

## United States Concentrations in South Indian Ocean and It's Strategic Implications

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### Abstract:

Since the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, some of the foremost occasions that form the international security milieu have emerged from within or on the shores of the Indian Ocean. The Indian Ocean will be a vital frontline for the competition between conflicting strategic partnerships, with the United States (US) and India on one side and Pakistan and China on the other. Thus, the primary US security objectives in the Indian Ocean region (IOR) are protecting its trade and maintaining a force adequately strong to balance or counter most events in the Middle East and elsewhere along the ocean's littoral. While China endures developing its locus in the region through its highly funded "One Belt, One Road strategy," which pursues to revive the old trade routes with Beijing at the center of the trade. The present study tries to explain the ongoing American concentrations and interests in IOR and its strategic ramifications for littoral states of the region and Pakistan. The study in hands employs historical, descriptive, and analytical research methods under the qualitative research approach.

**Key Words:** Indian Ocean, US interests, US-China Rivalry, India-US Strategic Partnership

### INTRODUCTION

By following Alfred Mahan's statement that "whoever controls the Indian Ocean will dominate Asia, the destiny of the world will be decided on its waters" (1987), the Indian Ocean got vital significance in Oceania politics of South Asia. In 1968, after the United Kingdom's withdrawal from the Indian Ocean region (IOR), the United States (US) presumed sustaining the order in the region. Backed by its devastating power-projection capability, the US has endorsed the liberal order and an open economic regime by thwarting external hegemonic control as well as the rise of other threats to the IOR. For the last three decades, IOR emerged as the central arena of competition in international politics. The strategic location of the region in terms of power and Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs) make it a place of great interests for the regional and extra-regional powers. Meanwhile, China's naval strength has enhanced both quantitatively and qualitatively. China has not used such capabilities in IOR as it has shown when pressing its claims in the East China Sea and the South China Sea. One cannot deny that it may attempt to secure unilateral control of that region eventually as well. The geostrategic competitions in the region among major powers like the US, China, and India, in the recent years has also driven its littoral states to increase their military power in the Indian Ocean (Izuyama, & Masahiro 2017). The Indian Ocean, once neglected, has today become the hub of political, and strategic activities due to conventional and nuclear

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vessels of the major powers like the US and other nuclear-weapon states such as Pakistan, China, and India. Besides, the US has established its military naval base in Diego Garcia on the isolated Island of Chagos archipelago in the Indian Ocean due to its interests in this region. Due to the strategic importance of the Indian Ocean and the competition among major regional powers, the US always supports India to counter Chinese hegemony in this region (Ahmed, 2015). The Indo-US partnership presumes to hedge against Chinese designs in the IOR. The threats to US hegemony from a rapidly expanding China are real and the National Security Strategy seems to have embarked upon a plan to counter this by deepening engagements with other increasing powers, pinpointing key allies. In a move, Trump could happily approve of gradually shifting the burdens of responsibility onto their shoulders.

