



STRENGTHENING INDIAN SECURITY IN INDIAN OCEAN REGION

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ABSTRACT

Security dilemmas, according to John H. Herz, are when one state's efforts to improve its security endanger the security of others and have a reciprocal effect. The likelihood of the effect is larger when the prior states' intentions are unclear or have negative effects on the first. Such security complexities have developed in the Indo-Pacific area, where China has combined its expansionist ideas and modernised its navy to handle its security difficulties, but in doing so has also prompted other players in the region to assess their own security concerns. India now perceives a "two-front war" as a result of the arrival of Chinese naval forces in the Indian Ocean region and security concerns coming from both Pakistan and Afghanistan. Several states, including India, have been forced to take action in a region where Chinese regional movements and convictions dominate regional security complexes. This article examines India's security posture in light of China's growing participation, threats from Pakistan, and an unstable Afghanistan, and examines the extent to which bilateral and multilateral agreements aid India in resolving its security issues in the region. This article also aims to provide a solution to the question of what function India might serve in the region in order to encourage the dynamics of regional security.

China and Pakistan have historically been India's two adversaries to the north. In contrast to the former, where relations between India and Pakistan have historically been tense and seem unlikely to improve in the near future, India has taken care not to antagonise China in the case of the latter. However, it appears that China, despite its caution, ignores India's worries about its safety in the area and has been actively inciting hostility because of its revisionist and expansionist ideology. China has consistently contested India's claim to be the dominant force in the region, from stepping up its naval presence in the marine areas surrounding it to making nefarious economic investments there. India has also refrained from participating in the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) in order to avoid upsetting China for this reason. India has nonetheless expressed a renewed interest in joining the Quad as a result of the recent turn of events in the Ladakh region and the ongoing standoffs in the border regions along the Sino-Indian border, which also add to China's increasing economic expansionism in the Indian Ocean region (IOR). India has been worried about not prodding China because of China's immense economic and military power. In addition, the security risks posed by Pakistan and Afghanistan could put India in a precarious position in the future with regard to its territorial security. Massive investments have been made in South Asian countries like Pakistan, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Nepal, and Bangladesh as part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which has also assisted China in acquiring bases for sea lines of communication (SLOC) in the Indian Ocean like the

Hambantota and Gwadar Ports in Sri Lanka and Pakistan, respectively. Although India has rekindled its interest in these issues in South Asia, it will be difficult for New Delhi to compete with a superpower like China on the economic and military fronts. India's active involvement in the Quad could lead to a resolution to New Delhi's issues since the Quad has emerged as a counterbalance to China in the Indo-Pacific area. In addition to addressing India's security concerns, New Delhi may revive its "Act East" policy by working with Japan, Australia, and the US to offer assistance, investments, and security to the region.

THEORETICAL FOUNDATION

According to Barry Buzan and Ole Weaver's Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT), regional security complexes are created inside regional boundaries that are isolated from neighbouring regions by physical barriers. These barriers are readily recognisable and include things like mountains, oceans, and in some circumstances a neutral condition between two places. According to the idea, security issues in each region may differ from one another, and as a result, the security complexes that are prominent in those regions control the security policies and concerns of the nations within those regions. Global powers may also be involved in these locations, and their actions may be influenced by these regional security complexes.

In addition, the Copenhagen School of Thought elevated the traditional security perspective—which had been mostly moulded by military concerns—in its definition of security.



Security complexes have been divided into five categories by the school of thought: military, political, cultural or social, economic, and environmental. According to the hypothesis, every division has had some level of interaction with every other division and plays a significant influence in the security dynamics of a region. Therefore, states must consider safeguarding all five factors when dealing with security-related concerns.

The theory also explains what concerns fall under the category of security, such as what signs indicate that a problem has turned into a security risk. According to each observer's threshold, the scale used to determine when the referent object becomes a security concern also varies. A way to determine the threshold is through major moves being made by the observers, such as major changes in functions or major changes in military expenditure. We may determine that such problems represent security vulnerabilities for observers as a result of these changes. Securitization is another name for these actions.

