



INDIA'S MARITIME POLICY AND GROWING PERIPHERAL CONCERNS AND REGIONAL SECURITY CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT :

The article aims at portraying the India's maritime expanse and its policy and what are the challenges manifested by it and theoretical conception, arguments underpinning the economic engagement along with contested security scenario. The south Asia region has been facing different set of challenges, Piracy, terrorism, Drugs abuses, and proliferation of weapons, offshore black economy of hoarding, resource scarcity and oil spill, environmental risks and hazards. All these problems needs to be mitigated and answered through the deliberations. The entire region is strangulated by busy SLOCs, choke points and economic vibrancy is disturbed due to non-state actors and policy of states sponsoring them. There is blatantly abuse of powers by countries to propel their interest in a subtle way of strategic encirclement and threat perceptions by blocking other interests. The pronounced maritime policy of countries can deter the adversaries from taking any offensive postures and proliferations in the region.



KEYWORDS : India's Maritime Policy, Economic engagement.

INTRODUCTION

The importance of Ocean has increased in Foreign and security policy of India and China, who have been otherwise known as territorial nation. Indian Ocean has economic and geopolitical significance as it constitutes the Arabian sea, Bay of Bengal and Island groups with major vital east west Sea Lanes of Communication SLOCs. The focus of India on maritime security has to be understood in context of US-China rivalry. Terrorism is the biggest blow to the regional harmony and stability in the region. It faces proliferation threats of small arms and weapons from the porous maritime borders which are easily penetrable and targeted. India needs to bolster its maritime capacity by developing ports, harbours and expanding its economic opportunities. The capabilities and potential of maritime industry needs to be explored for its best utilization and security building.

REGIONAL SECURITY CONCEPTION A THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

The regional security dynamics needs to be explored well to understand the role of key regional players and geopolitical significance of the region. Regional security mechanism should be understood through the different prisms of geopolitics, variables, actors and priorities.

Security is a contested term and it has multidimensional and multi-scalar concepts whose components are independent. It is facing both conventional and Non-conventional security threats. The traditional one includes sea piracy, terrorism while non-traditional one includes economic and environmental concerns. It has non-traditional aspects of Economic participation for guaranteeing its economic security. IOR is composed of diverse set of sub-systems which are having bilateral land based and

maritime disputes. Barry Buzan and Weaver has stated about the structure of International Security is determined by the interplay of regions and power.(Buzanand Wæver: 2003:460)RSC is composed of four variables which are boundary, anarchic structure, polarity and social construction. (ibid)

Buzanand Weaver framed nation states into eight RSC –south Asia, East Asia, Middle East, southern Africa, central Africa, post-soviet, Europe, south and North Americas.(Gupta: 2010:52)Buzan and Weaver has defined Regional Security Complex as complex set of interconnected webs which are interlinked with the securitisation and desecuritisation which can't be separated easily. RSC is composed of four variables which are boundary, anarchic structure, polarity and social construction. (ibid)

INDIAN OCEAN AS INTERNATIONAL TRANSIT CORRIDOR

In Indian Ocean Southeast Asia and regions of Australia forms the regional sub complexes. International security has many traditional security threats like international terrorism, illegal immigration and resource scarcity. National security feels compromised and threatened by political turmoil, social instability, and economic crisis. After the end of cold war rivalry and opening of free market neoliberal economies in late decades of 90s there was need felt for energy security for growing demands from the domestic consumption of heavy industries and transport communication sectors for the sustainable development and inclusive growth. Indian Ocean serves as important route way for importing oils from the Middle East, and securing interregional shipment are fundamental for global economy to flourish. The security of importing oil is crucial for region as Japan depends from Middle East for 80%, China 39%, Europe 21% thus 80% of world's sea borne trade pass through the three choke points – Strait of Hormuz (40%), Strait of Malacca (35%), and Bab el-Mandeb (8%).(Rumley: 2013:23)Energy security is associated with the interactions about the demand and supply of energy relations, nature of energy flows etc. Indian Ocean has remained the arena and amphitheatres of great power rivalry rubbing their shoulders for resource possession. It is recognised fact that Indian Ocean has legitimate security interests of extra regional powers and outpost states like China and USA.

