

Indo-U.S. Maritime Relations in the Indian Ocean Region: A Study of Emerging Trends since 1990s

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By

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the dissertation entitled “**Indo-U.S. Maritime Relations in the Indian Ocean Region: A Study of Emerging Trends since 1990s**” submitted by **Mayuri De** bearing **Regd. No. 19SPHL01** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of **Master of Philosophy in Political Science** is a bonafide work carried out by her under my supervision and guidance which is a Plagiarism free dissertation.

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DECLARATION

I, **Mayuri De**, hereby declare that the dissertation entitled “**Indo-U.S. Maritime Relations in the Indian Ocean Region: A Study of Emerging Trends since 1990s**” submitted by me under the guidance and supervision of **Dr. Shaji S** is a bonafide research work which is also free from plagiarism. I also declare that it has not been submitted previously in part or in full to this university or any other university or institution for the award of any degree or diploma. I hereby agree that my dissertation can be deposited in Shodhganga/INFLIBNET.

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MAYURI DE

CONTENTS

List of Abbreviations

Preface	1
Chapter One- Theoretical Framework on Power and Power Transformations	5
Chapter Two- India and US Maritime Cooperation: An Overview	32
Chapter Three- Indo-US Maritime Cooperation: A Site of New Power Relations	56
Conclusion	86
Bibliography	93
Originality report	102

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADMM: ASEAN Defence Minister's Meeting
ASEAN: Association of South East Asian Nations
AUKUS: Australia-United Kingdom-United States
BDN: Blue Dot Network
BECA: Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-Spatial Cooperation
BOP: Balance Of Power
BRI: Belt and Road Initiative
CENTO: Central Treaty Organization
CDRI: Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure
CISMOA: Communication Interoperability and Security Memorandum of Agreement
COMCASA: Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement
CPEC: China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
CTBT: Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty
DTTI: Defense Technology and Trade Initiative
EEZ: Exclusive Economic Zones
ESG: Executive Steering Group
FMCT: Fissile Missile Test ban Treaty
FONOP: Freedom Of Navigation Operation
G2: Group of Two
G7: Group of Seven
GSOMIA: General Security of Military Information Agreement
HA/DR: Humanitarian Assistance/ Disaster Relief
I2U2: India-Israel-United Arab Emirates-United States
IAEA: International Atomic Energy Agency
IFC-IOR: Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region
IMX: International Maritime Exercise
IONS: Indian Ocean Naval Symposium
IOR: Indian Ocean Region
IORA: Indian Ocean Rim Association
IOR-ARC: Indian Ocean Rim Association of Regional Cooperation
IPEF: Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity

IPOI: Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative
IRS: International Relations Studies
IRT: International Relations Theory
LEMOA: Logistics Exchange Memorandum Of Agreement
LSA: Logistics Sharing Agreement
MDA: Maritime Domain Awareness
MDP: Major Defence Partner
MSR: Maritime Silk Road
NAM: Non-Aligned Movement
NATO: North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NDA: National Democratic Alliance
NDMA: National Disaster Management Agency
NDRF: National Disaster Response Force
NIDM: National Institute for Disaster Management
NPT: Non-Proliferation Treaty
NSG: Nuclear Suppliers Group
NSS: National Security Strategy
NWS: Nuclear Weapons State
PoK: Pakistan occupied Kashmir
PLA: People's Liberation Army
QUAD: Quadrilateral Security Dialogue
RDF: Rapid Deployment Force
ReCAAP: Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia
RIMPAC: Rim of the Pacific
SAGAR: Security and Growth of All in the Region
SEACAT: Southeast Asia Cooperation and Training
SEATO: South East Asian Treaty Organization
SIDS: Small Island Developing States
SIPRI: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute
SLOC: Sea Lanes Of Communication
SREB: Silk Road Economic Belt
STA: Strategic Trade Authorization
TPP: Trans Pacific Partnership

UK: United Kingdom

UN: United Nations

UNCLOS: United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea

UPA: United Progressive Alliance

US: United States

USAID: United States Agency for International Development

USCENTCOM: United States Central Command

USSR: Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

Preface

In the Cold War times, the US-India relationship was marked by divergent perceptions and approaches that did not allow both the countries to cooperate with each other significantly. Security relationship between the US and India at that time generally reflected a pattern of misunderstandings, miscalculations and misgivings as was the case with the general Cold War binaries. In the post-Cold War era, the India-US relationship has been evolving in response to India's rise as a regional power with a robust economy and renewed military strength, through deepening of defence and trade relations. In general, such a shift was in tune with the change in distribution of power architecture in Asia, especially in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) with the rapid economic and military growth of China. The “Pivot to Asia” policy of the US bears testimony to this fact the US began to take this shift seriously. In this context, the US perceptions tilted positively towards India, especially towards the role of the Indian Navy and its maritime significance, which has evolved as one of their most important partners in the Indian Ocean and the larger Indo-Pacific region by cooperating through bilateral and multilateral agreements and strategic dialogues, joint naval exercises and other multifarious cooperation in Non-traditional security areas. Against this setting, this dissertation analyzes the evolving nature of Indo-US Maritime Cooperation in the post-Cold War times with an emphasis on the developments in last two decades through a Defensive Neo-Realist framework and the change in power equilibrium in the region which increased the power status of India.

There is ample literature on the subject of Indo-US strategic cooperation pertaining to both before and after the Cold War but the area of maritime cooperation has not received significant degree of attention from scholars of International Studies. Recently, we have witnessed renewed attention on this topic by noted scholars such as C Raja Mohan, Sumit Ganguly and Harsh V Pant as India and the US are moving closer to each other to strengthen bilateral maritime cooperation with the aim of balancing the Chinese rise in Asia. In our current study, the research problem deals with India's strategic engagements while sitting in the centre of the IOR and cooperates with the US to contain Chinese hegemonic expansionism in the maritime security sphere. Simultaneously, the study also problematizes the context in which India also tries to maintain economic and trade relations with China, its long term trade partner to safeguard its economic interests. Furthermore, the gap between India's aims and capabilities in the IOR has made cooperation with the US a necessity while

US with its declining presence has found a strategic partner in India given its geographic location as well as latter's status as a rising power to be a suitable partner in the region. In general, China has emerged an important factor in India's outreach towards US to safeguard its benign strategic interests which conflict with the offensive aims of China in IOR. Under this context, it is to be seen how this strategic relationship between a great power and rising power contributes to the changing power structure in the region and consequently to the power position for India. The major research questions that the study addresses are:-

- What set of factors (systemic, domestic, leadership) define the shaping of Indo-US maritime relations?
- What are the areas of convergence and divergence in Indo-US maritime relations?
- What are the impacts of such an alliance on the power structure in the Indian Ocean Region which includes the interaction of a great power and a rising power and its impact on the power status of India?

The study draws on some of the contending theories of International Relations such as Defensive Neo-Realism most importantly Waltz's Three Images and concepts on power and status transformation to understand India-US maritime cooperation and changing power structure in the region. Waltz's Balance of Power and Walt's Balance of Threat introduces to the concepts of balancing and bandwagoning as survival strategies for the states depending on power and threat perceptions of different states for their existence in the anarchic international system. In defining concepts on power and status transformation in international relations as these notions are quite crucial in the context of current study, theoretical framework developed by T V Paul assumes paramount significance. He describes characteristics to gain a major power status for India by combining elements of hard power and soft power (military; economy; technology; demography; norms; culture; leadership; institutions; diplomacy) and considers great power as one which has the ability to influence the international politics, maintain balance and order in the international system, and defending its security interests beyond its territorial defence by threat of force, diplomatic interactions or alliances. The above mentioned IR theories/debates help in examining the evolution of the strategic relationship between India and the US in the maritime sphere in the contemporary times with the rise of the revisionist China expanding its hegemonic influence in the strategically important Indian Ocean which leads to a transformation of power structure in the region.

Chapterisation of the Study

The study is organised into three core chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter titled “*Theoretical Framework on Power and Power Transformations*” introduces the theories on which the study is based upon. The first section explains the concept of Defensive Neo-Realism as theorized by Kenneth Waltz with focus on the Waltzian notions of Balance of Power and the changes that the concept has assimilated in the contemporary times with the inclusion of the concepts like balance of threat, soft balancing and strategic hedging options. The next section identifies the two variants of Neo-Realism and discusses the aspects of cooperation between states in the international system. The Indo-US relations is studied through the lens of Waltz concept of Three Images where the foreign policy is seen to be operated through three set of factors- systemic, domestic and individual (leadership). In order to study India’s rising power and status ambitions in the changing world order; the chapter also looks into the theories of status transformation in current International Relation Studies (IRS) and concludes the chapter by giving a brief view of the historical background of India’s maritime presence in the IOR before the period of independence.

The second chapter titled “*India and US Maritime Cooperation: An Overview*” discusses the foreign policy interaction, between India and US, from the 1940s to the 2000s, in which maritime dimensions figure significantly. The first section focuses on the 1940s to the 1960s, where the international setting comprised of the Cold War binary politics while India adopted the policy of Non-Alignment and was preoccupied with the continental conflicts and border disputes with its hostile neighbors. In the next section, the discussion centers on developments of 1970s and 80s wherein, India and the US relations were mostly driven by misperceptions and misunderstandings because of the actions they pursued out of their national interests where the US kept backing Pakistan during the 1971 Bangladesh liberation war and in several other instances while India received support from the Soviet Union and was against the presence of any extra-regional navy in the IOR. The last section looks into changes in improving bilateral relationship since 1991 with the Cold War coming to an end and the breaking up of the USSR while a major transformation was taking place in India’s domestic economic policies with the ascendancy of a renewed wave of globalization and the unfolding of a democratic liberal world order, led by the US.

The third chapter titled “*Indo-US Maritime Cooperation: A Site of New Power Relations*” traces the major transformation in the bilateral relationship with the coming of the 21st

century beginning from 2000 to the end of 2022 with the increasing importance of the IOR in global politics. The renewed attention towards IOR is because of the economic and political aspects attached to the choke points, the rise in flow of trade, maritime commerce and energy resources through the Sea Lanes of Communications (SLOCs) which lies in the region requiring freedom of navigation and rule-based order according to the international laws. The rising transnational threats from non-state actors and the hegemonic dominance of China with its rising sea-power are challenging the status-quo of the region. In view of these developments, the first section looks into the India-US relations during the post-Cold war times under the UPA regime when the Civil Nuclear Deal of 2008 was struck along with adoption of several defence agreements and strategic dialogues for maritime security. The next section highlights the implications of Chinese rise with its expansionist policies of BRI, CPEC and MSR which disrupts the balance in the region. The last section looks into the bilateral relationship under NDA regime following the similar trajectory with the rising capabilities of India as a strong naval power in the region and the US to support India through naval cooperation and foundational agreements like LEMOA, COMCASA, and BECA, signed to preserve the stability in the regional order in accordance with the common maritime interests of both the countries. The findings of the study are summarized by way of a conclusion at the end of the dissertation.

Methodology

The research is carried through historical and empirical analysis by reviewing secondary literature published on Indo-US relations with relevant primary data collected from different stakeholders/organisations on the different strategic areas pertaining to Indo-US relations. The primary sources consist of government documents and doctrines issued both by India and the US ministries/departments such as Indian Maritime Doctrine and the US Indo-Pacific Strategy, databases of international organisations and non-governmental organisations, speeches by Ministry of External Affairs, Foreign Affairs Records. The secondary sources include books, scholarly articles from reputed journals, newspapers, electronic information from authentic think tanks and government websites.

Chapter One: Theoretical Framework on Power and Power Transformation

The theme of the current study involves analysis of the bilateral relationship between India and the United States in the sphere of maritime engagements keeping in view of the changing regional geopolitical realities in the Indian Ocean from the past till the recent times. This chapter introduces the theoretical framework with the definition of power and the concept of structure viewed from Neo-Realist lenses by taking into account the basic assumptions and characteristics identified by Kenneth Waltz while theorizing international politics. It further describes the notions on Balance of Power and look into how cooperation takes place in a Neo-Realist defined international system. It takes into account the concept of ‘Three Images’ as suggested by Waltz to divide the international politics into segments and analyze the relationship between India and the US in the coming chapters. To analyze the power transformation in practice in the region, the concept of status is also employed in the study.

Introduction to Waltzian Realism

The systemic framing of international political system was employed by Kenneth Waltz in his book - *Theory of International Politics* (1979). It takes a “*Homo Economicus view of the international system*” where states are assumed to be self-interested, rational, individualistic actors with an aim to struggle for survival and maximize power in an anarchic world where self-help is the only way to survive.¹ In fact, the concept of Realism originated while describing Peloponnesian war by Thucydides and later in modern times in the writings of Morgenthau (during the inter-war period.) Both of them were classical Realists who concluded that wars happen because of want of power, influence and dominance by states which has its source in human nature.² On the other end, for Neo-Realists, it is the structure of the international system dominated by anarchy which leads to power struggle among nation-states. Power and distribution of power remains the central theme of Neorealist theory,

¹ Tamaki, T. "Level of Analysis of the International System." In *Encounters with World Affairs: An Introduction to International Relations*, by E Kavalski, Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2015: 85-106.

² Mearsheimer, J. "Structural Realism." In *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, by T Dunne and M Kurki, USA: Oxford University Press, 2016: 51-68.

as suggested by Waltz in *Theory of International Politics* while examining international politics determined by the actions of the great powers belonging to that era. Classical Realism, on the other end, tends to give its full emphasis on the actions of human nature i.e. the individual and domestic politics influencing state behavior excluding the role of international structure of the system which contributes in the functioning of the states towards each other in international politics giving it a crude and nuanced meaning. When compared to Neo-Realism, it fails to define the complexities of the present world politics mostly driven by the systemic changes in the international system. The current international system being anarchic in nature causes uncertainty about the security and the survival of the states in the system which makes Waltzian Realism the appropriate theory to examine the study. Its focus on the effects of the international structure on state actions in analyzing the rapidly changing regional dynamics in the Indian Ocean which gained significance because of its geopolitical and geo-economic value led to a Balance of Power struggle with an extra-regional power like the US, resident power (a power that resides within the region) like India and revisionist power (a power that challenges the status-quo) like China.

Kenneth Waltz constructed the Neo-Realist perspective of viewing international politics through ‘scientific way’ by creating a systemic theory where states respond according to the structural changes in the international system with its power capabilities and try to maintain the balance of power among them. He defines *system* “as a set of interacting units” which develop behavioral similarities over time and *structure* as the “arrangement, or the ordering, of the parts of the system.”³ He further views structures in terms of its ordering or organizing principle which is anarchy or absence of a world government/central authority to regulate order which makes states to adopt the principle of self-help to individually struggle for power to survive and coexist together leading to the formation of the international structure.⁴ In the Cold War times, the political binaries between the US and the USSR developed because of the structure of the international system consisting of anarchy or no central authority which will order and govern the states and to which the states will be responsible for their own political actions. This leads the individual states, which are the interacting units, to act in a similar way by developing their own hard power capabilities through military and economic

³ Waltz, K.N. *Theory of International Politics*. USA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979.

⁴ Ibid.

growth domestically to interact and survive by competing among states for power and maintaining balance among them, establishing the anarchical order.

In addition, through the principle of differentiation and specification of units and their functions, structures are characterized, but this principle gets ruled out because, under anarchic conditions, all states are alike and act in a similar way while performing the common activities required to run the state to meet the desired end which is common for all.⁵ Lastly, and most importantly is the principle of distribution of capabilities (mostly economy and defence) among the units, the capability to perform common tasks and functions of the state, differentiate the units and it is through this capability that their power is measured and compared and accordingly the states are placed in the system.⁶ These distributions give rise to balance of power behavior among states where the states try to maintain power equilibrium in the system and a change in the distribution leads to change in the structure of the system causing shifts between bipolarity and multi-polarity. The following section elaborately discusses the notions of Balance of Power (BOP) in Neo-Realist debates.

The Notions on Balance Of Power (BOP)

The concept of power according to the Neo-Realist defines anarchic global system where states are unitary and act according to their individual interests to maximize power to survive. Power is “the ability to influence others,”⁷ whether through physical or economic capability or the psychological way to influence the opponent and bring their activities in terms of the influencer, thereby power gets exercised. Robert Dahl, a political scientist, in similar terms, defined power “as the ability of A to get B to do something which he would otherwise not do.”⁸ Furthermore, Jeffrey Hart, the US thinker on international politics, while making observations about power in contemporary international politics concludes with three approaches in measuring power of the states either through control over resources, or control over actors or control over events and outcomes through which states exercise their power in

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Morgenthau, H.J. *Politics Among Nations*. 5th Edition. New York: Knopf, 1985.

⁸ Dahl, R. "The Concept of Power." *Behavioral Science*, 1957: 202.

the system.⁹ Thus, a state constitutes both tangible and intangible aspects which go into building up of the power capabilities of the state. So, in Neo-Realist framework, anarchy compels states to adopt the method of balancing with power capabilities. Such a balancing is carried out either single-handedly or through coalition, against an actor with hegemonic intentions which aims for predominance in the system to maintain the power equilibrium and independent identity of the states.

According to Levy, BOP can be interpreted in several ways either as a natural law to describe as an ideal power distribution system or as actual distribution of power or it can be classified only as a form of state strategy and not an international outcome.¹⁰ Morgenthau being a pioneer from the Classical Realism era referred to BOP concept as “iron law of politics”¹¹ because of its ‘scientific and systematic nature’ of explanation of alliance formation through observations of state behavior in seeking power and accordingly counter-reaction by states through formation of alliances to preserve balance and stability in the international system. This set the framework for Waltz to develop his theoretical framework in the later period. According to Waltz, for BOP to prevail, two requirements are needed “that the order must be anarchic and that it must be populated by units wishing to survive.”¹² After these conditions for BOP are achieved, the states as unitary actors seek either preservation or universal domination through power in a self-help system. They try to balance the power of the hegemon state, who exercises its capabilities to disturb the power distribution by altering it in its favor for universal domination. This is being balanced by the other group of states unconsciously or purposively, either alone or through joint efforts to preserve the existing order. This balancing by states in the international system happens in two ways, either through internal efforts by increasing military and economic capabilities of the respective states by themselves acting independently against the hegemon (*internal balancing*) or through external ways by establishing and strengthening alliances and agreements with

⁹ Hart, J. "Three Approaches to the Measurement of Power in International Relations." *International Organization* 30, no. 2 (1976): 289-305.

¹⁰ For more information, look into Paul, T.V., and J Wirtz & M. Fortmann. *Balance Of Power Theory And Practice In the 21st Century*. California: Stanford University Press, 2004, 29- 51.

¹¹ Morgenthau, H.J. *Politics Among Nations*. 5th Edition. New York: Knopf, 1985.

¹² Waltz, K.N. *Theory of International Politics*. USA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979.

several others like-minded states and pooling all the resources of power against the power of the state to be balanced (*external balancing*).

Thus, balancing is a behavior among states where mostly states align with the weaker coalition or the rising powers to act as a deterrent against the hegemon in order to maintain their sovereignty and power parity in the system because aligning with the stronger one i.e. bandwagoning would lead to giving up their independence and stay at their mercy.¹³ For instance, during the Cold War, the US tried to balance rise of the Soviet Union through its ‘containment strategy’ and the formation of NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization) alliances with West European countries like France, UK while the East European states like Czechoslovakia, Hungary closer to the Soviet Union in terms of geography and Communist influence were satellite nations who bandwagoned behind the USSR (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics) through Warsaw Pact. Waltz finds that “Balances of power recurrently form” and even if it gets disrupted it gets restored in some or the other way and balance is achieved and maintained.¹⁴ Hence a debate frequently occurs among the theorists where some consider BOP as a way to preserve stability and peace in the system while others consider it as a reason for wars and conflicts.

