

## **Sino-Indian Counter-Balancing Strategies in the Indian Ocean: An Analysis**

**Ayesha Khalid**

*M.Phil. International Relations Scholar, Department of Political Science and International Relations, University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan.*

Email: [ayeshakhalid487@gmail.com](mailto:ayeshakhalid487@gmail.com)

**Muhammad Owais**

*Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science and International Relations, University of Management and Technology, Lahore, Pakistan.*

Email: [muhammad.owais@umt.edu.pk](mailto:muhammad.owais@umt.edu.pk)

### **ABSTRACT**

This research paper is an attempt to offer a detailed analysis of the growing Sino-Indian strategic rivalry in the Indian Ocean. Indian Ocean is at the center of major geo-political events unfolding in Asia due to its historical, political, security and economic significance. Various actors have converging and overlapping strategic interests in the IOR that generates competition among them. India wants to achieve the status of a regional hegemon. Likewise, China is focusing on enhancing its economic and military capabilities to become a world power. These competing powers are indulged in counter balancing against each other to consolidate their strategic hold in the region. In response to Chinese BRI, India has initiated “Act East Policy” along with increasing cooperation with its neighbors. This research has been conducted by employing qualitative research method. Secondary sources of data have taken from existing literature, journals and research articles. Main finding of this research is that both states are seemed to be indulged in a never-ending competition which can be intensified in future. Therefore, they should increase cooperation in economic and maritime spheres to reduce the chances of clash between them.

**Key words:** Sino-Indian Strategic Rivalry, Indian Ocean, BRI, Counter Balancing

### **Introduction**

Tussle to dominate others and get more power has existed since the inception of human society. In the international arena, states focus on political, economic and military power to achieve their supremacy. In this context, Indian Ocean Region has always remained a center of attraction for global and regional players due to its geo-strategic, economic and military significance. The oil politik acts as a stimulus in forming power capabilities and new coalition patterns among the states. American naval strategist Alfred Mahan said “whoever controls the Indian Ocean

dominates Asia; in the 21st century, destiny of world would be decided on its waters” (Ghosh, 2011).

Indian Ocean is at the center of major geo-political events unfolding in Asia due to its historical, political, security and economic significance. Indian Ocean is the third largest ocean of the world which acts as a central stage for the competing powers in the world affairs. Throughout the history, all regional and world powers tried to dominate the region. Since the post-Cold War Era, regional powers; China and India have been indulged in power competition to counter each other. They have never enjoyed friendly relations with each other. Soon after the inception of a new nation-state status, both started seeing each other’s move with suspicion.

India and China are locked in a new Great Game of 21<sup>st</sup> century or a sort of treasure hunt as played by industrialized European states in the past. Indian Ocean is crucial for both countries as their economies are dependent on its Sea Lanes. About 84% of Chinese imports are transported through the Strait of Malacca and 80% of Indian imports are carried through the Indian Ocean (Team, 2011). Therefore, they want to control more energy and oil resources and power for themselves. Both are pursuing strategic, diplomatic and economic tools of aid, trade, investment, arms sale and infrastructural development to strengthen their influence in the littoral states of the Indian Ocean.

Both countries are opting counterbalancing strategies to encircle each other by making naval bases in the Indian Ocean. They are heavily investing in the littoral states of the Indian Ocean region to secure more support and area under their influence. China has joined hands with Pakistan and other littoral states to strengthen its influence. Likewise, India is in strong cooperation with US, Japan and Australia etc. This counterbalancing could entangle both states in an enduring competition with far reaching consequences not only for them but for the whole region.

## **Research argument**

Indian Ocean Region has become the central stage for regional as well as world politics especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Both Asian states (China and India) have the maritime capability and hegemonic aspirations to influence the regional politics of Asia. There are various strategic, military, economic and political factors that have generated the competition among China and India. Both countries are seemed to indulge in counter-balancing tactics to check each other’s power since long. This growing competition can bring strategic implications and would shape the future prospects in the IOR.

## **Chinese strategic posture in the Indian Ocean**

China’s economy experienced rapid expansion after the adoption of liberal policy of reform and openness named as Gaige Kaifang in December 1978. Growing modernization and industrialization demands more energy consumption hence

### *Sino-Indian Counter-Balancing Strategies in the Indian Ocean: An Analysis*

made China an oil-imported state from an oil-exporter over the years (Dingli, 2013). By 2011, China became the second largest oil consumer in the world after US.

