

# STRATEGIC MARITIME ENVIRONMENT IN INDIAN OCEAN: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR PAKISTAN

Safia Mansoor\*

## ABSTRACT

*This article examines various dynamics of strategic maritime environment in Indian Ocean and then describes its relevance with respect to Pakistan. Indian Ocean has become pivotal zone of strategic rivalries and cooperation. The confluence of various regional and extra-regional actors is complicating geo-political and geo-strategic environment of Indian Ocean. It has ramifications for Pakistan. This article aims at examining the challenges as well as opportunities for Pakistan emerging in the complex strategic milieu in Indian Ocean. This would help to suggest various policy recommendations which may be used to make an all-encompassing maritime strategy for Pakistan by the policy makers. The article aims to analyse the strategic maritime environment of IOR through the lens of Neo-realism. It makes evident that the Indian Ocean's changing geo-political and geo-strategic environment requires Pakistan to formulate a holistic Indian Ocean policy in order to meet the challenges and to avail the opportunities.*

**Keywords:** Strategic Environment, Structural Realism, Sino-Indian rivalry, Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue), BRI (Belt and Road Initiative), CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor).

---

\*The author is a student of International Relations at Kinnaird College for Women University, Lahore.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Indian Ocean has become a region of strategic convergence, strategic divergence and strategic dilemma which makes it a geo-political and strategic hotspot. This convergence and divergence among the regional and extra-regional states in the Indian Ocean has positive and negative ramifications for Pakistan. The active presence of large number of states in Indian Ocean is because of the enormous significance of this region. It is an energy super highway, gateway to energy hub and possesses large reservoirs of natural resources. US active military presence, rise of China, India's naval expansion and involvement of various new actors such as Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Iran and UAE is pushing Indian Ocean towards multipolar order. The emergence of blocs to maintain balance of power, the policies of various states to ensure security and interest evaluation with respect to relative power capabilities in Indian Ocean Region is the depiction of neo-realism.

The complex strategic environment of Indian Ocean is creating challenges as well as opportunities for Pakistan which is an important Indian Ocean littoral state and has substantial stakes in it. Various challenges such as militarization of Indian Ocean by US and India, increasing maritime cooperation between India and the Gulf states particularly Oman, will have negative implications for Pakistan. Additionally, rapid naval modernization and expansion by India, role of Quad states (US, Japan, Australia and India) in containing China, and the nuclearization of Indian Ocean by India is detrimental for the national interest, security, defence, regional and international standing of Pakistan. Most importantly in all these challenges, India is a common factor as it is trying to contain China and isolate Pakistan by enhancing its cooperation with various other states such as the US and Japan. Moreover, the nuclearization of Indian Ocean by India is creating strategic imbalance and is pushing Pakistan to enhance its military capabilities.

The changing strategic environment in Indian Ocean also provides opportunities to Pakistan such as active involvement of China and its Belt and Road initiative (BRI) of which CPEC (China-Pakistan Economic Corridor) is an important part. Within CPEC the importance of Gwadar port is substantial as it opens the way towards economic prosperity for Pakistan and augments its geo-strategic position. Moreover, through maritime cooperation of Pakistan with Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia provides an opportunity to Pakistan to strengthen its defence and strategic ties with the Muslim states in the IOR. The challenges and opportunities

emanating from the Indian Ocean complex strategic milieu demonstrate the need for a comprehensive Indian Ocean policy by Pakistan. This is the need of the hour in order to effectively curb the challenges and utilize the opportunities to increase its political, economic and geo-strategic prowess.

### **STRUCTURAL REALISM WITH RESPECT TO INDIAN OCEAN**

Strategic environment in the Indian Ocean can be explained through Kenneth Waltz's theory of structural realism which is also termed as neo-realism. The basic assumptions of the Structural Realism are: states are important actors in the political arena, pursuit of the security by states; evaluation of their interest in the context of power is relative, and the anarchical international system.<sup>1</sup> According to Kenneth Waltz, balance of power predominates in an anarchic order. It is characterized by the co-existence of two or more than two states, with weakening states being denied either aid or use of instruments indispensable for their purposes. Additionally, he asserted that due to anarchy, states ensure their security and balance against burgeoning power of other state which is known as balance of power.<sup>2</sup>

With respect to Indian Ocean, it is obvious that constellation of states is in interaction with each other. Policies and actions of the regional as well as extra-regional states in the Indian Ocean Region depicts that how these states are trying to maximize their security by acquiring latest weaponry and coordinating with other states against the common threat or to fulfil their interests. The reason behind these actions is the protection of their interests which includes oil trade via sea and protection against adversary states. In this aspect, relative power is important as it gives state an estimate regarding the potential threat.

The most fundamental assumption of neo-realism is balance of power which can also be explained through the emerging blocs and alliances in the IOR. For instance, strategic alliance between US and India against China which is a rising power. Secondly, the enhanced cooperation between the QUAD states which is again directed against China also signifies balance of power. On the other hand, the cooperation of Pakistan and China also fulfils assumptions of balance of power. Pakistan sees

---

<sup>1</sup> Patrick James, "Structural Realism and the Causes of War," *Mershon International Studies Review* 39, no. 2 (1995): 181-208, doi: <https://doi.org/10.2307/222750>.

<sup>2</sup> Jack Donnelly, "The Realist Tradition," in the *Realism and International Relations*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 17-18.

