



EXPLORING POTENTIALS OF PAK-CHINA STRATEGIC COOPERATION IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

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Abstract

Indian Ocean remained the most important part of great power rivalry during the Cold War amid the former Soviet Union and the then U.S. The Soviets have demised and other actors are consolidating their strategic position. Among such actors, China has increased its attention as one Pentagon strategic document has revealed that it has the largest naval buildup now. This paper argues that to rise to an Asian power China needs strategic cooperation with Pakistan in the Indian Ocean. This paper is supported by Pakistan's key location stretching from the Arabian Sea in the South where the Gwadar port is being progressed. The paper finds out that China in times of conflict with India alone or both India and the United States would be a great beneficiary for its movements of goods such as the military to military exchange and maintaining a smooth supply of energy from the Middle East. The paper recommends that by exploring China and Pakistan's strategic cooperation, the current strategic



partnership between China and Pakistan would potentially consolidate their defense and economic areas in the long term.

Keywords: Pakistan, China, Indian Ocean, United States, CPEC.

Introduction

The I.O offers a progressive and major platform for international trade and an arena for global security. Asian economic progress, increasing dependency on natural resource flows linking producers and consumers throughout Africa, the Middle East, Asia, and international network of supply and distribution are interlacing the region by sea. However, around the region of the Indian Ocean, an array of rising issues including piracy and some land clashes in the local seas, international ecological pressures on coastal and maritime resources are considerably causing hardships for the marine policymaker. The third-largest ocean in the world, the Indian Ocean, stretches on 73.56 million square miles in total and covers about 20 percent of the entire sea surface of the earth. The I. O's western boundary is demarcated in two points from the Atlantic Ocean; the highpoint from Cape Agulhas in South Africa and the Suez Canal. Utilizing chokepoints, sailing across the Indian Ocean, and a passage from its waters into adjacent seas is made possible and somewhat controlled too. In IOR, there are seven main chokepoints which, are the Suez Canal, Lombok Strait, Malacca Straits, the Strait of Hormuz, the Bab el Mandeb, Mozambique Channel, and the Sunda Strait. The IOR is enclosed and around 38 states variously influence it including Bahrain, Kenya, Pakistan, Madagascar, Mozambique, Somalia, Tanzania Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Australia, Qatar, Kuwait, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Maldives, Seychelles, Myanmar, Mauritius, Bangladesh, UAE, etc. U.K and France can be added too amongst the Indian Ocean littoral countries due to their island territories (Michel & Sticklor, 2012).

The Idea of The Indian Ocean's Geopolitics

The Indian Ocean has always been an integral part of human civilization by providing its dimension. Supposedly, the first-ever sea, the human sailed was the Indian Ocean. Numerous archeological discoveries provide evidence in support of this supposition. Thus, the Indian Ocean is tremendously affluent when it comes to the substance that composed a vital part of human history. For long, the Indian Ocean has been man's pal, a pathway of trade and success. It is an Ocean closely related to the faith of the people residing around it, with meticulous stress on Islam, as mentioned by Sugata Bose, a famous Indian historian. He points at it stating that the Indian Ocean experience for Muslims from India, Malay, and Java who boldly challenged the colonial rules to make it to Mecca and Medina during the period of British colonial dominations of the seas has essentially been



exceptional. Oceans are made by the seas, straits, and littorals in addition to the geographical aspects, the account of human activity for it provides the prospect to evaluate and ascertain the pertinent social and political aspects of a particular region. The Indian Ocean has facilitated the movement of people, as well as the movement and exchange of notions and cultures that go beyond geographical restrictions, turning this Ocean into a region that is also social and thus political (Bastos, 2014).

The Theoretical Concept of Power Politics

Power politics can be defined both as common political rhetoric as well as the theoretical depiction of the way different nations act together in quest of their objectives in the global arena. The notion of politics in American English is chiefly based on oppression instead of assistance. That coercion can be military or economic. Other than that politics also means the hunting of national self-interest more willingly than larger ideals, beliefs, or morals. This definition makes it obvious that the value judgment is generally implied by employing the term. The accusers who are involved in power politics are criticized for power abuse in pursuit of a self-serving political schema. The scholars have been employing the term in an assortment of ways to describe particular political conduct rather than denouncing it. Several philosophers belonging to the "realist" school of thought hold the opinion that the countries essentially seek out power for their own sake, therefore the rivalry and effort inherently typify international relations. While some theorists disagree stating that power is not an end but a means and suggest that countries pursue security before anything else and they direly need the power to attain the national interests and maintain the security. "Power problem" according to the political scientists is based on the fact that no state owns absolute power and every state has some power and all of the states perceive the other members of the international community with potential hostility. Relative security for one nation is often relative insecurity for others, and hence in this plan, clash and antagonism are expected naturally (Etzoldand & Messer, n.d).

