

The Recent Trends In India-China Maritime Rivalry: Highlighting Security Aspect

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Abstract: The concept of security has undergone sea-changes in recent years. To analyse the implications of these changes, with particular reference to the States like India and China here the paper would concentrate on the fact. In the last two decades maritime issues have assured growing importance in the international sphere for various reasons. The paper would try to emphasise the maritime issues like security and national interests of the concerned countries. The growing economic development of these countries has ironically emerged as challenges to them. To sustain the tendency of growth they need to ensure security of their sea lanes as well as smooth business transaction with the rest of the world through the Indian Ocean. The rivalry between India and China may not take hot form as both of the countries have learned to live under suspicion for long time and both have stake in the existing global order as their rise is the product of this present order. Present internal problems and the bilateral economic engagement between the two may restrict them to for another confrontation. Comprehensive bilateral cooperation on the energy issue between India and China is one of the ways in which at least some of these mutual concerns could be addressed.

Keywords: Maritime Security, Indian Ocean, Naval Power, Geopolitical, Geostrategic

I. INTRODUCTION

In the last two decades maritime issues have assured growing importance in the international sphere for various reasons. But before point out the reasons it would be essential to concentrate on the matter related to Indian Ocean and its littoral states. More specifically India and China are the main concerned countries in this matter. Keeping in mind the famous quotations “Whoever controls the Indian Ocean dominates Asia. This ocean is the key to the Seven Seas. In the 21st century the destiny of the world will be decided on its waters.” by the American sea power theorist, Alfred Thayer Mahan, the paper would try to emphasise the maritime issues like security and national interests of the concerned countries. The growing economic development of these countries has ironically emerged as challenges to them. To sustain the tendency of growth they need to ensure security of their sea lanes as well as smooth business transaction with the rest of the world through the Indian Ocean. India has a distinguished

ancient maritime history that was nurtured on strong commerce, trade, movement of peoples, spread of culture and the rooting of Indian influence in the Mediterranean, Persia, Southeast Asia and China. The Mauryas, Satavahnas, Chalukyas, Cholas and Chera kingdoms had a flourishing maritime enterprise and some of them had developed powerful navies that engaged in warfare. These global links were significant for the growth of Indian influences and trade that flourished on high growth rates and expanding trade and India and the Indian Ocean emerged as the centres of maritime activity and maritime enterprise. China’s maritime history has several epochs of maritime glory and is best understood through the maritime developments that took place during ancient times. The Song Dynasty and Ming Dynasty endeavoured to build China into a major maritime power that resulted in several successful maritime expeditions to Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean. China certainly was the strongest sea power in Asia in that period. In this paper will try to relate to issues of national interests of these countries

safeguard their national interests they are interested to enhance their look out with the South and South East Asian naval positions through strategy and diplomacy in recent times.

The concept of security has undergone sea-changes in recent years. To analyse the implications of these changes, with particular reference to the States like India and China here the paper would concentrate on the fact. Building a security scenario in the Indian Ocean Region particularly in the eastern part there are at least four major factors could be pointed out. (a) The geopolitical and geostrategic issues of India and China, (b) The national interests of both the countries, (c) Security threats and the External Powers, (d) Towards suggestive conclusion.

II. THE GEOPOLITICAL AND GEOSTRATEGIC ISSUES OF INDIA AND CHINA

It is a general perception that a military-oriented and state-centric approach to national security formulation is no longer adequate after the end of cold war. In history we have found that, the international security situation continues to be adversely affected by continuing conflict and violence as rising nations and no-state actors become more powerful, emerging risks require greater attention. The security environment has become more complex, with asymmetric threats from terrorism, piracy, territorial claims on sea lanes etc. Therefore it is easy to say that security goes well beyond strategic and military considerations, which involves political, economic, social, technological and even environmental factors. In the post cold war era, the world has witnessed the tyranny of technologically advanced countries imposing regimes governing technology, nuclear energy and even the environment and human rights. These regimes do not emerge from a consensus or even mutual deliberations but are discriminatory in nature and are imposed arbitrarily. They should therefore form the underpinning and provide the context within which India's defence and foreign policies must evolve synergistically. In case of China, the country is involved in disputes with Malaysia, Philippines, Taiwan, Vietnam and possibly Brunei over the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea. China is also occupies the Paracel Islands, which are also claimed by Vietnam and Taiwan, and asserts a claim to the Japanese-administered Senkaku Islands in the Pacific Ocean. Most of the boundary with India is in dispute, but Beijing and New Delhi have committed to begin resolution with discussions on the least disputed middle sector. China's de facto administration of the Aksai Chin section of Kashmir is also the subject of a dispute between China and India. China has a total area of nearly 9,596,960 square kilometres, in which it has a 22,117 kilometres of land boundaries with 14 other countries and coastline extends 14,500 kilometres from the border with North Korea in the north to Vietnam in the South. China's coasts are on the East China Sea, Korea Bay, Yellow Sea, and South China Sea. India's geographical location is responsible for the big relations between politics and geography as far as the Indian Ocean is concern. Originating the physical background for India is the way where it has found that, "very few nations in the world geographically dominate an ocean area as India dominates the