India as a potential aggressor which has led Pakistan to enhance its cooperation with China. Additionally, the emergence of blocs among the Middle Eastern states show their alignment of interests. This alliance formation is a manifestation of co-existence among states in the anarchic system in order to materialize their security or interest.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF INDIAN OCEAN**

Indian Ocean is the third largest ocean in the world which encompasses an area of 73,556,000 sq km and borders with three important continents (Asia, Africa and Australia). Indian Ocean also connects the Atlantic and the Pacific Ocean which is hub of political and economic powerhouses, hence rendering it great strategic significance. Additionally, the abundance of the natural resources enhances its significance as 35% of the world natural gas, 65% of world oil reserves, raw materials and various sources of manufactured goods are located in the Indian Ocean littoral states. The vital sea lanes and important choke points of the Indian Ocean such as Strait of Hormuz, Strait of Malacca, Bab el Mandeb, Suez Canal via Red Sea and Horn of Africa augments the geopolitical and strategic importance especially with respect to the global economy and security.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, the sea borne oil trade which transits through the Indian Ocean's choke points constitutes world's 80% sea based oil trade.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, the Arabian Sea holds an indispensable position within Indian Ocean, as it straddles important routes of energy supply, provides Central Asian Republics, Afghanistan and China's western region, shortest access to sea, access to Strait of Hormuz, Suez Canal, Malacca Strait and Bay of Bengal.<sup>5</sup> Its significance has increased tremendously with initiation of CPEC.

---

<sup>3</sup> Centre for Pakistan and Gulf Studies, "Maritime Security: Challenges and Prospects for Pakistan", Last modified June 18, 2019, <https://cpakgulf.org/2017/02/21/maritime-security-challenges-and-prospects-for-pakistan/>.

<sup>4</sup> Julian Weber, "China's Expansion in the Indian Ocean Calls for European Engagement," Mercator Institute for China Studies. Last modified October 11, 2019, <https://merics.org/en/analysis/chinas-expansion-indian-ocean-calls-european-engagement>.

<sup>5</sup> Faiza Fareed, "Pakistan's Indian Ocean Policy," *Daily Times*, October 17, 2019, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/485010/pakistans-indian-ocean-policy/>.

## INDIAN OCEAN STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENT

Strategic environment is a complex environment and it can be defined as interaction of political entities participating in political process. This environment is dependent upon the interplay of dynamics and it includes both rational as well as irrational elements of policy and power. The factors which shape strategic environment as per Carl von Clausewitz are rational thoughts, chance and disparate forces of emotions. Any force may dominate at a particular time, but other two would not become obsolete. Dynamics interplay determines the course of events. Hence an effective strategy is indispensable in order to deal with the transforming Indian Ocean's strategic environment.

Indian Ocean is being regarded as strategic hot spot because of the various developments which is pushing Indian Ocean towards a complex and multipolar strategic environment. The presence of various powerful states such as US, China, India and some middle powers which are aligned towards West such as Australia, Japan and France are significant in this regard. Additionally, the clutch of new Middle Powers such as Saudi Arabia, UAE, Turkey, Iran as well as Indonesia are trying to make themselves felt and are playing more active role in the affairs of Indian Ocean.<sup>6</sup> Each and every state is trying to pursue their own national interests and materialize their agendas, to build their blocs and exercise their areas of influence. The various developments show that the major as well as the middle powers are scrambling for position and influence in the Indian Ocean due to its enormous strategic significance.

The active military presence of US aims at the preservation and maximization of its national interests and the focal point here is that Indian Ocean acts as conduit to oil enriched Middle East. US is an extra-regional power but it is still regarded as predominant military power in IOR. It has base agreements and access to several ports in states such as India, Diego Garcia, Djibouti, Bahrain, Horn of Africa, Australia, UAE, Thailand, Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain. Its military presence aims at safeguarding energy and trade SLOCs, containing China and to

---

<sup>6</sup> Jean Loup Samaan, "Gulf Arab States Position Themselves to be Pivotal Players in the Indian Ocean," The Arab Gulf State Institute in Washington, Updated May, 17, 2019, <https://agsiw.org/gulf-arab-states-position-themselves-to-be-pivotal-players-in-the-indian-ocean/>.

ensure its naval primacy.<sup>7</sup> US is considered to be region's strategic anchor and its military presence is seen as security provider as well as coercive in nature.

US presence and interests are now challenged by the Chinese Naval endeavours which are synonymous with the 'Rise of China in Indian Ocean'. Rise of China is the main cause of changing regional strategic environment. Chinese grand strategy for Indian Ocean is String of Pearls as per the US narrative.<sup>8</sup> It is series of ports comprising of military as well as commercial facilities which ranges from China Mainland to the port in Sudan. This Chinese geo-strategic design is a network which consists of ports in Strait of Malacca, Indian Ocean littoral states such as Myanmar, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Pakistan. It further extends to an important choke point, Strait of Hormuz and then goes to African state Somalia.<sup>9</sup>

The burgeoning Chinese presence in Indian Ocean has sparked Sino-Indo rivalry which coincides with the US-China competition in Indian Ocean Region. India is trying to contain China through various means such as increasing trade, expanding ties with Indian Ocean littoral states, by carrying out joint sea exercises and maintaining an active naval presence. Additionally, India aims at becoming a regional power and for this cause military and economic alliance with US is the most suitable action. Both US and India are having concerns due to China's military and naval domination which has led both states to cooperate against a common threat which is China.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, the significance of Pakistan in this regard is enormous due to its geo-strategic location. The strategic partnership of China and Pakistan in IOR is of great significance. Construction of strategically important Gwadar port in the Balochistan

---

<sup>7</sup> Lindsay Hughes, "The United States and the Indian Ocean Region: The Security Vector," *Future Directions International*, June 23, 2016, <https://www.futuredirections.org.au/publication/united-states-indian-ocean-region-security-vector/>.

<sup>8</sup> David Benjamin Baker, "Where Is the 'String of Pearls' in 2015?," *The Diplomat*, October 5, 2015, <https://thediplomat.com/2015/10/where-is-the-string-of-pearls-in-2015/>.

<sup>9</sup> Anthony Sterioti, "The Significance of China's String of Pearls Strategy," *SSRN Electronic Journal*, (2017), <https://doi:10.2139/ssrn.2951903>.

