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The political and economic significance of Indian ocean: An overview

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Abstract
Today the Indian Ocean has gained incredible significance and has developed into the most concerted area where international economic activity conjoined political benefit. There is the world's busiest waterway and chokepoints such as the Strait of Malacca, Bab al- Mandeb, Strait of Hormuz and the Suez Canal also. The world's major economic as well as political focus has shifted towards the Asian and African continents which border Indian Ocean at large. The objective of the paper is to show the emerging Economic and Geopolitical significance of Indian Ocean by highlighting the evolving roles of India China and the USA in Indian Ocean, and by delineating the geographical features of this powerful ocean.

Keywords: strait of hormuz, strait of malacca, bab-el-mandeb, Gwadar deep sea ports, imperialism and colonization

Introduction
The geo-political analysts have viewed the configuration of earth on the bases of arrangement of lands and waters and interconnecting lines of these two phenomena. Most geopolitical concepts date back more than a hundred years, and analyzed the interrelations between men and the state and the natural environment. The earth has divided on the base upon: (i) The Land Continental hemisphere and (ii) the water hemisphere (oceanic). Indian Ocean has become one of the most important oceans of the world with respect to the growing economic activity of this globalized world over the time. It is the third major ocean of the world which has Asia in the north, Africa in the west, Indo China in the east while Antarctica lies in the south. It has 9600 kms range from north to south, the Bay of Bengal to Antarctica, while it extends from west to east from Southern Africa to Western Australia with the range of 7800 km. (D. Rumsey, S. Chaturvedi & M. T. Yasin (Eds.), 2007) [1].
Indian Ocean covers approximately 20% of the world's water. Its total area is about 27,240,000 sq mi and it is almost 5.5 times larger than the United States. Red Sea, Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal, Andaman Sea, Flores Sea, Great Australian Bight, Gulf of Aden, Gulf of Oman, Java Sea, Mozambique Channel, Persian Gulf, Savu Sea, Strait of Malacca, Timor Sea, and other tributary water bodies are the part of this ocean. It also has some small island nations such as the Madagascar, The Seychelles, Reunion Island, Maldives, Mauritius and Sri Lanka. In east a cluster of islands forming Indonesia borders the ocean. Indian subcontinent is the reason for the name of Indian Ocean. Due to its unique strategic location and bulk of natural resources, it has remained an important area throughout the realms of history.
Though, in recent periods the significance of Indian Ocean both politically as well as economically has been rapidly increased more with the spread of globalization. After the attacks on World Trade Centre on 9/11, 2001, world's major powers including America and China have focused towards it. America has listening carefully it due to the policy of counter terrorism and China has specially in order to overcome her distant location vulnerabilities.

Geographical Setting of Indian Ocean
The important global shipping routes and choke points of Indian Ocean discussed individually in detail, metioned below:
1. Strait of Hormuz

2. Strait of Malacca
3. Bab-el-Mandeb
4. The Sunda and Lombok straits
5. Mozambique Channel
6. Ten Degree and Six Degree Channels

Strait of Hormuz

It is one of the world's most important waterways or chokepoints which connect the oil fields of Persian Gulf, Gulf of Oman and the Indian Ocean. It is 50 to 80 km wide but navigation is limited to two 3 km wide channels, both which are exclusively used for inbound and outbound of vessels. According to estimation the strait carries almost 88% of the Persian Gulf oil to the world (Asia, USA, and Western Europe) and almost 20% of the world oil (Lehman, 2008). On an average day, the Strait of Hormuz carries 3,000 ships including oil tankers and fishing boats. Moreover, on an average day in 2014 for about 17 tankers carrying 20 million barrels of crude oil and almost 2 million barrels of petroleum products pass out from the Persian Gulf through this strait.

Therefore, any disturbance in the Strait of Hormuz may possibly lead to the direct effects on the worldwide economy leading to the sharpening of oil prices along with non-availability of energy supplies on the whole. It is the only strait of the world that carries Middle Eastern and Persian Gulf's oil, its significance has increased throughout history and since the phenomenon of lobalization has spread and interconnected in the globe. However, it is important to see who controls or owns this highly important chokepoint. Iran lies in the north of the strait and United Arab Emirates (UAE) borders south to the strait. Inbound vessels traverse the region of Iran while outbound vessels traverse the areas of Omani and the UAE (Kordesman, 2007) [3]. In the long run, the presence of US Navy ships and an adequate naval carrier work force in the Persian Gulf region can be a threat to Iran and thus, it can close the straits in some unhappy conditions. Recently, Iran has threatened to close down the Strait due to the new layers of restrictions imposed by the European Union and the United States due to Iran's nuclear program.