Indian Ocean," and it leads to the question of how for this geographical pre-eminence is reflected in the political arena for a long time. Actually India is effectively "the only viable link between various maritime zones of the total Indian Ocean region. It links between the Malacca Straits, Andaman Sea, Bay of Bengal, Central Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea, and also its extension to the Gulf and Red Sea."

Thousands of years, the sea has been a bounteous sources of all manner of resources, living and non-living, and a major contributor to human development, national unity and gives advantage for strategic policy making. Navies and other maritime forces have been increasingly involved in defence of this activity, and everything suggests that these responsibilities will expand in the near future. Thus 'maritime security' is a term "which can notes different things to different navies. While some perceive maritime security in a narrow sense as measures for force-protection and defence against sabotage, others include actions to combat terrorism and illegal activities like piracy and trafficking, still others expand it to embrace the protection of territorial waters and sea lanes. Adopting an inclusive approach, we in India define maritime security as; comprising a collection of all the issues that pertain to the seas, and have a bearing on national security. These include, inter-alia, seaborne trade and infrastructure for its pursuit, management of sea resources, environmental issues and employment of naval forces." In the article titled "*India and the Allure of the 'Indo-Pacific'*", Prof. David Scott has analysed that the term 'Indo-Pacific' has gained strategic discourse in and around the Indian Government since 2010. A strong geo-political and geo-economic sense of the Indo-Pacific has become apparent in this emergent Indo-Pacific discourse, which combines elements of India's 'Look South' and 'Look East' policies, and in which a core Indo-Pacific of the eastern Indian Ocean and Western Pacific Ocean has particular strategic coherence. Not only have Government leaders adopted the term Indo-Pacific at various times, diplomats, navy service chiefs, influential think tanks and persuasive voices like Shyam Saran and C. Raja Mohan have also been noticeable in their use of the term. India's bilateral and trilateral relations with Japan, Australia and the US have attracted particular Indo-Pacific association in India. While a criticism of the term Indo-Pacific is that it has negative China-centric, balancing undertones, he has tried to finds that although China-centric balancing frequently accompanies Indo-Pacific discourse, this is not an inherent part of the concept. The alleged Chinese attempt to increase its naval presence in the Indian Ocean region through Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Maldives and to some extent Pakistan – by offering technical assistance to build port facilities or to use existing ports for communication purpose have raised India's security antenna. China's defence modernization plans crowned with a galloping pace of expenditure that maintained a decade-long average rise of around 10% add to its "grand design" theory. Programmes are also afoot to transform the Peoples Liberation Army (PLA) Navy into a blue water one. The string of pearls theory or the development of bases all around the Indian Ocean by China is also a point of concern to Indian strategists. On the other hand India's engagement with South East Asia and connectivity with South China Sea is also took part in the China's interest in this area.

III. THE NATIONAL INTERESTS OF BOTH THE COUNTRIES

The Post Cold war era has heralded a socio-politico-strategic shift in thought. Globalization, specifically economics, today dominates strategic considerations. This has led to enhance maritime security concerns, since most regional trade is sea-borne. Despite “maritime bonding”, this region has unfortunately not seen the emergence of a vibrant trans-oceanic community. This may be rooted in regional countries’ wide dissimilarities and divergent interests, which have prompted each country to pursue economic linkages with Europe or North America rather than with each other. The Indian Ocean is home to many choke points, such as the Straits of Hormuz, Straits of Malacca, Lombok and the Sunda Straits. Any type of disruption in traffic flow through these points can have disastrous consequences. The disruption of energy flows in particular is a considerable security concern for littoral states, as a majority of their energy lifeline are sea-based. Since energy is critical in influencing the geo-political strategies of a nation, any turbulence in its supply has serious security consequence. Given the spiralling demand for energy from India, China, and Japan, it is inevitable that these countries are sensitive to the security of the sea lines of communication (SLOC) and choke points of the region. Most of the trade of the Indian Ocean littorals and the South Asian states is seaborne. Therefore the protection of the concern SLOC is essential for them. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) Report, “Review of Maritime Transport 2000”, notes that world sea-based trade recorded its fourteenth consecutive annual increase, and Asia’s share of imports and exports was 26.1% and 18.8% respectively. Thus the prospects for seaborne trade are set to rise dramatically. Unfortunately, along with this rise in traffic, the variety and intensity of threats, including piracy, maritime terrorism, drug trafficking, gun-running, human smuggling, pollution, accidents and inter-state conflict, are also expected to show a proportional rise.