<sup>10</sup> TaylanOzgur Kaya and Kılıç, Fatih, "Sino-Indian strategic rivalry in the Indian Ocean region," *İnsan&ToplumDergisi (The Journal of Human & Society)* 7, no.02. (2017): 155-172, <https://doi:10.12658/human.society.7.14.m0223>

province under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is its example.

Besides this, a new race is brewing between Turkey, UAE and Saudi Arabia which are trying to build military and naval bases across Horn of Africa. These moves in Indian Ocean reflect the rivalry between the two blocs of the Middle Eastern states: Egypt, UAE and Saudi Arabia on one side while Qatar, Turkey and Iran on the other. The confliction among these blocs is driven by the rivalries in the Levant and Persian Gulf.<sup>11</sup>

## PAKISTAN AS AN INDIAN OCEAN LITTORAL STATE

Pakistan is an important Indian Ocean littoral state having a significant geo-strategic location. It is present in the centre of Indian Ocean and sits at the mouth of choke point i.e. Strait of Hormuz. It carries 95% of its total trade through the sea.<sup>12</sup> Pakistan also has an Exclusive Economic Zone of 290,000 sq km.<sup>13</sup> The power play and strategic environment in Indian Ocean has multifaceted implications for Pakistan in the form of challenges and opportunities.

## CHALLENGES FOR PAKISTAN

- **Indo-U.S. Maritime Cooperation and Militarization of Indian Ocean**

The maritime cooperation between India and US is based on the two prominent aims: First goal is based on becoming a strategic opponent against China in order to curb its burgeoning maritime power. Second, is to enhance the regional ambitions of India. This maritime cooperation is in fact leading to the militarization of the Indian Ocean which is becoming challenge for Pakistan. In 2015, both states signed US-India Joint Strategic Vision for Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean Region which ushered the

<sup>11</sup> David Brewster, "Welcome to the New Indian Ocean," *The Diplomat*, February 21, 2018, <https://www.thediplomat.com>

<sup>12</sup> Abdul Sattar Rahuja, "Maritime Economy of Pakistan," *Pakistan Today*, March 26, 2020, <https://archive.pakistantoday.com.pk/2020/03/26/maritime-economy-pakistan/>.

<sup>13</sup> Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad, "Maritime Economy and The Geopolitics of Indian Ocean Rim: Challenges for Pakistan," Updated February 22, 2018, <http://issi.org.pk/national-conference-report-on-maritime/>.

enhanced maritime cooperation. This vision also linked security of Asia-Pacific to the security of Indian Ocean.<sup>14</sup>

In August 2016, both states signed Logistic Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) which is crucial with respect to the regional as well as extra-regional strategic and naval presence. This agreement allows both states to use their naval facilities for services and supply in a more formal and frequent manner. It also allows India to use US regional bases in Indo-Pacific and Indian Ocean. Another important agreement is Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) which is primarily based on US assistance to India for better surveillance in IOR.<sup>15</sup>

These agreements particularly LEMOA has huge repercussions for Pakistan as the strategic partnership between India and US. In this way US demonstrates full support to India to act as a regional hegemon. Military disparity between Pakistan and India will increase due to this agreement and will make Pakistan vulnerable to the aggression of India.<sup>16</sup>

- **Indo-Gulf Maritime Cooperation**

Indo-Gulf relations encompasses naval and defence cooperation which includes broad based MoUs (Memorandum of Understanding), joint naval exercises as well as visit of Indian ships on regular basis. The deal of India with Oman with respect to use of Duqm port facilities will further augment the strategic influence of India in the Indian Ocean. Strengthening its relations with Oman is important for India which is essential for better engagement with Gulf States. Duqm port will provide India with logistic multiplier and hence it is a great source to enhance its power vis-à-vis Pakistan.<sup>17</sup>

---

<sup>14</sup> Vivek Mishra, "Indo-US Security Cooperation: Implications for the Indian Ocean," *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India* 13, no. 1 (2017): 73-81, <https://doi:10.1080/09733159.2017.1315890>.

<sup>15</sup> Vivek Mishra, "India-US maritime cooperation: Crossing the Rubicon," *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India* 14, no. 2 (2018): 15-25, <https://doi:10.1080/09733159.2018.1562453>.

<sup>16</sup> Zeeshan Muneer, "Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement," *Brief, Center for Strategic and Contemporary Research, Islamabad* (2016).

<sup>17</sup> The Eurasian Times, "After Chahbahar, India Ties with Oman for Duqm Port to Counter Gwadar," February 14, 2018, <https://eurasianimes.com/duqm-port-india-oman-2018/>

Besides this, the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) which was conceived by India is also of great significance in this regard as all Gulf States are members of IONS. IONS is biennial forum established in 2008. It aims at enhancing maritime cooperation among the littoral states of the IOR and is represented by naval chiefs of respective states. Pakistan is also a member of IONS.<sup>18</sup> For the security and stability of the Gulf's sea lines, India also participated in the anti-piracy duties such as those in the Somali coast. Additionally, Indian naval visits in the Gulf region demonstrate India's need to protect the Western Indian Ocean's vital lanes. These joint naval endeavours strengthen India's relationships with the Gulf States.

This cooperation is creating challenges for Pakistan as it will diminish the prospects of Pakistan's mutual relations with the Gulf States which are member states of IONS. India through its active presence in IONS is trying to diminish the role of Pakistan and this became evident when India refused to invite Pakistan to IONS session which was held in 2018. All members were present except Pakistan.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, this enhances the power of India vis-a-vis Pakistan and creates power asymmetry.