Table: Configuration of Indian Ocean as pearls, diamonds and nuggets.

Chinese Pearls	USA diamonds	Indian nuggets
Bangladesh	Diego Garcia	Andaman Islands
Burma	Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, UAE, Kuwait	Mauritius
Pakistan	Egypt, Djibouti, Kenya	Maldives
Sri Lanka	Australia, Indonesia, Singapore	

(Source: IOTF Report of the Australia India Institute The Indian Ocean Region: Security, Stability and Sustainability in the 21st Century: p. 43)

China has some presence in the northern Indian Ocean rim locations- Chittagong in Bangladesh, Gwadar in Pakistan, Hambantota in Sri Lanka and sittwe in Burma these are the 'string of pearls' strategy of China.(Ibid: 43)USA has been placed strategically at 12 locations in Indian Oceans. Centrally located in Diego Garcia, give in Persian Gulf (Bahrain, Oman, Qatar, UAE, and Kuwait), three in Africa and three in eastern rim. India has its presence in Andaman, Mauritius and Maldives. Maritime Security has components of naval arms build-up, Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ) and competition over resources, and protections of SLOCs. Earlier India has developed Spice route from Kerala and Project Mausam, Sagarmala for getting vital linkages and connectivity with the other parts of the world. The new initiatives are aimed at developing ports and infrastructure and cherished goals of revival of old civilizational linkages with distant parts of world. Indian spice, silk and other commodities were hugely demanded in central Asia, Iran and European countries.

Table: Choke points and their significance in sea trade.

Choke Point	Geopolitical location & trade volumes
Strait of Hormuz	Located between Iran and Oman. Most important choke point, 90% of oil exported from Persian Gulf is moved to Asia, western Europe and US.
Strait of Malacca	Located between Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore. 35% sea borne trade shortest trade route for China, Japan and South Korea.
Strait of Bab el-Mandeb	Oil Choke point between Djibouti, Eritrea and Yemen, Strategic link between Mediterranean and Indian Ocean via Red sea and Suez canal, accounts 9% trade.

(Source: IOTF Report of the Australia India Institute The Indian Ocean Region: Security, Stability and Sustainability in the 21st Century: p. 59)

Indian Ocean Choke points face the problems of blockades and attack from the pirates of Somalia. Etc. Thus Indian Ocean is wider part of Indo-Pacific it overstretches from the Straits of Malacca to extreme end of South China Sea, touching the parts of Korea Taiwan and Japan to the West Coast of North America. Thus Indian Ocean has vast geographical expanse and outreach encompassing vital choke points and SLOCs.

US pivot to Asia and policy of rebalancing

As Obama's grand strategy "Pivot to Asia" was formulated to strengthen its relation with Asia Pacific allies and partners. It was policy designed after the USA pull out from Afghanistan and no key affairs left in Middle East war in Iraq and great crusade against terrorism. Entire gulf countries and Saudis have supported the warlords and terrorism in a covert manner. The Pivot to Asia as Obama doctrine encompass entire geographical area of East Asia and South East Asia. After the end of cold war USA policy towards China is purposefully guided by Congagement which means military containment and economic engagement. While China has immensely benefitted from USA globalisation and economic liberalisation. China has emerged as major manufacturing hub of finished goods and requires easy access to markets.

USA and TPP as regional groupings

USA has key allies in Trans Pacific economic partnership with the countries of Japan, Korea, and Australia. In South East Asia with the Countries of Singapore, Vietnam and Thailand have alliances with USA. It is difficult to assume that USA is balancing to rising aspiration of China or trying to hedge with other countries in containment of China. The rebalancing strategy is built on pillars of five key assumptions building closer cooperation with five key US allies in Asia (Japan, South Korea, Australia, Thailand and Philippines), deepening cooperation and capacity building with emerging centre of powers India, Vietnam and Myanmar, constructive relationship with China, engagement with the multilateral institutes of ASEAN and EAS summit, Trade and investment negotiation with the TPP. (Harold: 2015:86) USA after global recession is trying to focus on Asia-pacific region for its people. Pivot to Asia policy is rebalancing strategy of Obama against threat and challenges faced by China in the region. China acts as a potential aggressor and needs to be deterred by regional balancing which is envisaged as China dilemma. China has different set of arguments and advocacy in support of peace and development of harmonious world which itself is contradictory to its assertiveness in the region which poses threat to international norms and international orders. (Yuan: 3)