IV. SECURITY THREATS AND THE EXTERNAL POWERS

India’s and China’s aspirations for great power status, as well as their quest for energy security, have compelled them to redirect their gazes from land to the seas. The Cold War decades saw the United States as the great global maritime power and the Soviet Union as the dominant Eurasian land power. But as the Cold War recedes into the past and China rises economically and politically, taking advantage, in effect of America’s military quagmires in Iraq and Afghanistan, a new and more complex order is gradually emerging in the maritime rim-land of Eurasia, which includes not only the Indian Ocean but the Western Pacific. What follows is an analysis of a US navy that has already reached the zenith of its dominance, faced with a rising Chinese maritime presence that, along with the rise of India, could over time herald the end of Western control over these waters. While China seeks to expand its influence vertically, which means reaching southward down to the warm waters of the Indian Ocean. In

case India it has been found that the country seeks to expand its influence horizontally, reaching eastward and westward to the borders of Victorian age British India., parallel to the Indian Ocean. Once Chinese President Hu Jintao comments China’s sea-lane vulnerability and he has referred it as China’s “Malacca Dilemma”. Explaining the fact that is China depends on the narrow and vulnerable Strait of Malacca for oil imports from which she must somehow escape. It is her old fear, for Ming China’s world was disrupted in 1511 when the Portuguese conquered Malacca. In the 21st century the “Malacca Dilemma” means, among other things, eventually using Indian Ocean ports to transport oil and other energy products via roads and pipelines north ward into the heart of China, so that tankers do not all have to sail through the Strait of Malacca to reach their destination. Actually China wants to desperately to integrate Taiwan into its dominion, so that it can redirect its naval energies to the Indian Ocean. The concept of ‘String of Pearls’ is a strategy, which is for the Indian Ocean features to construct a large port and listening post at the port of Gwadar of Pakistan on the Arabian Sea, where the Chinese could monitor ship traffic through the Strait of Hormuz. There could be another Chinese utilized port in Pakistan, at Pasni, 75 miles east of Gwadar and joined to it by a new highway. There is no doubt about China’s ‘string of pearls’ strategy linked with its maritime strategy., and with which Sri Lanka and Maldives have also been associated. To set up a maritime link China seem to be building the oil-age equivalent of a coaling station for their ships at Hambantota, on the southern coast of Sri Lanka. China and India continue to for maritime influence, as influence over the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) remains both commercially and strategically advantageous. However, India’s recent strategy includes developing regional cooperative maritime frameworks that focus on security as a preventative hedge on Chinese incursions. While China consolidates commercial maritime interests in South Asia, India is hoping to underscore the greater importance of maintaining security, with the subcontinent giant as the cornerstone. In an attempt to further consolidate its littoral neighbours, India signed a tripartite maritime security pact with Sri Lanka and the Maldives. The deal includes joint cooperation on EEZ surveillance, search and rescue operations, working on anti-piracy efforts and, sharing and tracking of merchant vessels using new technologies. But it is interesting to say that the trilateral agreement was signed just days after the announcement giving the control of Gwadar Port to China. In August 2013, a new USD \$500 million container port will open in Colombo harbour in Sri Lanka, completed largely by the Chinese state run firm China Harbor Engineering. Ultimately, this group controls an 85% stake in the terminal and will continue to hold one for the next 35 years. A Chinese state owned firm will also own 125 acres of reclaimed land from the sea being built off the coast of Colombo. These strategic partnerships follow recent US-Indian drills such as the Malabar Exercise while India officials claim both sides’ naval cooperation has “hit the big time.” At the Bangladeshi port of Chittagong on the Bay of Bengal, Chinese companies have been active in developing the container port facility, where China might also be seeking naval access. In Myenmer, where the Chinese have given billions of dollars in military assistance to the ruling junta (the