**Figure 1: The Indian Ocean Region**



**Source:** <http://tamilnation.org>

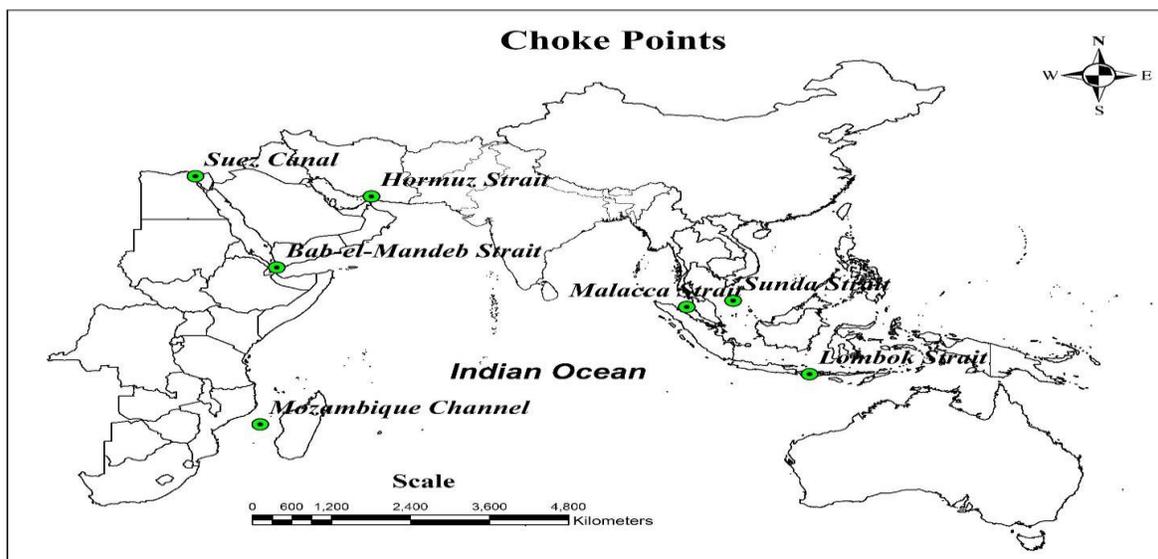
The present study aims to discuss the US security strategy for the Indian Ocean and its implications for China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Hussain, 2017). As soon as the CPEC and construction at Gwadar is completed, it would significantly shorten China's energy supply chain. China's energy resources could avoid thousands of miles of sea lanes dominated by the US navy. Gwadar port gives China the ability to monitor the sea-lanes of the Persian Gulf, observe Indian and the US naval activities, and examine China's "blue water navy" in the Indian Ocean to maintain its supply. The development of CPEC and Gwadar Port is not solely aimed at limiting the US and Indian influence, instead it is a tactical feature of China's expanding foreign policy goals and symbolic of China's more assertive role in the region (Khalid, 2013). Further, the Gwadar port connects western China with Arabian Gulf through Pakistan and has crucial geostrategic implications for the US economic and military interests. Additionally, from Pakistan's perspective, CPEC will help Pakistan maintain the balance of power (BOP) in South Asia. Ultimately, Gwadar Port and CPEC investment provide China with greater leverage in the region. Likewise, Pakistan is to strive for a win-win situation, where most of the states will get peaceful benefits from the dividends available in the region (Rizvi, 2015). This study aims to explore the importance of the Indian Ocean; to

elucidate precisely the American Concentration in the Indian Ocean, and; highlight the India-USA Strategic Partnership in the Indian Ocean and its implications for Pakistan.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIAN OCEAN**

The Indian Ocean contains the third largest body of water in the world. It covers almost 20 percent of the Earth's water surface. Southern Asia bounds it on the north, Arabian Peninsula on the west, The Malay Peninsula, Sunda Islands and Australia on the east, And Antarctica on its south. The ocean is nearly 10,000 km wide at the southern tips of Africa and Australia, including the Red Sea and the Persian Gulf. Small islands dot the continental rims. Island nations within the ocean are Madagascar - the world's fourth-largest island, Comoros, Seychelles, Maldives, Mauritius, and Sri Lanka. The Indian Ocean covers at least one-fifth of the world's total ocean area. It is bounded by Africa and the Arabian Peninsula, India's coastal waters, and the Bay of Bengal near Myanmar and Indonesia. It provides critical sea trade routes that connect the Middle East, Africa, and South Asia with the broader Asian continent to the east and Europe to the west. Apart from natural resources, the choke points located in the wider Indian Ocean are most important. The world's most important strategic chokepoints, include the Straits of Hormuz and Malacca through which 32.2 millions barrels of crude oil and petroleum are transported per day. More than 50 percent of the world's maritime oil trade is found in the IOR, which is believed to be rich with energy reserves. The following two pictures show the vital "choke points" & the naval mess in the IOR and its associated wider waters which reflects the importance of IOR and Oceans for global nautical trade.