Asia-Pacific has a geo strategic significance as it stretches from Indian Ocean to the Pacific Ocean which is lifeline of maritime trade and commerce, as pivotal sea routes are connected by it. Pivot to Asia will add new strength and vigour to the economies of Asia Pacific economies by infusing the trade and investment scenario in these countries. The security scenario has been supplemented and strengthened by USA presence as a resident power there in it will be mitigating tension. USA is building its Air sea battle response by building operational capability for the sake of China's anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) posture. (ibid: 6)

US- China regional Conflicts and confrontations:

USA is trying for Trans Pacific Partnership while China is adamantly pursuing the concept of RCEP with ASEAN and immediate neighbours. USA has been inevitably and indispensably the great pacific power. America after Global Financial Crisis has tried to assert economically its leadership in global economy by the multilateral free trade agreement with the 12 countries of pacific under the TPP scheme. "It would include U.S. access to growing markets in Asia, help stimulate the growth in U.S. exports, generate export-related jobs, and foster an economic recovery, while enhancing measures to protect U.S. intellectual property rights, and ensuring that business competition occurs in a fair regional market".(Tsai: 2013:16)Both China and USA are virtually fighting for economic space and increasing their political mileage and economic clouts in the region. Thus USA is trying to assert and rebalance through all possible channels of politics, economics and diplomacy. Chinese policy makers have stated that Pivot to Asia policy is viewed from the Chinese perspective aims at USA direct intrusion into China's relation with its neighbourhood.

There is conflictual situation over Senkaku and Diaoyu islands in East China Sea between China and Japan, both are flexing their military muscles to get claim over those islands. US may try to rebalance in such scenario and circumstances. China has created Sansha city to administer control over the Parcel Islands, Sparty Island chains and Macclesfield Bank of disputed South China Sea.(Muni: 2014:109-222)

Asia-Pacific regional significance

The Asia Pacific region got its prominence on global map because of key regions and factors like, rising China, Economic significance of Asian Tiger economies, ASEAN, IOR and Maritime security and USA policy of rebalancing. USA is quite apprehensive of China's assertion in the region mainly South China Sea and East China Sea as it has tried to shift the balance of power in the region and globally. USA is supportive of smaller countries who are claimant in South China Sea and is Rebalancing their interest. Peaceful rise of China and its military modernisation is giving provocative reaction to its immediate neighbours. China needs to be very cautious in foreign policy exercise in order to avoid any direct confrontation and maintains the stability of multipolar world order by resolving the territorial disputes amicably.

There can be greater coordination employed by China to settle down all sub-regional problems of Taiwan, North Korea Nuclear programme, frictions over maritime issues and other traditional threats to be resolved by win-win situations. Thereby the role of USA can be marginalised. China has assisted in rebuilding of ASEAN after the Asian financial crisis of 1997 and with ASEAN it has free trade agreement policy signed. CHINA- ASEAN has FTA and has trade worth \$380 billion.(Ibid: 212) The China's rise has impacted two country mostly is Vietnam and Philippines due to surmounting tension of South China Sea. India was invited by Vietnamese government for the exploration of hydrocarbon reserves in South China Sea, Indian giant PSU visited South China Sea under ONGC Videsh, Ltd (OVL) and signed agreement with the Petro- Vietnam as a part of India's Look East Policy.The Security situation in East Asia mainly security of North Korea, issues pertaining to the India, Japan and ROK securing there SLOCs and energy security, building trust and confidence in the region needs greater attention.(Ibid: 222)With the ASEAN we want greater participation because of India's look East policy for more stability, we must indulge with region as "Engage East" because of security and prosperity of the region. Mekong –India Economic Corridor project as highway project for better connectivity with the South East Asia to South Asia was connected from the India's north-eastern region was linking the trade and people exchanges between the two regions.(Rao: 2013)