The Balance of Power (BOP), which will be used to examine regional power dynamics and various bilateral and multilateral agreements to solve the security concerns, can be related to regional security dynamics through the RSCT. This essay will employ the restricted hard balancing under the BOP theory, which sits between between the hard balancing and soft balancing theories. In addition to restricted military coordination, limited hard balancing promotes the use of soft power methods to maintain equilibrium. The regional security complexes will be examined using these ideas, as well as the ways in which India might leverage these bilateral and multilateral agreements to reduce them.

INDIAN THREAT PERCEPTION: CHINESE CONCERN FOR THE INDIAN OCEAN

China has been developing quickly, and its need for crude oil has been rising noticeably. The greatest crude oil importer in the world, China brings in about 10.5 million barrels every day. Nearly half of China's imports come from the Middle East and Africa, which are the main import sources. Due to rising domestic demand and declining domestic oil supply, China must resort to external sources to meet its oil needs. Securitizing its oil sources has become crucial for not just China but for any country, as the strategic ellipses produce 70% of the world's crude oil and 10 of the 14 states there are considered unstable. China developed plans for aid and investment to safeguard its oil supplies, such as peace missions to Mali in 2013 to reduce that country's militant outburst against its oil-rich neighbours or China's participation in South Sudan peace talks. Securing not just the sources but also the SLOCs has grown in importance, and China has responded by setting up a base in Djibouti and deploying a variety of naval units in the Indian Ocean to control the SLOCs there. In contrast, China's geographical position and trade routes have given rise to the "Malacca Dilemma," a new security concern. The issue, which Hu Jintao first used in 2003, highlights the Strait of Malacca's

strategic significance for China and its potential to harm that country's economy when there is a dispute with another country. 60 percent of China's trade and about 70 percent of its crude oil travelled through the Strait of Malacca in 2016, making it a crucial geostrategic site. The military and political facets of the IOR are clearly security issues for China when the RSCT is used to analyse China's security concerns. In addition, the United States' involvement as a regional power has put China in the position of being the leader in the reformation of the global governance system, which has given rise to a variety of military, political, and economic security complexes.

SOUTH ASIA AND BELT ROAD INITIATIVE (BRI) BY CHINA

China has been aggressive in its approach to finding alternative routes for the transportation of its imports as well as structuring its presence in the region by providing aid and investment, as it has done through its BRI, to protect its interests in the Indian Ocean. The BRI's inclusion in the Chinese constitution demonstrates the significance it has for China. According to analysts, the BRI seeks to advance China's soft power globally and foster regional integration, infrastructure connectivity, and economic growth. It also seeks to exert influence over global economic governance.

Since launching the BRI in 2013, China has pushed its goals for the initiative beyond the world, with such investments being visible in South Asia. Pakistan is in the head of the receiving end of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, followed by many other port, electricity, and transportation projects in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar, and possibly Nepal. China has made significant investments in infrastructure, oil and gas pipelines, large ports, and transportation in two nations in South Asia: China and Sri Lanka. Through its investment in these nations, China was able to secure a 99-year lease on Hambantota's vital port and a 43-year lease on Gwadar. The ports give China a different way to import goods, reducing its reliance on the Strait of Malacca as a checkpoint for Chinese naval vessels in the area, shortening China's distance from the Strait of Hormuz, and providing a location to refine its crude imports. They also generate income for the country. Massive debts to the recipient countries as well as growing Chinese investment in vital financial, military, stock exchange, electronic, and IT sectors have been brought about by the BRI, potentially tightening China's grip on the economies and politics of the client nations.