- **Indian Naval Expansion**

The intense Sino-Indian naval rivalry nowadays is leading India towards naval modernization and expansion. India is developing ballistic missile submarines, conventional naval capabilities, state-of-the-art anti-submarine capabilities, and aircraft carriers. Additionally, LEMOA is further enhancing the naval capabilities of India. It is creating implications for China and can pose challenges for the Pakistan-China maritime cooperation.<sup>20</sup>

Indian Naval Commander Conference held in 2019 focused on the various aspects of the Naval force modernization and accretion. As a result of these deliberations it became apparent that the Indian Navy is working on a colossal plan which aims at boosting naval operational capability. The

<sup>18</sup> Royal Australian Navy. "Indian Ocean Naval Symposium." Accessed June 2020. <https://www.navy.gov.au/ions/>

<sup>19</sup> Sohail Azmie, "India's Refusal to Invite Pakistan for Indian Ocean Naval Symposium," *The News*, January 15, 2019, <https://www.thenews.com.pk/print/419200-india-s-refusal-to-invite-pakistan-for-indian-ocean-naval-symposium>.

<sup>20</sup> Ahmad Rashid Malik, "The Indian Ocean Security: Challenges and Opportunities for Pakistan," *Journal of Security and Strategic Analyses* 3, no.1(2017).

induction of submarines, new warships, and aircrafts for increasing Indian influence in Indian Ocean strategic maritime zones is an important aspect in this regard. Moreover, under this mega plan, Indian Navy aims at building a naval force having 200 ships, 24 attack submarines and 500 aircraft. Currently, Indian Navy has 132 ships, 15 submarines and 220 aircrafts. Additionally, the submarine fleet of the Indian Navy comprises of Arihant-nuclear powered ballistic missile submarine which is developed indigenously. It also has Scorpene class submarines, and Akula class submarines, which are leased from Russia.<sup>21</sup>

This rapid modernization of Indian Navy for the development of blue water capabilities and enhancement of prowess in Indian Ocean to attain regional and global status is a challenge for Pakistan. Although Pakistan has an effective surveillance and defence system, but the offensive naval capabilities, defence agreements and procurement of modern naval technology can create serious challenges for Pakistan.

- **Role of Extra-Regional Powers**

Lack of mutual co-existence, arms race and intra-regional disputes among the littoral states of Indian Ocean have encouraged the extra-regional powers to maximize their influence. They are applying various tactics such as empowering their naval forces, using the art of diplomacy and forming maritime bases in IOR. The QUAD alliance also known as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD) is the best example in this regard. India, United States, Japan and Australia are the members of this multilateral platform which is intended to underpin Asia-Pacific order to protect their interests and exert influence.<sup>22</sup> This pact has potential to undermine the standing of Pakistan as this platform can be used for coordinated incident response and strategies which can be detrimental for the interests of Pakistan.

The three extra-regional powers US, Japan and Australia acknowledge the importance of India to create balance of power in IOR. Japan and US have increased their cooperation in IOR in order to contain China while Australia also approves US led regional order. For their vested interests, India is the best choice due to its anti-China stance. This

---

<sup>21</sup> Saloni Salil, "Indian Navy: A Formidable Blue Water Force in the Making," *SP's Naval Forces*, February-March 2020. [www.spsnavalforces.com](http://www.spsnavalforces.com).

<sup>22</sup> Rahul Roy-Chaudhury and Kate Sullivan de Estrada, "India, the Indo-Pacific and the Quad," *Survival* 60, no. 3 (2018): 181-194, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00396338.2018.1470773>.

has repercussions for Pakistan as the internationally accepted role of India as regional and predominant power in IOR may have negative consequences for the autonomy and security of Pakistan. Moreover, Quad's anti-China stance also holds severe consequences for Pakistan as China's position in IOR is important for the interest of Pakistan especially with respect to CPEC.<sup>23</sup>

- **Nuclearization of Indian Ocean**

A new wave of nuclearization has started in Indian Ocean which is initiated by India. Indian Ocean nuclearization not only complicates situation in Indian Ocean but also creates the strategic imbalance between India and Pakistan. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced in 2018 that the first deterrent patrol was completed by the Indian nuclear armed and nuclear powered submarine-ATV submarine named as INS Arihant. This submarine is capable of carrying nuclear cruise missiles and submarine launched ballistic missiles. In 2017, the second nuclear submarine known as INS Arihant was also launched while the two other Arihant class submarines are under development.<sup>24</sup>

As a result, Pakistan has started to arm conventional submarines with nuclear armed cruise missiles. But still this nuclear race in the maritime domain has negative repercussion for the economically strangled state like Pakistan. It is pushing Pakistan to enhance its defence capabilities in order to curtail negative repercussions of Indian Ocean nuclearization and ensure its defence.<sup>25</sup>

## OPPORTUNITIES FOR PAKISTAN

- **China's Presence in the Indian Ocean Region**

The changing strategic environment in the Indian Ocean region has pushed Pakistan to deeply strengthen its maritime cooperation with China. Under its BRI China, is building ports and naval facilities in the Indian Ocean littoral states and choke points. But the regional as well as extra-

<sup>23</sup> Benjamin Clarke, "Pakistan and the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue: Current and Future Perceptions," *IPRI Journal* 19, no. 1 (2019): 30-55, <https://doi:10.31945/iprij.190102>.