With the Pivot to Asia policy the centre of gravity has shifted towards Asia and Indian Ocean, Pacific Ocean for economic growth. India has been supportive of U.S. entry into East Asia Summit as a full participant and recently observer to IOR- Association for Regional Cooperation. (IOR-ARC). India U.S. relation is directed against China. The Convergence of interest between countries lies in calculus of shared goals of maritime and energy security. Obama Administration is thus willing for promoting its business interest along with liberal values and ideologies of civil liberties for transitional societies.

Chinese policy of Strategic Encirclement across the countries

China is facing national security concerns from the Taiwan, South China Sea and SLOCs in the Indian Ocean. A.T Mahan has employed the concepts of "off shore defense" for blue water strategy. China being a revisionist power is uncomfortable with US a resident power in Asia pacific. US policy has been to balance rise of China. The pre-determined notion is that powerful china is not in US interest. In emerging scenario of Great power rivalry US establishment looks India as typical 'swing state' can be used to balance China. China has active Containment policy for India in Indian Ocean region of 'String of pearls' policy. The official policy of India is guided by pragmatism, constructivism and conagement (containment and engagement) towards China. India needs more strategic autonomy rather than guided by any external factors like presence of big powers in the region.

China's Infrastructural ports and connectivity projects

China has been constructing Gwadar port in Pakistan, Communication facilities at Burma's Coco islands (Chinese Intelligence signals). Chinese String of pearls policy is perceived by Indian strategist and think tanks as directed against India as China's regional policy of "encirclement" of India. India has to respond quickly to Chinese naval encirclement in a holistic way by developing more friendly relationship with the neighbouring countries. Heightening and Strengthening security at maritime Choke points of Malacca strait as it is the nerve centre of all trading business routes. China's string of pearls policy is its peripheral policy and naval diplomacy to get regional supremacy. China's string of pearls policy is extended from the South China Sea to the Arabian Gulf via Indian Ocean. China's ambitious project is viewed from the global security environment of burgeoning US-China relation. String of pearl is a Chinese geopolitical influence and military presence at every constituting "pearl". It is complex necklace of pearl used by Chinese strategist. "The main pearls are as Hainan Island with military facilities, Woody Island located in Parcel archipelago 300 nautical miles from Vietnam, container shipping facility in Chittagong (Bangladesh), construction of deep water port in Sittwe, (Myanmar); navy base at Gwadar (Pakistan)." (Pehrson: 2006:3)

Port and airfield construction projects, diplomatic ties and force modernisation are the objectives of the strategy. "The pearls extend from the littoral of South China Sea to the Strait of Malacca, across Indian Ocean and goes beyond up to the Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf." "Beijing prime objective is to develop Forward presence in the busiest SLOCs and its connectivity with the Middle East. String of pearls is treated as China's Grand National Strategy". (Ibid: 9) China's string of pearl policy is visualised from Chinese perspective for securing its quench for energy, securing SLOCs, and Strategically as peaceful rise of China.

China emerged as "Asian Dragon" and virtually surpassed the "Asian Tigers" of south East Asian Economies South Korea, Taiwan, Thailand Hong Kong who started the pace of rapid industrialisation and economic growth in 1960s. China has to import only 25% of its oil from outside. China imports about 70% of its oil from Middle East and Africa. Vulnerability of Malacca strait as coined as "Malacca dilemma" is the prime objective of pursuing "string of pearls" strategy. "Malacca is a narrow passage jointly administered by Singapore, Malaysia, and Indonesia almost 90% oil is carried by this route and 80% shipped through this strait". (Ibid: 13) China has peaceful development plans and aims at creating multipolar world by ending the eminence of USA. By Economic Modernisation and revamping its relationship with the neighbouring countries it wants to create new world order and new security environment by ending unipolar moment of USA. China is securing and creating win-win circumstances by regional realignment and hedging with the countries by providing economic and infrastructural facility.