The maintenance of power equilibrium that is achieved with balancing is mostly a behavior being seen among the great powers of the system as Waltz mentions; and that the international politics is based on the activities of the great powers of that time who sets the international political context for themselves as well as for others to act. This is when the number of great powers who actively compete inside the system becomes an important variable to determine the nature of polarity, which can bring more stability in the system and an active topic of argument among Realist scholars. While Morgenthau argues in favor of multi-polar systems bringing stability, Waltz gives an opposite argument in favor of bipolarity. Supporters of bipolarity argues wars are less prone as there are only two great powers to fight against each other maintaining greater power equality between them and lesser chances of miscalculation regarding potential threats and intentions which leads to effective balancing as they directly confront each other. While in multi-polarity there is more

¹³ Walt, S.M. "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power." *International Security* 9, no. 4 (1985): 3-43.

¹⁴ Ibid.

uncertainty, uneven distribution of power and buck passing strategy with more than two powers in the system.

On the other end, supporters of multi-polarity believe multiple great powers give more prospects of peace as deterrence becomes easier when more powers aggregate against the revisionist state giving rise to more balancing partners. It also contributes to less hostility as there is no single opponent power to focus on and multiple interactions leads to mitigation of conflict and prevention of war. In the present context, in terms of defining the nature of polarity two views develop on the analysis of US emergence in the post-Cold War era. One view states that there is unipolarity with US emerging as the sole great power in the international system while the other view states that it was just an unipolar moment for a certain period and it is the multi-polar system in operation where with US there are other major powers to deter and maintain balance in the system.¹⁵ Hence, we observe that balancing is an inherent part of the anarchic system where states in order to sustain themselves decide the type of balancing technique based on the international order established by great powers as well as their own capabilities. With the rise in globalization, there are new trends emerging in broadening the concept of BOP which is discussed in the next section.

The Broadening Aspects of BOP

The concept of BOP, as described previously, deals with power distribution among the states in the international system. Waltz, while theorizing the concept considered the problems that can emerge from the theory as it depends on predictions which can be indeterminate, and other than international system, internal changes of the state also play a part in determining the balancing behavior of the states which can be solved only by testing and refining the theory by identifying such cases.¹⁶ Hence, several interpretations developed on the theory to make it more accommodative to present realities.

With time the theory evolved, it was attempted by many scholars to make the concept broad and more inclusive. Though Kenneth Waltz spoke about automatic balancing, it did not factor

¹⁵ Mearsheimer, J. "Structural Realism." In *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, by T Dunne and M Kurki, USA: Oxford University Press, 2016: 51-68.

¹⁶ Waltz, K.N. *Theory of International Politics*. USA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979.

in the elements that constitute automatic balancing and how it is manifested. Stephen Walt, a notable Political Scientist who gave the idea on Balance of Threat, while discussing balancing among states broadens it from ‘*response to power*’ to ‘*response to threat*’ perceptions. He defines *balancing* as alliance “*in opposition to the principal source of danger*” while *bandwagoning* as alliance “*with the state that poses the major threat.*”¹⁷ He also considers balancing more prevalent than bandwagoning as states retain their autonomy and feels more secured to oppose together against the aggressor assumed having suspicious intentions and uncertain perceptions.¹⁸ Bandwagoning as a strategy is adopted by weaker states sometimes for defensive reason to avoid attack and also for offensive reason like acquiring benefits from the victory of the dominant power by aligning with them. On the contrary, balancing has been more of a preferred strategy by states in order to avoid domination by powerful states and create an alternative influence by aligning on the opposite side to secure themselves from the potential aggressors. Rather than considering power as the only factor, Walt considers ‘threatening power’ which is needed to be balanced and mentions the different sources of threat in terms of *aggregate power, proximity, offensive capability and offensive intentions*¹⁹ of the hegemon which determine the balancing behavior of other states. Thus, the overall power resources of a state with the location and distance from other states, the offensive intentions and capabilities based on perceptions and policies taken by the state which appears to be aggressive to others are the reasons which makes it a threatening hegemon leading others to balance against it.

With the rise of the complex global system and non-traditional security challenges in the present times, T V Paul categorizes balancing into hard, soft and asymmetric balancing²⁰ and considers states making policies through a mixture of liberalist and realist strategies according to its requirement to sustain security in different contexts. *Hard balancing* is mostly observed in case of high military conflicts and direct intense rivalry among states where military and economic capabilities are increased internally and open military alliances

¹⁷ Walt, S.M. "Alliance Formation and the Balance of World Power." *International Security* 9, no. 4 (1985): 3-43.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Paul, T.V. "Introduction: The Enduring Axioms of Balance of Power Theory and Their Contemporary Relevance." In *Balance Of Power Theory And Practice In The 21st Century*, by T.V. Paul and J Wirtz & M. Fortmann, California: Stanford University Press, 2004: 1-29.

are formed and maintained externally to balance the power of the already established aggressor. For example, the formation of NATO alliance by the US during the Cold War was to balance against the USSR. On the other hand, “*soft balancing* involves tacit non-offensive coalition”²¹ through mutually held summits among like-minded states, forming and cooperating in international institutions on particular issues and ad hoc coalition among states to initiate multilateral military exercises to neutralize the power capabilities of the rising aggressor state before it attains hegemony. For example states like India, Australia, Japan and the US are collaborating through QUAD to balance Chinese rise. The new concept of *asymmetric balancing* is related to the present circumstances and complexities of the international system which “encompasses interstate-level interactions and state versus non-state interactions”²² where international cooperation and balancing takes place to counter terrorism and indirect threats from insurgent weaker states and non-state actors which try to create asymmetry in power parity all over the world. For example, the US conducting counter-terrorism operations after the 9/11 attacks of 2001 by forming coalitions with states to balance threat from non-state terrorist groups.

Against this backdrop, the views of the opposite binary of Realism i.e., Liberalism, points that it is mostly the economic globalization, the spread of liberal values and the establishment and functioning of international organizations which increases chances of cooperative behavior and interdependence by promoting peace and reduces the chances of conflict arising from balance of power politics.²³ Neo-Realists counter these perspectives by stating that the spread of liberal democratic values are done to create an overall influence by the hegemon over other states. But, as long as the international structure remains anarchic, the uncertainty remains. Besides, though interdependence builds networks and contacts, the issue of relative gains over another and protectionism brings back the state’s aim for forwarding its national interests and survival. International institutions, though considered as harbinger of collective security, Realists, treat it more as a tool to promote national aims and interests and part of statecraft to create influence and power over others.²⁴ Thus, Realists consider cooperation not

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Waltz, K.N. "Structural Realism after the Cold War." *International Security* 25, no. 1 (2000): 5-41.

to bring in idealistic changes with noble democratic ideals; but to address the similarity of national interests among countries.

Hence, the concept of balancing is broadened to fit in a world where globalization, transnational terrorism, nuclear weapons play an important factor in determining international politics. *Strategic hedging*²⁵ too emerges as a foreign policy option for Asian countries in the current uncertainty in the South Asia region because of transition of power with China's hegemonic rise and gradual declining of the US presence in the region. This "strategic flux" created between a declining dominant hegemon and a rising revisionist power through power struggle has given rise to "swing states" like India with flexible strategic choices determine the BOP in the region.²⁶ The *swing states* often lack the capability of acting as a sole balancer in the region only through its internal balancing capabilities like military and economic strength of their own and require external support of other states through alliances. Such flexibility of these states to align with one or the other states as per their national interests determines the tilt of balance and power distribution, making regional and rising powers like India crucial for the region who seeks benefit from major powers through its hedging practices. India, in this case, tends to accept hedging as a serious strategic choice by avoiding alliances with China and the US but cooperating with both the countries depending on its national interests and benefits in power and status and also cooperating with like-minded rising powers to not allow anyone to become dominant disrupting the balance in the region.

In the present context of power transition seen in the regional structural order (in IOR), the study focuses on the mixture of cooperation (more transactional one) and balancing behavior making soft balancing the perfect strategy to be adapted by states temporarily based on issues and interests addressed by them. Strategic hedging is an emerging trend among rising powers in Asia because of the interdependent and complex nature of globalization and international politics. These concepts will be applied in studying the bilateral maritime relationship between India and US influenced by balancing methods and strategies, in next chapters. The

²⁵ Strategic hedging is the behavior of small and middle power states where in order to cope up with the uncertainty in the international system it tries to avoid taking sides with direct alternatives like balancing or bandwagoning while maintaining a balanced relationship with all great powers which will help them cope up with the threats as well as improve their military and economic capabilities and competitiveness to achieve their national security interest and seek higher status in the international system.

²⁶ Pant, H, and Y Joshi. *The US Pivot and Indian Foreign Policy: Asia's Evolving Balance of Power*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

next section explains and compare the two variants of Realism (Defensive and Offensive) as defined by the scholarship belonging to different schools of Realism to locate the aim of the states in using its power to achieve its desired ends (whether survival or hegemony) in the system and note how they address cooperation as a strategy that takes place among states aiming at fulfilling their individual interests.

The Two Variants of Neo-Realism and Cooperation

For the scholars of Neo-Realism, power remains the focal point of international politics which states aim for survival in the anarchical, self-help world. The disagreement arises between the two variants of Neo-Realist scholars – *Defensive* and *Offensive*, on the basis of the how much power is needed by states to achieve that level of control to secure itself and survive in the international system.

Defensive Realists like Waltz argues that states should not maximize power with an aim for hegemony in international politics. It would affect the status-quo of other states' power capabilities causing fear and security build up leading to security dilemma and balancing by other states against the aspiring hegemon. This would indeed threaten the existence of the hegemon state itself as its costs would outweigh its benefits with the defenders side being stronger than the offender.²⁷ So, the states should strive for 'appropriate amount of power'²⁸ and put a restraint to maximizing power ambitions which will curb intense security competition and rivalry.

On the other end, as opposed to Defensive Realist viewpoint, Offensive Realists like Mearsheimer argue that states should always aim for maximizing power whenever they gets opportunity. "*It is the means by which they can be secure or because they want other values that power is believed to bring*"²⁹ as they believe they have the power capabilities which are incompatible with the other states and will help them achieve universal domination. To them, the great powers mostly behaved in an offensive way throughout history with intense security

²⁷ Mearsheimer, J. "Structural Realism." In *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, by T Dunne and M Kurki, USA: Oxford University Press, 2016: 51-68.

²⁸ Waltz, K.N. *Theory of International Politics*. USA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979.

²⁹ For more reading, look into Mearsheimer, J. *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2001.

competition among states. They consider balancing strategy to be inefficient as it is more of a passing the buck technique adopted by states to shift the burden of opposing the powerful hegemon on each other or hedging strategically on both sides to avoid direct conflict which provides enough opportunity for the hegemon to establish itself as a great power in the world.

So, the Defensive Neo-Realist framework becomes a suitable one for the analysis of the India-US bilateral maritime cooperation. Here, India cooperates with the US not to become a hegemonic power in the region challenging China through direct intense competition and rivalry with the intention of interfering in Chinese security affairs and disrupt the status-quo of the region. It is mostly aimed at China's expansionist behavior to restrict its maximization of power with revisionist hegemonic ambitions disturbing the power equilibrium in the Indian Ocean. This issue-based cooperation is mostly rising out of structural realities from common strategic interests and concerns pertaining to maritime arena in order to contribute in preserving the status-quo maritime order, which can address and protect the national security interests of all the like-minded countries in the region.

When it comes to defining cooperation among states predominantly it has been associated with the liberal world order with institutions being the prime instrument in providing mutual security and hence establishing world peace. While Waltz on discussing cooperation considers that the structure of the international system itself tries to limit cooperation as the state fears about dividing the gains they achieve, and also leads to becoming heavily dependent on other through exchanges and cooperative favors³⁰. Thus, Waltz agrees on cooperation between nation-states to some extent mostly rising from structural constraints in order to maintain power balance against a potential hegemon in the system which are mostly transactional in nature addressing the national interests rather than appealing to universal common good. Though the two popular but contrasting schools of International Relations Theory (IRT), Realism and Liberalism agrees to the point that there is absence of sovereign world authority and the international system is anarchical in nature, but the disagreement lies on the matter of conflict. Both recognizes conflict as a part but Realism sees conflict more in the system as it focuses on wars and security, while Liberalism aim at adopting methods to mitigate conflicts which rise out of anarchy and turn it into mutual gains by cooperating with

³⁰ Waltz, K.N. *Theory of International Politics*. USA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979.

each other. The area of dispute is about which conflicts could have been avoided, preferences among states overlapped, and proper arrangements of cooperation existed.

Cooperation as identified by Liberal scholars mostly emphasizes on the vital role played by institutions in finding the common interests among the states, binding the states into legal agreements mutually agreed upon and behave in a particular order which would establish peace globally. The Neo-Realist scholars, on the other end, opposes the liberal viewpoint by claiming that states and their respective leaders use international institutions to assert their own national interests globally, and thus they cannot operate autonomously to observe peace and security. The two variants of Neo-Realism view aspects of cooperation among states as a strategy with a slight contrast where the scholars from Offensive school of thought consider incompatibility in capabilities between states leading to intense conflicts which are unavoidable; they have little hope that cooperation can take place among states where all aim for hegemony as their highest end.

Defensive scholars, on the other end, take a middle position between the views of Liberalism and Offensive Realism where “diagnosis of the situation and the other’s objectives”³¹ defines the possibility of cooperation. For instance, while facing a state with hegemonic intentions chances of cooperation remains less but among status-quo powers with less security dilemma chances of reducing conflict remains strong through cooperative policies. Even Waltz identified in his work on International Politics that reciprocity and caution both influences states strategies where reciprocity brings states together for the concern for peace and caution creates alertness among states causing fear to move apart making the states act as “frère ennemi and adversary partners.”³² Thus, Defensive Neo-Realist theory incorporates the element of cooperation based on situation and interests of the states giving it a more realistic approach while analyzing international politics. For instance, the current India-US maritime relations are based on certain degree of cooperation that can be seen through this lens.

Kenneth Oye, another Neo-realist, suggests some strategies where cooperation under anarchy is possible through payoffs structure making smaller transactions with increased

³¹ Jervis, R. "Realism, Neoliberalism and Cooperation: Understanding the Debate." *International Security* 24, no. 1 (1999): 42-63.

³² Waltz, K.N. *Theory of International Politics*. USA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979.

transparency, making mutual cooperation more attractive and advantageous (than mutual defection), reciprocity and continued interaction for long period and number of actors having common interest to cooperate whether it is bilateral or multilateral.³³ These theories make the base for observation about the cooperative strategies adopted by the two countries as it progresses in its bilateral relation. The analysis is done by studying the utilization of their power capabilities to deal with security issues arising out of shared mutual interests to maintain the status-quo of the regional structure and balance against any rise of hegemon which challenges the existing order and stability. The next section looks at how Waltz conceptualizes Three Images by layering foreign policy observations into systemic, domestic and individual levels.

Waltz and the Concept of Three Images

For Waltz, it is mainly the structural factors which determine changes in the unit-level state's behavior. While Neoliberals like Keohane points out that other than the structure there are international institutions and economic processes which influence state behavior while Waltz does not deny the importance of the unit-level factors influencing systemic level outcomes. But he also cautions about the cost of mixing up of both levels depending on selection of the theory and cases.³⁴ Waltz while theorizing international politics agrees to the fact that structural factors alone cannot decide states behavior in the international system and it needs to be supplemented by a combination of domestic and individual level factors (to some extent). On observing certain cases where combinations of different level theories are needed Defensive Realist scholars generally agree with Waltz, while offensive scholars purely stick to structural outcomes. Defensive scholars like Posen with Organizational Theory, Snyder with domestic regime type and Van Evera with militarism³⁵ try to find alternative theories to supplement their structural level assumptions to understand state's actions in the system.

³³ Oye, Kenneth A. "Explaining Cooperation under Anarchy: Hypotheses and Strategies." *World Politics* 38, no. 1 (1985): 1-24.

³⁴ Nye Nye, Joseph. "Neorealism and Neoliberalism." *World Politics* 40, no. 2 (1988): 235-251. For more detailed reading, Keohane, R.O. *Neorealism and Its Critics*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1986.

³⁵ Mearsheimer, J. "Structural Realism." In *International Relations Theories: Discipline and Diversity*, by T Dunne and M Kurki, USA: Oxford University Press, 2016: 51-68.

For more reading, look into, Posen, B.R. *The Sources of Military Doctrine*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1984.; Snyder, J. *Myths of Empire: Domestic Politics and the*

Waltz in his book, “*Man, State and War*”, gives the three images identified through individual, state and state system which are the causes of conflict and wars. According to the *First Image* he recognizes the role of human behavior for occurrence of conflicts where the “*causes of war is found in the nature and behavior of man. Wars result from selfishness, from misdirected impulses, from stupidity.*”³⁶ In the *Second Image*, the internal constitution of states, its ideological, political, military structure which makes the state contribute to determine its role in conflicts. In an example given by Waltz we find, “*War most often promotes the internal unity of each state involved. The states plagued by internal strife may then, instead of waiting for accidental attack, seek the war that will bring internal peace.*”³⁷ The *Third Image* is more of a collective level where the international anarchy gives rise to conflicts. Waltz argues, “*With many sovereign states, with no system of law enforceable among them, with each state judging its grievances and ambition according to the dictates of its own reason or desire- conflict, sometimes leading to war, is bound to occur.*”³⁸ These images have often been conceptualized as international, domestic and leadership level factors in studying foreign policy of states.

R. Jervis makes a similar point in terms with Waltz, where he argues different perceptions and misperceptions exist in global politics which make foreign policy decision-making for international actors depend on “*interplay of international, national and bureaucratic levels.*”³⁹ T.Tamaki classifies these categorization into three levels of analysis of international system to study foreign policy decision making in international politics from different focal points identified by different strands of International Relations Theory (IRT). For Neo-Realist scholars, it is the third image which stands most important than the others to determine the emergence of conflicts in the world. Other theories criticize the Realist standpoint for

International Ambition. New York: Cornell University Press, 1991.; Van Evera, S. *Causes of War: Power and the Roots of Conflict*. New York: Cornell University Press, 1999.

³⁶ Waltz, K.N. *Man, the State and War*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1959.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Jervis, R. *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976.

“*blackboxing the states*”⁴⁰ which means giving attention only to the systemic level changes on which the foreign policy outcome of states depend and not considering domestic factors taking a top-down approach in viewing international politics.

While applying this methodology in studying the foreign policy interaction of India and the US, Sumit Ganguly uses the concept of Three Images to look into the relationship and its transformation since the Cold War.⁴¹ Several international and domestic foreign policy decisions and events of importance are categorised into the three levels to analyse the bilateral relationship between the two countries like the conclusion of the Cold War and breaking up of the USSR, to India restructuring its economic policies and financial institutions and the high level state visits made by leaders from both sides contributing to the flourishing Indo-US relationship. In the further chapters, such events of international and domestic importance with influence of leadership factors at the individual level based on the categorisation observed above as being analysed in relation to their focus on the changing dynamics of the IOR and the continuous advancement made in the bilateral relation between the two biggest democracies. This study primarily looks into how changes brought by international events decided the course of relationship of the two countries in the region. According to the Defensive Realism, these structural factors led to cooperation between the two countries mostly because of the common national interests addressing the region which in turn is also looked upon as an interaction of a major power (US) with a rising power (India) that has favoured India in increasing its status in the global politics.

The Concept and Importance of Status in International Relations

Neo-Realists see the world from the perspective of distribution of power and capabilities among similar state units but they also acknowledge the fact that there is a hierarchy among states existing within the international system of anarchy as theorized by Waltz in describing international politics. He concludes that the number and ordering of great powers play a vital role in determining politics and that “*international politics is written in terms of great powers*

⁴⁰ Tamaki, T. "Level of Analysis of the International System." In *Encounters with World Affairs: An Introduction to International Relations*, by E Kavalski, Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2015: 85-106.