<sup>24</sup> Nuclear Threat Initiative, "Indian Submarine Capabilities," Updated October 11, 2019, <https://www.nti.org/analysis/articles/india-submarine-capabilities/>

<sup>25</sup> Mian, Zia, M.V. Ramana, and A.H. Nayyar, "Nuclear Submarines in South Asia: New Risks and Dangers," *Journal for Peace and Nuclear Disarmament* 2, no. 1 (2019): 184-202, <https://doi:10.1080/25751654.2019.1621425>.

regional actors including India, US, Japan and other allies of US are trying to contain China in the IOR. China and Pakistan are mutually cooperating with each other in maritime domain in order to maintain balance of power and attain economic interests. The presence of Chinese forces and investment in the Indian Ocean Region is a golden opportunity for Pakistan. Firstly, it will create strategic balance with respect to Indian aggressive manoeuvres in the Indian Ocean such as militarization. Secondly, Chinese investments in the form of CPEC, particularly Gwadar port would augment the prowess of Pakistan economically and geo-strategically.<sup>26</sup>

The Chinese technological and defence assistance to Pakistan in maritime domain is also of substantial importance. The militarily strong Pakistan is in mutual benefit for China and Pakistan, as former considers the strong defence posture as a balancer against India and protection of its interests in IOR, while latter considers its strong naval force as a requisite for ensuring its security and defence in Indian Ocean where it has initiated colossal project like BRI. The sale of tracking system for speedy missile development program, F-22 Chinese made frigates, marine patrol vessels, fast attack craft, anti-ship missiles, torpedoes and coastguard ships by China to Pakistan, will help latter to enhance its defence capabilities in maritime domain.<sup>27</sup>

- **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor**

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a regional connectivity framework which provides enormous opportunities to Pakistan as well as China. The US\$ 62 billion project signed between Pakistan and China on April 20, 2015 comprises mega network of roads, energy pipelines, railway lines and fibre optic cables. It will connect China's city of Kashgar in Xinjiang province with Pakistan's deep sea port-Gwadar located in Balochistan province. CPEC is a flagship project of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). CPEC is considered as a game changer. With respect to Pakistan, this project would strengthen road links such as Karakoram Highway, enhance economic ties between China and

---

<sup>26</sup> Zahid Khan, "The China-Pakistan economic corridor," *China Quarterly of International Strategic Studies* 05, no. 02(2019): 249-265, <https://doi.org/10.1142/S2377740019500131>

<sup>27</sup> Ghulam Ali, "China-Pakistan maritime cooperation in the Indian Ocean," *Issues & Studies*, 55, no.03 (2019): <https://doi.org/10.1142/S1013251119400058>

Pakistan, increase investments and bring multiple opportunities for infrastructural and economic development.

It would further fulfil power consumption need of Pakistan because of the construction of power plants. This project would further enhance the geo-strategic importance of Pakistan as various extra-regional states have shown keen interest in CPEC such as Turkey, CARs (Central Asian Republics and Russia) along with the regional actors such as Iran and Afghanistan. With respect to maritime domain, it would provide Pakistan a strategic leverage vis-à-vis India, as Pakistan's role as an important Indian Ocean littoral state would enhance.<sup>28</sup>

Chinese investment in Pakistan in the form of CPEC also provides golden opportunity to Pakistan for exploring blue growth options such as blue economy. Blue Economy refers to advancement of employment opportunities and sustainable development activities by utilizing the maritime resources in an effective and manageable manner. Pakistan under the umbrella of the CPEC can develop "Blue Partnership" between both states which can lead to economic prosperity. Additionally blue economy also includes another important sector known as coastal tourism which is also an opportunity yet to be discovered and utilized by Pakistan.<sup>29</sup>

- **Gwadar Port**

The importance of Gwadar within CPEC is substantial. Gwadar port is a deep sea and warm water port of Pakistan and it is proximal to key choke point - Strait of Hormuz. This port would connect three important regions, i.e. Middle East, South Asia and Central Asia. Its importance is enormous for various countries such as China as it provides shortest trade passage to China. This port would further be beneficial for Central Asian Republics (CARs), Afghanistan and Russia. Even CARs and Russia have also expressed desire to become part of CPEC. Hence mega trade through Gwadar port will help Pakistan to keep keen eyes on Indian Ocean's important Sea lines of Communication (SLOCs) starting

<sup>28</sup> Muhammad Mehran Iqbal, "CPEC: Through the lens of Pakistan's foreign policy," Centre from Strategic and Contemporary Research, August 3, 2018, <https://cscr.pk/explore/themes/trade-economics/cpec-through-the-lens-of-pakistans-foreign-policy/>.

<sup>29</sup> China Pakistan Economic Corridor Portal, "Maritime Cooperation under CPEC has Potential to Promote the Blue Economy of Pakistan," Last modified June 3, 2020, <https://cpecinfo.com/maritime-cooperation-under-cpec-has-potential-to-promote-the-blue-economy-of-pakistan>.

from Persian Gulf and strategically significant choke point, Strait of Hormuz. This port can develop trade links among various regions such as Africa, South Asia, Western and Central Asia. Additionally, the development of this port would bring economic prosperity in Pakistan as it would manifold trade benefits, would generate revenue and provide employment opportunities for Pakistan.<sup>30</sup>

- **Rapprochement between China and Iran**

India being dropped from Chabahar-Zahedan Railway line project and cooperation between Iran and China in the form of 25 years long strategic partnership is also important for Pakistan. Firstly, it would strength CPEC, and secondly it would increase the prospect of trilateral cooperation between Iran, China and Pakistan.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, the exit of India from Chabahar project would eliminate security and economic challenges that were posed for economic and security interests of Pakistan.<sup>32</sup>

- **Pakistan's Maritime Cooperation with Muslim States**

Pakistan being a Muslim state has an opportunity to extend its maritime cooperation with other Muslim states of the Indian Ocean Region. With Saudi Arabia, Pakistan has conducted joint naval exercise named as Naseem Al Bahar XI in 2018. Since the inception of Naseem Al Bahr biennial exercise in 1993, it has now reached to an advanced maritime cooperation including almost every facet of the naval cooperation. The aim of these exercises is to enhance expertise to curb piracy, mine threats, and anti-surface and anti-air threats warfare. Additionally, Pakistan also participated in the Thunder of North Exercise which includes naval, air and ground forces. These exercises were held in Saudi Arabia in 2016 and other Muslim states such as Jordan, Sudan, Egypt, Turkey, Malaysia and Morocco also participated in these exercises. Pakistan and Saudi Arabia's cooperation in strategic and defence domain provides Pakistan an opportunity to develop a staunch ally in IOR to help