China's ambitious MSR

China's Maritime Silk Road initiative, MSR is a soft power projection of China in region to enhance its trade ties with the South Asia, West Asia, Europe and North Africa. (Bhattacharjee:9) China's maritime Silk Road initiative was taken in the backdrop of the US pivot to Asia-pacific policy, China's aggressive posture with the Southeast Asia countries, and resurgent Russia to increase its influence in the Post -soviet space. The "Silk road" terminology was revived after China's president Xi Jinping proposal to build the New Silk

Road Economic Belt after Premier Li Keqiang unfolded the China's grand plan at 16th ASEAN- China summit at Brunei.(Tatar: 2013:3) MSR was manifested to deepen the existing relationship between the south and south East Asia. "MSR emphasis on stronger economic cooperation, cooperation on building roads and railways, enhancement of security cooperation and the idea of 21st century maritime Silk Road through strengthened "maritime economy, environment technical and scientific cooperation."(ibid: 3)

Maritime Silk Route is seen with doubt and enthusiasm visualising Chinese pre-eminence and global clout in terms of its vibrant rising economic and military prowess. China has increased its economic and regional clout in East Asian countries by making its presence felt at the regional groupings of ASEAN, APEC and East Asia Summit (EAS).

China has formulated China- ASEAN FTA in more comprehensive manner by converting it into Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) for enhancing security and maritime cooperation, developing infrastructural projects and cultural linkages by people to people contact. China is trying to countervail against US initiative of TPP and big blow to its pacific initiative of 'Pivot to Asia' policy. China's new initiative will certainly undermine the Obama's big ticket project of Pivot to Asia. This route is just like to develop historical and cultural linkages with its ancient past old Silk route.China has normal relation with ASEAN countries it has troublesome relation with the Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia and Brunei. China has its territorial maritime dispute related to the South China Sea with these countries.

South China Sea dispute and controversy surrounding it and regional mechanism of East Asia

The South China Sea is comprised of four island groups they are Pratas Island located to the northeast, in northern side is Parcels, Sparty is located in southern side and Scarborough Shoal in central east. The Macclesfield Bank is totally submerged reef complex situated at the centre of South China Sea.

South China Sea and UN Convention on law of Sea

The main Claimants of the South China Sea disputes are ASEAN member countries Vietnam, Philippines, Malaysia, Brunei, Taiwan and China. All these countries have overlapping maritime interest and claim over the South China Sea. The region has vast deposits of oil and natural gas, has atolls, rocks and other fishing zones and all maritime commercial activities took place through it. The dispute is associated with the historical and emotional attachments to the landmass, overlapping Exclusive Economic Zones and freedom of navigation, disputes over the interpretations of UNCLOS, and Unexplored resource rivalry. (Bader: 2014:3)UNCLOS permits the littoral states to claim Exclusive Economic Zones of 320 km or continental Shelf or islands can generate own exclusive economic zones EEZ or Continental Shelves. China claims the sovereignty over 12 nautical miles and 200 nautical miles EEZ by atolls. The South China Sea has another territorial dispute related to China's historical affinity and attachment with the "nine-dash line" or NDL. NDL has significance in delineating the boundary where Chinese sovereignty prevails even after the UNCLOS. Nine dash line is U- shaped land mass that covers approximately 80% of land mass area. China has historical rights over these waters and maritime resources. Besides that China claims historical rights over the Spratly and Parcel islands for EEZ. (Storey: 2014:5)

South China Sea has a strategic significance as it is focal point of all shipping and trading activities. If hostile power get control over the South China Sea then it has to reroute through the Sunda Strait and Lombok adding delay and cost escalation. China in time of conflict with the USA and India can block the Malacca strait which can disturb the supply line and oil dependence through it.(Buszynski: 5)The South China Sea has abundance of hydrocarbon reserves, storage of oil and natural gas is the prime motivation behind the energy securitization and cascading resource rivalry in the South East Asian region. China wants bilateral mechanism to solve the disputed issue rather than multilaterally. The new MSR will be aiming at mitigating and diffusing the tensions between the frozen conflicts and aggravated situation in the SCS.