Strait of Malacca

The Straits of Malacca is a straighter located between Malaysia, Singapore and Indonesia. It connects the Indian Ocean to the South China Sea and the Pacific Ocean, this strait serves as the smallest route between the Persian Gulf and its markets in Asia. This remains one of the most important routes in the world due to this fact that it allows approximately 50,000 ships to go by road every year. Although it has a big ability to cater for a big number of ships, its tight channel the small islands and shallow reefs make it the center of the danger of collision (Massey, 2008). Therefore, one of the important parts where pirate attacks are often very common, the Philips channel has its own point in the Singapore Strait, which is the narrowest point with only 1.7 miles wide. As the oil flows through the straits, it is recorded that about 15 million barrels per day cross through the strait, which makes it the second most important strait after Hormuz's strait. Therefore, it crosses the oil through the Indian Ocean through the Persian Gulf to the South China Sea and South Korea, Japan, China and other Pacific Rim states to cross the Pacific Ocean. Approximately 30% of the world's trade is in the accounts of Strait of Malacca. And around 80% of the petroleum is imported by China, Japan, South Korea and Taiwan through this strait (Rumley, Chaturvedi, Yasin, 2007) [1]. Therefore, in case of strait stagnation, there will be severe implications with regard to elevated freight fees and shipping delays because other Malacca alternative routes are quite long. On the other hand, oil demand from Asia-Pacific is increasing by 2.8 percent with an estimated world rate of 1.7 percent, it is estimated that there will be significant increase in sea traffic in the Straits of Malacca for the coming years.

Bab-el-Mandeb

Bab al-Mandab is the third busiest and important waterway, between Hormuz and Strait of Malacca. The water stream of Bab al-Mandab connects the Indian Ocean along the Red Sea on the Gulf of Aden. It is 20 miles wide and is divided into two channels; the western channel is 16 miles wide while the eastern channel is 2 miles wide. This strait imports most of the European crude oil because it allows tankers to carry oil from Persia Bay through the Suez Canal and then from a pipeline to Europe and the United States. Strait has the ability to complete 3.3 million barrels of oil per day from the Persian Gulf. On the other hand, the estimated flow of oil passing through the Suez canal is approximately 2.1 million barrels per day in Europe and America (Rodriguez, 2004) [13]. However, in the event of the strait of the strait, oil tankers from the Persian Gulf cannot be able to reach the Suez Canal and Europe and America. Therefore, the alternative route of Bab al-Mandab, the Cape of Good Hope, can be used in the event of its closure. But again, the transfer of oil tankers to Europe and America with the Cape of Good Hope will maximize all the shipping costs, while additional about 4,750 nautical miles and 12-14 days to reach the Port of Rotterdam from the Persian Gulf. In addition to this, it will reach the US to reach 2700 nautical miles and the Louisiana Offshore Oil Port (LOOP) for about seven to nine days to move forward. At present, it takes about 21-22 days to reach Rotterdam, and about 31 days to reach LOOP, through the Arab-Al-Mandab routes, to move oil from the Persian Gulf.

The Sunda and Lombok Straits

The strait of Sunda and Lombok are the alternative routes in the event of closure of the Strait of Malacca. Between two Indonesian islands, Java and Sumatra, the Sunda Strait is situated while Java connects the ocean to the Indian Ocean. However, at some points the straits are very shallow and narrow, which is less important for carrying heavy oil tankers. On the other hand, there are many other problems for navigating the straight, such as heavy tidal waves, oil drilling platforms, volcanoes as well as small islands. The Lombok Strait is another alternative route for the Straits of Malacca, between the two islands of Bali and Lombok. The Strait is a safe passage and welcomes Supertechar because it is much wider, deeper and less crowded than Malacca Strait. However, if this strait is used instead of the Malacca Strait, then it will increase the distance of 3.5 days and approximately 16,000 nautical miles, which will definitely increase transport costs.

The Mozambique Channel

Mozambique Channel is highly strategic waterway which lies between the island nation of Madagascar and South East Africa in the India Ocean. The length of this waterway is

almost 1600 km long while its width varies from 400-950 km. It carries almost 30% of the world's oil trade and almost 100% of the South Africa's maritime trade. Thus, one of the most serious concerns in this part of the Indian Ocean is consistent attacks by Somali pirates. Although Mozambique crosses this essential and second long coastline after Somalia, but it lacks resources for the police on its own. Therefore, states like South Africa and France have an important role in these regional waterways. (Luke, 2011).