---

<sup>30</sup> Anwar Saeed, "The Evolving Pakistan-China Maritime Economic Relationship in the Indian Ocean." Sea Power Centre, Australia, Updated July, 2016, [https://www.navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/Soundings\\_Paper\\_No\\_13.pdf](https://www.navy.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/Soundings_Paper_No_13.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> Shafqat Ali, "Pakistan to Benefit from China's Strategic Deal with Iran: Mushahid", *The Nation*, July 30, 2020, <https://nation.com.pk/30-Jul-2020/pakistan-to-benefit-from-china-s-strategic-deal-with-iran-mushahid>

<sup>32</sup> Saad Rasool, "India's Chabahar Debacle", *THE NATION*, July 19, 2020, <https://nation.com.pk/19-Jul-2020/india-s-chabahar-debacle>

it deal with the emerging challenges.<sup>33</sup> However, the recent confliction between Pakistan and Saudi-Arabia requires Pakistan to take immediate action to normalize relations with Saudi Arabia.

Turkey is taking an active part in Indian Ocean and this has created an opportunity for Pakistan. Turkey is trying to increase its presence in IOR and this is demonstrated by its recent deal with Sudan in order to rebuild the port of Suakin.<sup>34</sup> The renewal of Turkish presence in the Indian Ocean brings opportunities for Pakistan. Both states are boosting their security and defence cooperation in maritime domain. Pakistan-Turkey naval partnership will complement Turkish strategic engagement in East African region. A 17,000 tonnes fleet tanker commissioned by Pakistan Navy in 2018 was built with the help of the Turkish defence company.<sup>35</sup> Additionally, Pakistan Navy signed a contract with the Turkey to acquire four MILGEM class corvettes in 2018. This naval cooperation would enhance the defensive capabilities of Pakistan and would provide Pakistan a Muslim ally in the Indian Ocean Region.<sup>36</sup>

## RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Comprehensive Maritime Strategy**

In a Conference titled “Maritime Security in Indian Ocean: Challenges and Opportunities for Pakistan” organized by the CPGS-Centre for Pakistan and Gulf Studies (CPGS), NCMPR-National Centre and KAS-Konrad Adenauer Stiftung on March 27, 2017, various scholars and policy makers have emphasized the dire need for holistic maritime strategy. Rana Tanveer-former Defence Production minister said that the

---

<sup>33</sup> Shaul Shay, “Saudi Arabia and Pakistan-Strategic alliance,” *IDC Herzliya*, April 2018, <https://www.idc.ac.il/en/research/ips/2018/documents/shaulshaysaudi%20arabiapakistane n17.4.2018.pdf>

<sup>34</sup> Aamir Latif, “Turkish military chief visits Pakistan Navy HQ,” *Anadolu Agency*, November 19, 2019, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/turkish-military-chief-visits-pakistan-navy-hq/1649999>.

<sup>35</sup> Amir Latif, “Pakistan Navy Commissions Warship Built with Turkey,” *Anadolu Agency*, October 16, 2018, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/pakistan-navy-commissions-warship-built-with-turkey/1283542>.

<sup>36</sup> Aamir Latif, “Turkey begin constructing warship for Pakistan,” *Anadolu Agency*, June 9, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/science-technology/turkey-begins-constructing-modern-warship-for-pakistan/1870750>.

efforts of competitors to sabotage CPEC creates dire need for Pakistan to be fully prepared in order to deal with emanating challenges in maritime domain. Additionally, Sehar Kamran who is President of Centre for Global and Peace Studies said that the long term and comprehensive maritime security policy with futuristic approach is need of the time.<sup>37</sup> Hence, Pakistan should formulate a comprehensive Indian Ocean policy to deal with challenges and to utilize the opportunities. Maritime strategy should be all-encompassing and should range from trade maximization, defence capabilities and cementing ties with the states. Political institutions alongwith Pakistan navy should work mutually to devise a holistic policy in this regard.

- **Emphasis on Blue Economy**

According to Director General of the Institute of the Maritime Affairs Bahria University, Rear Admiral Mukhtar Khan emphasized the importance of Blue Economy in National Conference named as “Maritime Economy and Geopolitics of Indian Ocean Rim”. He asserted that Pakistan has a tremendous maritime economic potential; its environment is suitable for blue economy, and CPEC operationalization would manifold the maritime sector of Pakistan.<sup>38</sup> Hence, Pakistan should gear up for the promotion of blue economy in order to enhance its national development. This would bring economic prosperity which is significant for the regional and international standing of Pakistan as a littoral state of Indian Ocean region.

- **Naval Diplomacy**

Naval diplomacy is defined in the Maritime Doctrine of Pakistan (MDP), as an activity which aims at influencing states behaviour, engaging Navy to persuade, support and to act as diplomatic instrument.<sup>39</sup> Pakistan should use Naval diplomacy in order to curb various challenges emanating from the complex strategic milieu in Indian Ocean. Firstly, the Pakistan-Iran deficit should be eliminated through confidence building

---

<sup>37</sup> Daily Times, “New maritime Policy and Renewal of Navy Need of the Hour,” March 28, 2017, <https://dailytimes.com.pk/20807/new-maritime-policy-and-renewal-of-navy-need-of-the-hour/>.

<sup>38</sup> Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad. “Maritime Economy and the Geopolitics of Indian Ocean Rim: Challenges for Pakistan,” Updated February 22, 2018, <http://issi.org.pk/national-conference-report-on-maritime-economy-and-the-geopolitics-of-indian-ocean-rim-challenges-for-pakistan/>.

<sup>39</sup> Maritime Doctrine of Pakistan, Pakistan Navy Dec. 2018, Pg 6-7

measures. Secondly, Pakistan needs to develop friendly relations with supportive and friendly states in IOR and should redefine and reevaluate its geostrategic space. Additionally, Pakistan should maintain and reinforce the cordial relationships with Indian Ocean littoral states in order to balance India's Naval expansion and militarization of Indian Ocean.