China is facing threats from states and non-state actors as well as Security Dilemma across the Indian Ocean. About 80% of Chinese imports pass through the Strait of Malacca and 40% oil imports pass through Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf. Chinese President Hu JinTao has accepted that China faces Malacca Dilemma and Hormuz Dilemma (Jash, 2015). Chinese growing economic activities and investment in the Indian Ocean region demands a strong and modernized naval military security network which could protect Chinese interests in the region.

In past, Chinese naval strategy was mainly based on protecting Chinese interests in its coastal areas and Taiwan. Later on, Chinese Premier Li Keqiang adopted a more proactive naval strategy aimed at maximizing its naval and air defence power to protect its shipping lanes. This extended strategy is named as “Chinese Far Sea Defense Strategy” which is formulated to consolidate China’s position as a strong regional and global power along with protecting its economic interests (Wong, 2010).

In 2009, Chinese navy started operating in the Indian Ocean. Initially, its operating capacities were limited to counter piracy efforts. Chinese naval presence in the region is believed to strengthen since December 2017 when China added 14 warships in its existing fleet of only 8 ships. China enhanced its projection power by adding first aircraft carrier in its fleet in 2012 and the other one in 2017. China is planning to launch two more aircraft carriers by 2030 (Chan, 2018). China has increased operating capabilities of PLA and PLAN to protect its interest far seas.

### **String of Pearls**

Chinese naval strategy of “String of Pearls” is manifestation of Chinese military and commercial facilities along its SLOCs extended from mainland China to the port of Sudan in the Horn of Africa. China has strategic naval centers in Pakistan (Gwadar), Bangladesh (Chittagong), Sri Lanka (Hambantota), Maldives and Somali. Chinese strategic SLOCs run through significant choke points like Strait of Malacca, Babel Mandeb, Strait of Lombok and the Strait of Hormuz. India perceives it as the Chinese strategy to encircle India in the IOR and aims to counter it (Dabas, 2017).

String of Pearls strategy highlights Chinese ambitions of fostering strong diplomatic and economic relations with littoral states by developing port facilities, air fields and strong naval defense facilities. According to Chinese authorities and policy makers, China doesn’t have hegemonic designs. All Chinese projects are designed to secure Chinese economic and trade interests securing its SLOC. However, Chinese expanding power in the IOR is threatening for India generating security dilemma between both states.

## **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**

In late 2013, Xijiping announced the idea of “Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)” also known as “One Belt One Road (OBOR)” initiative in his speeches made in Indonesia and Kazakhstan. It was planned to consolidate Chinese investment and trade activities in the Indo-Pacific region and across the globe. BRI is designed along the Chinese old Silk Route to strengthen its foothold on the strategic SLOCs. Through BRI, Xijiping wants to integrate the states of Indian Ocean region economically, politically, financially and regionally. This will ultimately strengthen Beijing’s political and diplomatic influence in the region along with providing strategic edge against India and US.

Some analysts consider BRI as Chinese move to place China at key position in Eurasian continent by changing or rebuilding existing geopolitical, economic, energy and strategic outlook (Yu, 2017).

### **Economic Corridors under BRI**

China under BRI has planned to build land corridors in almost 60 states including Asia, Europe, Australia and East Africa. It aims at developing the physical infrastructure along these corridors. There are six suggested economic corridors under BRI that are designed to link China with South Asia, Southeast Asia and the Indian Ocean (He, 2009). These are as follow;

1. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)
2. Bangladesh China India Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM)
3. China Mongolia Russia Economic Corridor
4. China Central Asia West Asia Economic Corridor
5. China Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor
6. New Eurasian Land Bridge Economic Corridor

Among these projects, CPEC and BCIM are the most significant economic corridors for the Indian Ocean region. CPEC will connect Chinese province Xinjiang to Pakistan through vast networks of roads and railways along with developing Gwadar. On the other hand, BCIM corridor is designed to link Kunming (China) to Kyaukphyu (Myanmar).

### **Division of routes**

BRI has two routes; land routes and maritime route. “Belt” represents the economic routes known as “The Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB)” which connects China with Europe through Eurasian Landmass. It includes three belts; the North Belt passes through Central Asia and Russia to Europe, the Central Belt connects Central Asia and West Asia with Persian Gulf and Mediterranean and the South Belt moves from China to Southeast Asia and South Asia to Indian Ocean via Pakistan (Hatcher, 2013).