⁴¹ Kapur, P.S., and S Ganguly. "The Transformation of U.S.-India Relations: An Explanation for the Rapprochement and Prospects for the Future." *Asian Survey* 47, no. 4 (2007): 642-656.

of an era.”⁴² To have established great powers status they require resources which will help them maintain all kinds of power be it military or strategic so that they can perform the tasks and responsibilities of great powers of “transforming or maintaining of the system, the preservation of peace, and the management of common economic and other problems.”⁴³ Thus, status as a concept gives an added explanatory dimension to the Realist notion of international relations in classifying states in the anarchical system based on the power capabilities achieved by them for survival. It also observes states beyond the conventional material based arguments of distribution of power by looking into others forms of social power which motivate states to achieve status attribution in order to seek either dominance in the form of hegemony or leadership to maintain balance in the global order.

Status is a dynamic concept where collective decision taken by other states about a given states ranking in the international system based on the soft and hard power capabilities and resources it have. Status is thus “*collective, subjective and relative*” “*recognized through voluntary deference by others*”⁴⁴ where general agreement and other perceptions play a deciding role as unilaterally states cannot decide their position in the international hierarchy unless other state leaders and actors recognize them depending on their ability to influence the global political context. The characteristics of great power/major power status for states is conceptualized by Levy about states having the resources and capabilities which will help them to pursue its foreign policy aims and interests beyond its immediate reach of influence in neighborhood to influence the international political context independently and attribution by other states.⁴⁵ Thus, status differentiates nation-states as great powers and rising powers.

From this conceptual framework, T.Volgy derives the framework of measuring status of major powers under Realism depending on three factors – opportunity based on the availability of hard power resources like military and economic capacity to the states, willingness of them to expand its foreign policy interests by engaging in global activities of

⁴² Waltz, K.N. *Theory of International Politics*. USA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, 1979.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Paul, T.V., and D.L. Larson. "Status and World Order." In *Status in World Politics*, by T.V. Paul, W Wohlforth and D.L. Larson, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014: 3-33.

⁴⁵ For more information, look into, Levy, J.S. *War in the Modern Great Power System, 1495-1975*. Kentucky: The University Press of Kentucky, 1983.

both conflict and cooperation with independent behavior and attribution by other states based on establishment of embassies and state visits by recognized major powers.⁴⁶ Through these frameworks the bilateral relationship of India and the US will be looked in later chapters as an interaction between a rising and a major power.

Stephen Cohen, an expert on South Asian studies, while focusing on factors contributing to India's growth as a major power, on the other end, considers it as an assessment of "*survey of old and new measures of power, influence, geography, and culture in an era of economic interdependence, political deregulation, and technological innovation.*"⁴⁷ It is the "reputational power" along with economic and military aspects which gives India an elevated status based on recognition by other major power states on the power and influence it has all over the international system. Accordingly, based on these features states have been distinguished between great powers and rising/emerging powers where a great power have a "class identity and an ambition" to maintain their position intact in the international world order through influence and casting themselves with the responsibility to protect the overall system. Alternatively, emerging powers mostly stick to establishing its influence only in the region they are dominant enough but are unable to project the same power and recognition in other parts of the system in the current phase; but holds a vision of an would be great power in future as it is perceived in the case of India with its claim for higher status.

Attribution of status plays an important role in classifying a state as major power. According to Social Identity Theory⁴⁸ which also talks about status as a social power, attribution occurs either through community of states in the international system recognizing it as a major power, through a group where states take membership of certain great power clubs and

⁴⁶ Volgy et al. "Major Power Status in International Politics." In *Major Power and the Quest for Status in International Politics*, by T Volgy, R Corbetta and K Grant, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011: 1-27.

⁴⁷ Cohen, S.P. *India: Emerging Power*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press, 2001.

⁴⁸ The Social Identity Theory is taken from the concept given by social psychology in studying how individuals participate and take membership in social groups based on its interests and they develop a social identity in accordance with the groups they get aligned with and compare it with other groups. This theory is implemented in the form of status in IR literature through the works of Deborah Welch Larson, Alexei Shevchenko, William C. Wohlforth and others where status is attributed in the similar manner depending on the states capabilities and their actions as they take part in certain groupings which are compared and it determines their position in the international system.

international institutions to get recognized and lastly by self-reference where if not attributed by others, the states themselves claim their status position for domestic and international aspirations.⁴⁹ When the capabilities match the aspiration and attribution of state's status by others then, they are status-consistent major powers. In many cases, the match does not happen when there are status-inconsistent powers in the system. The underachievers are those who have the capabilities but doesn't receive the recognition by other states leading to status competition out of dissatisfaction while overachievers are those who get full attribution of major power status even though they lack in certain capabilities which make them one preserving the order.

Several methods and strategies are adopted by states to mark their status positions in the system such as status accommodation, status seeking and status signaling behavior. Status accommodation behavior implies when a major power acknowledges a rising power its capabilities and responsibilities by certain symbolic status markers which enhance its status. Status seeking behavior happens when the state tries to influence perceptions of other states about its status position by increasing its domestic capabilities which are visible for recognition. Status signaling is also done by states when a particular status is claimed by them and sometimes it leads to status dilemma as it is perceived in different ways by multiple audiences causing status competition and inconsistency.⁵⁰ These methods are implied by states to make them visible in the hierarchical rankings of the international system.

The importance of status lies in the national interests and foreign policy concerns of the state leaders to increase their influence in the domestic politics and more importantly in exercising its leadership capabilities on the central issues of international politics. It gives an additional privilege and legitimacy to states to also influence its immediate surroundings during any crisis and also decision making autonomy to create structures of global governance for multilateral cooperation. Status concerns by states in global politics stands as an equally important factor other than distribution of capabilities driving states to major power conflict. The status with big 'S' decides the states relative position in the system causing major

⁴⁹ Volgy et al. "Major Power Status in International Politics." In *Major Power and the Quest for Status in International Politics*, by T Volgy, R Corbetta and K Grant, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011: 1-27.

⁵⁰ Paul, T.V., and D.L. Larson. "Status and World Order." In *Status in World Politics*, by T.V. Paul, W Wohlforth and D.L. Larson, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014: 3-33.

fluctuations which has more value than small's' which are related to trivial factors within the states internal matters about the acknowledgment of its desired status.⁵¹ The issue of comparison of status with other related social concepts like authority, prestige is often confused but it is status which gives the legitimacy to establish authority and influence over other states while status depends on attribution by others. The issues regarding multiple hierarchies with different state rankings exist in the international system but it is the clubs identified by established major powers, like the United States, which give the recognition.

To study the distribution of power and status in the context of Asia, the report by Lowy Institute constructs a conceptual framework for measuring 'comprehensive power' based on the resources of the countries and its ability to influence and shape the international environment. The eight themes which determine countries to be super powers, major powers, middle powers and minor powers consists of economic and military capability, resilience and future resources which are quantifiable while the other four consists of economic relationships, defence networks, diplomatic and cultural influence which are non-quantifiable.⁵² With the aim for power balancing and achieving major power status, conflicts happen in international system. Hence these concepts are highlighted and brought into practice quite frequently in studying international politics from a broadened, flexible and inclusive approach.

By adding the concept of status, the study further analyses the interaction between India and the United States in the Indian Ocean Region where power transitions can be seen with the rise of power among several states wanting to become active stake holders and make their presence felt to improve their position in the global hierarchy. Under this circumstance, the contribution this relationship makes to India's evolving status in the global sphere and consequently the challenges and prospects which comes attached with it is looked upon. While applying the Waltzian concept of Three Images to understand the foreign policy interactions between the two countries in the maritime sphere, the events occurring at the systemic, domestic and leadership level are taken into consideration.

Furthermore, the Defensive Neo-Realist framework enables one to examine the bilateral cooperation emerging out of balancing the threat perceptions rising out of common security

⁵¹Ibid.

⁵² Lemahieu, H, and A Leng. *Asia Power Index*. Sydney: Lowy Institute, 2020.

concerns. In practical terms, the Chinese threat because of its hegemonic rise in the IOR is disturbing the power equilibrium which has made India and US to cooperate in the maritime realm because of converging strategic interests serving the nationalist objectives of both the countries rather than cooperating on ideals of common good. This cooperation which is mostly transactional in nature with a major power like US has immensely contributed in the rising status of India in the IOR in the contemporary times though it resided there from the ancient past. With the growing significance of the Indian Ocean maritime region because of its strategic location and the key responsibilities taken up by resident India over the decades the next section briefly introduces the historical presence India has had in the pivotal region before it attained independence.

India's Maritime Presence during the Pre-Independence Period

The IOR generally possessed a certain degree of geo-economic and geo-political importance, even in the ancient past as the major maritime trade routes passed through the region. With the development of sea routes and naval technology with the help of navigational charts and compasses and lighter ship vessels armed with weaponry gave an easy direct entry for the western colonial powers to the Indian subcontinent and establish dominance. Several maritime historians prominently K.M. Panikkar, noted the geo-strategic location of India and its roots of maritime tradition in the ancient past which can be traced back to the eras of Hindu Kings and Mughal period. Ancient maritime trade during these times, operated in both the western and eastern sides of India which led to emergence of small and active ports in the region, development of indigenous shipbuilding skills and pointed out the maritime skills of trades and merchants.

Looking from the lenses of history and references cited in several travelogues of foreign travelers visiting India, its presence in the Ocean can be found from around 5th century during the rule of the Hindu kings in the peninsular India by the Chola Empire till the 13th century where they controlled the seas and navigation through the trade with Arabs and Persia. Before the kingdom of the Cholas flourished, it was the Maravas and Andhras in 3rd century who ruled in the eastern side maintaining seagoing fleet for trade all over the south eastern region which later was passed in the hands of the Pallavas in the 4th century. It was under the rule of Sri Vijaya Empire from the 7th century where the control over sea power could be seen dominant with a strong navy to maintain its influence over the Malacca region which was taken over by the Chola Empire in the 13th century. "The period of Hindu supremacy in the

Ocean was one of complete freedom of trade and navigation”⁵³ which made India become a maritime power in the region.

With the Mughal establishment gaining its strong foothold in the region from the beginning of 1500 to 1800, there was a rise of several merchant communities concentrated in different coastal regions of India operating from Malabar, Coromandel, Gujarat and Bengal maintaining trading and commerce links with the West and the East. The trade at that time was mostly dominated by the Indians with several merchant communities engaged in the western side while the Muslim merchants were present on the eastern coast of India. There were “three categories of merchants- the maritime merchants engaged in coastal and high-seas trade, the broker and the intermediary merchant providing goods to and buying goods from the maritime merchant, and the money merchant”⁵⁴ where the last two were mostly Hindu trading communities while the first one was mixed varying across regions depending on the presence of the communities.

These communities dominated the Indian Ocean trade and traffic through their indigenous ships with large vessels constructed to carry heavy tonnes of goods to distant places while the medium and the small ones were light weighted to use in river crafts. There were compass and navigational chart used for travelling but predominately they depended on monsoon winds and clear skies.⁵⁵ This trade gave rise to peaceful trading organizations within different parts of India and with that there was banking and financial arrangements made with free movement of people allowed all over the region. Different kinds of products were exported from spices, metal and gems items, clothing and textiles to bulk commodities like staple foods like rice, sugar, timber and horses and elephants to the rulers in the Arab world. Ultimately it led to the spread of Islamization and increase in pilgrimages and commercial activity to the West with several changes brought over the region with the coming of the Portuguese.

The difference between the coastal regions and the inland during the trade under the Mughal rule was that more plural communities were present in the coastal regions because of

⁵³ Panikkar, K.M. *India and the Indian Ocean: An Essay on the Influence of Sea Power on Indian History*. New York: Macmillan, 1945.

⁵⁴ Prakash, O. "The Indian Maritime Merchant, 1500-1800." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 2004: 435-457.

⁵⁵ Lewis, A. "Maritime Skills in the Indian Ocean 1368-1500." *Journal of the Economic and Social History of the Orient*, 1973: 238-264.

exchange and settlement of various trading communities giving rise to the intersection of several cultures. The profit from the sea trade was not spent on the development of the port and maritime communication and infrastructure facilities but went to the royal capital in maintaining the military and administration, which was used to secure the throne and protect the land borders from foreign invaders. Later though there were communications developed with the hinterlands with the rise of trade and production of more commodities to transport to different places still focus on the development of the maritime region lagged behind making the region vulnerable for attack in future. During this period, maritime India developed because of the presence of the liberal regime which permitted autonomy to every community to dwell in the coast and develop its commerce accordingly complementing the inlands with rising awareness of the importance of the regions for the Mughals. Earlier, what prevailed was “a defenceless source of wealth to the state”⁵⁶ which was only defended at the time of crisis as a reaction to it with scant attention being paid making these regions vulnerable for attack by Imperial powers allowing them to invade and settle in Indian soil.

In the Indian Ocean commerce, the principle which existed was the “rulers was to provide complete protection to an international community of merchants who were often granted extra-territorial juridical rights in exchange for not violating the port’s neutrality.”⁵⁷ There was a kind of autonomy and independence which existed in “the entire system of trade and the balance of power was the assumption that the ocean was not an area of armed conflict in which warring states should exercise their sovereignty.”⁵⁸ Hence, peace was there all over the region with fleets needed mostly from protection of pirates.

It is in this condition that the Portuguese invaded the Indian coasts through the seas with their upgraded technological innovative warfare techniques and infrastructure to gain monopoly over the spice trade and commerce and exercise its sovereignty over the seas through the use of naval warfare after discovering the route to India and its strategic importance in the trade lines of communication during the 16th century. There were several naval battles that took place between the Portuguese and the Zamorin’s fleet, supported by Egyptian fleet by

⁵⁶ Arasaratnam, S. *Maritime India in the Seventeenth Century*. Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1994.

⁵⁷ Chadhuri, K.N. "The Portuguese Maritime Empire, Trade and Society in the Indian Ocean During the Sixteenth Century." *Portuguese Studies*, 1992: 57-70.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Hussain maintaining its supremacy over the seas in Calicut and fleeing away the Portuguese for 500 years, maintaining its control until it fell in the hands of Portuguese from the Malabar Coast giving an imperial turn to the Indian presence on the seas. The Portuguese not only exercised control and power over the region but also made permanent settlements with the establishment of Catholic churches and spread of its culture and language over the places it reigned by getting completely naturalized within the Indian community itself which was not done by the later colonialists.

After that several fights took place among the European trading companies of Dutch, French and English to get control over the whole empire and the Indian waters from which the British emerged with its strong navy as the ruler over the Indian waves in the 19th century. With British gaining its hegemony over the region and its naval supremacy succeeding over the local naval powers which protected the Indian Ocean before. The British Navy decided to form the Royal Indian Navy with its own forces and dissolve the local navy as it was an additional spending of resources which they did not want to spend in the times of economic distress of the World War.⁵⁹ With that the ultimate autonomy of India was lost in the British hands making it a 'British Lake' till India got its Independence in 1947.

As mentioned earlier, with the Independence of India, the importance of the maritime history of India was first noted by the eminent historian K.M. Panikkar who came out with the book "*India and the Indian Ocean (1945)*" highlighting the lost heritage and maritime past and also giving a brief view about the future policy which India should adopt. It states the fears and constraints which India is going to face and suggests recommendations for India's brighter future as a maritime nation to maintain its vital interests and influence over the region by focusing on the importance of the Indian Ocean in connecting different parts of the world. He concludes by saying that "*the interests of India in the Indian Ocean are different from those of the other countries whose shores are washed by its waters. The other countries are not as entirely dependent as India on this Ocean.*"⁶⁰ Thus, he highlights the importance of the strategic position of India with regard to the Indian Ocean by stating the fact that for

⁵⁹ Kumar, R. "British Maritime Activities in India(1857-1863)." *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 1989: 620-628.

⁶⁰ Panikkar, K.M. *India and the Indian Ocean: An Essay on the Influence of Sea Power on Indian History*. New York: Macmillan, 1945.

*“India it is the vital sea. Her lifelines are concentrated in that area. Her future is dependent on the freedom of that vast surface. No industrial development, no commercial growth, no stable political structure is possible for her unless the Indian Ocean is free and her own shores fully protected. The Indian Ocean must therefore remain truly Indian.”*⁶¹

He also emphasizes *“that her claim to interest in the Indian Ocean is not with a view to any aggression or imperialist design, but purely or solely as a matter of defence”*⁶² objecting to hegemonic intentions and firmly holding its stand on respecting sovereignty of each other to maintain stability in the seas opposing to power rivalry among great powers.

Therefore, he suggests that India, with its hard earned independence should be able to take the responsibility to protect the IOR with the help of the British commonwealth, forming regional organizations with other countries having stake in the region and a strong navy, with that creating a ring of naval bases encircling the ocean including Singapore, Ceylon, Mauritius and Socotra to counter the future rise of China, the US or Japan as naval power in the region and establish its own position in defence and trade as well to uphold its freedom and sovereignty without encroaching on others. Since then, he has already pointed out the importance of cooperation needed by India to maintain a balanced order in the seas, as it was not possible for India alone to preserve the order being at a nascent stage of its development.

Previously, it was considered to be a ‘British Lake’ with British naval dominance, whereas the Royal Indian Navy was considered to be simply as a representation of the British counterpart. However with Independence, the Indian view has been highlighted by first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru where he considered the importance of sea both for trade and defence related purpose and with that told to focus on both land and sea power. Though India was already gifted with the long natural coastline and a strategic location to dominate the region but what it lacked was minimum political will of the leadership in allocating budget for the development of the navy and more focus on the land based struggles and the military because of the territorial disputes which rose with India’s independence and partition in the first few decades which will be dealt with more details in the further chapters.

⁶¹Ibid.

⁶² Ibid.

Though K.M. Panikkar was the first to highlight the importance of India's past maritime traditions in developing its sea-power (with his well argued work) which gave India an edge over its then competing powers in terms of its maritime strategic ambitions but India's response for the demand of greater role of the navy could not be fulfilled in the early days of independence. The reason was its obsession with land based competition and involvement in border wars immediately after gaining independence where diverting its resources in building a strong navy was neither the need of that time nor was it possible for a weak state reeling under the twin effects of colonialism and partition. Hence, India exclusively focused on the strategic requirements of that particular period where neither its land based competitors i.e. Pakistan and China had big naval fleets nor there was any attention paid on the strategic significance of the ocean which made India only to invest in the minimal requirements needed to protect its coastal waters. With global politics entering the post-Cold War era and the changing scenarios with IOR emerging as the centre of strategic importance, Raja Mohan, a renowned international relations expert counters India's stand on development of sea-power in his book, "*Samudra Manthan: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific*"(2013). He argues for revisiting India's past maritime traditions for articulating an active maritime strategy with sea-power ambitions and a blue water naval fleet with enhanced strength to operate with strategic depth in deep oceans for power projection. As the present realities are different with Chinese hegemony as a strong naval power and the presence of non-state actors in the region it will directly affect India's national security interests if India did not focus on becoming a strong naval power.

Thus, a focus on maritime geopolitics was highlighted by several early statesman, diplomats and western scholars where sea power was equally important for a nation with the land power to emerge as a great power. The importance of power was established since the era of 18th and 19th centuries where eminent theorists like A.T. Mahan and Julian Corbett brought in the concept of sea power and its importance for any nation to maintain command over the seas to become a powerful maritime nation. Their notions of maritime power dealt with the traditional aspects of geopolitical understanding where nations aimed at domination and influence through an interaction between geography and power.

B. Germond classifies sea power through the different lenses of international relations approaches. When it comes to Realism it is the traditional concept of security which is being focused with states being central to the anarchical system and where every state focuses on power maximization and survival in the international politics through naval build up and

command over the sea. Thus either they build up their own military capabilities or resort to coalition formation to increase their national power. *“From a realist perspective, sea power is understood as a sum of assets, that is to say a powerful navy, an efficient merchant fleet and some invariable geographical factors which contribute to state’s power.”*⁶³ Thus, for Realists, it was the numerical strength of the navy which mattered the most to fight wars in the ocean.