Maritime Silk Route and India's view towards its operational feasibility and implications to security

Different group of thinkers have differing viewpoints towards the culmination of this project. Neo Realist, Neoliberal and key strategist have different policy articulation with regard to China's pilot project being anchored in littorals of Indian Ocean Regions. Strategist and Geopolitical thinkers argues that this initiative is to Counterbalance American alliances in the region. It is interesting to note India is positioned at the crossroad and fulcrum of the MSR as it is located at the southern tip of the Southern silk Route. India really view MSR with the opportunities and Challenges by joining it and has another choice to realign with alternatives of Japan and US economies. China's MSR aims at constructing connectivity and multiple lines of communications with the China for better engagement with the world through ports and infrastructure, acting as a bridgehead by constructing railway linkages in ASEAN. Neo Realist are quite sceptical about this new development of MSR along with China's String of pearls policy as it is blatant manifestation of Chinese increasing its orbit of influence to Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and Pakistan to circumvent India in Indian Ocean littorals.

China is more interested in developing the Kashgar-Gwadar Corridor to get better connectivity. Gwadar port is economic gateway to the China because of its proximity to the Persian Gulf and Arabian Sea. Gwadar port will boost investment in the troubled and conflicted region of FATA and Balochistan. India has deeper policy implication of MSR as it has to revitalise and rekindle its investment by building (Ports, Logistics and Shipbuilding) in immediate neighbourhood in Bangladesh, Myanmar and Sri Lanka from becoming Chinese 'political outposts'. (Singh: 2014:133-148)

India's strategic choices against Chinese Dragon

China is vulnerable SLOCs and asymmetrical maritime option. India is left with the policy choices of providing alternative via Sunda and Lombok straits in case of Malacca blockade. China wants to develop MSR as a collective security instrument for the burden sharing in the security of SLOCs and littorals. Indian initiatives rests on building Chabahar port on Iran's Makran coast as a transit points in the IOR. China is pushing hard for the Land corridor named BCIM-EC. Bangladesh is strategically located and is acting as a bridgehead between South and South East Asia. "If the Bangladesh China India and Myanmar Economic Corridor materializes it will fructify the economic connectivity and trade linkages with the North- East and South-East Asia." (ibid: 141)

From the Neoliberal perspective it is vital to see the new centres of economic powers being emerging in the globalised era and there is need to get engaged with the China, Japan and South Korea and ASEAN economies. With the MSR coming into existence there has Security considerations has taken a backseat and economic consideration has assumed centre stage of all activities. The bottom line of today's economic growth has been economics, trade and business. There has been shift from the role of India being a net security provider to the China. Countries are leveraging and hedging with China for the Security of South Asian countries. Because of increasing Chinese assertion in Indian Ocean India has been downplayed by the Chinese ambitions and has to work for greater economic space and draw benefits by aligning with MSR.

Security threats assessments and conflicts in the South Asia region:

Entire South Asia region comprising eight countries is conflict ridden. The nature of conflicts are protracted whether it is ethnic Tamil crisis in Sri Lankan, Kashmir issue. Security should be broadly visualised from Indo-Centric perspective with taking into cognisance of the adversarial state of relations with neighbouring states. Though, there has been transformation in the nature of state of conflict. There are two nuclear power in the region as it is lying on nuclear stockpiles. The region has protracted conflicts like Afghanistan, Vulnerable regimes of Nepal, problems in FATA and NWFP of Pakistan, Unresolved border and maritime disputes between Bangladesh and India, Islamist militancy epicentre is located in its vicinity and provides an arc of instability. Maritime security needs to be strengthened to prevent any occurrence of terrorism incidents of Mumbai. The vast coastal and security guards should be augmented to check

vulnerabilities of open sea. India's policy is weighed by adjusting its strategic choices with China and Pakistan as major arch rivals in the region. India has a benevolent approach of humanitarian aid and assistance with economic engagements in the regions.

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