### *Sino-Indian Counter-Balancing Strategies in the Indian Ocean: An Analysis*

“Road” refers to the maritime route named as “21<sup>st</sup> Century Maritime Silk Road” that connects China with Europe through South China Sea, Indian Ocean, The Arabian Sea, Red Sea and The Mediterranean Sea. It is identical to Chinese strategy of String of Pearls. However, some Indian scholars see Chinese ambitions of regional connectivity through “One Belt One Road” as revival of British Raj (Mohan, 2015).

#### **Chinese projects**

BRI and Chinese 21<sup>st</sup> century Maritime Silk Road is the latest version of its String of Pearls Strategy (Tiezzi, 2020). China has developed or initiated various projects in the Indian Ocean littoral states under BRI. These projects are in Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Myanmar and Pakistan as discussed below:

#### **Bangladesh**

Bangladesh has become a very significant part of Chinese Indian Ocean policy because of Bay of Bengal. China wants to cash geographical location of Bangladesh by transporting oil and gas reserves to China through Myanmar Pipeline. During his visit to Dhaka in October 2016, Chinese President Xi Jinping has concluded 27 deals of cooperation in various sectors with Bangladesh (Siddique, 2019). The sectors of cooperation are; communication technology, coastal disaster management and construction, culture and people to people contact, maritime cooperation, investments and disaster management.

They have constructed road links between Kunming and Chittagong via Myanmar and air links connecting Kunming and Dhaka to increase connectivity (Ramachandran, 2019). Chittagong Port is the key part of Chinese port network. In 2010, China claimed to spend \$9m for the modernization and expansion of that port. It stretches from Chinese coastline through Southeast Asia, the Indian Ocean, and East coast of Africa and through Mediterranean to Greece. China gave a Submarine to Bangladesh in November 2016 to be used in Bay of Bengal. This also raised concerns for India because initially, Chinese troops have to support the submarine.

#### **Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka is the principal partner of China in BRI and shipping center in the Indian Ocean. Since 1990s, relations between both states grew stronger as China sell arms to Sri Lanka frequently. During Sri Lankan Civil War (1983-2009) arm sales was huge. Sri Lanka bought Jian 7- fighter Jets, JY-11 3D air surveillance radars and aircraft guns from China. China also funded new ports and infrastructural projects in Sri Lanka included International Airport in Hambantota which costs about \$1 billion. China wants to link this airport with port facilities for economic

integration. Sri Lanka sold 70% stakes of Hambantota Port to China's state own conglomerate China's merchant port holdings on July 2017.

Some strategic analysts believe that Hambantota has dual potential of being used as port facility and as a naval base which raises concerns for India. Whereas, China argues that it only wants to use the port as docking station and a refueling facility (Habib, 2018).

## **Nepal**

Sino-Nepali relations are not tension free. US influence on Nepal and anti-Sino activities of about 20,000 refugees living in Nepal raised serious concerns for China. In order to neutralize these threats, China has invested in various infrastructural, military and hydro-power projects of Nepal. India has given \$2.6m military aid for security sector. To integrate Tibet with China, China has designed a railway project that will join Golmud in the Qinghai province to Lhasa in Tibet.

Another 700km rail link has been built by China joining Lhasa, Tibet with Khasa, Nepal to increase economic integration between China and Nepal and to reduce India's influence on Nepal. Nepal became China's partner in BRI after signing a "Memorandum of Understanding on the Belt and Road Initiative" on 12<sup>th</sup> May 2017 (XNAP, 2019).

## **Myanmar**

Myanmar is a strategically important state that connects China to the Indian Ocean through an overland transportation link. It is a key part of BRI which can allow China to export its goods directly through its own territory because of its geographical proximity to the Strait of Malacca. Myanmar controlled Coco Islands can help China to fulfill its ambition of becoming World-class blue water Navy by 2050. Coco Islands are 30 km north to the Indian controlled Andaman Islands providing strategic location for Chinese navy.

Bangladesh, China, India and Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM-EC) aims at developing a road manufacturing corridor from Kunming to Calcutta via Myanmar, India's northeast states and Bangladesh. Its estimated cost is \$20 billion and is a part of "China-Indian Ocean-Africa-Mediterranean Sea Blue Economic Passage" under BRI (Siddiqui, 2014).