**Figure 2: Vital Maritime "Choke Points" in IOR**



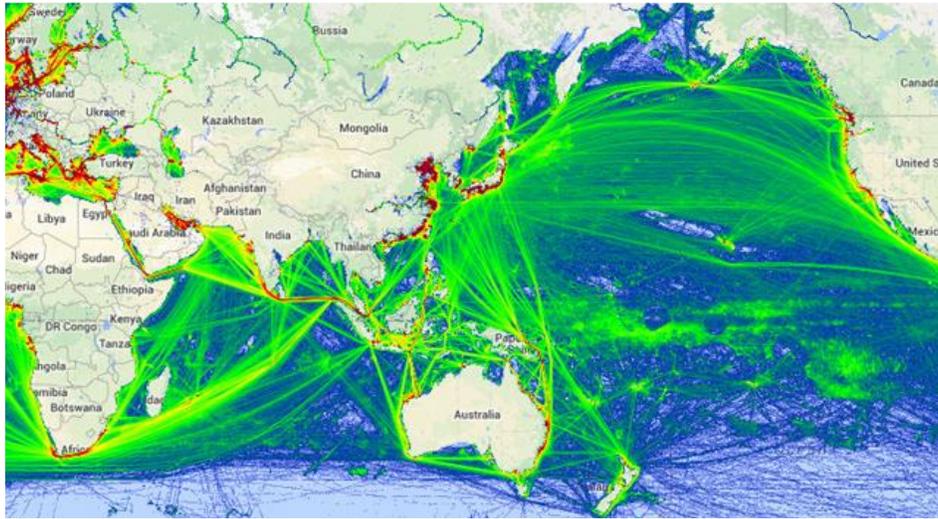
**Source:** Central Library, University of Punjab

Nearly 40 percent of the world's offshore petroleum is produced in the Indian Ocean. Coastal beach sands and offshore waters host heavy mineral deposits, while fisheries are increasingly important for exports and domestic consumption (Gupta, 2010).

The end of the Cold War did not alter the fact. The US remained a maritime nation with global security concerns and felt obliged to maintain the capacity to project and sustain its forces

throughout the world and especially the Indian Ocean in defense of its interests and those of its allies (Khan, 1982).

**Figure 3: Maritime Traffic Mess**



**Source:** Central Library, University of Punjab

In this study, first part attempts to discuss the involvement of the US in the Indian Ocean. The second part discusses the major US concerns i.e economic and strategic- in the Indian Ocean. The third part converses the implications for littoral states of the Indian Ocean. Further, this study endeavours to answer the following questions: What are the major US concerns in the Indian Ocean? What are the implications for littoral states?

### **UNITED STATES CONCENTRATIONS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN**

The US was initially founded as the Continental Navy in 1775, during the American revolutionary war. Originally, the US navy operated in the Pacific and Atlantic but later, the trade awareness and the Indian Ocean's growing importance, attracted the US interest. In the 19<sup>th</sup> and first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Indian Ocean was a British lake. The British got control of India and various choke points of the Indian Ocean to secure the trade routes of their favour. At that time, the US presence in this part of the world was minimal (Ahmar, 1983). American concern in the Indian Ocean grew significantly during and after the World War II. Eventually, the US became the main sponsor of safety on the high seas in the Indian Ocean, especially after the British withdrawal from east of Suez in the 1970s. During World War II, hundreds of the US advisers were stationed in India. More importantly, for the future of the region, the the US President, Franklin Delano Roosevelt stopped in the Suez Canal on his way back from the Yalta Conference in the 1940s. There he met the founder of Saudi Arabia, King Abdul-Aziz ibn Saud on a ship. The king had brought several sheep on board, slaughtered, and roasted for the American bunch, while the security of oil guarantees was discussed by the pertinent parties (Khan, 1982). In the past 50 years, the size of the US navy in the Indian Ocean increased from its beginnings in the 1940s, though it, for the most part, remained in the Arabian Sea portion of the Indian Ocean. There are two critical milestones in this process. The first was the establishment of a 50-year American lease on the British Island of Diego Garcia in the southern part of the Indian Ocean. The island has since been inhabited by around 5,000 British and

American soldiers and was an enactment ground for the American wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. The other major milestone of the American naval presence in the ocean was the Persian Gulf War. To indicate augmented the US commitment to the Middle East, the region got its fleet—the reactivated 5<sup>th</sup> Fleet—in 1995, based in Bahrain. This, of course, has been heavily involved in all successive operations in the region since then (Berlin, 2002).