The IOR is evolving to be the network of world power and disagreement in the approaching time. After the United States Navy that remained leading power since the 20th century, now in I.O Region, China and India also are enhancing their naval and military powers. The U.S and Japan are assisting India to advance its military latent and capability. In contrast, China is the strongest ally of Pakistan in South Asia where the naval sphere is straightly connected and other small countries have to be submissive to China for military, economic support. Also, India is constantly making efforts to persuade the smaller countries in the IOR, so a condition of Power Politics is there in the Indian Ocean. (Karim,



2017)

BRI and Gwadar port

Pakistan intends to benefit from Chinese resources and its production capability, and learn tactics to improve the infrastructure of Pakistan and produce a system for sustainable economic development through CPEC. On the other hand, CPEC offers China the advantages gained through the links to the Arabian Sea, by offering a possible trade route to the hazardous Southeast Asian Malacca Strait. Yet, there have been several drivers, with the broader BRI, and the significance of impressive geostrategic designs must not be gaudy.

China believes that for economic development, social stability, and an enhanced security situation, the government needs to invest in infrastructure. In South Asia the stability of its permanent friend, Pakistan is the main apprehension for China to counterbalance India and as a latent exercise platform for Uyghur militants from the Xinjiang Province. For this reason, CPEC is considered to be an indispensable strategic deal for China who is interested in creating more and better trade routes in Pakistan to strengthen the stability-minded progress of the own Western interior of China. In reality, Chinese companies are making progress by overfilling domestically. They are also enticed by Pakistan's uncomplicated funding and closed bidding method. Pakistan has been struggling to tackle the energy crisis by adding coal capability, whereas locally Chinese companies are suffering from the decline in the need for similar expertise. (Mardell, 2020)

Contours of the Position of Pakistan' Strategic Presence Inside the Indian Ocean

Pakistan is situated at the core of the Indian Ocean which makes it a vital coastal state since more than 95% of its trade is carried out through the sea utilizing its Karachi ports, Qasim and Gwadar. Also, Pakistan brings its Exclusive Economic Zone of 290,000 sq km and Continental Shelf into use for a fishery, excavating, examination, and nautical study. From the Gulf States, more than 15 million barrels of crude oil are transported via Pakistani coasts on daily basis through the Persian Gulf. The direct and shortest seaway into Afghanistan, Central Asian states and China is also through Pakistan which is clear evidence of the significance of Pakistan's marine Economy potential as well as its military and strategy for the region.

Pakistan has altered the taxonomy of the Ministry of Ports and Shipping to the Ministry of Maritime Affairs in recent times after acknowledging the significance of marine activities



and their role in national safekeeping. The Pakistani government passed the 1976 Maritimes Zones Act (MZA) after figuring out the potential Pakistan possessed to thrive by expanding its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) from 100 to 200 nautical miles from the starting point. Pakistan then in 2015 expanded its Continental Shelf to 350 nautical miles under the domain of the UNCLCS (UN Commission for Limits of the Continental Shelf) but the significance of MZA is reducing with time since the government could not amend the law sporadically. In 1997, Regardless of approval of the 1982 United Nations Law of Sea Convention (UNLOSC), the slackness of not making it a part of our regional legislature has resulted in a huge loss in several global perks like the benefit of sharing and marketable privileges which has deeply harmed the Pakistani marine economy. In addition, the dearth of oceanographers and “blue jobs” and lack of facilities to search the waters have halted Pakistan from discovering its optimum nautical potential. MZA needs to be reviewed and amended in corresponding to the international law and the assimilation of the Pakistan Maritime Security Agency Act 1994 into one broad law that will enable it to develop its area of control at the sea (Jalil, Mahmood, Akram, & Farwa, 2018)

China's presence inside the Indian ocean and its financial and strategic interests