On the other end, *“From a liberal perspective, sea power should be understood as a collective final cause and should not be seen through individual/ national material lenses.”*⁶⁴ *“Sea power offers the capacity to influence others’ behaviour and to shape the international system”.*⁶⁵ Thus, the liberal viewpoint believes in maintaining a peaceful and stable international order with free market economy and free trade with institutions promoting liberal norms and supporting economic globalization. Here the naval forces become important in conducting multilateral exercises to protect the freedom of navigation in the ocean and also in dealing with non state actors with threats regarding piracy, maritime terrorism and peaceful economic development of all the states with everyone aiming at the collective good. Thus in the 21st century, *“Sea power is not a notion exclusively linked to war and military power. It encompasses various non-military aspects, such as maintaining good order at and from the sea. Navies are used to performing a large range of peace time missions, including naval diplomacy, humanitarian operations, search and rescue (SAR), and police and constabulary duties.”*⁶⁶ It aimed at a holistic approach to maritime security by the states.

When applying theoretical debates on sea-power to understand India’s overall economic and military strategy one finds India showing lesser sea power ambitions because of its attention towards development of land based army and the economic resource constraints it faced in the earlier times. Later, in post Cold War times, the need was felt for the development of the Navy as it primarily focused on protecting its traditional security interests by increasing naval

⁶³ Germond, Basil. *The Maritime Dimension of European Security: Seapower and the European Union*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

strength and diplomacy through strategic partnerships to emerge as a significant maritime power. With globalisation and the emergence of non-conventional threats from non-state actors, the Navy's importance was also realised in operating collectively to ensure a peaceful and stable order in the seas.

Concluding Remarks

The basic concepts (Defensive Neo-Realism, notions of BOP and concept of Three Images) which form an integral part of the Neo-Realism defined international system are discussed in the chapter mostly by highlighting Kenneth Waltz's works. The Defensive Neo-Realist framework is used as a theoretical tool to identify the structure i.e. anarchy in which the states operate for survival through self-help mechanism preserving the balance of power among states. Cooperation between states within Defensive Neo-Realism theory is transactional in nature when there is convergence of their national interests in response to changing structural realities and in order to protect them and preserve the existing structure of power from any hegemonic intentions of revisionist state that they tend to engage in bilateral and multilateral engagements. The Three Images concept helps in analysing the interaction between India and US at the maritime realm through the events occurring at the systemic, domestic and individual levels. In this context, the Indo-US maritime relations in IOR is studied where this cooperation eventually contributes to rising power status of India is analysed through the concepts of status transformation primarily through the works of T V Paul as discussed in the chapter. The maritime aspect of India in IOR in the ancient times with active trade relations with multiple countries points out the fact that the present aims of establishing India as a non-hegemonic resident power in the region comes from its maritime roots and earlier traditions which is extensively discussed in K.M. Panikkar's writing.

The following chapter will look into historical background of the rise of India as a maritime nation in the IOR and the brief interaction which took place between India (with its non-alignment stand) and the already established ocean power, the US during the Cold War which later led to increased cooperation between them because of several changes in systemic, domestic and individual level factors with the beginning of 21st century.

Chapter Two: Indo-US Maritime Cooperation: An Overview

During the Cold War era, the international system was split into two ideological blocs with Soviet-US disputes. Such a binary, along with the effects of Partition and territorial disputes with its neighbors- Pakistan and China, India took a non-alignment stand in the global politics and supported concepts like Zone of Peace in the maritime realm. Such a positioning of India led to growing misperceptions and mistrust between India and the US. With the Cold War tensions coming to an end because of the breaking up of the Soviet Union and the 1991 domestic economic reforms in the country, India was looked upon by the US as a prominent strategic state in the IOR in securing the sea lanes of communications (SLOCs) for energy security and maritime commerce; thereby bringing in high degree of convergence of ideas and interests. This chapter discusses the evolution in the foreign policy interaction between India and the United States since India's independence (in 1947) till the 2000s. This period marks several divergent perspectives arising out of each country's national interest, with India showing traditional obsession towards land borders to developing common strategic values and economic interests in the geo-politically significant Indian Ocean Region. Against this setting, the first section of the chapter provides an overview of India's maritime relations with US from 1940s to 1991.

India-US Relations closer to Indian Independence and After

The origins of the relationship between India and US can be traced back to the period before India gained independence in 1947 when US President Franklin D. Roosevelt strove for better relations with India because of its strategic value; therefore he advocated for India's de-colonization.⁶⁷ With the onset of World War II, where United States and Britain were allies it led to a debate between Franklin D. Roosevelt and W. Churchill, Britain's Prime Minister on US's open support to India's independence struggle. Ultimately for US, the World War was prioritized over Indians fight for freedom struggle which made the Indians feel betrayed by US. US under Roosevelt's leadership campaigned for India's freedom and argued that in order to get better cooperation from Indian side in the World War granting independence to them was essential. US also wanted to include the principle of self-

⁶⁷ Chadhuri, R. *Forged in Crisis: India and the United States since 1947*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 14-15.

determination of all people as a part of the Atlantic Charter representing all free nations including India which was under the British colonial rule.⁶⁸ US made efforts for claiming India's independent status and tried to provide economic help by establishing different channels of communication for active engagement with India. These initiatives of US were suppressed under Churchill's pressure in favor of the unity of the Anglo-American alliance needed to fight the World War while India continued its nationalist struggle of independence in their own way.⁶⁹ India's unified nationalist movement caused hindrance to the Allied powers in its fight in the Second World War against the Axis Powers as India was an integral part of the British colonies with maximum numerical strength in the army of the Allied forces. On the other end, the Indian National Congress at that time decided not to cooperate with the colonizers unless full freedom was given to India. This led to dissatisfaction on both sides.

With India gaining independence in 1947, under unfolding Cold War dynamics, India in its domestic sphere struggled with the effects of Partition and the refugee crisis after demarcation of the borders and formation of its new neighbor, Pakistan. With the formation of the new nation-state, Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first Prime Minister whose government took the non-alignment approach to deal with the changing global affairs in the international system. From the Western perspective, Non-alignment was loosely defined as neutrality or isolationism from the world affairs but, in the Indian understanding it was "to retain the capacity to judge every international issue on its own merits, irrespective of the views of either bloc in the Cold War."⁷⁰ According to M.S. Rajan, a distinguished scholar of International Relations elaborately discussed the distinctiveness of the non-alignment concept in India. He argued that the state had the utmost authority in "freedom of policy and action in world affairs, an attitude of mind and outlook on world affairs and the means to promote certain end of the policy"⁷¹ which was thought desirable according to the fiscal needs and political realities of the weaker nation-states coming out of the effects of colonialism.

⁶⁸ Chadhuri, R. *Forged in Crisis: India and the United States since 1947*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 15-16.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Rajan, M. *Nonalignment & Nonaligned Movement: Retrospect and Prospect*. New Delhi: Vikas Publishing House, 1990.

In a way, the Non-Alignment policy was formulated to protect India's hard earned sovereignty and independence by not aligning to any of the major powers while upholding Indian interests through diplomatically engaging with every state for economic and military assistance to reinforce its own security under a peaceful order. Furthermore, as a new state, India was in a grave socio-economic crisis with widespread hunger and poverty which in fact acted as a trigger for economic development in a peaceful environment. Thus, assessing the geopolitical realities and economic imperatives, India realized that "non-alignment would theoretically allow India to minimize defence expenditures, reduce the chances of costly conflict, and draw on multiple sources of aid without strict preconditions."⁷² India aimed to make its own independent strategic choices while forging friendly relationships with diverse countries generating out of India's national interests to get access to resources and technological support from all the major powers. This helped India build its own strong infrastructure and establish its eminence in the world stage by leading all the like-minded countries of that time in getting freedom from colonial rule under the Non-Alignment Movement (NAM) to preserve their independent identities.

Several divergence points rose between India and the US in 1950s and 1960s because of the nature of non-alignment followed by India which did not allow formation of alliances of any types was a major cause of irritation as US wanted allies to establish a democratic liberal world order. India's official recognition of People's Republic of China in 1949, along with India's refusal to consider China as an aggressive state in the Korean War crisis in the 1950s (where India was a mediator) and India and China's mutual involvement for third world solidarity irked the then Truman and Eisenhower presidencies. The US, on the other end, needed allies and partners to contain communist expansion by the Soviet Union and China for which India was not suitable enough to match the US strategic interests in South Asia because of contrasting worldviews. The inward looking closed economy with socialist economic Five Year plans adopted by India did not attract the US capitalists as an emerging market for their military and technological investments as India prioritized development assistance over militarization and defence expenditures. This made US shift its attention towards India's rival, Pakistan as a strong ally as it matched US interests in South Asia. US incorporated Pakistan into military alliances formed in the region and provided defence

⁷² Pant, H, and J.M. Super. "India's 'non-alignment' conundrum: a twentieth-century policy in a changing world." *International Affairs* 91, no. 4 (2015): 747-764.

funding which caused direct security threat to India. To address these issues on urgent basis, India became closer to USSR leading to fallout in India's relationship with US.

On the Indian side, the Indo-Pak War took place in 1948-49 on the issue of territorial claims by Pakistan on Kashmir when princely states in India were getting integrated into the Indian Union under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. The US was the first country to provide development and military aid to India after independence and food assistance programs initiated under Truman administration in 1950 to help India come out of drought and famine havocs. The US also tried to mediate the Kashmir conflict before it became an international issue at multilateral forums like United Nations (UN) but Pakistan's aggression on Kashmir was not recognized in the UN by the major powers. It was considered that "Pakistan was strategically more important, with a martial regime, and possession of higher potential defense usefulness, made it a better ally"⁷³ in the strategic calculus of US. This led to intensive military aid from the US side to Pakistan by making it an integral strategic partner in US led security organizations like SEATO (South East Asian Treaty Organization) in 1954 and CENTO (Central Treaty Organization) in 1955 to counter Soviet influence in the South Asian landmass by acting as a buffer. Suspicion rose among Indians as it brought the Cold War rivalry in the subcontinent and the arms and ammunitions supplied by US under the bilateral defence pacts signed with Pakistan to resist Soviet attack were ultimately used by Pakistan to fight border wars with India. "While the Americans failed to comprehend India's preoccupation with Pakistan, India could not understand the American obsession with containing communism"⁷⁴ which ultimately caused major differences in interpreting each other's strategic interests in the 1950s. The turnout of events kept the relationship between the two countries frozen for a while because of the emerging US-Pak military alliance which gave rise to security dilemma in the South Asian region. India alone could not meet up to such advanced equipments and weaponry which made India which was trying to balance between non-alignment ideas and national interests to purchase MiG-21

⁷³ Banerjee, D. "An overview of Indo-US strategic cooperation: a rollercoaster of a relationship." In *US-Indian Strategic Cooperation Into the 21st Century: More than words*, by S Ganguly and B Shoup & A. Scobell, London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2006: 61-82.

⁷⁴ Rubinoff, A. "Incompatible objectives and shortsighted policies: US strategies toward India." In *US-Indian Strategic Cooperation Into The 21st Century: More than words*, by S Ganguly and B Shoup & A. Scobell, London: Routledge Taylor & Francis, 2006: 38-61.

aircrafts from Soviet Union. Such an action ushered a new Indo-Soviet arms relationship with the aim to protect Indian interests for the time being.

In the 1960s, there were convergences of security interest developing between India and US because of Chinese incursions in Tibet and intensifying Sino-Indian border disputes which led to the Indo-China border War in 1962 where India was considered by the US as a democratic counterbalance against Communist China. It was in this context, the attack by the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China in both the Eastern and Western sectors of India along Kashmir and North-East Frontiers that India felt betrayed and the need for increased material support and stronger defence equipments was felt. This led to the adoption of pragmatism both by the later Lal Bahadur Shastri and Indira Gandhi governments to increase defence expenditure for national security. Kennedy administration in the US came to the rescue of India by assisting with ammunitions and artillery in C-130s for air defence without any such conditions attached while Soviets maintained neutral position giving ideological support to China.⁷⁵ This was the first time that relations between India and US improved.

The U.S.S. Enterprise, an aircraft carrier, was also sent by the US to the Bay of Bengal region as a support to provide air cover over the Eastern sector if it was necessary but eventually the war ended before through a ceasefire called from the Chinese side.⁷⁶ This led to repercussion from Pakistan's side as US supply of arms to India was looked at suspiciously. This started the dynamics of security arms race which led to Pakistan's closeness towards China in terms of resources support to balance India's rise forging a geostrategic alignment with China which became stronger in the coming years. At the same time, in the economic front, India got support of US in leading the Green Revolution beginning in the 1960s over the decade which helped India transform from food scarcity state to self-sufficiency state in the realm of food grain production. The scientific agricultural collaboration, intellectual exchange and the economic assistance through United States Agency for International Development (USAID) with Indian Agricultural Universities helped India producing high quality food grains through modern agricultural technologies and awareness to farmers about its usage for sustainability

⁷⁵ Chadhuri, R. *Forged in Crisis: India and the United States since 1947*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014,110.

⁷⁶ Andersen, W.K. "Emerging Security Issues in the Indian Ocean: An American Perspective." In *Superpower Rivalry in the Indian Ocean: Indian and American Perspectives*, by S.S. Harrison and K Subrahmanyam, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989: 12-84.

and productivity for the Indian population.⁷⁷ The bilateral collaboration started diversifying across different sectors from defence to agriculture.

The interactions between India and the US were short-lived as several changes took place in the international, domestic and individual level. “In 1964, China tested its first nuclear weapon and significantly tipped the scales of power in the subcontinent”⁷⁸ initiating the nuclear arms race. In 1968, India disagreed to ratify the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) as countries were differentiated based on nuclear capabilities and the have-nots were restricted in attaining nuclear power status in future. In Indian perspective, such a differentiation was considered as discriminatory. The Sino-Soviet ties started to get disrupted on ideological grounds; India started diversifying its defence procurement options by extracting resources from the Soviet Union as well as its own capabilities. Meanwhile, the Nixon administration started rapprochement towards China with Pakistan’s support which led to thawing of the US-China relations. This made India less strategically important to the US in the region while China stood as a long term security threat for India.⁷⁹ India’s support to Vietnam to resist the US intervention as a part of the Cold War rivalry led to sanctions on food grain shipments to India at the time of severe famine and drought hampered the growing relationship.⁸⁰ In the maritime realm, the idea of declaring ocean spaces as peaceful zones was supported by India. In the Non-Aligned Summit of 1964, according to the proposal of the Sri Lankan Prime Minister, it was declared by the countries to establish denuclearized zone in areas and oceans already free from nuclear weapons reducing Cold War tensions for maintenance of international peace and stability of the region. India’s position was then criticized by US as it affected its strategic interests.

⁷⁷ U.S. Department of State Archive. *U.S. - India Partnership: Creating Economic Opportunities in Agriculture. Text of the Statement by David C. Mulford, U.S. Ambassador to India at a Luncheon Hosted by The Confederation of Indian Industry at Chandigarh, India*, 2004.

<https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/sca/rls/rm/31553.htm> (Accessed on 29th November, 2022)

⁷⁸ Malone, D.M. *Does the Elephant Dance? Contemporary Indian Foreign Policy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, pp.158.

⁷⁹ For more reading, look into, Madan, T. *Fateful Triangle: How China Shaped U.S.-India Relations during the Cold War*. Washington DC: The Brookings Institution, 2020.

⁸⁰ Chadhuri, R. *Forged in Crisis: India and the United States since 1947*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

The result could be seen in the Indo-Pak War of 1965 which also dealt with the Kashmir crisis where attacks came from both land and sea in order to make Kashmir an integral part of Pakistani territory. It was also during this War that the Indian Navy was deployed in the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal and the crisis was felt by India in the seas about its weakness in projecting maritime power, defending its security interests and deterrence against the aggressor. The relation with the US became bitter since then as the military equipments used by Pakistan in the War were supplied by the US to deter any attack from the Communist countries. It was assured by the Eisenhower administration in late 1950s that it would not be used against regional conflicts with India but when such violations took place the US preferred to maintain strict neutrality in this matter without imposing sanctions on Pakistan. Later on, under the Johnson administration (during 1960s) followed by Nixon presidency from 1969 the Chinese threat did not seem a serious one for the Americans who considered Pakistan as a solution to the China problem. While for Indians, China was considered as a part of their neighborhood challenge and an immediate threat which required urgent solution which led to disagreement between the two countries and hampered the deepening of bilateral relations.

As mentioned in the previous chapter about India's maritime roots to develop a successful maritime strategy for India after independence, historically we observe, India did have a long maritime tradition during the Chola Empire when indigenous shipbuilding, maintaining naval fleets and making maritime voyages to other kingdoms were a part of its power projection. Invasions were faced at both the fronts where Mughals entered from the north-western frontiers of the Himalayan region while the British and other Western colonial powers entered through the sea. Hence, learning from history both the sectors necessitated equal focus from the political leadership for addressing national security concerns, though after independence India was preoccupied with the territorial disputes and securing land borders (which Raja Mohan terms as "the curse of continentalism.")⁸¹ Even after having a geographically long strategic coastline, not much importance was given to the development of the naval infrastructure because of economic constraints and lack of political initiative in developing a successful strategy for the seas along with a continental mindset within the Indian strategic elite struggling with land wars. In a way, India's policy of non-alignment

⁸¹ Raja Mohan, C. *Samudra Manthan: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific*. India: Oxford University Press, 2013, 36.

adopted at the dawn of independence, based on the realities of that time, did not allow India to project power in the IOR.

Though India gave weight to its potential role in the Indian Ocean as country moved to independence, the rhetoric and speeches of political elites were not translated to practice. The Indian Navy, at that time was one of the neglected arms of Indian Defence which only provided peripheral service during continental wars guided by British Chiefs for more than a decade.⁸² The budget share for the Navy among the three armed forces languished in the initial years of independence. 4.7 to 4.8 per cent was allocated to Navy from the total defence budget initially, but by 1960s when land wars were fought with China and Pakistan it recorded the lowest with 3.4 per cent.⁸³ It was mostly from Britain that cruiser, frigates, destroyers and smaller ships were acquired to strengthen the naval arm. Also aircraft carrier from Britain was inducted with the name INS Vikrant since the 1960s⁸⁴ but Navy got a limited role to play to display its strength in the maritime affairs of the nation and in international politics. It lacked infrastructural, budgetary and human resource capabilities as due importance was not paid at the leadership and administration level for the development of the Navy as a strong defence arm of the nation in protecting its country's coastlines from foreign attack. In the initial decades of independence, to a large extent, India's weak economy slowed down India's naval expansion. In sum, India was obsessed with land borders, especially among the Indian strategic elites, because of the land based security challenges it faced from its neighbors (Pakistan and China) who also didn't have strong navies at that point of time. This made India to ignore the naval arm of the nation as it did not have any functional role in securing the land borders which the Army and the Air Force did while the maritime affairs in IOR was not a prime concern for them then.

During the 1965 War, though Pakistan sent tanks in the borders of Rann of Kutch and air forces in the Kashmir area which was dealt by India jointly with its Army and Air Forces, the Indian Naval Force was also sent to Mumbai to patrol in the Arabian Sea and blockade Pakistani vessels from entering the region from Karachi port. As a spillover of the war taking

⁸² Scott, D. "India's "Grand Strategy" for the Indian Ocean: Mahanian Visions." *Asia-Pacific Review* 13, no. 2 (2006): 97-129.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Raja Mohan, C. *Samudra Manthan: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific*. India: Oxford University Press, 2013, 60.

place in the land Pakistan sent its flotilla to carry out a bombardment of the coastal temple town of Dwarka.⁸⁵ Though Indian fleet was able to restrain the further intrusions that took place in Saurashtra region, the Navy's role was considered to be ineffective as it wasn't successful enough to blockade or avenge the bombardment by the Pakistani Navy and ceasefire was declared. This led to the realization among the Indian leadership to allocate more funds and bring serious development in the naval infrastructure where new fleets and logistics with naval bases and ports were needed to be created to increase naval presence in Eastern and Western sides for coastal defence and protect the Exclusive Economic Zones. In addition, with the supply of vessels and submarines to meet the requirements for a stronger Indian Fleet, the relation between India and Soviet Union improved from that time.