Ten Degree and Six Degree Channels

Ten degrees and six degrees of channel are two channels in the Indian Ocean, which are ten degrees and six degrees above the equator respectively. The Ten Degree Channel is usually located between the two Indian islands of Andaman and Nicobar, while the six-degree channel is located between the Indian island Nicobar and Indonesia's Sumatra Islands. Since these two channels are close to Indian areas in the Indian Ocean, their importance to India is very high. These all waterways and choke points are significant for the Asia, Europe and America, and in other words these are the strategic Sea Lines of Communications (SLOCs). For the South Asian States, three subjects dominate the Indian Ocean and its SLOC revolve around China, India and economics. The importance of these chokepoints may vary according to the degree of its demand and use which are considered as the resources. Thus the vulnerability as well as the importance of strategic chokepoints has been increasing in the event of globalization. So, the significance of chokepoints has always remained essential for the world trade energy supplies. Physical characteristics, Usage and Access are the three main characteristics which define the chokepoints to be resources (Rodrigue, 2004) [13]. Therefore, to use chokepoints, as resource states need to overcome any constraint to ensure these three. On the other hand, in the Asian peninsula, China and India have seen to be quite active to ensure the safety of their strategic waterways, which carry their essential commodities and energy supplies (Berlin, 2010).

Chabahar and Gwadar Deep sea Ports in Indian Ocean

Due to the importance of Indian Ocean for modern business and deepening sea ports in the Indian Ocean, to shipping both China and India. Gwadar, China's deep sea port built by China, strategically opposes the importance of Chabahar port in Iran, in which it is assisted by India for development and construction since 2002. This is India's policy to reduce its dependence on Pakistan and provide a route for Central Asian States and Afghanistan through Iran. Therefore, the Gwadar deep sea port project (funding with China), which is hardly 72 km east of Chabahar port, poses a direct challenge to Indian interests (Jaffrelot, 2011) [8].

Historical Exploration of Indian Ocean

The historic discovery of the Indian Ocean can be divided into the following steps:

1. Prehistoric period 9000 to 5000 BC
2. Ancient times 5000 to 1000 B.C.
3. Classical era 1000 BC to 300 CE
4. Medieval era 300 E From 1450 AD till
5. The first global age is 1450 AD. From 1770 AD till
6. Industrial and imperial period 1770 AD From 1914 AD till
7. from the twentieth century to the present

Emerging Roles of USA, China and India

It was in 1963, when Professor Saul Cohen laid out two most important geostrategic regions of the world i.e. 1) The trade dependent maritime world and 2) The Eurasian Continental World, however, one more emerging geo-strategic region called the Indian Ocean realm could be added up as a third most important geo-strategic regions of the world. It is great characteristics of a geo-strategic region that it combines all those features what are globe influencing like: location, movement, trade orientation, and cultural or ideological bonds. Thus, the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) tends to include this entire trait that makes it a worldwide influencing region (Dowdy & Trood, 1983) [5].

China is building its naval presence strictly in the Indian Ocean, which is being seen as emerging hazards for the interests of India and America. Strengthening China's maritime power, which has been named "Far Sea Defense", has been entrusted with the task of achieving two main objectives. These are first to preserve China's maritime security (including its territorial sea and EEZ); and second to increase and secure its economic interests, especially in IOR and West Africa. Admiral Zhang Huachen, Deputy Commander, Rear East East Fleet reiterated that "With the expansion of the country's economic interests, the navy wants to protect the country's transport routes and our main sea lanes." In reference to the practical requirements for implementing FSDS, he said, "To achieve this, the Chinese Navy needs to develop on the lines of larger vessels [and] with more extensive capabilities." (Joseph Lin, 2010. and Edward Wong, 2010) [9, 6].

As the second big player in the Indian Ocean, the strategic rise of Indian Navy has affected the security and economic interests. India casts its 89% oil requirement by importing it from the sea being a main stakeholder in Indian Ocean's trade and trade operations in regards to imported crude oil, raw materials and consumer products, the country's exports.

The security of SLOC from the Persian Gulf, Europe, and East Asia is become essential for India. The security of these vital shipping lanes is also linked with India's dependence on the security of the Indian Ocean, combined with its need to monitor and, if necessary, check the naval activity of other regional powers.