### **UNITED STATES CONCENTRATIONS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN: ECONOMIC PERSPECTIVE**

Economic concerns always played a major role in the formulation of US foreign policy and foretelling its supremacy and power abroad. The US economic interests in the IOR are centered on the key resources, including oil, critical materials, and minerals and the sea line of communication. Though for the US, IOR has become a central tip of overseas and financial policies and has a growing impact on its security. Comparatively, the lesser costs of the foreign capital, the excessive use of alloy-supporting mineral, and the consumer orientation of its economy increased the reliance on resources abroad. The US has to depend on external energy sources of supply for as many as 18 critical materials and minerals. Many of these materials come from the Indian Ocean making Washington vulnerable to unfavourable development in the region. Some of the famous US strategists i.e.e Herman Kahn, Margaret Hoover, and Donna Brazil, are in favour of enlarging the presence in the Indian Ocean, to ensure the continued access to strategic resources, like oil and other minerals. Thus, for the economic survival of its allies, the US has been trying to ensure unhindered shipping of raw materials, oil, and other products through the SLOCs (Jamshaid,& Fatima 2015).

According to President Nixon's report on foreign policy to Congress in May 1973, the US and other industrial nations' demands for energy are rising in the world. Consequently,, the need for Persian Gulf oil would increase soon (Nixon, 1973). In the post-war era, IOR lost its strategic significance due to the rising tensions between superpowers in Europe. Moreover, France and England had colonies in the Indian Ocean's littoral states. Britain, thus, provided a sagacity of safety to the US interests in the Indian Ocean. The US war in Korea in the 1950s (Dobbs, 1981) had strong effects on the US economic concerns, which was extended to a great part of Asia. Therefore, the alliances were made with the littoral countries of the Indian Ocean i.e., India, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka. Further, the US entreated the South East Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO) (Dew, 2013) to check the South–West extension of China, which was measured to be a Soviet ally. Washington also created another treaty organization of Australia, New Zealand, and the United States (ANZUS) to assure protection of its allies. Likewise, the US encouraged the configuration of the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) to take the initiative as an observer (U S State Department, 2001). In all these provisions, the US sought and protected major participation of Great Britain, and kept its presence in the area limited to flag -showing profile at Bahrain-based Mideast force. The Suez crises in 1956 and the Colonial rule in the Subcontinent brought home the fact that the British cannot continue their presence in the region for an indefinite period. Nevertheless, later on the announcement of British withdrawal came as a surprise for the whole world. The inspiring Soviet entry into the region in the wake of the British decision to withdraw from the area was seen as a part of the intended Russian move to fill the vacuum created by the British. These historical events led the US to believe that in an area as important as the Indian Ocean, it is dangerous to let the Soviet Union attain a potential that would significantly be greater than its own (Clinton, 2011).

**UNITED STATES CONCENTRATIONS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN: STRATEGIC PERSPECTIVE**

The Nixon doctrine states:

for the security concerns the arrangements were modified to make available a more secure US role in Indian Ocean Region, the burdens and responsibilities were shared within the allies for their own protection and security and for more bitterly sharing of materials and manpower ("The Nixon doctrine," 1969).

This doctrine highlighted that, in some cases and areas, US would be militarily involved, and in some cases, the involvement would be much lesser. The US key objective was to maintain a balancing role in IOR that would continue to represent US interests in the area. It also encouraged littoral states to contribute to their security issues. Further, the US would help provide the naval and air presence as a potential defense, and the allies would help supply their ground troops. The desired naval units of the US maintained a viable presence due to their flexibility, mobility, and relative independence in the international waters. To preserve necessary deterrence, it was essential to reach any part of the Indian Ocean within the shortest time and without any interference by littoral states. In the context of the Nixon doctrines of "Island strategy," the naval base Diego Garcia comprises a pivot to American naval interests in IOR. In the post-Gulf war era, the US continued to establish alliances in IOR for security concerns (Berlin, 2010). On the other hand, the post 9/11 era marked a rising involvement of the US administration in this region. In the wake of the 9/11 attack on the US, President Bush highlighted two superseding security concerns in his speech, providing policy guidelines for the US involvement in the Indian Ocean. According to Bush, two major features of the US involvement includes first, countering China, and second, securing oil trade routes ("Bush's national security," 2002). According to a journalist, in the past, it was the US who encouraged Saudi Arabia and Pakistan to support the Taliban regime. So when the Taliban took the power, the US saw nothing objectionable in the Taliban regime and their plans to impose strict Islamic law (Clinton, 2011). The strategic interests of Washington in IOR can be measured by a broader foreign policy outlook. That viewpoint is prejudiced by the number of core regional concerns in general and the country's specific objectives in particular. On the other hand, Washington's key objective is to curtail and eliminate threats for the US interests in this region (Green & Shearer, 2012). The US foreign policy, specifically to IOR and, particularly to India, Pakistan, and China, can be recapitulated in a hierarchical way to describe the core objectives of the US policy. In this regard, there are two notable points to explain. First of all, in the US like many other countries, the domestic and foreign considerations are highly interlinked with foreign policy announcements, which sometimes can be designed mainly with domestic spectators in mind. Secondly, the US current economic conditions will have consequences for the foreign and defense policies for the time to come (Spykman, 2007). So as a final point, despite the increasing importance of the IOR, no single region-wide policy exists as yet as the Indian Ocean has. Diverse strategic schools of thought exist i.e., the renowned American strategist Alfred Thayer Mahan, Lord Horatio Nelson, J.C. Wylie, and John talkie when it comes to the importance of the strategic objectives of the US in this region.