Thus, India started to recognize the importance of the maritime domain to enhance its power projection and hence increase its status among the major powers in the international system to influence the global affairs but it was mostly on the external sources that India relied on for defence developments. With the Cold War tensions and power play between the US and the Soviet Union, balance and counterbalance strategies till then took place in the South Asian landmass. In the next section, this power rivalry and politics in the Indian Ocean maritime region is discussed. The pivotal point for the Indian Naval Force to display its strength in the Indian Ocean that was felt during the 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War with the support of USSR and promotion of Zone of Peace proposal in the IOR is also highlighted. This led to the degradation of relation with the US while more emphasis was given on the modernization of the defence machinery by the leaders and statesman during the 80s period.

India-US Relations in the 70s and 80s

The two Cold War rivals slowly began to recognize the importance of IOR which ultimately became an area of international conflict when Britain decided to withdraw from the Suez Canal and the British Indian Ocean Territory islands except Diego Garcia in 1971 after

⁸⁵ Hiranandani, G. "The Indian End of the Telescope: India and Its Navy." *Naval War College Review* 55, no. 2 (2002): 61-72.

exercising full control in the entire region for the past 200 years.⁸⁶ With the spread of influence in the region by establishing colonies in the littoral states, Britain was the only country who established supremacy in the IOR. This withdrawal created a power vacuum as all the important choke points and vital sea lanes passed through the ocean for free flow of trade and commerce and the West Asian region where uninterrupted flow of oil and minerals was needed to maintain energy security in the countries. Thus, it led to the beginning of serious competition between the US and the USSR in the Indian Ocean to increase its presence in the seas and exert influence among the littoral states in the region.

The power rivalry in the ocean mostly emerged because of the misinterpretation of perceptions and intentions of each other where one state's increased acquisition of arms out of national and security interest was looked suspiciously by the other. The vacuum created by the sudden decision of British exiting from the Ocean caused the spillover of the Cold War tussle from the landmass to the seas when Indian Ocean started to get prioritized over Atlantic and Pacific Oceans because of its economic and strategic importance. The countries surrounding the ocean were important both for emerging financial markets and for the establishment of military and naval facilities and bases.

Even though the limited presence of US in the IOR can be traced back to 1948 only in Bahrain⁸⁷ region; but it was since 1960s when frequent visits took place so as to defend its political and diplomatic concerns. In order to balance the influence of Soviet forces in air and land which was a hinterland state capable to attain prominence with its hidden intentions and strategies both among the countries and the ocean, it was needed for the US to develop maritime capabilities with a strong naval force as a sea-based deterrent against them and compete in filling upon the vacuum. The protection of sea routes and lanes with freedom of navigation and flow of trade and commercial activities and the vital interests in West Asia for flow of oil and energy resources which could be disrupted because of regional aggression and civil strife among and between countries was a priority for the US.

Such a scenario led to different defence cooperation pacts and agreements between US and nations like Iran and Pakistan. In this context, US sent carriers and vessels in support of

⁸⁶ Andersen, W.K. "Emerging Security Issues in the Indian Ocean: An American Perspective." In *Superpower Rivalry in the Indian Ocean: Indian and American Perspectives*, by S.S. Harrison and K Subrahmanyam, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989: 12-84.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

regimes facing military pressure from Socialist World. Establishment of naval bases with communication and logistic facilities jointly with Britain in islands like Diego Garcia having strategic importance and maintenance of permanent presence in ports of certain Gulf countries also took place for patrolling and access to the important choke points in the sea. In the late 1970s and 80s, Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force(RDF) and the US Central Command(USCENTCOM) were also created to exclusively look into securing the US interests in region⁸⁸ ; which in turn made it an important part of the Cold War conflict.

On the other end, the Soviet Union made its first entry into the Ocean in 1957 for oceanographic research but it was around late 1960s when Soviet warships made symbolic port visits to make its naval presence felt. It was mostly as a counter response to the United States' military deployment of submarines and carriers and a possible missile threat in the region. The other reasons were to secure the commercial shipping routes in the Indian Ocean as movement of traffic in this region was easier than the frozen waters of the Arctic Ocean,⁸⁹ acquiring facilities and bases like in Berbera and expansion of influence in the surrounding regional countries by extending support and assistance to their anti-colonial struggle. For instance, in the Bangladesh conflict, projection of the country as a friend of the Third World states with no imperialist history and intention helped seeking political and economic advantages from these countries.

At the regional level, the 1971 India-Pakistan War which led to the Bangladesh liberation is considered as one of the watershed moments in the naval history of India; a lowest point in the maritime relations between India and the US. The rise of ethno-linguistic factions demanding recognition and greater autonomy in East Pakistan resulted in imposition of martial law all over East and West Pakistan to suppress the uprising with the demand for independence and liberation from the Pakistani rule.⁹⁰ This led to genocides and atrocities led by the Pakistani Army all over East Pakistan steered massive inflow of refugees through the eastern side of the Indian borders complicating India's domestic problem as they needed

⁸⁸ Awati, M. "Emerging Security Issues in the Indian Ocean: An Indian Perspective." In *Superpower Rivalry in the Indian Ocean: Indian and American Perspectives*, by S.S. Harrison and Subrahmanyam, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989: 84-133.

⁸⁹ Coye, B.F. "An Evaluation of U.S. Naval Presence in the Indian Ocean." *Naval War College Review* 23, no. 2 (1970): 34-52.

⁹⁰ Chadhuri, R. *Forged in Crisis: India and the United States since 1947*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014, 154.

assistance from the Indian side which was provided by India by supporting the liberation struggle.

There were complex international geostrategic dynamics happening during the same time with the Nixon administration coming into power in US in the early 1970s. With Pakistan's help it decided for a sudden rapprochement with Mao's China after Sino-Soviet split. As US saw a melting of relation with China, the value of India as a counter was not required anymore which was clear when Indian appeal to the international community for solving the refugee crisis did not yield any clear response other than humanitarian aid. There was a clear divergence in approach towards China where the US saw China as a potential strategic partner to counter Soviet presence along with Pakistan, while India viewed China as an internal challenge as it claimed portions of Indian territories as well as the all-weather friendship it developed with Pakistan. Hence, the border wars fought with both of them led to increasing military expenditure bypassing funds for development. Expecting a possibility of a perceived threat from the side of Pakistan with the aided support from China and the US made India officially side with the USSR under PM Indira Gandhi's administration for support to deal with the refugee crisis which later developed into a border war.

These suspicions lead to signing of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between India and Soviet Union in 1971 to safeguard its own national interest and create an effective balance in the region where cooperation would be provided from the Russian side in every field. The signing of the Treaty did lead to questioning of the non-alignment stand of Indian foreign policy as the Article 9 of the Treaty mentioned if either of the countries were subjected to threat or attack because of a third aggressor then both the states mutually would ensure in maintaining peace, stability and security of the states.⁹¹ On the contrary, Article 4 of the Treaty "clearly stated that nothing in the treaty would undermine India's policy of non-alignment."⁹² Thus, India aimed towards the concept of multi-alignment⁹³ as a justification of non-alignment where it was flexible enough to diversify dependence on resources from multiple partners by temporary tilting based on its own interest and needs. The need for

⁹¹ Ibid

⁹² Chadhuri, R. *Forged in Crisis: India and the United States since 1947*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014,165.

⁹³ Madan, T. "The dragon in the room: the China factor in the development of US-India ties in the Cold War." *India Review* 18, no. 4 (2019): 368-385..

change was felt by the Indian strategic elite and negotiating cooperation was required to safeguard the country's interest. This made the non-alignment norms enter the stage of relaxation and negotiation through strategic cooperation with multiple partners based on shared interests depending on the changes of the international environment and the administration in power.

The 1971 War was initiated by West Pakistan through land and sea on the western side of India in order to divert Indian forces from providing support to the liberation movement in East Pakistan. Later on, the war spread to the eastern front and to the ocean which brought involvement of the Navy. Indian missile boats were sent to the Arabian Sea to deter and attack ships arriving from Karachi blockading the port and destroying their oil tankers and ceasing the area to stop the shipping traffic.⁹⁴ In the Bay of Bengal side, the aircraft carrier of the Indian Navy was deployed to choke all the resupply which came seaward from West Pakistan while Ghazi, the Pakistani submarine tried to lay mines near Visakhapatnam harbor to attack the Indian fleet⁹⁵ which got safeguarded as it was placed on the other side. Being an ally of Pakistan in defence pacts, as a gesture of solidarity the nuclear powered aircraft carrier, U.S.S. Enterprise of the Seventh Fleet was sent to the Bay of Bengal by the US to resist the collapse of the Pakistani force in the East Pakistan region but it was countered with the nuclear missile armed ships dispatched by the Soviet Navy which trailed behind the US forces.⁹⁶ Ultimately, the Navy's successful blockade could destabilize Pakistani forces in the East which made them to surrender and led to the creation of Bangladesh.

This led India to manifest itself as a rising maritime nation with strong naval capabilities in the region. But it still needed more research and development in terms of improvement in harbours and ports, investment in naval bases in Andaman and Nicobar and Lakshadweep Islands, development of anti-submarine and ships with missile carrying capabilities which would contribute in projection of power in the high seas. The replacement of older ships with new indigenous constructions and modernization of infrastructural equipments depended on

⁹⁴ Hiranandani, G. "The Indian End of the Telescope: India and Its Navy." *Naval War College Review* 55, no. 2 (2002): 61-72.

⁹⁵ Awati, M. "Emerging Security Issues in the Indian Ocean: An Indian Perspective." In *Superpower Rivalry in the Indian Ocean: Indian and American Perspectives*, by S.S. Harrison and Subrahmanyam, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989: 84-133.

⁹⁶ Hiranandani, G. "The Indian End of the Telescope: India and Its Navy." *Naval War College Review* 55, no. 2 (2002): 61-72.

larger allotment to Navy's budget which was still the lowest among the three wings of military forces. Comparatively, the Navy's share in the Indian defence budget rose from the 3.4 per cent in 1960s during the border wars with China and Pakistan to 6.6 per cent during the 1971 war and went up to 8.8 per cent in the beginning of the 80s when importance for the growth of the naval arm was beginning to be felt with reaching an all time high during 1985 period with 12.5 per cent.⁹⁷ A balanced naval force was required which would cover "ocean going forces, coastal defence forces, harbor defence forces, logistic support forces, amphibious forces and the air element integrated with the forces"⁹⁸ for displaying its defense and deterrence capabilities. At that moment the Indian Navy though started getting prioritized by the political and bureaucratic sector, it was still localized enough in having command and control only over its immediate coastal waters. The Soviet Navy then did provide a lot of support in terms of supply of modern technology and latest equipments with vessels and ships required to strengthen the naval architecture.

The relation between India and the US hit an all time low as the US tilted towards Pakistan and China when Henry Kissinger travelled to these two countries with a secret mission of normalizing the relations while India moved towards the USSR for help and counterbalance which incited mutual mistrust and suspicion (between US and India). The issue of nuclear weapon proliferation also caused discontentment between the two countries when India in 1974 made its first ever peaceful nuclear explosion for deterrence. While the US pressed for legislations like Nuclear Non-Proliferation Act, the Pressler Amendment and the Symington Amendment⁹⁹ to limit the spread of nuclear weapons mostly to India and Pakistan in South Asia.

Another point of contention in the Indo-US maritime relationship rose from the support India gave to the proposal and the joint co-sponsorship it provided to promote the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace. The proposal came up in the 1970s Lusaka Summit where the states were called for adoption of the declaration "to consider and respect the Indian Ocean as a Zone of

⁹⁷ Scott, D. "India's "Grand Strategy" for the Indian Ocean: Mahanian Visions." *Asia-Pacific Review* 13, no. 2 (2006): 97-129.

⁹⁸ Kohli, S.N. *Sea Power and the Indian Ocean with special reference to India*. New Delhi: Tata McGraw Hill, 1978, 87.

⁹⁹ Kapur, P.S., and S Ganguly. "The Transformation of U.S.-India Relations: An Explanation for the Rapprochement and Prospects for the Future." *Asian Survey* 47, no. 4 (2007): 642-656.

Peace.”¹⁰⁰ The proposal was extended to emphasize the exclusion of the great power rivalry and competition between the US and the USSR including establishment of naval, air and armed bases and facilities in the surrounding littoral states and to make the area nuclear weapons free. It was supported by Indian PM Indira Gandhi as the US presence in Diego Garcia irked India. The importance of the Laws of the Seas was also highlighted where every state had the freedom to use the seas and its resources and no single state can economically exploit it as everyone has the freedom of navigation to seas.¹⁰¹ India viewed US as an extra-regional navy establishing dominance in the region which made India oppose US on various multilateral forums.

The criticism came from both Western and Eastern bloc of nations where the major powers justified the presence of its extra-regional navies to preserve stability and power balance in the region where its vital commercial interests laid and which was mostly preoccupied with regional conflicts and also the nation states needed support from the major powers to protect their regimes and fight proxy wars. On the other hand, India in line with its policy of non-alignment supported the Zone of Peace proposal to prevent spillover of Cold War tensions to the oceans which belonged to all the countries keeping them free from nuclearization as well as from great power conflicts and maintaining a peaceful rule-based order in the seas for proper flow of maritime trade and commerce. Simultaneously, there were talks of détente between the US and the USSR in 1977-78 to freeze the military buildup and maintain a status-quo in the region whose progress was necessary for realization of the proposal of Zone of Peace.

There were hopes for an emerging prospect in Indian Ocean Arms Control when the Carter administration in the US decided to mutually demilitarize the region by curbing conventional arms sales and restraint in deployment of ships with nuclear weapons ultimately scaling down the military presence.¹⁰² The negotiation talks between US and the USSR primarily failed

¹⁰⁰ Ministry of External Affairs. (1983). *Two Decades of Nonalignment: Documents of the Gatherings of the Non-aligned Countries, 1961-1982*. New Delhi: Government of India, 1983.

¹⁰¹ Kohli, S.N. *Sea Power and the Indian Ocean with special reference to India*. New Delhi: Tata McGraw Hill, 1978, 51.

¹⁰² Subrahmanyam, K. "Arms Limitation in the Indian Ocean: Retrospect and Prospect." In *Superpower Rivalry in the Indian Ocean: Indian and American Perspectives*, by S.S. Harrison and K Subrahmanyam, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989: 223-246.

because of diverging perspectives on latter's position on Ethiopian and Afghanistan in the 1980s. This led US to create the Rapid Deployment Force and US Central Command in the region as a vital responsibility to counter the Soviet build up and security threats and protecting sea lanes for free flow of Persian Gulf oil by supporting friendly governments through military aid and equipments. The Soviet presence in Afghanistan triggered US investments in Pakistan with latest military equipments to defeat Soviet forces. Eventually, these weapons were indirectly utilized by Pakistan to fight wars with India which was a major issue on the Indian side straining its relationship with the US.

The regional dynamics started changing with growing Chinese maritime interests in the Indian Ocean. From late 1970s, China decided to open up its economy and went on for modernization reforms of the entire defense structure under Deng Xiaoping's Four Modernization Program. Under this program, the expanding profile of the Chinese Navy was clearly visible to the states in the IOR. The reason was to ensure flow of energy resources by commanding control over the Sea Lanes of Communication and the choke points through which majority of the trade commences, upholding its own territorial claims in Taiwan and South China Seas and constraining the naval dominance of the US among the littoral nation-states with that of the rising capabilities of the Indian Naval Force. The Chinese diplomats publicized its earlier maritime tradition during the Fifteenth century with the Seven Voyages led by Admiral Zheng He in the Indian Ocean under the Ming Dynasty. In analyzing the real purpose of the visits some point out the economic motive for trade and commerce while others point towards the military and strategic importance to the event where these expeditions visited ports in and around Kerala and Sri Lanka further going towards the West.¹⁰³ By glorifying the Chinese maritime past and justifying the expeditions as peaceful, China claimed its maritime space in the IOR.

Since 1985, China continued to make its presence felt in the Indian Ocean through its naval warships¹⁰⁴ making port calls in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh demonstrating its operational capability in the IOR. China also supplied missile boats and submarines through military aid programs and active cooperation to friendly states like Sri Lanka, Bangladesh,

¹⁰³ Ray, H. "An Analysis of the Chinese Maritime Voyages into the Indian Ocean during Early Ming Dynasty and their Raison d'etre." *CHINA REPORT* 23, no. 1 (1987): 55-87.

¹⁰⁴ Raja Mohan, C. *Samudra Manthan: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific*. India: Oxford University Press, 2013, 110.

Pakistan, Thailand and Egypt.¹⁰⁵ For increased presence and influence into the areas in the Indian Ocean from 1980s, China started investing in infrastructural projects for transforming and integrating its underdeveloped regions of the western provinces and build transport corridors via roads, highways, rails and river basins with the ports of the South Asian countries having direct access to the ocean. Through three trans-border transport corridor construction plans China aimed at developing from that time, one connecting Lhasa to Kolkata through the controversial Tibetan plateau, second, the Karokoram highway which passed through the disputed areas of Jammu and Kashmir linking Kashgar in Xinjiang province to Pakistani ports of Karachi and Gwadar on Makran coast and lastly, the Irrawaddy Corridor through Burma connecting the Yunnan province of China to the Bay of Bengal.¹⁰⁶ These objectives were later materialized by China by creating its own circle of influence in the IOR.

India's regional role became important to balance China's rise in its own backyard and the deeper China-Pakistan friendship meant defence development indigenously as well as cooperate with like-minded states where there was convergence of interests. "In fact, it is China, not Pakistan, that has gradually emerged as the new third party in the India-US relationship"¹⁰⁷ because of its hegemonic intentions and growing economic and military profile. Since the 1980s, with Rajiv Gandhi's government coming to power, the geopolitical and strategic considerations were prioritized which led to modest expansion and modernization of naval forces with allocation to navy's budget increased to around 13.5 percent and declaration of 25 year Naval Modernisation programme in 1990s.¹⁰⁸ The aim of the programme was introduction of new technology and modern equipments in the development of naval infrastructure, port building in strategic places and islands; replacement of old ships with new ones both by indigenous ones and procurement from friendly countries

¹⁰⁵ Awati, M. "Emerging Security Issues in the Indian Ocean: An Indian Perspective." In *Superpower Rivalry in the Indian Ocean: Indian and American Perspectives*, by S.S. Harrison and Subrahmanyam, New York: Oxford University Press, 1989: 84-133.

¹⁰⁶ Raja Mohan, C. *Samudra Manthan: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific*. India: Oxford University Press, 2013, 113-118.

¹⁰⁷ Malone, D.M. *Does the Elephant Dance? Contemporary Indian Foreign Policy*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, 173.

¹⁰⁸ Scott, D. "India's "Grand Strategy" for the Indian Ocean: Mahanian Visions." *Asia-Pacific Review* 13, no. 2 (2006): 97-129.

and training the navy personnel accordingly. The interaction between India and the US under Indira Gandhi and Ronald Reagan administration led towards betterment with technological and logistic transfers of equipment. Foreign purchases also took place from all major powers with induction of another aircraft carrier, INS Viraat and nuclear submarine INS Chakra from Soviet Union. Assertive use of naval power as a part of India's peacekeeping operations in Sri Lanka in 1987 and Maldives in 1988 received external recognition and validation also contributed to India's reputation as a rising sea-power in the maritime sphere. With declining foreign reserves, economic stagnation and shrinking growth made its way to the 1991 economic reforms and end of the Cold War ushered in formation of a new international order and bilateral relations with common and shared Indian and US interests. This is being discussed in the next section.