## **Pakistan**

Pakistan is the most close ally and friend of China that can provide it an overland transportation link to the Indian Ocean. China has initiated various infrastructural projects in Pakistan to access world markets more conveniently. The most significant among them is the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which is the flagship project of BRI. It includes an oil pipeline, road and rail links in Pakistan and road and rail links from Gwadar to Kashgar. CPEC aims to enhance

### *Sino-Indian Counter-Balancing Strategies in the Indian Ocean: An Analysis*

connectivity between Arabian Sea and the Western Xinjiang province of China through Pakistan.

By constructing a deep-sea port in Gwadar, China wants to access Indian Ocean directly instead of using trade route through contentious Middle East. China wants to convert its provinces Yunnan and Xinjiang into gateways to Indian Ocean as part of its “bridgehead strategy” (Ijaz, 2019). However, India raised serious concerns regarding CPEC as it has been constructed through Gilgit-Baltistan which is claimed by India to be part of its territory.

### **India’s strategic outlook in the Indian Ocean**

India’s strategic thinkers believe that Indian Ocean is India’s ocean as it is named after India. So, for them Indian Ocean is its natural area of influence and Indians reserve all rights of complete control over this Strategic water body. As Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India once remarked that whoever will control the Indian Ocean, India’s independence and its seaborne trade will be under her influence (Kaya & Kilic, 2017).

Likewise, Sardar Patel, the first Deputy Prime Minister of India believed that for the protection of its coastlines and maritime interests a strong naval force is unavoidable. These policy statements are reflected also in Indian Maritime Strategy of 2007. According to that India can fulfill its future goals and aims only by attaining the status of a sole-leading power in the Indian Ocean region.

### **Energy security**

India has a rapidly growing economy which has greatly increased its energy consumption. In order to meet its growing energy needs, it imports 70% oil from other countries. India’s oil imports are expected to reach 84% by 2020 if its growth kept on moving with the same pace (TET, 2019). Approximately, 80% of these imports are conducted through international shipping lanes. For that reason, along with its geostrategic importance for India, Indian Ocean is also essential for its energy security. This demands vibrant strategic policies and a strong naval force to protect India’s seaborne trade and its vital interests in the Indian Ocean Region.

### **Encirclement of China Act East Policy**

In 2014, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi modified India’s existing “Look East” policy of 1990s at East Asian Summit and named it as “Act East Policy”. This new policy describes the strategic interests of India in the Asia-Pacific region comprising of economic as well as strategic factors (Vaughn, 2018). Economic interests include the development of the northeastern part of India along with maximizing its exports. Strategic interests of China include countering Chinese growing power and influence in the Indian Ocean.

Narendra Modi was of the view that the success of Act East Policy is linked with the fulfillment of all the commitments made in the Delhi Declaration of 2018. This Declaration aims at completing and upgrading the connectivity frameworks in Myanmar, Cambodia, Vietnam and Lao People's Democratic Republic. It is designed to carry out the renewal of 69 bridges along the Trilateral Highway (TH), Constructing the TH and working-out Trilateral Motorway Vehicle Agreement (MVA).

Act East Policy aims at focusing on the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). It is an International Organization that includes 7 countries of South East Asia and South Asia along the Bay of Bengal as members. BIMSTEC promotes strong partnership in fourteen main areas including; energy, tourism, trade and investment, fisheries, transport and communication, agriculture, alleviation of poverty, anti-terrorism, environmental security, social contact, health and cultural coherence (Jacob & Jayanth, 2018).

It also aims at enhancing connectivity between India and Southeast Asia by promoting tourism and utilizing India's rich cultural heritage. Economic activities in the region must be boosted by promoting closer cooperation in the communities and by establishing small advanced cities in Dawki and Moreh.

### **Metal chain strategy**

India aims to unstring the Chinese pearls by opting new policy known as iron curtain or metal chain strategy. Under this strategy, India has made investments or cooperation agreements with following states:

#### **Myanmar**

Geopolitical position of Myanmar has made it one of the most important countries in realizing India's dream of becoming most powerful country of the region. Myanmar enables India to maintain its presence in the Bay of Bengal and also in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands. Strategic thinkers believe that by making Myanmar, a Chinese "client state", China can easily contain or encircle India. In 2000s, India helped Myanmar to construct its infrastructural project like Kaladan and Kalay-Kalaywa-Kyiga-Tamu Road. In 2000, Myanmar assured India that it will never let any state to use its land against India.

Under its "Act East Policy", Modi government has initiated Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project in Myanmar. It is consisted of both road and sea routes. India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway project is another attempt of India to connect Southeast Asia with India's remote northeastern part. These projects show India's willingness to keep Myanmar away from Chinese influence (Yhome, 2017).