By following the notion of Mahan, states are increasing their naval fleets owing to continue the smooth naval trade and quick response in any sudden warfare. The following table is showing the numbers of naval fleet strength till 2020:

**Table 1: Naval Fleets & Aircraft Carriers Strengths (2020)**

Sr. No	Country Name	Navy Fleets (Strengths)	Sr. No	Country Name	Aircraft Carriers Fleets (Strength)
1	North Korea	984	1	United States	20
2	China	777	2	Japan	4
3	Russia	603	3	France	4
4	United States	490	4	Egypt	2
5	Colombia	453	5	China	2
6	Iran	398	6	UK	2
7	Egypt	316	7	Italy	2
8	Thailand	292	8	South Korea	2
9	India	285	9	Australia	2
10	Indonesia	282	10	Russia	1
11	Italy	249	11	India	1
12	Finland	246	12	Thailand	1

**Source:** <https://www.globalfirepower.com/navy-ships.asp>

In the case of a conflict with China, the Indian Ocean would have a significant trade implications particularly in terms of supply lines. Another opinion is that IOR will become less important to the US after the drawdown in Afghanistan in 2014. Furthermore, if relations of US with Pakistan are permitted to weaken, it will become easier for other states to challenge the supremacy of the US in the Indian Ocean, particularly regarding naval primacy. Unless the sovereignty and security of the US are not directly threatened by other power.

On the other hand, the US will endeavor to shift its focus from the Middle East and the Afghanistan-Pakistan theatre to South-East Asia. Its pertinent emphasis will remain on India, which will have the most strategic importance to the US, even if it is not completely clear just for India to fulfill the desires of the US (Team, 2011). There is a third school of thought which offers an exciting amalgamation of the above two schools of thought. It states that the region will always be attractive for the policymakers of the US. Despite the fact, that the focus of the US is growing day by day in this region. Due to modern technology aids, as it seems no longer necessary to have large numbers of bases in the region, at least to monitor it (Nagao, 2012).

### **UNITED STATES CONCENTRATIONS IN THE INDIAN OCEAN: RAMIFICATIONS FOR INDIAN OCEAN'S LITTORAL PERIPHERY**

There are different key factors of ongoing rapid transformation in IOR. Firstly, China is emerging as the second-largest economy globally with its transnational mega-venture like Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road or Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) project with Pakistan and the other Asian States. Secondly, the US counter strategy towards China's rise and pivot strategy to Asia is of great concern. Furthermore, the US is also concerned to assist several emerging economies of the littoral states in this region like India, Indonesia, Pakistan, and others (Malik, 2014). In the near future, it seems there will be the rise of intensive economic activities

within and through IOR. . There would be a high possibility of militarization among littoral and external powers. In the overall context, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) presumes particular importance in this region. India has a fear that this mega venture by China and Pakistan can encircle India's boundaries of both land and maritime. IOR seems very crammed full with the active role of countries like Australia, Japan, Indonesia, and Iran more than others. China's entrance into the Indian Ocean is slow and steady but it seems as a self-effacing manner, so in that case it is not perceived as a trans-national power. There are some significantly evident features of the US objectives in the Indian Ocean. Similarly, the US conceives the alarming threats to its interests in IOR from regional countries like China and Iran (Yoshihara, 2008).