The major trends of India-US relations in the 1960s and 70s were dominated by the systemic, domestic and leadership level factors altogether but out of that it was the systemic level factor which influenced the other two factors to operate accordingly. Mostly in this period the misperceptions and mistrust that existed about each other's foreign policy actions was a response to the Cold War international system which prevailed. The systemic level factors made them take different stands on its relation with Pakistan, China and USSR as well their presence in the IOR where they tend to oppose each other's position because of the conflicting worldviews they held about the Cold War politics. With the Cold War coming to an end and establishment of a liberal democratic order of globalised interdependent networks the divergent perspectives of India seeing US as an extra-regional country and US seeing India as strong believer of non-alignment with socialist economic policies were shed away with an emergence of a strong bilateral partnership in the coming years.

India and US after 1991

At the structural level, the end of the Cold War with the disintegration of the Soviet Union and beginning of US unipolarity led to a successful establishment of the liberal international economic and political order which did not leave any other option for India but to reorient its foreign policy approach. The Soviet Union was the major supplier for India's defence equipment and military hardware which now became uncertain after its collapse. India had to look for alternative strategic options for fulfilling its own military and diplomatic objectives and the US was the perfect option to fill the vacuum left by USSR for strategic and defence support. The US, on the other side, had reservations with India only for its tilt towards USSR

who boosted India's defence sector during the Cold War times with India being one of the biggest purchasers of arms and ammunitions. MiG aircrafts, naval ships and aircraft carriers including INS Viraat and Vikrant as well as INS Chakra with nuclear technology, modern logistics, spare parts and equipments of defence materials were brought by India from Soviet Union to secure its national interests during that period which ended with the Cold War.

At the domestic level, it was the severe balance of payment crisis that India had to deal with in 1991 which led to economic stagnation because of depleting foreign exchange reserves after the Gulf War and oil crisis, repatriation of Indian workers from the Gulf region and financial dues from loan repayments to multilateral banks.¹⁰⁹ Under the leadership of then PM P.V. Narasimha Rao with his Finance Minister Manmohan Singh, it was decided to give up the socialist development policies, government regulation of the market and industries, import substitution methods and so on. They decided to globalize the Indian economy with market reforms and export led growth by adopting structural adjustment programs and opening up the different sectors to foreign private companies allowing foreign direct investments to deal with the financial crisis that led to economic growth and favorable trade flow. The economic reforms led to opening up of industries through de-licensing for entry of private sectors in regulating the Indian economy through higher foreign investments, the growth of the Information and Technology sector as a vibrant hub and allowing a free market economy with the ultimate goal of Liberalization, Privatization and Globalization (LPG policies). The changed economic environment made it an attractive ground for the US capitalists to invest in the emerging Indian market removing the reservation US had towards India by boosting up the free flow of trade, resources and information exchange between the two countries. It was the ideological flexibility of PM Narasimha Rao enabled the country to integrate India into the global economy by bringing in economic reforms and develop a close relationship with US, the leader of the unipolar world order at that time. This partnership would benefit India in the long run to emerge as a strong economic and strategic power with the ability to exert its influence and leadership in the region.

The financial crisis became a major obstacle in the modernization plans for the Navy with falling defence budget and the fall of USSR disrupted the source of military hardware needed for the maintenance of the Navy. "India's Navy was actually shrinking in size and aging, as

¹⁰⁹ Kapur, S.P., and S Ganguly. "The Transformation of U.S.-India Relations: An Explanation For The Rapprochement and Prospects for the Future." *Asian Survey* 47, no. 4 (2007): 642-656.

older ships were decommissioned but not replaced.”¹¹⁰ With the removal of constraints against the US, there were constructive defense cooperative plans proposed by Lieutenant General Claude M. Kicklighter during his visit to India for service to service level expansion, annual exchange of visits and joint training and participation exercises. “Executive Steering Groups (ESGS) were established in both countries to intensify military to military cooperation”¹¹¹ which was also extended to the Air and Navy wing with strategic dialogues and interactions held between the high officials of the three services to facilitate discussions between them.

The MALABAR exercises for the Navy were suggested in the Kicklighter proposal and the first ever joint naval exercise between the Indian and the US Navy commenced in the Indian western seaboard in 1992 to be held in an annual basis to achieve interoperability and technological compatibility in use of naval equipments through interactions.¹¹² The MILAN exercises initiated in 1995 with just five members grew to fourteen¹¹³ which looked at the interoperability among navies. In 1995, the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) was set up which was later renamed as Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) mostly to look after the economic interests of the region advocating economic cooperation in the region.¹¹⁴ Due to lack of clarity in goals and regional instabilities its potential could not be fully realised though efforts for rejuvenation by different countries were taken to actively discuss the needs and interests in the region with China and US being official observers of the organisation.¹¹⁵ The Agreed Minute of Defense Relations was signed in 1995 between the US Defense Secretary William Perry and the

¹¹⁰ Scott, D. "India's "Grand Strategy" for the Indian Ocean: Mahanian Visions." *Asia-Pacific Review* 13, no. 2 (2006): 97-129.

Malik, V.P. "Indo-US defense and military relations: from "estrangement" to "strategic partnership"." In *US-Indian Strategic Cooperation Into The 21st Century: More than words*, by S Ganguly and B Shoup & A. Scobell, London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2006: 82-113.

¹¹² Rani, S. "Indo-US Maritime Cooperation: Challenges and Prospects." *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India* 8, no. 2 (2012): 123-143.

¹¹³ Pant, H, and Y Joshi. "The American "Pivot" And The Indian Navy: It's Hedging All The Way." *Naval War College Press* 68, no. 1 (2015): 47-70.

¹¹⁴ Scott, D. "The Indian Ocean as India's Ocean." In *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, by D Malone and C Raja Mohan & S Raghavan. UK: Oxford University Press, 2015.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

Indian Minister of State Defense Mallikarjun which “aimed at strengthening as well as expanding defense cooperation to meet requirements of the new post-Cold War world.”¹¹⁶ It mainly proposed bilateral discussion at different government levels for defense cooperation with defense research and production, service and civilian level interactions and established three groups the Joint Defence Policy Group, the Joint Technical Group and the Joint Steering Committee to facilitate cooperation through discussion.¹¹⁷ Thus, at the defence and strategic level, the two countries renewed their engagements of cooperation.

At the leadership level, the Narasimha Rao administration was the first to come to power after the commencement of the Post Cold War international order when it faced serious pressure from Bush and Clinton presidencies on the subject of nuclear non-proliferation policies of NPT(Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty) and CTBT(Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty). India refused to sign because it discriminated the non-nuclear states in achieving nuclear tests while the nuclear powers were allowed to conduct tests and continue its own missile program. Also the human rights issue rising out of civilian unrest and militant activities which India tried to curb by imposing restrictions on the people of Kashmir came under scrutiny of the US.¹¹⁸ Under I.K. Gujral’s short tenure there were normalization of relations when the Gujral Doctrine help improved India’s ties with its neighbors and there was convergence of opinions in several matters of importance.

It was during NDA (National Democratic Alliance) government’s rule under Atal Vajpayee in 1998; India successfully carried out its second nuclear tests and declared itself as a nuclear power state. India’s decision was justified by Vajpayee to Clinton by stating that the action was a repercussion to “the threat posed by China and its assistance to Pakistan had pushed India to testing.”¹¹⁹ The tests brought shock to the Clinton administration as they were busy

¹¹⁶ Malik, V.P. "Indo-US defense and military relations: from "estrangement" to "strategic partnership"." In *US-Indian Strategic Cooperation Into The 21st Century: More than words*, by S Ganguly and B Shoup & A. Scobell, London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2006: 82-113.

¹¹⁷ Rani, S. "Indo-US Maritime Cooperation: Challenges and Prospects." *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India* 8, no. 2 (2012): 123-143.

¹¹⁸ Chatterjee, A. "From Uncertainty to Solidarity? An Anatomy Of Post-Cold War India-U.S. Relations." *Jadavpur Journal of International Relations* 14 (2010).

¹¹⁹ Chaudhuri, R. (2014). *Forged in Crisis: India and th United States since 1947*. New York: Oxford University Press. pp.182.

promoting and imposing a non-proliferation regime and their intelligence agencies failed to detect India's actions. This ultimately made the US impose economic and military sanctions on arms sales and technology export controls to India and later also to Pakistan for its reciprocal tests within three days. These sanctions and restrictions "were deemed necessary to maintain a common front against the worldwide menace of proliferation"¹²⁰ by the US where India stood as a clear violator with its nuclear tests, according to the US government.

Though India's actions negatively impacted the relations with the US but it was only because of this event that India was considered as an important power in the region which accordingly was later accommodated by the major powers. This led to backchannel dialogues for strategic engagement for the longest duration between the US Deputy Secretary of State Strobe Talbott and Indian Minister of External Affairs Jaswant Singh from 1998 to 2000 which was considered as initiatives of confidence building to remove suspicions between the two nation-states. Though India was unable to sign treaties like CTBT and FMCT (Fissile Materials Cut-Off Treaty) because of lack of domestic political support but agreed to act as a responsible nuclear power and contribute to global issue of promoting nuclear disarmament as well as cooperate on common security threats like terrorism and piracy.

The success of the dialogues could be seen during the Kargil crisis where India and Pakistan were de-hyphenated for the first time by the US.¹²¹ The Pakistani Army again made an intrusion crossing the Line of Control in Kashmir area in 1999 which led to an escalation of conflict. At this time, Pakistan wanted the US support and cooperation to find a solution while justifying its actions with false arguments which US did not agree upon and pushed pressure on Pakistan to vacate the illegally occupied territory. The reasons could be the US dissatisfaction with Pakistan's reciprocal nuclear tests with the support of China and instability in the domestic politics of Pakistan.¹²² The Clinton administration decision to side with India during the crisis was seen as a game-changer in the bilateral relationship.

¹²⁰ Cohen, S.P. *India: Emerging Power*. Washington DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2001.

¹²¹ Hagerty, Devin T. "Are we present at the creation?: alliance theory and the Indo-US strategic convergence." In *US-Indian Strategic Cooperation Into The 21st Century: More than words*, by S Ganguly and B Shoup & A Scobell, London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2006: 38-61.

¹²² Chatterjee, A. "From Uncertainty to Solidarity? An Anatomy Of Post-Cold War India-U.S. Relations." *Jadavpur Journal of International Relations* 14 (2010).

Pakistan's decision to withdraw was not only because of the response from Clinton administration but also due to India's rising military profile. The Vajpayee government after coming to power formulated strong defence policies to increase India's reach and international status which led to development of the navy as well. In 1999, "land setbacks in Kargil were offset by successful naval deployments against Karachi and the Pakistani coastline"¹²³ and in fear of a two front war and sea blockade, Pakistan decided to withdraw its forces leading to successful Indian naval projection to deter or defend at the seas against any maritime challenge from its neighbors. It was "India's long standing democratic culture and its economic potential and big emerging market"¹²⁴ which attracted the US government towards India as a partner to maintain a stable political architecture in the region. Being the oldest democracy, the US always had the affinity towards India to preserve stability in the largest democracy.

The reciprocal visits of Clinton and Vajpayee in 2000 brought in the era of strong bond between the leadership and solidarity between the two countries over developing of common concerns which required mutual cooperation in the coming years. It was the changed nature of the domestic governments at power and the eagerness of the leadership and statesman from both sides to give up their Cold War reservations and begin a new era of fruitful cooperation and mutual understanding between the two countries. The signing of the Vision Statement in 2000 aimed at addressing the actions to be taken for the future course of cooperation through institutional mechanisms needed in strengthening the bilateral relations with regular interactions held at summit levels between the two administration in collaborating in political, defence, security and economic spheres. Hence, the beginning of the bilateral maritime relations between India and US in securing the IOR with strong foundation set from the 2000s continued in a progressive fashion by the succeeding governments as can be seen in the following chapter.

Concluding Remarks

¹²³ Scott, D. "India's "Grand Strategy" for the Indian Ocean: Mahanian Visions." *Asia-Pacific Review* 13, no. 2 (2006): 97-129.

¹²⁴ Chatterjee, A. "From Uncertainty to Solidarity? An Anatomy Of Post-Cold War India-U.S. Relations." *Jadavpur Journal of International Relations* 14 (2010).

The Cold War era led to contrasting views and ideological constraints about the international order between India and the US rising out of national priorities. India preferred staying non-aligned to any of the blocs to avoid domination by imperialism of any form while the US aimed at establishing its primacy all over the world defeating communist influence. The key reasons of disengagement during these times mostly arose out of Pakistan and China factors where the United States failed to choose between India and its rival neighbors. Though India's tilt towards USSR was looked upon with apprehension, the end of war and breaking up of USSR this concern got diluted. While India fought wars with its neighbors who were supported by the US, the lack of consistent support from the US side to address Indian concerns led to suspicion among the Indian leadership to have complete trust on US foreign policy decisions. The initiatives of engagement taken by political leadership from both the sides started with Kennedy and Gandhi administrations to the contemporary leadership did try to resolve the years of suspicion and mistrust which developed between the two countries.

Throughout this period India had a traditional continental mindset as it was preoccupied with land border disputes. However, since the 1971 War, India started to emphasize the underlying importance of its naturally gifted and geo-strategically significant position in the IOR and a strong navy with blue water capabilities to project its maritime power in the high seas and protect maritime commerce and energy security to maintain India's rise.

The 1971 War brought in global recognition by the major powers who recognized India's sea-power and considered it as one of the crucial countries in the region to balance the rise of China as a revisionist power. Chinese strategies to alter the regional balance with its expansionist policies and aggressive intentions, friendly ties with Pakistan and funding other South Asian neighbors became an important factor for convergence of interest between the two nations which will be discussed in the next chapter. The opening of the economy to the international market and the US unipolarity in establishing a liberal economic order in 1991 led to strategic dialogues and fostering of mutual cooperation agreements on defence and security to preserve the balance, stability and peaceful order in the region. This led to addressing shared common goals like non-traditional security threats emerging out of globalization such as transnational terrorism, piracy and disaster management through bilateral and multilateral initiatives of cooperation.

Chapter Three: Indo-US Maritime Cooperation in the Post-Cold War Period: A Site of New Power Relations

The end of Cold War and disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1990s, led to the primacy of the US led unipolar liberal world order. At the same time, India strived to establish its power ambitions in the strategically significant Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and the India-United States bilateral relationship went through a major transformation with the beginning of the 21st century. The international events which made India visible as a crucial rising power for US in the IOR were the 9/11 attacks in the US, the global financial crisis, the rising Chinese maritime presence and assertiveness in the region and emerging threats from transnational actors. Such a scenario shaped the strategic bonding between India and the US giving up years of suspicion and mistrust of the Cold War era and getting into a dynamic relationship of active strategic cooperation between the two states.

The Indo-US Nuclear deal signed in 2008 was a first significant bilateral deal concluded with the US wherein India's interests were recognised and accommodated. The international recognition by other states and significant global institutions after that led to the upliftment of India's status as a significant responsible security provider of the region. In addition, the primary role India gets to play in the IOR is highlighted in US Pivot to Asia policy (in 2011) by the US administration under Obama presidency is one of the prime examples. At the systemic level, it is during the changing transitions of power in Asia because of a rising China and declining US presence in the region which contributed to India's growing prominence in the Indian Ocean. Such a transformation of India was supplemented by increasing domestic capabilities to preserve the peace and stability in the regional structure from traditional and non-traditional security threats. This chapter highlights the important bilateral and multilateral initiatives of cooperation especially in maritime realm, taken under the leadership of Manmohan Singh in UPA rule from 2004 to 2014 in the first half of the chapter. It is followed by a discussion on the maritime cooperation followed by India and US under NDA rule since 2014.

India-US relations in the 2000s

India's relationship with the US under the Vajpayee government started well with the declaration of the Vision Statement in 2000, jointly signed by both the countries to cooperate

in several sectors, from military to counter-terrorism measures. In the US, it was the 9/11 terrorist attacks which shook the country's security system and the Iraq and Afghanistan crisis in which the US was a prominent actor, drained its economy into a financial crisis in 2008. India with its commitment towards strategic autonomy and domestic political constraints decided not to get involved directly in US intervention through sending of troops in Afghanistan and Iraq. Nevertheless, India was ready to provide support to the humanitarian crisis under the UN banner or any other initiative of cooperation under any multilateral organisations. India was one of the foremost countries to condemn the US 9/11 terrorist attacks and offered logistical support to the US with access to air bases and ports, refuelling facilities and intelligence sharing against the terrorists groups operating from the regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Both the states- India and the US also established a Joint Working Group on Counter Terrorism as well as Cyber Security Forum to successfully fight terrorism from neighbouring regions. India too helped US during its 'Operation Enduring Freedom' in Afghanistan when the Indian Fleet under 'Operation Sagittarius' guarded the US vessels passing through the Strait of Malacca, an important choke point for free flow of energy security and maritime trade protecting them from the transnational security threats in the region.¹²⁵ These gestures not only brought the two countries close in their goal of securing the global commons but also made US recognize India's potential and rising capabilities in the maritime sphere. In the meantime, the sanctions by the US government on India for conducting the nuclear tests (of 1998) were lifted up. In fact, it was a sign of improvement in their bilateral relations eventually recognizing India's nuclear power status informally in the global context (as a de-facto nuclear power).

A perception started developing within the US and also globally about the declining presence of US in the IOR. The US Navy was mostly centred on the Western Indian Ocean around the Persian Gulf because of its active military involvement in the region and the costly wars in Iraq and Afghanistan with devastating effects on its economy. This overall limited the US influence in the entire region. This led to three dividing school of thoughts in America about declining position of US in the international politics. According to Harsh V. Pant, the 'relativists' (the first school) argue that the US is experiencing a relative decline in echoing its influence globally with the simultaneous rise of Chinese power leading to a multi-polar

¹²⁵ Chatterjee, A. "From Uncertainty to Solidarity? An Anatomy Of Post-Cold War India-U.S. Relations." *Jadavpur Journal of International Relations* 14 (2010).

world. Alternatively, the ‘absolutists’ (the second school) declare a bipolar world is developing with China as its main challenger while the US having an absolute decline globally. Finally, the ‘rejectionists’ (the third school) clearly rejects the claims of the US decline while proposing that Chinese rise with its revisionist aims will be contested and balanced internationally by several powers with the help of US.¹²⁶ This led US to seek strategic partnerships with like-minded countries where common interests existed. Hence, the US moved towards India in sharing its responsibilities in securing the Indian Ocean where India emerged as a leading power in the region (which was supported by the US for maintenance of a stable and peaceful order).

Against this strategic environment, India emerged as the centre of US strategic interests in the IOR for a stable rule based order as well as to link with a growing Indian economy for trade and defence market. India hosted and participated in the International Fleet Review held in 2001 which aimed to promote cooperation and goodwill among the navies while showcasing its capabilities. In 2001, the first formal level discussion took place with the visit of the US Deputy Secretary of State, Richard Armitage to India and discussed common maritime security issues to counter global terrorism and piracy by increased military level contacts and exchange of information, logistic support and assistance to each other.¹²⁷ India benefitted from its relationship with the US through access in high dual-use technology equipments

¹²⁶ Pant, H, and Y Joshi. *The US Pivot and Indian Foreign Policy: Asia's Evolving Balance of Power*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016, 13-16.

In this book, the US’s declining position in the international system has been described by three different school of thoughts. The relativists school argues that the wars fought in Iraq and Afghanistan, the 2008 financial crisis as well as the Chinese rise has made US witness a relative decline of influence in the global hierarchy for a certain period of time giving rise to a multipolar world of power distribution. The absolutists school consider the decline in absolute terms with China rising as the main challenger to its unilateral hegemony in the coming times with the decline mostly defined in terms of economic capacities of the two countries forming a bipolar world with a declining hegemon and a rising power. The rejectionists school completely reject the claims made on American decline as it lacked evidence to prove it. They defended American status on the ground that US has earlier recovered from financial crises rising out of costly wars and the Chinese rise would not be that smooth as predicted because of its aggressive intentions which will make its neighbouring states balance its power and seek US assistance.