Energy and Trade

China's growth made it dependent on sea paths throughout the Indian Ocean to export trade and import energy. China imports most of its energy by the sea that produces a tactical weakness for it. The main issue for China is to protect its widespread sea lines of communication (SLOC) that cross the Western Pacific and the Indian Ocean and link the Persian Gulf raw exporters and major China's oil terminals and littoral refineries. Currently, China is surrounded by several ambitious projects to enlarge its nautical power abilities afar its shorelines. besides the obvious threat from India and many other Asian nations, the increasing marine influence of China or its enhanced sea guard is equally worrisome for America. The probable threat of exclusion of its trade and energy goods at the Malacca Strait has made China opt for wide different and unusual trade and energy routes such as developing dry land energy paths connecting the Xinjiang Uyghur sovereign province in its west with the Seaport of Gwadar Pakistan. By discovering substitute overland paths through Burma to Yunnan Province, China is also trying to lessen its tactical susceptibility at the Malacca Strait.

China Belt and Road Initiative



In 2013, Chinese President Xi first pronounced Belt and Road Initiative or One Belt, One Road; a conceptual means that has lent policy consistency to an assortment of trade and investment ventures of China through the Indo-Pacific. The notion of BRI is based on the past trade connections of China to the West through the primeval Silk Road. The BRI is termed as an all-inclusive idea for political, regional, and business amalgamation under Chinese control. BRI is the solution to the vital trade and strategic hardships of China and it deals with safeguarding the continental borders of China. It also deals with energy security, plus wider political power, and strategic growth. The idea is about having a matchless influence of China over a main expanse of the planet.

Jonathan Stivers, the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission states that the Belt and Road Initiative of China is aimed at accomplishing numerous main targets of China including to alleviate the domestic excessive capability of China in the manufacturing and building section; to increase the accessibility of China to politically imperative marine and land trade paths and to enhance the energy security plan of China; to obtain control and influence over other states and to counteract U.S. power, and to make China the hub of trade and business in Asia.

China is increasing its power and existence in the Indian Ocean region which is not only about trade and investment only but also includes the military element. Many regional analysts view the presence of China as rapidly growing even more than it was earlier anticipated, though the speed and scope of the intentions of China to expand its tactical position in South Asia are vague.

In the Indian Ocean, now China is proceeding quicker than many analysts had predicted and is building a military role including the expansion of a complex of naval and military bases about the Indian Ocean coastal, beginning with Djibouti and the latest base expected to be constructed near or at Gwadar. More bases of China are probably being built in the region of East Africa and the central/eastern Indian Ocean. A set-up of bases of different kinds and sizes will grant china more and better options to counter the unforeseen events distressing its interests, such as the aid for anti-piracy actions, civilian withdrawal, defense of Chinese people and their assets, and possibly the involvement in the Indian Ocean coastal countries or other states of the region (Everycrsreport, 2018).

Currently, China is doing its best to protect its economic and business benefits in the Indian Ocean shoreline and has successfully formulated a soft power economic policy in correspondence with the well-known motto of Deng Xiaoping; biding time and lying low. Therefore, China is intending to build a blue-water naval force in avowing the nautical



regional assertions of the nation. The purpose of this plan is to increase its accessibility to resources and commerce during amity. The goals of China regarding the Indian Ocean are likely to enhance its influence and its existing military growth and noteworthy existence in the Indian Ocean that is highly challenging for the former powers present in the region. Besides, the present naval platforms and weaponry of China are supposed to display sizeable maritime power into the Western Pacific; instead, it can emphasize both south and west alongside the tactical sea lanes from Southeast Asia and beside the Indian Ocean. constant apprehensions of the prohibition of oil supply, coupled with the mounting keenness of China in nautical resource and trade might steadily make more far-reaching nautical progress towards the west.