- **Speedy implementation of CPEC**

Pakistan should focus on the speedy implementation of CPEC and should not be distracted by moves or actions of the adversaries. The external or internal pressure should not act as an impediment for CPEC. Corruption, political differences and inefficiency should not halt the mega project like CPEC which will not only bring the economic opportunities but will also increase the strategic clout of Pakistan.

- **Gwadar-Chabahar Corridor**

Pakistan and Iran have various mutual interests and can mutually cooperate in various domains such as trade expansion, eliminating terrorism from Balochistan and construction of Iranian gas pipeline. Most importantly, Gwadar-Chabahar Corridor can be constructed for both states to reap the benefits to a maximum extent. Sayyed Muhammad Ali Hoesseini-Iran ambassador while delivering lecture at IPI-Islamabad Policy Institute said that Iran is willing to expand its ties with Pakistan and also mentioned Iran's desire to join CPEC in bilateral or trilateral forum.<sup>40</sup> This reinforces that an economic corridor can be built between Gwadar and CPEC to enhance trade between two states.

- **Effective Deterrence Against Nuclearization in Indian Ocean**

As a result of the nuclearization of Indian Ocean, Pakistan's policy response should be effective. As the nuclear free Indian Ocean appears as a distant dream, hence Pakistan should adapt those measures that would make Pakistan invincible. Deterrence in maritime domain is now a compulsion for Pakistan to ensure its sovereignty and defence. This suggestion can be supported through the viewpoint of Alfred Wohlstetter who was an American political scientist. He said that the basic pre-condition to maintain deterrence is state's capability to ensure its survival

---

<sup>40</sup> China Pakistan Economic Corridor, "Iran is Keen to Join CPEC by All Means," Last modified January 31, 2020, <https://cpecinfo.com/iran-is-keen-to-join-cpec-by-all-means/>.

from pre-emptive attack of adversary. Therefore, to make sure effective deterrence, Pakistan should acquire sea based deterrent weapons.<sup>41</sup>

## **CONCLUSION**

Balance of power, acquisition of weapons to ensure security and interest maximization demonstrates the practice of Neo-Realism by states in IOR. The changing strategic environment in Indian Ocean creates challenges as well as provides opportunities for Pakistan. The various challenges such as Indo-US militarization of Indian Ocean, Indo-Gulf cooperation along with naval expansion of India, role of extra regional powers (US, Japan & Australia) and nuclearization of Indian Ocean is perilous for Pakistan. But these challenges do not outcast the importance of the opportunities available for Pakistan.

The opportunities available such as the China's economic endeavours in the Indian Ocean and its presence in IOR is important for Pakistan as it creates a balance against US and India's strategic moves. Additionally, China's BRI and CPEC as its flagship project, tremendous importance of Gwadar port gives Pakistan an opportunity to stabilize its economy and enhance its political influence. Additionally, China-Iran deals and Pakistan's maritime cooperation with Muslim states is also important for increasing its prowess especially in maritime domain. Hence, Pakistan should formulate holistic Indian Ocean policy. It must focus on maritime diplomacy, ensure speedy implementation of CPEC, and enhance its naval capabilities to curtail the threats and challenges as well as reap maximum benefits from the opportunities available.

---

<sup>41</sup> Suffian Ullah, "Strategic Calculations Behind Pakistan's Pursuit of Sea-based Nuclear Deterrence." South Asia Voices, Updated June 11, 2020, [https://southasianvoices.org/strategic-calculations-behind-pakistans-pursuit-of-sea-based-nuclear-deterrence./](https://southasianvoices.org/strategic-calculations-behind-pakistans-pursuit-of-sea-based-nuclear-deterrence/)

## BOOK REVIEW

### 88 DAYS TO KANDAHAR; A CIA DIARY

*Abdul Ghaffar\**

This book provides a tremendous inside knowledge on how CIA operatives work, plan and negotiate in clandestine operations. From secret meetings to intelligence based operations preparedness, coding and decoding of intelligence intercepts and manoeuvring through double cross in a real war time scenario; this book provides a detailed account on various aspects of CIA's way of war. Robert Grenier, a former CIA Station Chief, has authored a great piece of information. The author is one of the key architect of US clandestine intelligence activities in Pakistan and Afghanistan after 9/11 incident. The book gives a mature perspective on initiation of Afghan war and post 9/11 secret meetings of Taliban representatives and CIA officials.

The book is divided into five parts. Other than part one named "The subversive" that tells everything about author's induction into CIA and his journey through the hierarchy. Other four parts contains detailed account of how CIA managed to convert some Taliban commanders to switch sides and explains intelligence-based cooperation with Pakistan intelligence services. The author provides his analysis and observation of U.S policy in Afghanistan.

The plot of the book starts with a phone call with George Tenet, the then Director of CIA informing Robert Grenier about the imminent war in Afghanistan in the wake of 9/11.

Grenier was asked operational question about American war in Afghanistan and how it should have begun. Despite the confirmation from the Department of Defence that Al Qaeda had evacuated their camps, the US still invaded Afghanistan bombing empty grounds. Grenier thought that instead of military action alone, the US had focused more on a long-term political objective, a post-Taliban political government denying any space to Al Qaeda. But the opposite happened. Regional geostrategic goals

---

*\*PhD Scholar International Relations. The author's split PhD research is under process at University of California, USA.*

were given preference and Afghanistan proved another Vietnam for the US.

Initially the war focused on destroying Al Qaeda. Obama administration revisited Afghan strategy and shifted the focus to an overambitious plan of Afghan nation building to end the crisis. A complete US withdrawal was announced in 2014 without achieving any substantial success as Obama shifted focus to Asia Pacific region.