#### **EAGLE VS DRAGON & INDIAN OCEAN**

China's naval projection can be traced back to the heyday of the Qing dynasty; China's naval legacy was not prolonged far beyond the Cape of Good Hope. As long as China's strategic concerns in the Indian Ocean, China has already obtained the shore operational capabilities. China seeks to build a blue water navy to maintain its long-term objectives in IOR (Montgomery, 2013). Concurrently, China is also eagerly increasing its participation in multilateral institutions likewise, its participation in the UN peacekeeping missions, international disaster relief campaigns, counter-terrorism, and counter-piracy missions, also grant a soft image to Beijing's international policy stance. The regional neighbors of China view its naval projection as a fearsome offensive force in the Indian Ocean. The US and its regional allies also consider the naval modernization of China in the Indo-Pacific as a potential threat to their interests. Likewise, China's dominant naval position is becoming the cause of a clash of interests between the two major states; China and the US (Zweig & Jianhai, 2005).

The US considers China as a potential source of instability in IOR so in 2010 one of the US officials warned China of cultivating its activities in this region. The US Pivot to Asia strategy with its allies encircles China along the eastern and southern island chain periphery. Further, for the containment of China, the US also builds strategic rings and expand its defense treaties with its South Asian regional allies to encircle China in this region. China, on the other hand, considers the US as a major threat to its security. Beijing is also making substantial efforts to counter the US in the Indian Ocean, for example in 2013, Beijing warned the US not to interfere in the region. Secondly, China imposed a no-fly zone in the South China Sea area (Evans, 2011). Likewise, the rise of China as a booming economic power and also a dominant superpower in Asia-Pacific regards China a major player in IOR. The aggressive and substantial rise of China has changed the geopolitics of the Asian region, and also affected the international order. Now China has become the most significant partner of Asian countries due to its economic rise. The rapid rise of China also poses major threats to its neighbors and other countries like the US. Many countries consider the overall view of the engagement of China's in this region as a threat to their interests (Sakhuja, 2015). China's massive investment and projects in many of the littoral states impose an alarming situation for the US and its ally India in the region. . It seems far from reality that New Delhi joins China's mega venture (Bieri, 2014). Most recently, under the platform of Indo-Pacific and QUAD settings, the US has launched its "Blue DOT Network (BDN)" aiming to counter the Chinese based BRI and CPEC.

### INDIA-UNITED STATES STRATEGIC INTIMACY AND INDIAN OCEAN

In the late nineteenth century, the US appeared concurrently as a great power and a regional hegemonic state in the Western Hemisphere. Whereas it has found the ways in a multipolar world in the first half of the twentieth century. Likewise, in the Western Hemisphere, the US also maintained a favourable BOP in Europe, East Asia, and the Middle East. By contrast, the South Asia and IOR was on least priority of the US. Since the end of the cold war, the US openly assisted India to rise as a regional power; the 21st century marked an important step in relations between the US and India. Clinton visited India by the end of the 20th century, and Bush also visited in his first and second term. The current engagement of both countries is known as “Strategic Partnership” based on a broader range of areas for cooperation like economic trade, nuclear technology, missile technology, and defense cooperation (Mohan, 2010). India and the US signed a strategic partnership in 2000, and both countries signed “Next Steps in Strategic Partnership” [NSSP] in 2004, and strategic dialogue was started in 2009. After the NSSP, both countries said “Goodbye” to their past estrangement, ideological differences, divergences of interests, and misunderstandings and inaugurated the new chapter of their relationship (Nisar, 2019) by signing a “New Framework for Defense Relationship” in 2005 and “123 Civil Nuclear Agreement” in 2008. India supported the US “Pivot-Asia” policy and played a significant role in counter China strategy. India and the US renewed their “New Framework for Defense Relationship” in 2015 and signed “Logistic Support Agreement” in 2016. Indo-US strategic relations touched new heights when the Obama administration declared India as a major Defense partner in 2016. The new US President Trump also showed its softness towards India and called Indian Prime Minister Modi a “True Friend of US.” The decline of US-Pakistan strategic relations has positively affected Indo-US relations. The Pakistan factor has always affected Indo-US relations. The US administration considers that India would play a meaningful role in counter China' planning (Shukla, 2017).