## **Sri Lanka**

Sri Lanka shares close economic, historical, cultural and geographical proximity with India. Keeping Chinese threat in view, India has established good relations with Sri Lanka by providing economic assistance and by signing various agreements with her. India gave aid to Sri Lanka for reconstruction purposes after 2004 Tsunami (Hindustan Time, 2019).

To increase bilateral trade between both states, they signed Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) and Foreign Trade Agreement (FTA). Since 2013, both countries have been conducting joint military exercises every year named as “Mitra Shakti”. They also cooperate in intelligence sharing, warship modification and many other areas.

## **Iran**

Iran is one of the most important states for India which provides shortest route to the huge energy resources of Caucasus region and Caspian basin. Modi government has initiated many projects in Iran. Most significant project among all is the development and redesigning of Chabahar port of Iran which was signed on 23 May 2016 during PM Modi’s visit to Iran. Chahbahar is strategically important for India as it can provide her an easy access to Afghanistan and a sea-route to Central Asia (Singh & Singh, 2019).

However, China has ruined Indian attempt of influencing Iran by signing a \$400 billion investment and cooperation agreement with Iran. Under this agreement, China and Iran will cooperate militarily and economically in various sectors (Cohen, 2020). Now, India can’t use Chahbahar against China as Iran has become a part of BRI.

During his visit to Iran, PM Modi also signed a trilateral agreement with Iran and Afghanistan to construct an International Transport and Transit Corridor. It will enable India to access Central Asia and Afghanistan if Pakistan refuses to give transit rights to India. Another big project of India with Iran is International North-South Transportation corridor (INSTC). It is a 7,200km rail, road and sea route that connects India with Iran and Russia.

## **Singapore**

India and Singapore revived the Air Force Training Agreement for five years. Singapore’s forces are being trained on Indian soil under 2007 and 2008 agreements between the both parties. Since 1994, navies of India and Singapore have been conducting naval exercises named as Singapore India Maritime Bilateral Exercise (SIMBEX) every year. The scope of SIMBEX has expanded with time from anti-submarine warfare to maritime security, anti-air and anti-surface warfare (Cheema P. I., 1980).

## **Bangladesh**

Since the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, it has developed good relations with India. In 2014, Prime Minister of Bangladesh, Sheikh Hasina assured India that the soil of Bangladesh will never be used against India. In 2015, about \$2 billion was given to Bangladesh by India. In the same year, both countries concluded a Land Boundary Agreement to further strengthen their relationship avoiding any misconception (Anwar, 2019).

Despite all these efforts and close cooperation between both states, some points of contention also exist. Sharing water resources, illegal immigration from Bangladesh and its evolving relations with China are some irritants in Indo-Bangladesh relationship. China has given two submarines to Bangladesh which is considered as Chinese plan to encircle India.

## **Analysis**

Both India and China have been indulged in growing competition in the Indian Ocean Region and trying to counter threats posed by each other. As a reaction to China's "Belt and Road Initiative" strategy India has developed its "Act East" policy aimed at developing relations with China's South-Eastern neighboring states like Taiwan, South Korea, Philippines and Japan (Dabas, 2017). India has also developed a "Look West" policy that aims to have a more vibrant role in terms of trade, investments and security interests with the western littoral countries in Middle East and Africa.

The recent policy shift of Maldives, the small island state, from pro-India to pro-China has further escalated concerns among Indian leaders regarding Chinese militarization aspirations. As part of its counter-balancing strategies, India has set-up naval basis on foreign soils like; Madagascar, Mauritius and Kochi. The station at Madagascar has radars and surveillance facilities use to protect India's SLOCs. India has recently bought maritime surveillance drones from US. India has made agreement with Mozambique to carry out patrolling of its vast coast. It has also installed its warships along the African Coast to monitor the movements of terrorists and pirates. India has air bases in China's neighboring states of Tajikistan and Mongolia (The Pioneer, 2020).

In order to counter balancing China, India goes for bandwagoning. India has made alliance with superpower of the world (US) that is providing not only diplomatic strength to India but also adding up to its military power, technological advancement and surveillance capabilities. Both states have designed a "Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia Pacific and Indian Ocean Region" in 2015. Indian former defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman once said that defence cooperation between US and India have become the key stimulus of our strategic bilateral relations. US and India have signed Logistic Exchange Memorandum Agreements (LEMOA), Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA), Naval Security Agreements and defence framework Agreements.

