually Expect from It," *Asian Regional Review DiverseAsia* 3(2) 2020. p. 3.
- ²⁰ Maria Adele Carrai, "China's Malleable Sovereignty along the Belt and Road Initiative: The Case of the 99-Year Chinese Lease of Hambantota Port," *New York University Journal of International Law and Politics* 51(4). p. 1065.
- ²¹ Navid Khan, Riaz Ahmad and Ke Xing, "China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): Regional Development, Employment Opportunities and Policy Challenges," *Global Political Review* III(I) Spring 2018. p. 13.
- ²² Sami G. Hajjar, *U.S. Military Presence in the Gulf: Challenges and Prospects*, Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, U.S. Army War College, 2002. p. 1.
- ²³ Peter Harris, "A Footprint of Unfreedom: The Future of Naval Support Facility Diego Garcia," *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, Summer 2020. p. 86.
- ²⁴ Moneeb Jaffar Mir, "Pakistan & BECA Threat," Issue Brief, Islamabad Policy Institute, Pakistan, November 5, 2020. pp 1-5.
- ²⁵ Zeeshan Muneer, "Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement," Research Brief, CSCSR, p. 3. http://cscr.pk/pdf/rb/RB%20_LEMOA.pdf (accessed May 2022).
- ²⁶ Mark Rosen and Douglas Jackson, *The U.S.-India Defense Relationship: Putting the Foundational Agreements in Perspective*, Washington: Center for Naval Analyses, February 2017. p. 4.
- ²⁷ MisbahMukhtar, "India-US Military Agreement: BECA And Its Implications for the Region", Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad, ISSUE BRIEF, November 17, 2020, pp 1-4,1.
- ²⁸ "The U.S.-Japan Alliance," Congressional Research Service, June 13, 2019. p. 2.
- ²⁹ Young-Wan Goo, "Military Alliances and Reality of Regional Integration: Japan, South Korea, the US vs. China, North Korea," *Journal of Economic Integration* 29(2) June 2014. p. 330.
- ³⁰ Allan Behm, "ANZUS and Australia's Security," Discussion Paper, Canberra: The Australia Institute, July 2020. p. 6.
- ³¹ Christopher B. Williams, "110 Years of Humiliation from 1839 to 1949: China's Grand Strategy," Masters diss., (U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, 2016). p. 43.
- ³² Sheikh Imran Nasir and Muhammad Zeeshan Munir, "Sino-Indian Strategic Competition in the Indian Ocean Region and Future of China's Maritime Interests," *JSSA* VI(1). p. 35.
- ³³ Ashley J. Tellis, Alison Szalwinski, and Michael Wills, *Strategic Asia 2020: US-China Competition for Global Influence*, Washington DC: The National Bureau of Asian Research, 2019. p. 7.
- ³⁴ Ville Sinkkonen, "The United States-Iran Standoff," FIIA Comments, June 2019.

-
- ³⁵ *China's Influence on Conflict Dynamics in South Asia*, USIP China-South Asia Senior Study Group, US Institute of Peace, 2020. p. 31.
- ³⁶ Arzan Tarapore and David Brewster, "Indian Ocean Strategic Futures: Re-examining Assumptions of Capability and Intent," *Asia Policy* 16(3) July 2021. p. 6.
- ³⁷ Enrico D'Ambrogio. Graphics: SamyChahri, "The Quad: An Emerging Multilateral Security Framework of Democracies in the Indo-Pacific Region," EPRS | European Parliamentary Research Service, March 2021. p. 4.
- ³⁸ Manuel Vermeer, "Maritime Power Politics in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)," *ISPSW Strategy Series: Focus on Defense and International Security*, Issue No. 519, November 2017. p. 4.
- ³⁹ Aasia Khatoun, Nazim Rahim and Barkat Ali, "A Historical Perspective of China's Peaceful Policies and its Rise as World Economic Power," *Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal* 2(1) January-June 2018. p. 66.
- ⁴⁰ David C Kang, "The Balance of Power and States Interests in International Relations: South Korea between China and the USA," EAI Working Paper series 5, January 27, 2007. p.1.
- ⁴¹ Meicen Sun, "Balance of Power Theory in Today's International System," February 12, 2014. <https://www.e-ir.info/2014/02/12/balance-of-power-theory-in-todays-international-system/> (accessed December 2021).
- ⁴² Brian Healy and Arthur Stein, "The Balance of Power in International History," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 17(1) March 1973. p. 34.
- ⁴³ Nazir Hussain and Amna Javed, "The Contours of New Regional Alignments in South Asia," *South Asian Studies* 34(1) January - June 2019. p. 27.
- ⁴⁴ Frank Umbach, "China's Belt and Road Initiative and its Energy-Security Dimensions," S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies Singapore, January 3, 2019. p. 9. <http://hdl.handle.net/11540/9582> (accessed December 2021).
- ⁴⁵ Alexandra Sakaki and Gudrun Wacker, "China – Japan – South Korea," SWP Research Paper 2017/RP 05. p. 10.
- ⁴⁶ Ashley J. Tellis.
- ⁴⁷ Muhammad Faisal, "Pakistan-China Relations: Beyond CPEC," *Strategic Studies* 40(2) 2020. p. 36.
- ⁴⁸ *Major Powers' Interests in Indian Ocean: Challenges and Options for Pakistan*, Islamabad: IPRI, 2014. p. 14.
- ⁴⁹ Manuel Vermeer.
- ⁵⁰ Arzan Tarapore and David Brewster, "Indian Ocean Strategic Futures: Re-examining Assumptions of Capability and Intent," *Asia Policy* 16(3) July 2021. p. 6.
- ⁵¹ Shirin Lakhani, "The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Regional Effects and Recommendations for Sustainable Development and Trade," *Denver Journal of International Law & Policy* 45(4) 2017. p. 419.