¹²⁷ Rani, S. "Indo-US Maritime Cooperation: Challenges and Prospects." *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India* 8, no. 2 (2012): 123-143.

such as weapons and radar systems, reconnaissance planes and protected exclusive information through the *General Security of Military Information Agreement (GSOMIA)* signed in 2002. These cooperative initiatives bolstered India's military strength and its status ambitions. The growing recognition of India in US strategic discourses was highlighted in the National Security Strategy (NSS) document released by the Bush administration in 2002 where the US relationship with India was given importance. The first step towards the transformation of the relationship took place when the two countries jointly announced the "*Next Steps to Strategic Partnership*" in 2004. They decided to cooperate in areas of civilian nuclear and space technology with that of high technology trade and dialogue related to missile defense¹²⁸ to support India's domestic capabilities through supply of needed equipments and observing its importance as a benign rising power.

After the UPA (United Progressive Alliance) government came into power in 2004 under the leadership of Manmohan Singh, India actively continued the close cooperation with US as established by the previous government led by PM Vajpayee. At the same time, the United States presidency was run by the Bush administration since 2001 who followed Clinton's path in solidifying its strategic ties with India. Thus, flexibility on the ideological positions (across political spectrum) is visible with both the administrations to strengthen the Indo-US cooperation irrespective of the domestic governments they belonged. The *New Framework for Defense Cooperation* was signed in 2005 giving opportunities for an active defence collaboration and co-production of technological equipments. It espoused on shared interests between the two countries to jointly work on issues regarding security and stability and protecting free flow of trade and commerce while also defeating terrorism which later contributed to the rise in defence sales to India.¹²⁹ There was a slow and gradual integration of national interests between the two administrations through bilateral cooperation in defence sector.

Additionally, *Maritime Security Framework Agreement* which was framed in 2006 on the same lines to work bilaterally and multilaterally in dealing with the maritime threats both traditional such as security threats from belligerent revisionist countries, and non-traditional

¹²⁸ U.S. Department of State. *Next Steps in Strategic Partnership with India*, 2004.
<https://2001-2009.state.gov/p/sca/rls/pr/28109.html> (Accessed on 11th March, 2022)

¹²⁹ Mukherjee, R. "Chaos as opportunity: the United States and world order in India's grand strategy." *Contemporary Politics*, 2020: 1-19.

threats from maritime terrorism, transnational piracy, as well as, to commit and support the existing international organizations providing maritime security and respect international laws.¹³⁰ Later, US-India Strategic Dialogue were initiated since 2010 after the US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton proposed to discuss issues of common concerns ranging from regional to global level for enhanced cooperation in the maritime domain.¹³¹ The rising importance of IOR made the both countries to collaborate in the maritime security aspects to protect their security interests in the region.

Domestically, India started developing its own maritime capabilities by focusing on a stronger blue water navy¹³² for the high oceans and upgraded its military facilities to enhance its maritime presence in the IOR. A constant increase in the Navy's expenditure budget could be seen in 2003 as it touched the highest with 17percent of the total defence budget¹³³ where new aircraft carrier(INS Vikramaditya and INS Viraat), nuclear submarine(INS Arihant), INS Jalashwa- an amphibious ship and P-81 long range maritime reconnaissance aircrafts were purchased for power projection, deterrence and maritime awareness. Along with the India's Western Command at Mumbai and Eastern Command at Vishakapatnam, the Southern Command was established in Kochi and a new naval base INS Kadamba was started in 2005 at Karwar under the Project Seabird¹³⁴ which aimed at expanding the naval facilities to influence the different parts of the Indian Ocean. A tri-Services facility was inaugurated in 2001 and upgraded in 2005 in the Andaman and Nicobar islands which was the Far Eastern

¹³⁰ Rani, S. "Indo-US Maritime Cooperation: Challenges and Prospects." *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India* 8, no. 2 (2012): 123-143.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Raja Mohan, C. *Samudra Manthan: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific*. India: Oxford University Press, 2013, 55.

A blue water navy is meant to have all round capabilities of C4ISR(command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) to operate in deep oceans by projecting naval power and forward presence through naval modernization, development of aircraft carriers and naval bases in and outside the countries for offshore operations, strategic deterrence and seeking partnerships through naval diplomacy and conducting combined joint operations as well as providing maritime assistance in distance waters.

¹³³ Scott, D. "India's "Grand Strategy" for the Indian Ocean: Mahanian Visions." *Asia-Pacific Review* 13, no. 2 (2006): 97-129.

¹³⁴ Geraghty, C. *India in the Indian Ocean Region: Re-calibrating U.S. Expectations*. Washington DC: American Security Project, 2012.

Naval Command and a naval base in the Lakshadweep island for coastal surveillance¹³⁵ in Bay of Bengal and Arabian Sea region. These infrastructures helped India in monitoring the transit routes and the important choke points passing through the region for protecting country's own national interests regarding energy and maritime security.

At the leadership level, diplomatic speeches made by Prime Ministers A.B. Vajpayee and Manmohan Singh repeatedly focused on areas “*Aden to Malacca*” and “*the Suez to the South China Sea*” broadly highlighting India's expanding geographic scope of maritime interests.¹³⁶ On the same ground, India published its first ever Maritime Doctrine in 2004 - The “*Indian Maritime Doctrine*”¹³⁷, espoused broadly the maritime aims and strategies to make a stronger Navy thereby a stronger maritime power. It should be capable to rule the high seas apart from coastal defence and protect the sea lanes of communications from Persian Gulf to Strait of Malacca through which trade and commerce operated from emerging security threats in the region. In 2007, the updated version - *Freedom to Use the Seas: India's Maritime Military Strategy* was published with a detailed outline about the role of the Indian Navy, in order to spread maritime consciousness and promote its power projection capabilities where it would actively contribute both during war and peace time. The four main roles of Indian Navy were classified into military, diplomatic, constabulary and benign to operate both during traditional naval wars as well as providing humanitarian assistance and disaster relief¹³⁸ broadly to address the traditional as well as the non-traditional security issues. The document further focused on the development and production of new technology and equipment through procurement plans and indigenous acquisitions as well as engagement with major powers and regional navies to provide security in the region and serve India's interests in its emergence as a powerful maritime nation.¹³⁹ At the budget allocation level, from 1992-93 to 2012-2013

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Raja Mohan, C. “India and the Changing Geopolitics of the Indian Ocean.” *Maritime Affairs : Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India* 6, no. 2 (2010): 1-12.

¹³⁷ Integrated Headquarters, Ministry of Defence(Navy). *Indian Maritime Doctrine*. New Delhi: Government of India, 2004.

¹³⁸ Mukherjee, R. "Chaos as opportunity: the United States and world order in India's grand strategy." *Contemporary Politics*, 2020: 1-19.

¹³⁹ Holmes, J, and A.C. & T, Yoshihara Winner. *Indian Naval Strategy in the Twenty-first Century*. London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2009.

the Navy's share in the defence budget increased from 11.5 per cent to 19 per cent¹⁴⁰. It implied an increase in Indian Navy's activities in the region with its objective to rise as a strong maritime power through building blue water naval capabilities.

Additionally, in the non-traditional security front, the big boost in collaboration between the two countries for humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HA/DR) operations was in 2004 tsunami in the IOR. The US-India Disaster Relief Initiative was created by both the countries during this period to provide combined training for combating future disasters through communication and intelligence sharing and strengthening interoperability between the navies for prompt response to handle the crisis situations efficiently. With the rise in natural disasters and cyclones affecting the region, India also strengthened its own capabilities through formation of new agencies and organisations like the National Disaster Management Agency (NDMA), the National Institute for Disaster Management (NIDM), and the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF).¹⁴¹ The Indian Navy, as well focused on acquiring new multi-functional tankers, amphibious ships, and frigates to hold multinational HA/DR naval exercises which were deployed for carrying disaster relief 'bricks' containing food, medicine, clothing, water purification equipment and kitchen supplies.¹⁴² India started increasing its Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) by expanding its presence in the oceans including its aim for sustainable development by providing security of its Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZ).

Besides, the 2004 Tsunami in the IOR accelerated formation of a "Tsunami Core Group" by US, Japan, Australia and India to facilitate coordination of relief activities¹⁴³ which later was called the QUAD grouping aimed at preserving the stability and security of the regional architecture from maritime threats through proper dialogue and consultation. The leadership from all the countries were highly interested in converting the ad hoc mechanism into a proper grouping sharing responsibilities in protecting the rule based order and maritime

¹⁴⁰ Pant, H, and Y Joshi. "The American "Pivot" And The Indian Navy: It's Hedging All The Way." *Naval War College Press* 68, no. 1 (2015): 47-70.

¹⁴¹ Samaranayake, N, and C Lea & D, Gorenburg. *Improving U.S.-India HA/DR Coordination in the Indian Ocean*. US: CNA Analysis & Solutions, 2014.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Envall, H. "The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue: Towards An Indo-Pacific Order?" *Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Nanyang Technological University*, 2019.

security in the ocean. The grouping was looked upon by China as an anti-China military grouping and to maintain the trade and commercial relations with China at the bilateral level the countries disassociated from the Chinese view. Australia was the first to express concerns about the nature of dialogues to not sound anti-China and took a decision to withdraw followed by Japan on similar lines as every country had its own national interests which could not be aligned together at that time.¹⁴⁴ Thus, the strategic positioning of the countries based on their aim to maintain a cordial relationship with China and the rising geopolitical rivalries in Asia led to differences which led QUAD (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) into a temporary break after 2008.

India being at the centre of the IOR equally contributes in securing the high oceans from non-traditional transnational threats through counter-terrorism and anti-piracy measures. India plays an active part in functioning of the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) which was the first government to government agreement on cooperation against piracy and helped in establishment of its Information Sharing Centre in 2006. Since 2008, the Indian Naval Force independently led counter-piracy operations in Somalia waters and the Gulf of Aden¹⁴⁵ maintaining a continuous presence to protect its shipping lines for free flow of commerce as well as not getting entangled in any country led alliances which will affect its sovereignty. The rise of terrorism was felt by both the countries through the 9/11 attacks in US and the USS Cole bombing in Yemen, while the 26/11 attacks in Mumbai,¹⁴⁶ in India. This led to collaboration between the two countries in terms of intelligence and technological sharing as well as physical assistance in the development of navy and coastal guards for adapting to counter-terrorism measures. In 2006, the Indian Fleet and the US Fleet jointly collaborated in the Non-Combatant Evacuation Operation in Lebanon.¹⁴⁷ There was active cooperation between India and US in encountering non-conventional threats in the ocean.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Pant, H, and Y Joshi. "The American "Pivot" And The Indian Navy: It's Hedging All The Way." *Naval War College Press* 68, no. 1 (2015): 47-70.

¹⁴⁶ Mishra, V. "India-US maritime cooperation: Crossing the Rubicon." *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India*, 2019.

¹⁴⁷ Rani, S. "Indo-US Maritime Cooperation: Challenges and Prospects." *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India* 8, no. 2 (2012): 123-143.

At the multilateral level, there was a rise in the interaction and participation of countries in conducting naval exercises. In 2008, the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) was established by the Indian Naval Force for cooperative interaction of regional navies of the IOR for maintaining security and stability by addressing the maritime issues and develop solutions.¹⁴⁸ It was mostly a consultative forum that could not develop itself in conducting joint naval operations but had a potential to develop into one. The Indian Naval Force along with US carried out various naval exercises annually named MALABAR for fleet exercise, Habu Nag for amphibious operations and Spitting Cobra and Salvex for diving and salvage¹⁴⁹ which were necessary for power projection and continuing presence in providing stability in the IOR.

The significant moment in the bilateral ties came with the signing of the *Indo-US Nuclear Deal* in 2008 through which India's growing status was accommodated by the formal recognition of India as a de-facto nuclear weapons state (NWS) and a responsible nuclear power. It was done by adjusting and amending US domestic laws like the Atomic Energy Act of 1954 and enforcing the Hyde Act and 123 Agreement to allow peaceful and unhindered civil nuclear cooperation with a country that refused to sign the NPT (Non-Proliferation Treaty) even after testing nuclear weapons.¹⁵⁰ It was considered to be an exemption in the American legislation. India was finally able to come out from the nuclear ban (which was imposed through Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG) restrictions) and was able to expand its civil nuclear cooperation which was an important need to satisfy its energy security requirements during the times of globalisation. In response to US adjustments, India extended cooperation by doing its own part in separating civilian and military nuclear facilities, placed it under IAEA (International Atomic Energy Agency) safeguards and inspections as well as, refrained from transfer of nuclear technologies to non-nuclear states.¹⁵¹ This was the highest point reached between Bush and Singh administration even though there were several domestic political constraints faced by the Singh administration from the supporting communist parties

¹⁴⁸ Upadhyaya, S. "Maritime security cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region: The role of the Indian Navy." *Australian Journal of Maritime and Ocean Affairs* 6, no. 4 (2014): 173-190.

¹⁴⁹ Brewster, D. *India's Ocean: The Story of India's Bid for Regional Leadership*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2014.

¹⁵⁰ Chadhuri, R. *Forged in Crisis: India and the United States since 1947*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2014.

¹⁵¹ Chatterjee, A. "From Uncertainty to Solidarity? An Anatomy Of Post-Cold War India-U.S. Relations." *Jadavpur Journal of International Relations* 14 (2010).

of the UPA coalition. The communist parties opposed the notion of compromising India's strategic autonomy through agreement though even after the pact, India retained its freedom to continue its development of nuclear technologies for deterrence and expanding strategic relationships with other countries. At a macro level strategic point, this also de-hyphenated India and Pakistan from its Cold war ties with India slowly progressing towards its great power ambitions in the region with the support of US.¹⁵² In essence, the deal contributed immensely in declaring India as a leading power in the region.

There were two incidents which slowed the pace of the cooperation between the two countries even though the 2008 nuclear deal proved to be a success in bringing the two countries closer. With the Barack Obama administration coming to power in 2009 and its ideas to implement the G2 or the Group of Two between US and China for joint management of global affairs, signalled a complete different posture of the US administration as compared to the Bush times which created a strategic uncertainty among the Indian strategic community. Later, G2 was abandoned due to the rising Chinese assertiveness with hegemonic intentions in the Asia-Pacific region. Obama shifted US foreign policy in cultivating strategic partnerships with an exclusive focus on India to counter Chinese rise through announcement of US Pivot to Asia policy in 2011. This uncertainty in US foreign policy choices created doubts for the Indians about the incoherent nature of changing US policies in a short period of time. On the other end, with the second UPA government coming to power, there developed certain degree of strategic uncertainty due to American policies, as well as through the emphasis on the Indian side for autonomy. In addition, a high degree of anti-American attitude among the supporting parties of UPA made the response towards the Pivot policy characterised by 'reluctance and caution.'¹⁵³ With the growing Indian presence in the IOR and perceived declining presence of US actually made US support India in enhancing its capabilities and develop itself as a major power to shoulder responsibilities in providing net security in the maritime arena. Obama administration's strategic document titled "*Sustaining US Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*" also stated US support through a long term strategic partnership with India so that it is able to emerge as a regional economic

¹⁵² Shoup, B, and S Ganguly. "Introduction." In *US-Indian Strategic Cooperation Into The 21st Century: More than words*, by S Ganguly and B, Shoup & A, Scobell, London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2006: 1-10.

¹⁵³ Pant, H: Joshi, Y. "Indo-US relations under Modi: the strategic logic underlying the embrace." *International Affairs* 93, no. 1 (2017): 133-146

anchor and a security provider in IOR.¹⁵⁴ Thus, initiatives were taken from US side to take forward its relationship with India.

In 2012, US Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta after calling the bilateral cooperation as the lynchpin of US Rebalance to Asia strategy launched the Defense Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI) aimed at deeper defence cooperation with reduced bureaucratic hurdles between the two countries.¹⁵⁵ The then Indian Defence Minister AK Antony preferred limited engagements with the US and diversification of strategic partnerships with different countries in the region. US also pressed for engaging India in signing the three important agreements for technical cooperation under Logistics Sharing Agreement (LSA), Communication Interoperability and Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA) and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA) which had limited progress under the UPA rule because of its occupation with strategic autonomy¹⁵⁶ and preferred to keep it aside as it was not a priority for them then.

This led to diversification of partnerships with the littorals in the IOR as a part of its hedging approach through agreements with countries like Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles for conducting hydrographic surveys and anti-piracy patrols with construction of maritime surveillance systems because of the strategic positioning of these islands in the ocean. These helped in monitoring the activities in the important choke points to provide security to sea lanes of communication meant for free flow of trade and commerce. India actively cooperated with Iran in developing a north-south transportation corridor via Afghanistan and towards Russia through Caspian Sea. India assisted Iran in developing its Chabahar port and construction of rail and highway link connecting Chabahar port with Zaranj in Afghanistan to form alternative supply chains for meeting India's energy needs.¹⁵⁷ India strategically

¹⁵⁴ U.S. Department of Defense. *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, 2012.
https://www.defense.gov/news/Defense_Strategic_Guidance.pdf (Accessed on 18th October, 2022)

¹⁵⁵ Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisition and Sustainment, U.S. Department of Defense. *U.S.- India Defense Technology and Trade Initiative (DTTI)*, 2015.
<https://www.acq.osd.mil/ic/DTTI.html> (Accessed on 23rd August, 2022)

¹⁵⁶ Pant, H, and Y Joshi. "The American "Pivot" And The Indian Navy: It's Hedging All The Way." *Naval War College Press* 68, no. 1 (2015): 47-70.

¹⁵⁷ Das, C. "Changing contours of India's Ocean strategy, 2004-2015." *Australian Journal of Maritime and Ocean Affairs*, 2018: 1-15.

engaged with the ASEAN countries in conducting bilateral naval exercises and defence agreements with countries like Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia for coordinated patrolling in the Indian Ocean.¹⁵⁸ Thus, India spread its diplomatic linkages with multiple countries having maritime interests in the region.

The India-US maritime cooperation during Manmohan Singh's regime was dealt judiciously with a lot of circumspection as there were domestic constraints rising from its belief in non-alignment and uncertainty arising from the inconsistent US policies in the region. This led the UPA government to take a defensive stand and adopt hedging practices in order to not align to a particular side completely with independent strategic choices in cultivating security partnerships with different countries which were attuned to India's national interest in the IOR. The next section deals with the analysis on the rising Chinese assertiveness in the region coupled with Narendra Modi's NDA government coming into power with a foreign policy to engage with US in the Indian Ocean Region.

The Rise of China Factor and Its Implications

The Indian Ocean because of its geostrategic location has always been the theatre of great power rivalry and the struggle to dominate the region existed since the World War times. Out of five oceans, the Indian Ocean is the third-largest in the world connecting Asia in the north, Africa in the west, Indo-China in the east and Antarctica in the south. It has four critical access waterways- the Suez Canal, Bab-el Mandeb, the Strait of Hormuz and the Strait of Malacca. The Indian Ocean connects the Middle East, Africa and East Asia with Europe and the Americas.¹⁵⁹ As discussed in the previous chapter, in the 19th century, Great Britain enjoyed a superior position in the IOR.

The fall in the relative power of Britain and the simultaneous rise of power blocs, led by the US and the USSR respectively, in the Cold War times made the IOR a region of power struggle. Both these powers carried ambitions of expanding their sphere of influence in the region.¹⁶⁰ In contemporary times, the onus is on the US for maintaining stability in the IOR

¹⁵⁸ Scott, D. "The Indian Ocean as India's Ocean." In *The Oxford Handbook of Indian Foreign Policy*, by D Malone and C Raja Mohan & S Raghavan. UK: Oxford University Press, 2015.