### *Sino-Indian Counter-Balancing Strategies in the Indian Ocean: An Analysis*

India has also made alliances with other states like Japan and Australia. Indo-Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership aims at strengthening defence, security, economic, diplomatic, maritime and environmental cooperation between both states. Japan and Australia also join Indo-US Malabar Naval exercises. Commonality of interests among both states brought them closer to counter Chinese threat. Japan is committed to support India against Chinese threat in Indian Ocean. On the other hand, India supports Japanese claims in South China Sea against China.

For countering China in the region, India is striving hard to increase maritime cooperation with Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Iran, Maldives, Thailand, Indonesia, Vietnam and Singapore. India and US are primarily concerned about strong Chinese Influence in Pakistan and Sri Lanka as they are believed to be key states of Chinese BRI (Hindustan Times, 2019, Dec, 01). China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a part of BRI. India has serious reservations regarding CPEC and is against this project. Likewise, Sri Lanka in December 2017 has signed an agreement with China regarding its Southern Sea Port of Hambantota. As per this agreement, Hambantota has been given to China by Sri Lanka on lease for 99 years.

CPEC and Chinese control on Hambantota is threatening for India and US as both want to counter Chinese influence in the region. In February 2020, Pakistan and China have signed a \$5.8 billion agreement. Under this agreement China will provide investment to construct a dam in Pakistan's area of Gilgit-Baltistan. Soon after the finalization of agreement, India started raising reservations and called this construction illegal because India has claims on this territory.

Whereas, China is in strong cooperation with India's next door neighbor and staunch enemy Pakistan. China's attempt of developing Gwadar port of Pakistan has compelled India to reconstruct Chahbahar Port in Iran to protect its supply lines and national interests. China has ruined Indian attempts of bringing Chahbahar under its influence by signing a \$400 billion economic and strategic partnership with Iran (Cohen, 2020). Under this cooperation agreement, China will not only invest in Iranian port but in various economic and military sectors as well. China can invest in Iranian telecommunication, banking, railways, ports and many other sectors. In return, China will get oil from Iran at cheap rates for 25 years. Both states will cooperate in intelligence sharing, joint military exercises, training of military officials, development of weapons and other military domains. Sino-Iranian deal will automatically enhance cooperation among both states in all sectors and will end Indian influence on Iran (Singh & Singh, 2019).

Power projection is the ability of a state's navy to deploy its forces outside its territory. In order to get access to other state's ports, states conduct strong military diplomacy and invest on port development. India and China have developed many such port facilities in Indian Ocean to enhance their naval power projection along with their operating capacity. China has developed port facilities in Bangladesh (Chittagong), Sri Lanka (Hambantota), Pakistan (Gwadar) and many other littoral

states of the Indian Ocean (Chris, 2009). Likewise, India has established overseas naval bases and port facilities in Madagascar, Mauritius and Kochi.

## **Conclusion**

In Sino-Indian case, China has adopted the strategy of buck passing and using Pakistan to counter India in the Indian Ocean region. Buck passing is the strategy adopted by states in power politics to shift their own responsibilities to other states. Under this strategy, a state tries to let another state to deter or fight the threatening state while keeping itself aside. China has been making huge investments in India's staunch enemy, Pakistan. In order to counter Pak-China partnership, India is establishing regional partnerships and strong cooperation with superpower US. However, some analysts are of the view that US is also using India to counter Chinese growing influence in the Indian Ocean region. Indian analysts believe that India must follow the great Roman historian Tacitus words who said "If you want peace, prepare for war". Therefore, India should strengthen its naval and security capacities along with deepening ties with its regional and international partners. Hence, India needs strong internal and external balancing to counter Chinese threat in its backyard.

Apparently, both China and India are pursuing the balancing strategies to counter threat they pose to each other. However, these balancing may result in a standoff or use of force against each other due to clash of interests which will shape the future context of the Indian Ocean Region. Therefore, China and India should initiate cooperation in economic and maritime spheres to minimize the chances of clash between them because states having shared economic interests are less likely to engage in a conflict. PLAN and Indian navy should try to cooperate in anti-terrorism, counter piracy, disaster management and humanitarian assistance program which will ultimately boost confidence level between both parties.

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### ***Sino-Indian Counter-Balancing Strategies in the Indian Ocean: An Analysis***

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