**Table 2: Countries in Indo-pacific strategy**

US wisdom under IP	Nations
Requisite Associates	Australia, Japan, Korea, Thailand, Philippines
Solidification Relationships	Singapore, Taiwan, New Zealand, Magnolia
Strategic Partnership in Southern Asia	India
Mounting Partnerships	Sri Lanka, Maldives, Bangladesh, Nepal
Turn to South East Asia	Vietnam, Indonesia, Malaysia

Foundation of ties	Brunei, Laos Cambodia
Revitalized Ties	Papua New Guinea, Fiji, Tonga
Hugging with Other associates	UK, France Canada

**Source:** Researched and Compiled by Researcher

The recent defense deal between India and the US in 2020, soon after the President Trump's visit to India in February 2020 further strengthened the naval power of India because D2 agreed to import/export helicopters with Hercules power which can easily give backup to the Indian naval force in the time of warfare. The growing presence of PRC in the Indo-Pacific must be countered. It is the first policy of the US Pacific Command, where India is the leading player. Interestingly, India's hoax under the Indo-pacific and American support as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean are prominent.

The following table shows the upcoming defense article especially the naval defense articles, which have reciprocally given weight to India in the Indian Ocean.

**Table 3: Upcoming Defense Trade between India & the USA**

Year	Munitions	Statistics	Dealing Department	Cost
2020	AGM-84 L Missiles	10	DSCA, USA State Department	0.092
2020	MK-54 Torpedoes	16	DSCA, USA State Department	0.063
2020	MQ-9/Predator-B High Altitude Drones	10/30	DAC, Ministry of Defense India	3
2020	IADWS Defense system	1	DSCA, USA State Department	1.8
2019	MK 45 (MOD-IV) Guns	13	DSCA, USA State Department	1
2019	P8I Aircrafts	6	DAC, Ministry of Defense India	1.5
2019	777 Large Aircraft Infrared (LAIRCM)	2	DSCA, USA State Department	0.190

**Source:** <http://www.orfonline.org/research/india-us-defence-trade-continuity-under-trump-68919/?amp>

In the US future strategy, India is openly considered as an important strategic partner, particularly in the US strategic concerns in Asia-Pacific and across the globe. The US shares common goals with India of global trade and commerce. Further, both are enthusiastic about having secure and safe

crucial sea lanes in the Indian Ocean. Beyond Indian Ocean strategies, the US supports Indian leadership in the region and observes it as fruitful for regional strength. The US partnership with India is strengthening over time. Likewise, Indo-US defense cooperation is also booming day by day. In the scenario of new collaboration and joint venture, Indian policies and strategies in the IOR are although under the shade of the US concerns, but these are in the direction of Indian interests (Mansingh, 2006).

### **PAKISTAN-UNITED STATES CRASH CRISSCROSSING**

The US vital objectives for Pakistan are to maintain the stability which remains in control of its territory and nuclear capabilities. Further, the current US prospects of a distorted relationship with post-Musharraf Pakistan have not come to pass. Indeed, other than publicly distancing itself from Washington, Pakistan is not willing to have any kind of transformational relationship with the US. The US-Pakistan bilateral relation has always had twists and turns, but Pakistan is significantly having vital importance for the US to ignore. After the withdrawal from Afghanistan, Pakistan is the least important for the US. Still, for internal skirmishes and security ramifications, it is not simple for the US to leave it alone and allow it to implode (Iqbal, 2011). The cooperation between two major powers like the US and China is also beneficial for Pakistan.

On the other hand, Kashmir is also an ongoing problem bigger than a ten-year timeframe. Mainly, since the elite in India and Pakistan have vested interests in maintaining the status quo in this area, the weight of inertia regarding Kashmir is too immense for the US to solve. Even pretentious Washington was willing to force the two sides to a declaration (Qazi, 2012). On the other hand, since Pakistan's foreign policy has remained under experimental endeavors, there has always been an absence of stable and permanent policy direction towards the region and beyond. Besides, this country's geographical position has also served as a major feature behind this condition. Pakistan shares a long border with India and Afghanistan, also linked with China and the Indian Ocean. China follows its notion of peaceful coexistence in South Asia to make the region more tranquil and follow the philosophy of peaceful coexistence, regional security, respect for regional entities, peace and stability, anti-hegemonic and harmonious world (Nisar, 2019).