In addition, China has been rapidly modernising its naval force, as evidenced by the intermittent expansion of its naval fleet and operations. China has also adopted a resolute position in the South China Sea and has established itself as a formidable adversary of the US Navy and its allies in the area. China has been able to spread its ideas and support on several occasions on various worldwide platforms because to its economic endeavours. In order to secure its position in the region, China



has adopted a number of economic, military, and political measures.

STRING OF PEARLS

Other regional players now face security challenges as a result of Chinese expansionism and its own forays into securing its interests. Due to the region's potential on the economic and geopolitical fronts, this has led to the development of a security complex. As a result, Chinese investments made through the BRI have sparked the geopolitical theory of the "String of Pearls," which contends that Chinese investments in South Asia could obstruct Indian aspirations in the IOR because they could lead to Chinese military dominance in the region—despite the fact that they are currently being made as commercial investments. While many political experts subscribe to the notion, many others think that China's approach is one of "Places not Bases" after reviewing the investments.

The amount of money spent on the bases and the infrastructure expansion needed for these bases to become militarised are far insufficient. Daniel Kostecka examines the low development and installation of defence systems in the pearls in order to discuss the "dual-use logistics facility" or the "Places not Bases" policy. According to the doctrine, China's bases in the region serve to support its soldiers rather than serve as a basis from which China can conduct its military operations. The "Places not Bases" policy is also emphasised by David Brewster, who also issues a warning against the security conundrum that has developed in the Indian Ocean, which has prompted China and India to pursue their own security issues and, in turn, resulted in a more coercive and untrustworthy relationship. He claims that even though China hasn't had a military threat against India in the Indian Ocean, it could eventually develop a different strategy to counter India's presence there and secure its own SLOCs there. The "String of Pearls" policy is also disliked by Christopher Yung, Ross Rustici, Scott Devary, and Jenny Lin, who place more focus on the dual-use logistics facility. However, the study also makes the claim that India and the US should be careful of Chinese naval advancement since, in its opinion, "China's building of naval troops in the IOR would be a better indicator of Chinese military goals in the region than the String of Pearls." In order to protect their interests from an unfriendly Chinese presence in the IOR in the future, should such a situation arise, the researchers advise India to modernise its naval fleet and the United States to strengthen its bilateral and multilateral partnerships in the South Asian region.

Although the proponents of dual-use logistics facilities dispute any allegations of militarised Chinese action from the pearl bases, they do not entirely dismiss the idea that China is implementing an aggressive policy in the IOR. Chinese aspirations in the IOR for India are questioned given the People's Liberation Army (PLA) Navy's rapid modernization, the emphasis placed on its development and application, and China's aim to increase its influence in other countries, which

has been made clear in its white papers. The hesitancy of the host countries to take a strong position against India in the region has been one criticism against China's deployment of pearl bases. Pakistan has been the sole exception, and its animosity toward India might encourage it to continue with this course of action. India's fears are strengthened by Pakistan's recent efforts to secure its bases and the Pakistani military's participation in these efforts. India's concern about insurgency along its borders has increased as a result of the turmoil in Afghanistan. The hypothesis of a two-front conflict has been discussed as a result of the mistrust among Indian policymakers toward Pakistan and China's reasons for acting against India.

A country confronting two opposing forces in two different geographical locations is said to be in a "two-front war" in military parlance. In order to increase their prospects of victory and relieve strain on their own forces and reserves, the joint forces engage in such a war. Conflicts in Doklam, the Galwan Valley, and most recently in Pangong Tso have damaged India's faith in China's acceptance of and consideration of the peace agreements between the two countries. Arunachal Pradesh's ongoing war has also been a source of concern for India because China has strong political and religious aspirations in the area, and their activities along the border pose a serious danger to India's sovereignty.