then military ruling Govt.), Beijing is building and upgrading commercial and naval bases, constructing road, waterway, and pipeline links from the Bay of Bengal to China's Yunnan Province and operating surveillance facilities on the Coco Islands deep in the Bay of Bengal. A number of these ports are closer to cities in central and Western China than those cities are to Beijing and Shanghai. Such Indian Ocean ports, with north-south road and rail links, would help economically liberate landlocked inner China. China is reaching southward and westward, evinced by a seemingly improbable railway it hopes to construct linking its westernmost provinces- across some of the highest terrain in the World – to a copper producing region of Afghanistan south of Kabul.

At same time it should be mentioned here that the Chinese claims to the Spratly islands have conflicted with those of Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam. Chinese maps depict virtually the entire South China Sea encompassing the Spratly islands and the Paracel islands as their territorial. Further, the Chinese view the presence of any economic or military activity in the South China Sea as an invasion of their territory. In 1974, China clashed with Vietnam and seized the Paracel islands. In 1988, China took over several islands in the Spratly islands in a two-day clash. The aggressive posture continued and China clashed with the Philippines over Mischief Reef in 1995 clearly showcasing its belligerent intent. The trend towards assertive jurisdiction continued unabated, and in 1996, the two sides were again engaged in a skirmish over the Scarborough Shoal, claimed by the Philippines. These incidents showcase Beijing's assertiveness with regard to its disputes with other claims to the South China Sea. There are several reasons for this posturing. First, China does not hesitate to use force when it comes to issues of its sovereignty. Secondly, China can be quite assertive to protect marine resources such as hydrocarbons, fish and minerals that are available in the disputed South China Sea. Thirdly, the strategic location of the islands serves as a base for protecting China's long and valuable sea lines of communications. Despite the exercise of such assertiveness by China, diplomacy to prevent the escalation of disputes has a prominent place in Chinese conduct of international relations as demonstrated by the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea. The Chinese strategic calculus visualizes challenges to the rivals to attain a power position. In Asia, China views India and Japan as its rivals, which are significant economic and military powers that have the potential to challenge its rise to pre-eminence in Asia. China's primary geopolitical ambition is to build comprehensive national power to emerge as "Pan-Asian power" and expand its influence in South Asia and across a larger swath of the Indian Ocean. Significantly, the Indian Ocean has figured prominently in the strategic thinking of ancient Chinese mariners for trade and also in the geostrategic calculus of the Sung and Ming emperors. After all, Zheng He's naval expeditions in the Indian Ocean had established Chinese suzerainty, spheres of political, economic and strategic influence. Given its critical needs for raw materials, markets and energy (source from Africa, the Persian Gulf, South Asia and Southeast Asia), China's maritime strategy nurtures and sustains robust relations with several navies in South Asia and the Indian Ocean littoral extending to

the Middle East and Africa. These dynamics steer China's South Asia and Indian Ocean policy and strategies.

There is long history of involvement by outside actors in South Asia. Many have established and maintained a presence there and in the Indian Ocean to ensure their strategic interests. In modern times the key players include the United Kingdom, United States, Russia and European Union. US interest and presence in the Indian Ocean increased during the Cold War period in order to counter the influence of the Soviet Union, which occupied Afghanistan and enjoyed a special relationship with India. One reason for the Soviet interest in Afghanistan was the potential for access to warm water ports in the Indian Ocean. In 1971, the US established a military base on the British island of Diego Garcia, located in the middle of the Indian Ocean, following a lease agreement with the UK. Diego Garcia is home to one of the five ground antennas that comprise the US Global Positioning Satellite system. US interest in the Indian Ocean increased following the fall of the Soviet Union and the subsequent end to the Cold War, and Diego Garcia was seen as crucial to furthering it. Starting in 2002, the military base began construction on new hangars for B-2 bombers and subsequent extensions of the runway. Similarly, "Camp Justice," a facility designed to hold soldiers involved in the "war on terror", and also rumoured to hold a prison for suspected terrorists, was approved and completed. Aware of US interests in the Indian Ocean, China has made efforts to establish its presence in the region, initially through lines with Pakistan (because of the strained relations that both countries have with India) and, more recently, with Sri Lanka. China links to Sri Lanka are primarily related to defence cooperation. Trade, commercial, and cultural activities play a lesser, but still important role. China's efforts to gain a foothold in the Indian Ocean are seen by many as an attempt to assert it as a major consumer of India Ocean resources. A series of singles appearing in official statement and observations of authoritative scholars, including in remarks made in the Blue Book of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences published in 2013, confirm that maritime security interests have come to dominate China's thinking on the IOR strategy. Given below is an estimate, and possible regional consequences of responses by two important involved powers, the India and US. China's priority will always be on protecting its energy security interests, by way of securing the SLOC, spreading from the Gulf to the South China Sea. In the short and middle-terms, realising its existing inferior position compared to US maritime power and India's strategic advantage in the IOR, China may persist with its 'harmonious sea' approach. It will shun a military approach and push for 'constructive engagement' in the IOR between three powers- the US, China and India, and concentrate on achieving 'greater space' in the IOR by way of promoting maritime security cooperation with the Indian Ocean littorals. In the long-term, China, under perceived conditions of the continuance of India's domination and strong US presence in the IOR, may intend to project its own power. Beijing may actively work to create alternative energy supply routes, safe from US and Indian Challenges. China's currently fears that the US is trying to contain the PRC by roping in Indian Ocean littorals within an 'Indo-Pacific' framework; this may always influence Chinese strategic thinking. One can expect increased Chinese