Pakistan, a fairly much less critical player, but probably larger role/Gwadar port significance:

The Cold War transformed the dynamics of global politics and part of a feeble or state has turned out to be more decisive in the international system in the period after cold-war. A state is still the core player in the international system and holds rights on its land. Therefore, a country is an active component and the purposes of national security are to achieve influence over the region and expand its influence which requires considerable military might. Presently, a country has gotten to play a very intricate role and continues to make efforts to reach limited sources such as coal, oil, gas, coal and to govern over geo-economic tools. A route refers to a topographical as well as a tactical notion that refers to the physical entree in a specific area or state. For this reason, routes or areas not only affect the critical spheres such as security and development but also the configuration of domestic growth. Furthermore, routes are a perfect tool that can help in exposing the qualitative correlation between the states and opening the gateways for economic efficiency, safety, enlarge countryside growth, and boost entrance into metropolitan or international markets. Out of all these advantages, having access to routes is indispensable since lacking proper access; a state cannot keep up its commercial and marketable happenings. Incidentally, the borders of Pakistan and its adjacent regions especially the province of Baluchistan have remained vital to getting hold of influence, the search for development, and can grab global consideration. Besides, it's terrestrial and oceanic own a strategic worth constructive for expanding economic supremacy counting India, USA, and China.

In the current geopolitics, fresh sea paths and rapid vessels assure the protection of commercial and political goals which originate from the capacity to proceed towards oceans, mountains, deserts, and seas. Accordingly, the sea and terrain-related politics to



fulfill economic and commercial objectives have been an ancient practice and the post-Cold War era has not changed the strictures of current politics. former Prime Minister of Pakistan Zulfikar Ali Bhutto also believed that geography plays the utmost crucial and distinct role in shaping the foreign policy of a state and the politics of seas predominantly the significance of the Indian Ocean is past alteration and staying aloof and uninfluenced of geographical neighbors is not possible for a state. These views of Bhutto anticipated the approaching circumstances and pointed out the profound and abiding concern of the prodigious armed and economic countries such as the US, China, and India in the matters of the area. Edward Luttwak was of the view that the significance of routes is better comprehensible during conflict than in peacetime and imperative to achieve strategic goals and is likewise fundamental for the economic progress of a country. also, deep insecurity and rivalry among the adversaries are created by the scarcity of entrance to the ocean or accessibility of the appropriate region. The big powers usually create routes for strategic and political purposes to seek economic benefits. yet, if the small states intend to benefit themselves from the developed countries, the goals and the nature of the business can alter the balance of military power. As a matter of fact, a country needs to have economic development for its survival, and ignoring this integral aspect may disintegrate the system.

Therefore, a route is created through the areas which serve as a bridge and provide access and make the connection with other parts of the world possible. Strategically speaking, the location of Gawadar is quite attractive to the regional and international powers which are concerned about South, West, and Asia. Gawadar is situated at the doorway of the Persian Gulf while its northern areas are closer to the Xinjiang province of China. Undeniably, Gwadar in Pakistan has developed into a strategically vital place in the present world. its harbor is close to the Hormuz Strait that is a route of almost 17 million barrels' oil daily which makes it a perfect site amidst three key areas of South Asia, Persian Gulf (enriched in oil), and Central Asia (oil and gas-resourced) that further enhance its strategic value. Its progress has altered the political situation of Central Asia to Pakistan since shortly Gwadar will link up with non-coastal Central Asia and the remaining world.

The location of Gwadar location grants China a substitute to Strait of Malacca which reveals that the coasts of Gwadar and Makran usage possess several strategic gains for all the involved powers due to the access to the coastline that can supply objectives more than the use of authority in the region. It can enable admittance to any power to marine paths by increasing its access through the Hormuz Straits and the northern Indian Ocean. This can also let local as well as international powers function at the extensive reserve from the coasts for a longer period, service for more ships, which sequentially will facilitate the increased patrols in the Indian Ocean and also elevates the intensity of existence besides



the shipping paths of huge importance for the industrial states. In this background, both Indo-US view the presence of China at Gwadar to have palpable strategic insinuations for happenings in the Persian Gulf and Iran. though China presents its interests in Gwadar as purely economic and devoid of potential strategic aspects other actors disagree and perceives the extension of that China to Gwadar as probably provoked by commercial as well as military objectives. The American government is not at all happy with the Sino-Pakistan strong bond and is concerned about the Indian apprehensions regarding Gwadar. The involvement of China in Gwadar is alleged as a risk to the US authority in the region. India views Gwadar crookedly since it obstructs its control in Iran and Afghanistan (Hilali, 2014).