The conflicts have also sparked discussion about a future two-front war and India's readiness to fight on both fronts. Unfortunately for India, if such a fight materialises, the debates do not have a favourable ending, which prompts additional discussions about the precautions India should take to defend itself from such opponents. As a result, it is now crucial for India to protect itself from China's aggressive actions in order to handle the possibility of a two-front conflict. In contrast to Pakistan, this piece will place more emphasis on the need to counter China. Both militarily and economically, China poses a greater threat to India than Pakistan does. Additionally, the loss of Pakistan's faith in its ability to fight India without Chinese assistance on the second front will have the final impact of balancing China.

The "OP theory is required in this situation. The theory holds that when a country or group of countries feel threatened by the rise in power of another country, they either endeavour to strengthen their own position or try to build alliances with other countries who share their views in order to counteract the former country's dominance. It becomes obvious when the BOP is interpreted using the RSCT that alliances and coalitions must be created to handle security issues on all fronts, including military, political, economic, cultural, and environmental ones. These characteristics can be seen in "The Spirit of the Quad," in which the participating nations affirm their commitment to a free and open Indo-Pacific region where the rule of law, freedom of navigation and overflight (economic), peaceful resolution of disputes (military), democratic values, and territorial integrity are upheld (political). The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has received backing from the Quad, and



environmental concerns such the manufacturing and supply of vaccines during the COVID-19 pandemic and relief efforts after natural catastrophes are given more prominence. The importance of balancing China through the development of alliances and coalitions has increased as a result of the declining US influence in the area and the rising economic and military power of China. India should therefore proceed with the formation of bilateral and multilateral agreements based on the same vision in order to secure its interests in the area of regional security. India will need to implement both internal and exterior reforms, changes that will provide India the ability to defend itself should hostilities break out, and secondly, changes that will counterbalance China in the Indo-Pacific. The article will mostly concentrate on locations far from India's northern boundaries, including the maritime realm, Southeast Asia, and the other South Asian nations, as India's efforts to balance China in these regions will produce the desired results.

UTILIZING ECONOMIC UNDERTAKINGS TO SECURITIZE INDIA'S INTERESTS

Lending money to the Indo-Pacific area in order to promote infrastructure and technology is one of the goals of the Quad. China's ambitious BRI has been effective in funding significant infrastructure projects in a number of countries throughout the world, including those in the Indo-Pacific. India is concerned about the "String of Pearls" effect these investments have created and needs to take the initiative to counter it by making its own investments to balance out Chinese ones. Chinese economic engagement could successfully balance out India's neglect of its neighbours and the perception that India had assumed a hegemonic role in the region, two factors that made Chinese investments in the South Asian region highly sought. As the political climate in the region has recently changed, China's "deft-trap" diplomacy has drawn criticism from both its international opponents and the recipient governments, making new countries who receive such investments from China wary of falling into a trap themselves. India has begun to follow suit by offering various investments to nations like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and the Maldives.

STRENGTHENING ACT EAST POLICY

In the modern era, Southeast Asia has become a focus area for the superpowers. The region is significant for India as well because 40 percent of its trade and its main oil imports both go through the Strait of Malacca. The "Look East" policy, which later became "Act East" under the present ruling administration, can be used to assess the significance of the area for India. India must forge relations with Southeast Asian countries if it wants to realise its ambition of becoming an economic superpower and realise the potential of its northeastern states. Building infrastructure and establishing supply chains will help India connect with its neighbours in Southeast Asia politically as well as economically. Even though India has entered into numerous

agreements with ASEAN countries, including Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreements with Singapore and Malaysia in 2005 and 2011, a trade in goods agreement with Japan in 2016, free trade agreements with China, and security dialogues and memoranda of understanding with Australia, it still feels underrepresented in its economic (aid and investment) and security endeavours. Although India has advanced its ASEAN initiative, Bajpae claims that "India has lost its focus on the ASEAN centrality. India has been reluctant to enforce its efforts on security posts within its local borders, and it has been unable to establish commercial ties with the ASEAN because it is just the region's 9th-largest trading partner, with smaller countries like Taiwan and Hong Kong piling up greater numbers. India has pursued other projects to establish ties with ASEAN, including the India-Myanmar-Thailand highway, which is now being planned to encompass Cambodia, Laos, and Vietnam along with Bangladesh, the Kaladan Transit Project, and various other envisioned programmes with member states. India has also excluded itself from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership that could have enforced its "Act East" out of fear of Chinese malpractices. India has been attempting to establish additional economic channels with ASEAN members that do not include China.