efforts to woo these littorals through economic and other means. Its drive to build infrastructure in IOR littorals as part of its 'going global' strategy is already setting the trend in this regard.

As far as traditional security threats are concern piracy has become the bane of the modern seafarer. According to the International Maritime Organization Annual Report 2002, the Malacca Straits, South China Sea and Indian Ocean are the areas that have been most affected by piracy. This heavy infestation of piracy has a lot to do with the geography of the area, but economic conditions and the mindset of the coastal people in the hundreds of minor islands that lace the Malacca Straits and South China Sea are also a significant factor. Recently, piracy related incidents seem to have spilled over from these two areas into the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. Indeed, the center of gravity of piracy may shift to the waters around India. Maritime security has assumed a new dimension in the post 9/11 era. The fight against this old and persistent issue has received a boost with the backing of the international community, particularly the US. While the search for terrorists and their personification in Al Qaeda continues on land, at sea the international community was hunting for Bin Laden's terror ships, termed the "phantom fleet." The main idea was to prevent Osama Bin Laden and Al Qaeda operatives from escaping via the sea or terrorizing the maritime arena. An important adjunct to maritime terrorism is drug trafficking. The nexus of these two phenomena is admittedly so deep that they are often analysed under the same parameters. With profit margins running into hundreds of percent, drug trafficking is by far the most lucrative means of generating funds to fuel ever growing terrorist activities and insurgencies around the region. Considering the geo-political setup of the Indian Ocean region, Iran and Pakistan from a major portion of the drug-infested "Golden Crescent", with Myanmar and Thailand constitute the majority of the "Golden Triangle", notorious for its illegal drug production. As all these states are in the IOR, it is natural that narco-terrorism is a major security concern for littoral states like India, which has seen its own emergence as a transit point for a majority of the drugs that emanate from these two areas. There are clear links between the narcotics and illegal light weapons trade that include shared supply and transit routes, the use of weapons for protection amongst drug traffickers themselves, and funding of gunrunning through drug trade and vice versa. Besides these there are so many example could be produce for oil related disasters at sea are the bane of not only environmentalists but mariners and security specialists as well. Regional Governments are deeply concerned with major oil spills or wrecks of oil tankers at narrow approaches to harbours and choke points, since such spills can seriously affect the flow of merchant shipping traffic. Mining of waters is one of the cheapest ways to conduct maritime warfare. Mines may be laid by seaborne or airborne vessels. Due to rising terrorism and Somalia based sea piracy, the strategic environment in the western Indian Ocean has become quite volatile. All the island states in the region have faced piracy problem which has adversely affected their tourism industry and has targeted their fishing vessels bringing decline in these sectors of their economy. Sri Mandip Singh(media personality) has focused in an write up titled "*China Base a*

Threat to Indian Navy?" on December 17th,2011, that, there is been much talk in the media of an apparent offer by the Seychelles of a base for Chinese ships deployed to the Gulf of Aden and the West Indian Ocean, to help combat piracy. While it's not yet clear if the offer has been accepted, Chinese media reports suggest that Beijing is actively considering it as a "resupply" base. China's Foreign Ministry was quick to state that Beijing is not contemplating a military base in for the Seychelles, adding that it would not "violate" its traditional policy of "not stationing troops abroad." Still, China's quest for a foothold in the Indian Ocean is not a recent development and it is one that India needs to watch carefully.