The presence of the Indian Navy has touched 40 vessels and submarines, two atomic submarines, two aircraft carriers. This will be a fleet of 165 ships by 2022, in which the 400-MiG-29K aircraft and helicopter with three surface-fighting submarines were included for three aircraft carrier groups. "This would result in the change of balance of power in the Indian Ocean, with a tilt decisively in India's favor" viewed by Sanjay Chaturvedi (1998) [14]. As an expert in maritime strategic issues as well as professor at the Asia-Pacific center for Security Studies in Honolulu, Donald Berlin has observed this evolving role of India in the IOR:

> New Delhi regards the Indian Ocean as its back yard
> And deems…that India functions as, eventually, the
> Predominant influence in this region…In the
> Expansive view of many Indians, India's security
> Perimeter should extend from the Strait of Malacca to
> The Strait of Hormuz and from the coast of Africa to
> The Western shores of Australia." (2006)

Increasing competition between China and India in the Indian Ocean and the US response add a new dimension to

its geopolitical significance. However, the flow of energy and trade is China's first concern, but its activities are seen by India through strategic calculations. China is involved in expanding a political and economic impact on Africa by investing billions of dollars in industries like oil, mining, transportation, power generation, telecommunications and infrastructure. This will ensure a successful access to energy resources and raw materials, which are important for its development and development. This is a new geopolitical orientation of Chinese policy towards energy resources which will have a far-reaching impact on China, the collision of competition, interests and interests between USA and India. Probably it will become a feature of the Indian Ocean's geo-political significance in the 21st century. Geopolitical code of the Soviet Union also inspired it to focus on the Pacific and Atlantic oceans. However, soon the changing trend of the complexities of the Cold War of international politics reduced the strategic neglect of the Indian Ocean. Two factors were paramount in this regard; the first was the deletion of British from the Indian Ocean in 1970, which was considered a serious potential threat to Western interests in the Indian Ocean region.

Second was the Arab Israel disagreement in 1973 and consequent oil embargo. The Indian Ocean embraces the oil and energy rich Muslim countries which were directly involved in the conflict with Israel. There was a perception among American strategists that it was far from reality that the Soviets would fulfill the essentially vacuum made electric power as a result of British withdrawal. This potential danger was needed for a credible US naval presence in the Indian Ocean. Diego Garcia was selected as a naval base to arrange military communications facilities for this. The purpose was first to boost U.S. naval communications in the central and northwestern region of the ocean, and secondly to create the region with worldwide American military capabilities from Ethiopia to Australia's s outheastern coast. The US maintained throughout the Cold War period its deterrence in the Indian Ocean.

The post-cold war and post 9/11 geopolitical orientation of the USA in Asia is marked by the majorly three factors, one is growing Islamic identity and integrity from the Middle East to Pacific, second the struggle for influence on Central Asia and changing patterns of this region and third the ever increasing presence of China and India on Indian Ocean. (Kaplan, Robert 2009) [9]. The Indian Ocean ranks as the central point of gravity in all these influences. The increasing danger of revival of Islamic identity as a common bond, although it appears more in non-state actors, it can be dealt with by increasing its presence and involvement in IOR states only. Regardless of whether it is based on Afghanistan or Kazakhstan or seeing India as a potential strategic partner for future needs. In the words of Robert D. Kaplan "The bulging up of Indian Navy will function as an antidote to Chinese military expansion." Apart from this, other concerns are international terrorism, religious extremism. Since 9/11, there has been a fundamental change in the pattern of relations between the two countries, because now no Cold War era system takes any place in their attitude towards each other.

Conclusion

Finally it can be said that geo-political significance of IO would rise and strengthen because of its littoral states possess more than two thirds of the world's oil reserve, and roughly 35% of the world's gas reserves, 60% of uranium, 40% of gold and 80% of all diamond deposits. This is catalyst for many countries like: Japan imports almost 90 per cent of its oil from the IOR, Italy 85 per cent, Britain and Germany 60 per cent and France almost 50 per cent. The Indian Ocean is also important because the industrial raw material is near that's include lithium, beryllium, zirconium, thorium, coal, iron, copper, manganese, tin, bauxite, chromite, nickel, cobalt, vanadium and phosphates (Michel, Fuller & Dolan, 2012) [11]. Although it works at an important strategic location, any country in the world, almost to dominate the United Kingdom policy of controlling most of the surrounding parts of the ocean (Laipson & Pandya, 2009) [10] in the 1880s did not try.

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