Gwadar port has a vital significance to China from a trade and politico-strategic point of view. Pakistan is also intensely involved with China in the Gwadar project. There are a serious hue and cry from the Indian side over CPEC. China also rejected the Indian opposition and concerns as it was a bilateral decision of both states, which has not endangered the concerns of other regional and non-regional actors (Khalid, 2013).

### **CONCLUSION**

IOR is enduring a rapid conversion because of some significant factors like China's emergence as the second-largest economy in the world and its transnational mega ventures and investments. On the other hand, the US pivot or rebalance approach to Asia and the rise of several emerging economies of the littoral states, including India, Indonesia, Pakistan, and others. Moreover, the Indian Ocean has now become the great power rivalry pitch in the twenty-first century. Indian alliance with the US has served in different ways in the Indian Ocean strategy. Firstly it has counteracted Indian plans of supremacy in this region, and secondly, the US strategy and approach has obtained the center stage in IOR, and also in the South China Sea and the Persian Gulf. The presence of internal and external powers like the US and Chinese and Japanese naval forces in the

South China Sea are considered an extension to great Indian hegemony. This study's primary objective was to focus on the US security strategies for the Indian Ocean and its implications for CPEC. The first question was to probe the US concerns in the Indian Ocean. It has appeared as a vital center of geostrategic concerns in the modern world. The extra-regional states like the US, European countries, and regional states like China, India, and Pakistan have become the world's largest energy consumers in this region. In this context, the Indian Ocean and Asia-Pacific region symbolize a composite amalgamation of power and paradox in financial expansion and strategic enlargement. The US has become a dominant feature of present-day geopolitics and perceived that its strategic and military occurrence in the Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean is fundamental and foreseeable. On the other side, China is the rising economic and military power, and the country has asymmetrical compensations in observance of the US, India, and Asia-Pacific countries off guard in a way that no other country could quickly reinstate China's influence. Because of challenging and inter-reliant economic and strategic concerns, the major competitors of the IOR require strategic and geopolitical alteration to transform global conditions under the concentration of key actors to preserve a constructive and constant strategic symmetry in the region. The US strategic joint venture with India will disturb the stability in this region and pose threats to Pakistan, specifically to ongoing mega venture of CPEC. In this regard, China's concerns in Gwadar will thwart US-India alignment in the region. However, Pakistan has strong geopolitical motives to confront the Indian supremacy in the region. The policy makers advocate that the centrality and sanctuary of the Indian Ocean can only be retained through the idea of coexistence. The second question focused on the US security strategy for the Indian Ocean and its posed hindrances to CPEC. Conclusively, in the 21st century, the region has become an observer of far-reaching changes and substantial turbulences. Likewise, China's entry onto the regional chessboard and its ongoing projects with Indian Ocean littoral states and the US partnership with India to contain China is worthy of mentioning dilemmas. In this situation considering that this region is already very unpredictable, peace and security will have lingered a significant challenge in the next few decades for both the foreign powers and the regional states. There is no distrust that the Indian Ocean has now gone through a period of rough seas and further happenings in this region cannot be neglected. Nevertheless, the present geopolitical situation envisages that the game of chess will be played on the Indian Ocean. The two leading coalitions of countries, such as the "Pivot on Asia" coalition led by the US and the BRI coalition led by China will play on this terrain and sea-based chessboard. CPEC may have good and positive blow so far, but its eventual success depends on its capacity and ability towards regionalization. However, if this development gets the success Pakistan needs to open CPEC to its neighbours and allow them to participate in it. Such policy will fetch more benefits to Pakistan and the region. Pakistan should revise its regional policy and give up the policy of "strategic depth" and should unlock the CPEC to the countries in the West such as Iran and Afghanistan and to the arch-rival India in the East, to make CPEC a pro regional connectivity project.

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