V. TOWARDS SUGGESTIVE CONCLUSION

In concluding the overall matter here it has been observed that, India is well aware of maritime security concerns of the region. To protect Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs), to check and stamp out sea-piracy, to fight against maritime terrorism, and to break the emerging narco-terrorism-crime nexus, India has developed a blue-water navy and has become the largest maritime force in the region. India has initiated the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) which also include Comoros, Madagascar, Mauritius and Seychelles as its members to enhance maritime cooperation among the navies of littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region and to discuss regionally relevant maritime issues. In 2015 the official visit by Indian Foreign Minister Ms. Susma Swaraj to Sri Lanka and Maldives and most importantly Prime Minister Modi's visit to Seychelles, Mauritius and Sri Lanka are getting so relevant to secure India's monitoring and presence in the region as a powerful and determining force. In previous years 'India's Look East Policy' and identifying as 'full dialogue partner of ASEAN' has made the India's position in a positive angle. Apart from the security concerns posed by sea piracy and maritime terrorism, China, an expanding outside power, is increasingly showing its presence in these island states. China has also sent its naval ships on anti-piracy patrols into the Indian Ocean region and the Gulf of Aden 'to ensure' the security of its trading ships and oil tankers in the wake of its burgeoning trade with Gulf countries, Africa and the island states of Western Indian Ocean. Chinese expansion through trade, aid and investment can muscle India aside in its traditional "backyard". Increasing in the Chinese presence in the area can gradually erode the Indian political influence there.

The South China Sea dispute has brewed for many years, but several things have become clear: Beijing has become more assertive about its territorial claims in recent years, with a coherent strategy to pursue such claims. Most importantly, it can afford to bide its time. Granted that, Beijing has moderated its behaviour, following widespread concern over China's growing assertiveness. Beijing is getting the People's Liberation Army (PLA) to moderate its tone. In July, 2011, it also signed the China-ASEAN Agreement on the Implementation Guidelines for a Declaration of Conduct (DOC) in the South China Sea- a move that could lead to a legally binding Code of Conduct (COD). The report also said that, China insists on negotiating with disputant countries on a

one-on-one basis, and it has still not accepted the dispute settlement mechanisms under the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea. On the other hand geographically placed India astride commercial routes and energy lifelines passing from the Indian Ocean to Southeast Asia. In military terms, the Indian Navy (IN) is one of the largest maritime forces in the region. India has played a crucial role in increasing maritime bonding by initiating numerous confidence building measures (CBMs). It conducts regular naval exercises with IOR and Southeast Asian navies, and in 2004 held its second joint exercise with the Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN). The exercise provided an opportunity for the two Asian giants not only to assess one another, but also to extend a hand of rapprochement the face of existing circumstances that cause the Chinese to feel encircled by the US. It also enabled the Chinese to become more appreciative of Indian sensitivities regarding Chinese attempts to gain a foothold in the Indian Ocean, a move that had made many of the littorals wary and apprehensive. In this (2016), the international naval exercise series like MILAN from 1990s in the Bay of Bengal institutionalized with the objective of achieving interoperability with ASEAN navies, allaying fears about the Indian Navy's growing influence in the Andaman Sea, and promoting goodwill between India and ASEAN countries. In this scenario the MALBAR series of exercise between the US Navy and the IN have received positively. In 2002 it involved ships from Sri Lanka, the Maldives and Mauritius as well. In recent 2016, the International naval exercise highlighted the India's importance and strategies in the region. It is obvious from the above that smaller regional navies have a lot to gain from interaction with the IN, based on its experience in dealing with transnational crime and terrorism. In fact, joint efforts by the IN, and other capable IOR and Southeast Asian navies could lead to SLOC patrols to help ensure the free flow of traffic through SLOCs and choke points. The rivalry between India and China may not take hot form as both of the countries have learned to live under suspicion for long time and both have stake in the existing global order as their rise is the product of this present order. Present internal problems and the bilateral economic engagement between the two may restrict them to for another confrontation. Comprehensive bilateral cooperation on the energy issue between India and China is one of the ways in which at least some of these mutual concerns could be addressed. China has the status of 'dialogue partner', and India is a member of IOR-ARC and the recent inaugurated IONS may provide an appropriate regional multilateral platform for addressing both of them as their maritime concern regarding the Indian Ocean as a whole.

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