ECONOMIC ENTERPRISING WITH REGIONAL ALLIES

In order to accomplish shared objectives in the Indo-Pacific region, India and the United States have also advanced their cooperation. The leaders of the two countries reaffirmed the significance of forging strategic alliances and cooperating with other blocs like ASEAN and the Quad, despite the fact that their shared interests and collaboration have primarily been visible in the defence and security aspects of the relationship. The United States may potentially have a significant impact on India's periphery by working closely with India to improve infrastructure, increase capacity, and revivify a region that is struggling to recover from a pandemic.

Through blue economy initiatives, the Indian Ocean already contributes 4% of GDP; but, as the sector's demand is expected to grow globally, this percentage will grow dramatically. India will need to take the initiative to grow its blue economy sectors in addition to producing infrastructure, maintaining security, and advancing a rules-based system. India and Australia's maritime cooperation has improved in this way. Concerns about tackling the issues of promoting peace, stability, and a rules-based maritime order based on international law while combating terrorism, piracy, drug trafficking, and environmental challenges like climate change and ocean acidification, as well as protecting marine ecology and encouraging resource sharing, have been raised by India-Australian maritime cooperation. In order to protect their interests in the Indo-Pacific area, India and Australia have increased their collaboration.



In addition to bilateral agreements, the region has seen an increase in trilateral agreements, such as the supply chain initiative between Australia, Japan, and India, as well as the Australia-India-Indonesia and India-Australia-France groups. The coalitions will work to address the region's economic, security, and environmental problems while promoting a "free and open," peaceful, and law-abiding Indo-Pacific. In the wake of the COVID epidemic, the India-Japan-Australia Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI) will concentrate on creating robust supply chains in the petrochemicals, automotive, pharmaceutical, and textile industries.

UPDATING AND INVESTING IN MILITARY CAPABILITIES TO MAINTAIN MILITARY INTERESTS

The United States and India have the most extensive military coordination in the Indo-Pacific region. The United States has prioritised India's position as being crucial to the United States' "Pivot to Asia" as a result of moving its attention to the "Asia-Pacific," as was indicated under the Obama administration. With the completion of three key agreements—the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement, the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement, and the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement—the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government led by Narendra Modi gave the India-US shared vision official recognition in 2015. The three agreements will help both countries supply their chosen military sites with high-tech equipment, protect communication between their troops, and provide intelligence, respectively. Along with the aforementioned transactions, the US also approved sales of the US-P8I patrol plane and Guardian unmanned aerial vehicles, both of which will help India fend off Chinese naval presence, particularly submarine presence, in the Indian Ocean. India must improve its naval capabilities, which the aforementioned agreements have been explicitly created to do, if the United States wants India to support it in its "Pivot to Asia" and if India wants to defend itself in the maritime domain against Chinese aggression. India and the United States have strengthened their capabilities through military exercises in addition to the acquisition of technology and equipment, with India hosting the most military drills with the United States among all of its partners. With Japan formally joining the exercise in 2015 and Singapore and Australia participating in an unofficial capacity, the India-US Malabar exercise, which is primarily focused on joint operations in the maritime domain, has made remarkable strides. With nations in the Asia-Pacific region like Japan, Singapore, Indonesia, and the Philippines, India has conducted a number of additional naval drills in which antisubmarine corvettes, multi-role guided missile stealth frigates, and P8I long-range maritime patrol planes took part.