Trump administration shifted the focus back to Afghanistan. The third phase of Afghanistan war was a 'conditions-based policy' which means the US would be present in Afghanistan as long as circumstances demanded. Grenier, the then CIA Station Chief in Islamabad, advised to avoid interfering with an on-going civil war between the Taliban and Northern Alliance given the ethnic sensitivities in Afghanistan. But the US allied with Northern Alliance, which embittered the public sentiments in Afghanistan. The US however failed to recognize these cultural realities and destroyed the social, cultural, and religious landscape of the country.

Pakistan created Taliban which, according to Grenier, is untrue. Pakistan's political support to Taliban was based on a premise that they could unify various Afghan factions relieving Pakistan of its western border concerns. Given the fact that Pashtun diaspora is spread both inside and beyond Pakistan's western border, Pakistan's political support to Taliban was justified.

When the US forces were bombing empty Taliban camps, CIA was busy arming Afghan tribal rebellion led by Hamid Karzai and others against the Taliban. Hamid Karzai and Shizai entered Afghanistan from Pakistani territory and ISI supported these tribal leaders. At the same time CIA began to recruit the non-Pashtun dominated Northern Alliance in the north. It was the beginning of 'sectarianization' of the war.

The book affirms the perception held in Pakistan that Islamabad's cooperation resulted in radicalization in the country. The resultant anti-American sentiments helped the radicals to recruit and raise funds. It is believed that Tehreek-Taliban Pakistan was a tribal response to military operation in the Tribal Areas. Since the start of this war, CIA and CTC distrusted Pakistan and never fully shared critical intelligence with Pakistan Army. This helped Al Qaeda fighters to flee into the bad lands of Pak-Afghan borders. However, even with limited intelligence, Pakistan

Army captured and handed over hundreds of Tora Bora escapes to the US authorities. These included Afghans, Arabs, Chechens, and Turk militants.

Moreover, failing to understand the nature of this war, the US was quick to celebrate victory. It thought that it was about to topple a government through military force but failed to understand the strategic deceptive collapse of the Taliban. It is said that it was Bin Laden's strategy to lure the US to the graveyard of empires and Taliban's tactical superiority to trap it in guerrilla warfare. Due to power being decentralized in the border areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan, the US failed to understand it. Robert Grenier writes, "Seeds of future instability were being sown" in the US installed system in Afghanistan.

US invasion resulted in disruption of social, political, and sectarian landscape. It was further disrupted by the ill-planned and bloody withdrawal of the US following Doha Peace Accord between the Taliban and the US. America needs to understand that invasions in Afghanistan (Alexander, British and the Soviets) ended in an unconditional withdrawal. Only Afghans can rule Afghanistan peacefully.

The 88 Days to Kandahar; A CIA Diary is an ideal choice to read and understand how fog of war can lead to disasters and turn victory into defeat.

# **GUIDELINES FOR BEACON JOURNAL - 2022**

## **PAKISTAN NAVY WAR COLLEGE (PNWC)**

Pakistan Navy War College (PNWC) invites manuscripts for its journal (Beacon-22). The journal is accredited with HEC in 'Y' category. Research articles shall be accepted in areas related to International Relations, Strategic Studies, International and Regional Security, South Asian Studies, Maritime Security, Indian and Pacific Ocean studies and Hybrid Warfare.

**Submission Deadlines:** Research scholars who wish to contribute **original, unpublished articles** to the journal may submit these by **first week of March, 2022**. The articles may be written individually or co-authored.

**Article word limit:** The manuscripts should normally be 5000 (+\_ 10%) words excluding abstract, author's introduction, footnotes and bibliography.

**Format:** All article submissions must include an abstract of about 200-250 words with 5-7 keywords and footnotes. The first page of the manuscript should contain the title of the paper, the name(s) of author(s), abstract and footnote giving introduction and current affiliation of the author(s). A 'Disclaimer' must be made at (footnote 2) if and when applicable.

**Plagiarism:** Similarity Index (Turnitin Report) must not exceed 18%.

**Editorial and Peer Review Process:** All submissions are screened using "Similarity Index" detection software. Articles shortlisted by the Editorial Board will undergo double-blind peer review. During this stage, articles may not be approved for publication by the referees. However, if they are found suitable for the Journal, reviewers may recommend either major or minor changes in the manuscript. The revision process may take multiple rounds. Peer Review timelines vary depending on Reviewer availability, area of expertise and responsiveness.

**Citation Format:** Footnotes and Bibliography must comply with Chicago Manual of Style 17th Edition. Some examples for Foot notes are cited below for guidance:

**Book:** Peter W. Rose, *Class in Archaic Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 95.

**Chapter of Book:** John D. Kelly, "Seeing Red: Mao Fetishism, Pax Americana, and the Moral Economy of War," in *Anthropology and Global Counterinsurgency*, ed. John D. Kelly et al. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 77.

**Journal Article:** Joshua I. Weinstein, "The Market in Plato's Republic," *Classical Philology* 104 (2009): 440.

**Newspaper/Magazine Article:** Daniel Mendelsohn, "But Enough about Me," *New York Times*, January 25, 2021, 68.

**Website:** Helen Regan, Nikhil Kumar and Sophia Saifi, "Pakistan Shot Down Two Indian Jets Inside Its Airspace," *CNN.com*, Accessed February 28, 2021, <https://edition.cnn.com/2021/02/28/india-pakistan-strikes-escalation-intl/index.html>.

### **Miscellaneous:**

- 1 UK English Spellings should be used. Dates must be written as 1 January 2022.
- 2 Acronyms should be written within brackets after writing words in full on first use
- 3 Images/ Maps resolution must be of 300-600dpi.

**Postal Address:** Soft Copy of article (Word Document) as well as 'Certificate of Originality and Publishing Rights' must be signed, scanned and emailed to Point of Contact (ds.research3@pnwc.paknavy.gov.pk).

**NOTE: Author(s) as well as members of Editorial Board and Advisory Board would receive a free-copy of the Journal.**