Options for Pakistan

The Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean are somewhat closed allowing a small exchange of water that takes place from the north contrary to the Atlantic oceans and the Pacific which are unrestricted from North to the South Pole and together with monsoon turnabout made the North Arabian Sea one of the most dynamic region. The perimeters of the Indian Ocean are occupied with the third of the total world's population that relies on inanimate resources. The sea provides the essential goods and amenities for the growth of the littoral and non-coastal regions which were able to generate affluent fisheries, gas, oil, and mineral resources. The coastal zone of Pakistan was also procuring economic wealth from animate and inanimate resources and valuable supplies, such as fishes and fishery goods, coastline reliant activities, marine trade, seaport and freight goings-on, tourism and beach amusement, etc., which helped in gaining foreign exchange of millions of US dollars. Minerals obtained from water were used for developing construction purposes in addition to the provision of energy for commercial and domestic utilization, and fertilizer for the agricultural zone. Several minerals which were considered economically important like Poly-metallic sulfide deposits famous for having high lead, zinc, copper, barium, gold, and silver concentrations; the crust enriched in cobalt, normally available on the seamount sides, possess nickel, copper, zinc, iron, cobalt, and manganese. The discovery of a few more oil and gas reservoirs, phosphorites, and precious metals had also garnered the attention of several researchers as well as mining companies all around the world. Luckily, Pakistan has a 990 km long coastline, having an Exclusive Economic Zone of around 240,000 square km. Further latest scientific findings reveal that the possible input of these resources to the international economy could be more fruitful. A proposal of establishing an "Ocean Business Forum" was also put forward with members chosen from the coastal countries of the Indian Ocean and afar for the benefit and use of the expertise for viable



progress of the marine resources leaving to the economic growth and advancement of the nation.

Regional cooperation is fighting the maritime offenses by stating that Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) must make efforts to endorse the nonstop development and stable growth of the region and its member countries and to produce a general platform for regional economic collaboration. Nautical security and protection, business and investment assistance, fisheries, calamities and risk management and tourism, cultural and expertise interactions must be the top priorities. An all-inclusive tactic was adopted to embrace all stakeholders and boost confidence between government and people. The misplaced funds could be put into the betterment of governance and socio-economic infrastructure (Chandio, 2015).

Conclusion

IOR navies were comprised of the navies of various countries including Pakistan, Australia, Oman, UAE, Bangladesh, South Africa, Iran, Singapore Saudi Arabia, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Thailand. The American and French naval bases were also there. The Navies of Pakistan, KSA, and Oman collaborated as part of “Aman Exercises” to counteract the menace of regional and global terrorism as well as piracy. Several financiers, middlemen, insurance companies, pirates, middlemen, or security agencies who supposedly benefited themselves from piracy were rightly investigated. In 2010, Somali pirates were paid roughly US \$ 238 million ransom while around the US \$ 95 million (40 percent) went to recipients outside Somalia. Without regional assistance, the abolition of piracy was unattainable. For Pakistan, it is not possible to remain unmindful of any development concerning the Indian Ocean since it has a deep impact on our growth and success. Therefore, staying heedful about the Indian Ocean is imperative for Pakistan who is more attentive towards continental matters hence sea get away from its focus. This is high time to emphasize the issues of maritime as the expansion of the Navy is of fundamental significance for Pakistan. For this purpose, Pakistan’s security/economic interest in regard to the Indian Ocean must be kept in mind while conducting the conferences by think tanks.

Even though some key and regional powers viewed the Gwadar port development with the help of China as a Chinese tactic of creating “strings of pearls”; As a commercial port, it gives immense economic benefits to China. Through the Dubai-Gwadar-Urumqi route that is about 3500 kilometers, China will be able to save 22 days long marine traveling and a sizeable amount of freight expenses instead of operating the trade to the Chinese Western



parts through the Strait of Malacca on the Dubai-Shanghai-Urumqi course that involves 14,500 kilometers traveling. Pakistan is mainly anxious about preserving steadiness plus the safety in its neighboring region of concern of the North Arabian Sea. However, Pakistan is aware of transboundary perils and has always remained an active member of Counter-Piracy Task Force-151 Combined Task Force-150. These sorts of intercontinental collaborations have played a significant role in this region. Pakistan is the sixth utmost populous country and soon it will have to turn towards the seas to guarantee food security for a growing population and economic progress. An immediate awareness about the 'Century of Oceans' is immediately required. People must realize the sensitivity and the nature of the problem, the need to found a normative framework, create technical capability and enlarge regional corporations (Chandio, 2015).



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