UTILIZING GEOPOLITICAL RESOURCES

Because to their position, India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands also play a significant role. The islands give India a fantastic geostrategic location from which to conduct its military operations, such as the already formed Tri Service Command, given their proximity to Southeast Asian countries and the Malacca Strait. However, despite these improvements, the island still receives criticism for not being developed to its fullest extent. The islands can be exploited by India's regional allies, including Australia, Japan, the United States, and France, for their naval capabilities given the region's shifting political and strategic landscape. This might materially improve coordination between regional allies, especially in light of the Quad's objectives and reach. By allowing foreign navies access to the islands, India may also upgrade the islands' infrastructure, technology, and intelligence. This is especially true now that the United States has established its new Indo-Pacific Command, which has increased the region's influence.

The Indo-Pacific, from the perspective of Indian interests, stretches from the eastern coasts of Africa to the western shores of America. If India is at the strategic end of one part of the region, then Australia is at the crucial intersection where the Indian Ocean and the Pacific meet. This geostrategic value of both the nations has made the nations realise the importance of each in achieving their goals in regard to the future of the Indo-Pac. By negotiating agreements covering a wide range of interests, including military interoperability, intelligence collaboration, technology cooperation, and maritime capabilities, India and Australia have been able to further their relations with one another.

When it comes to controlling the Indian Ocean, India has a strategic and geographical advantage over China. However, China has been aggressive in establishing economic connections with the Indian Ocean, connections that have been hampered by the arid geographic terrain between the Indian Ocean and China. In the event of a battle between India and China, India would prefer to have it take place in the maritime space, but due to China's growing naval presence over time as a result of facilitating ports and taking part in anti-piracy missions, India needs to find allies among its neighbours. In order to promote the idea of trade, transportation, communication, tourism, counterterrorism, energy, and other areas that could decrease the demand for Chinese investments and increase Indian influence over such countries, India has used its geographic position and leadership to form and lead initiatives like the Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal (BBIN) Initiative and Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC).

CONCLUSION

Along with numerous internal policies and advances to address weaknesses and improve preparedness, India has been deploying a variety of soft and hard balancing options to oppose China in the Indo-Pacific. Major worldwide economic and



political weaknesses have been revealed by the epidemic, and this, combined with the internal and foreign instability already present in India, has sparked new aspirations and endeavours on the part of that country. The Indo-Pacific is divided for India into its immediate neighbours, the western borders of Africa, and east toward Southeast Asia. Through this article, it has been made clear that India must look beyond its immediate neighbourhood and that it has recently begun to place more importance on the larger Indo-Pacific region in light of China's intervention in the area. Additionally, there has been a slight change in India's political position toward China from one of passivity to one of casual activity. In an effort to achieve a limited hard balance against China in the Indo-Pacific, India has begun to adjust its policies and position. India has collaborated with other regional allies to accomplish that goal and will do so in the future. With the help of these agreements, India now has a practical and successful means of countering China without resorting to a direct confrontation, which India is unlikely to desire.

India is securing itself against both conventional and non-conventional threats by putting the RSCT theory and BOP into practise. India has been balancing and thwarting Chinese security concerns in the region through a number of economic, cultural, political, environmental, and military accords. This may work well to address India's potential "two-front war" danger. By forcing China to take India's goals into consideration, we can stop any Chinese aggression on the frontiers. Second, the Indian side would be considerably better off opposing Pakistan without the threat of coercion from China on the second front. India's participation in the Indo-Pacific could be a useful step in achieving its aim of becoming a global power.

Given its immense geographic, economic, military, and cultural might, India could assume a prominent position in the area. Every one of the regional players who share India's mentality has expressed interest in working together. Even the smaller nations have profited from these agreements and have demonstrated a readiness to contribute to such projects, even though countries like Japan, Australia, the United States, and France have similar interests. China-dominated nations like Laos and Cambodia have also been touched through a variety of endeavours. Even while several of these agreements are still relatively new and insufficient against China at the moment, they could develop into a substantial strategy to counterbalance China with continued participation and efforts.

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