¹⁵⁹ Pant, H. "India in the Indian Ocean: Growing Mismatch between Ambitions and Capabilities." *Pacific Affairs* 8, no. 2 (2009): 279-297.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid.

due to lack of another superpower in the region. Though US has the largest navy in the world its presence in the IOR kept on shrinking for years with a total of 272 ships in 2016 which was the smallest number since 1917.¹⁶¹ This led US to look out for strategic partnerships in the region with India emerging as the potential country in sharing responsibilities for preserving balance in the regional architecture from the Chinese expansionist policies with hegemonic intentions.

In addition, the countries with emerging economies in the IOR relied on this oceanic space for supply of energy to secure their economic development and industrial base. Approximately, a half of the world's sea borne trade passes through the IOR with around 20 percent of it consisting of resources needed for free flow of energy. Almost 40 percent of the world's offshore oil production comes from the Indian Ocean, while 65 percent of world's oil and 35 percent of gas reserves are found in the littoral states of this Ocean. Almost three-quarters of the trade passing through the Indian Ocean in the form of oil and gas belong to states that are not part of the region.¹⁶² Hence, unimpeded flow of trade and energy resources across the Sea Lanes of Communication (SLOCs) is essential for the international economic supply chains and for this reason nation-states have huge stakes in the region.

Historically, India has harboured ambitions of establishing itself as a non-hegemonic, maritime power residing in the IOR, but, the limited material capabilities of the country has not allowed it to do so. India is once again trying to develop itself as a net security provider in the region with its expanding economic and military capabilities. India's economic development relies on the free flow of commerce through the SLOCs of the Indian Ocean because 90 percent of India's trade depends on merchant shipping.¹⁶³ India here faces an unprecedented challenge in the form of China who is expanding its sphere of influence in the Indian Ocean. India is trying its best to limit the influence of China but the Chinese navy is far ahead in terms of superiority with military modernisation by acquiring a submarine fleet with ballistic missiles and high end technologies for surveillance as well as building an additional aircraft carrier. It is due to this reason that India is showing keen interest for

¹⁶¹ Choudhury, A, and P Moorthy. "Strategic-Maritime Triangle in the Indian Ocean: An Emerging Indo-US Naval Entente?" *India Quarterly* 74, no. 3 (2018): 1-21.

¹⁶² Pant, H. "India in the Indian Ocean: Growing Mismatch between Ambitions and Capabilities." *Pacific Affairs* 8, no. 2 (2009): 279-297.

¹⁶³ Ibid.

maritime cooperation with other like-minded powers to preserve and enhance its strategic interests in the IOR.

Since the 1980s, the massive boost in Chinese economy contributed to its enlarging maritime interest in the Indian Ocean with one of the largest defence expenditure in the world and a strong navy after military modernization. China started obtaining naval bases in the critical choke points of the IOR as this serves both its economic and strategic interests to protect its shipping lanes of commerce and energy trade and aiming for maritime security by cooperating with regional countries. China is building up its maritime power with an aim to establish dominance in the IOR and emerge as the potential superpower of the world eventually challenging the established balance in the region. Chinese navy is now recognized to be the third largest in the world ranking behind USA and Russia which is India's biggest worry and to counter this rise in India's own backyard it seeks partnership with US to preserve the power status-quo in the region. According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), in 2021, China's defence expenditure accounted to USD 293 billion while Indian defence expenditure was USD 76.6 billion.¹⁶⁴ The data implies a wide disparity in China and India's military growth and outreach capability.

The growing presence of the Chinese navy can restrict India's freedom to manoeuvre in the IOR. China started making its presence felt around 2008 through counter-piracy patrols in the Gulf of Aden¹⁶⁵ and since then had a continued presence through the PLA navy submarines to protect its own growing overseas interests securing its maritime trade and energy needs. Even though China has access through the South China Seas into the Pacific but it doesn't have the access to the central part of the Indian Ocean where India resides with a long coastline. So, to seek influence and project power countering the US presence China has invested massively in several port construction and infrastructural projects aligning Chinese economic interests with that of its strategic maritime interests in developing its sea-power in

¹⁶⁴ Silva et al. *Trends In World Military Expenditure, 2021*. Stockholm: SIPRI, 2022.

¹⁶⁵ Brewster, D. "The Changing Balance of Power in the Indian Ocean: Prospects for a Significant Chinese Naval Presence." In *Evolving Maritime Geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific Region*, by D Mitchel and R Passarelli, US: Stimson Center, 2013: 71-81.

IOR.¹⁶⁶ This has made both US and India to counter Chinese efforts and curb its influence in the region.

It was under Xi Jinping's regime since 2013 that rapid military modernisations was undertaken for strengthening capacities and develop specialised forces to lead military operations with greater military technological innovations and lead joint military operations. Similarly, in the White Paper released by China in 2015 about its Military Strategy, along with the military modernisation aspects, there was emphasis on naval restructuring plans. It aimed at giving equal importance to the seas besides the land frontiers and achieve offshore water defence with open seas protection to emerge as a strong naval power with the ability to protect its maritime rights and interests.¹⁶⁷ This highlighted Chinese focus on making inroads into the Indian Ocean through the seas.

China stationed its Jin class submarines at a submarine base near Sanaya located in the southern tip of Hainan Island in South China Sea.¹⁶⁸ This became a matter of serious concern for India as the base was only 1200 nautical miles far from the Malacca Strait and was the nearest entry point for China to the Indian Ocean. The access tunnels on the mouth of the deep-water base were alarming for India as China's strategic positioning could prohibit routine shipping through the three crucial SLOCs of the Indian Ocean. For China it was to solve the "Malacca Dilemma" as then Chinese President Hu Jintao called, so that Chinese shipping lines through choke points remain uninterrupted. Chinese set up its first naval base in Djibouti in Africa in 2017 as a key logistics hub for its naval operations in the IOR which boosted up its naval ambitions¹⁶⁹ in securing its maritime concerns in the region.

Accordingly, the "String of Pearls" strategy of China has significantly expanded China's strategic depth in Indian Ocean. This strategy includes the development of Gwadar Port in Pakistan, naval bases in Burma, facilities to gather electronic intelligence on islands in the

¹⁶⁶ Krupakar, J. "China's Naval Base(s) in the Indian Ocean-Signs of a Maritime Grand Strategy?" *Strategic Analysis*, 2017: 1-16.

¹⁶⁷ Suri, G. *China's Expanding Military Maritime Footprints in the Indian Ocean Region(IOR): India's Response*. New Delhi: Vivekananda International Foundation & Pentagon Press, 2017.

¹⁶⁸ Pant, H. "India in the Indian Ocean: Growing Mismatch between Ambitions and Capabilities." *Pacific Affairs* 8, no. 2 (2009): 279-297.

¹⁶⁹ Krupakar, J. "China's Naval Base(s) in the Indian Ocean-Signs of a Maritime Grand Strategy?" *Strategic Analysis*, 2017: 1-16.

Bay of Bengal, funding the construction of canal in the Kra Isthmus situated in Thailand, a military agreement with Cambodia, development of ports in Sri Lanka (Hambantota) and Bangladesh.¹⁷⁰ China addresses geographical vulnerabilities in the Indian Ocean through increasing naval capabilities and gaining access to ports and bases, while attempting to invest in transnational transportation links and oceanic connectivity infrastructure across different continents bordering the IOR for deepening economic integration and facilitate free flow of international commerce. This initiative was called the *Belt and Road Initiative* (BRI) proposed by Xi in 2013 which had two components – the *Silk Road Economic Belt* (SREB) and the 21st Century *Maritime Silk Road* (MSR). The SREB was supposed to connect China with the Persian Gulf and the Mediterranean Sea through Central Asia and West Asia overland connectivity, the MSR was supposed to connect China with Europe through South China Sea and Indian Ocean overseas link.¹⁷¹ Through these initiatives, China aimed at fulfilling its expansionist agenda in the IOR.

The BRI gave Chinese access to Indian Ocean by connecting China's Yunnan province with Myanmar opening in the eastern side of India in the Bay of Bengal, the CPEC interlinking China's Xinjiang province through Gwadar port in Pakistan in the western side of India in the Arabian Sea and the MSR integrating all the major ports of the countries and littorals belonging to the region.¹⁷² According to Indian perception, all these initiatives aimed at encircling India through both land and the seas. Moreover, as per the strategy stated by China in the *China-Pakistan Economic Corridor* (CPEC) which is a part of SREB scheme the road and railway lines which are supposed to pass over the disputed territory of Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) into the Gwadar port will help China get closer access to the Strait of Hormuz. This became a serious issue of security threat not only for India but also for the US as civilian infrastructure oriented growth can also be used in fulfilling aggressive intentions in the later period. Hence, India has always positioned itself against the BRI concept because

¹⁷⁰ Pant, H. "India in the Indian Ocean: Growing Mismatch between Ambitions and Capabilities." *Pacific Affairs* 8, no. 2 (2009): 279-297.

¹⁷¹ Suri, G. *China's Expanding Military Maritime Footprints in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR): India's Response*. New Delhi: Vivekananda International Foundation & Pentagon Press, 2017.

¹⁷² Mishra, V. "India-US maritime cooperation: Crossing the Rubicon." *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India*, 2019.

of its non-transparent nature and neglecting territoriality and sovereignty of other countries involving in disputed territories which are yet to be solved.

Chinese justified its stance in the Indian Ocean as a benign strategy to improve economic connectivity and bring overall development in the region by citing its medieval past of maritime tradition led by Admiral Zheng He of the Ming Dynasty and his seven voyages of trade and discovery in Southeast and South Asian waters.¹⁷³ By stating the maritime history of the nation through claims that the earlier expeditions in the past were peaceful and economic in nature, China justified its policies and declared that it has the natural right to maintain its presence in the geopolitically significant Ocean. The past maritime traditions helped China legitimise its ambitions and the naval presence in the IOR and that it was aimed at a peaceful rise towards being a great power. Recently, China's indulgence in maritime disputes over maritime territories in the sea and its expansionist policies over islands through building up of bases, ports and pipelines with unclear intentions not only gave economic access but also military build-up in the region which disrupted the power equilibrium. This, in turn, made US and India to enhance its cooperation in preserving the status-quo of Asia thereby challenging Chinese attempt to build an alternative international order.

India-US cooperation in the period of NDA rule from 2014

The rise of an assertive China challenging the international order has led to convergence of interest between India and US like never before where the maintenance of the status-quo in an environment full of strategic uncertainty and power transition is a priority. The breakthrough moment in the bilateral cooperation in the IOR was in 2015 under Obama administration with the signing of the *US-India Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean Region* to address regional maritime security issues ranging from “Africa to East Asia.” In the document, India was highlighted as a key player in the region to balance the Asian security architecture, Chinese expansionism in the South China Sea was pointed out and both the countries aimed for maintaining stability and peace with freedom of navigation in the seas and working under principles established by international laws.¹⁷⁴ The focus shifted on India as it was the only country with the largest regional naval force in the

¹⁷³ Holmes, J, and A.C. & T, Yoshihara Winner. *Indian Naval Strategy in the Twenty-first Century*. London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2009.

¹⁷⁴ Pant, H, and Y Joshi. *The US Pivot and Indian Foreign Policy: Asia's Evolving Balance of Power*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

IOR capable of providing security as a non-hegemonic resident power which made US support India with defence and technological assistance to help India develop as a major power and balance China's maritime expansionism in the region.

The foreign policy under the Modi government has continued the hedging practices adopted by the previous government in a more nuanced way. Even though the present government aimed at betterment of bilateral trade and economic relations with China but it also expressed Indian concerns regarding the security aspects in the maritime region when it was challenged by Chinese revisionist mindset. It was clearly highlighted by PM Modi during his visit to Japan that Chinese activities in the East and South China Seas showed "the 19th century mindset of expansionism."¹⁷⁵ Furthermore, he gave a call for all the states who are active stakeholders to participate in providing maritime security for freedom of navigation and a rule based order in the seas which will benefit everyone. This led to the extension of the MALABAR naval exercises with the inclusion of Japan from 2015 and also talks were held for creation of alternative trade supply chains by the two countries through the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor framework to balance China's BRI program.

In addition, India's position as a provider of net security is pinpointed time and again by US because of its increasing maritime presence and advanced maritime capabilities being the most powerful regional navy as compared to the others in the region. India on its part has been performing well taking the centre stage in the IOR through its domestic activities. To increase India's strategic ties with the Asia-Pacific region the NDA government under PM Modi upgraded India's Look East policy to Act East policy. With it India actively pursued to establish relations with ASEAN countries through cultural and economic linkages and developing strong connectivity among the countries in the region countering China's rise collectively in providing choke point security. Similarly, India has also launched the Link West policy to focus on the maritime linkages with the West Asian countries in securing the Sea lanes of Communications where the shipping lines pass through of all the countries while collectively securing the maritime interests.

¹⁷⁵ Press Information Bureau. *Text of the Statement by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's Keynote Address at the Luncheon Hosted by Nippon Kiedanren- The Japanese Chamber of Commerce and Industry and the Japan-India Business Cooperation Committee*, 2014. <https://pib.nic.in/newsite/pmrelease.aspx?mincode=3>. (Accessed on 18th December, 2021)

Similar diplomatic initiatives have been launched under the NDA government like the Project Mausam which aimed to establish communication with maritime countries in the Indian Ocean region through revival of earlier cultural linkages based on the monsoon patterns with both the coastal and hinterland areas to develop new avenues of cooperation with shared responsibilities.¹⁷⁶ The Spice Route and India's Cotton Route were initiatives which focused on improving ties with Central Asia, Europe and African nations through revival of trade routes from where Indian cotton and spices from Kerala were traded through sea connectivity and transportation which improved with dialogue and cooperation among these countries. The Sagarmala project launched in 2015 is an ambitious initiative by the Indian government for domestic growth to develop the Indian ports and upgrading coastal maritime infrastructure with navigable and accessible waterways. This led to area specific development mostly with the focus on the Andaman and Nicobar islands and the Arabian Sea which has been gaining more strategic attention because of its geographical location which can contribute immensely to India's leading role in the IOR.¹⁷⁷ Thus, India can be seen going through a dilemma of balancing between seeking betterment of economic relations with China on one hand, while implicitly opposing its strategic initiatives through active partnerships with like-minded countries like US, where India's security and strategic interests converge in accordance to the region. This made India adopt hedging through diplomatic engagements with different countries.

India's Maritime Strategy was revised in 2015 titled *Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy* where the areas of interest were broadened and aimed at providing security to the littorals, upholding international law and emphasised MDA to develop naval capacities in its own coastlines and islands.¹⁷⁸ The security aspect was highlighted through the title itself after several incidents of maritime terrorism; the Navy was entrusted with the responsibility to provide security in both coastal and offshore areas including the littorals. India aims for a greater role in providing regional stability and security and has broadened its maritime

¹⁷⁶ Padmaja, G. "Modi's Maritime Diplomacy: A Strategic Opportunity." *Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India* 11, no. 2 (2015): 25-42.

¹⁷⁷ Panda, J.P. "India, the Blue Dot Network and the "Quad Plus" Calculus." *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, 2020: 4-22.

¹⁷⁸ Khurana, G. "India's Maritime Strategy: Context and Subtext." *Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India*, 2017.

interests both eastwards and westwards to address traditional threats from neighbouring countries with revisionist attitudes. The emerging non-traditional threat areas were recognised and addressed through capability development with induction of submarines for deterrence and reinforcing norms and laws under United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).

With the rise of strategic significance of the Indian Ocean in global politics and India's ability to shoulder greater responsibilities several regional cooperative mechanisms were adopted by the NDA Government in actively engaging the littorals and islands of the region in utilising their potential towards protecting the seas through SAGAR. The SAGAR (Security and Growth of All in the Region) policy in 2015 outlined the importance of Indian Ocean and ensured to work towards the safety, security and stability with its own domestic capabilities. Additionally, it focused on assisting maritime neighbours and island states through deeper security partnerships and developing multilateral cooperative mechanisms in addressing issues like natural disasters and climate change collectively. It also aimed at sustainable development with focus on Blue Economy practices alongside the recognition given to all the nations having stake in the region through engagement with dialogues and partnerships.¹⁷⁹ Thus, through the SAGAR initiative for small but strategically important island countries of Seychelles, Mauritius and Sri Lanka in the IOR, India aims at sharing responsibilities with all the countries through maritime cooperation. This served all the nation's interests collectively in protecting their rights and stakes in the region with respect to international maritime rules and norms with the sole responsibility to provide stability and prosperity through a peaceful order in the region. India assisted Seychelles through agreements in development of the Assumption Island, setting up of coastal surveillance radar system and gifting second Dornier aircraft.¹⁸⁰ In Mauritius, under capacity building program, Barracuda, an offshore patrol vessel was commissioned with agreements signed for connectivity facilities with the Agalega islands and on similar grounds there were discussions held on economic, political and maritime issues with Sri Lanka for strong ties between the two nations.¹⁸¹ Thus, an active Indian Ocean diplomacy was initiated by engaging the

¹⁷⁹ Raja Mohan, C. "Modi and the Indian Ocean: Restoring India's Sphere of Influence." *ISAS Insights, National University of Singapore*, 2015.

¹⁸⁰ Padmaja, G. "Modi's Maritime Diplomacy: A Strategic Opportunity." *Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India* 11, no. 2 (2015): 25-42.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

neighbouring island countries which was highly important for India to display its leadership role as a security provider.

The consequent engagement through visits made by President Obama and PM Modi with their diplomats and statesman in their partner countries signalled India's growing status and importance in the international system with US accommodating India's status as well as supporting it by stating themselves as natural partners. The two countries decided to renew the 2005 Defence Framework Agreement after ten years of its fulfilment in 2015. The DTTI agreement which was not prioritised under the UPA rule was focused by the new regime to negotiate bilateral defence technology cooperation and transfer serving both the country's national interests.

Under the DTTI the two countries decided to start joint production of military technology and equipments with working groups on aircraft-carrier technology and jet-engine technology cooperation being established.¹⁸² By pooling combined resources and capacities through Joint Working Group for Aircraft Carrier Technology Cooperation, working in areas of maritime reconnaissance aircrafts with P-8Is and P-8As and maritime surveillance through drone technology¹⁸³ helped the two countries to increase its Maritime Domain Awareness by joint operations and uplift their interoperability in tackling maritime threats in the region. The recently launched initiative "Make in India" program meant to encourage workers and professionals to develop indigenous innovations and technologies has exhibited serious interest about the DTTI initiative and showed commitment in coproduction and co-development of defence related technologies.¹⁸⁴ The defence collaboration intensified and strengthened the relationship of the two countries in working together in the maritime domain.

The core of Indo-US bilateral maritime relations consisted of naval exercises held bilaterally named Spitting Cobra, Sangam, Salvex, Tiger Triumph and multilaterally through IMX(International Maritime Exercise) and Sea Dragon hosted by US in Gulf region,

¹⁸² Pant, H; Joshi, Y. "Indo-US relations under Modi: the strategic logic underlying the embrace." *International Affairs* 93, no. 1 (2017): 133-146.

¹⁸³ Mishra, V. "India-US maritime cooperation: Crossing the Rubicon." *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India*, 2019.

¹⁸⁴ Pant, H, and Y Joshi. *The US Pivot and Indian Foreign Policy: Asia's Evolving Balance of Power*. UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

SEACAT(Southeast Asia Cooperation and Training) in Indo-Pacific region and Cutlass Express in Western Indian Ocean, ADMM(ASEAN Defence Minister's Meeting) Plus, La Perouse, Komodo and Kakadu exercises conducted by neighbouring countries in different parts of IOR and annually held MALABAR exercises¹⁸⁵ to combat risks rising out of traditional and non-traditional maritime security with readiness and preparedness. India also participated in Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) exercises hosted by US to increase navy's interoperability capabilities covering a vast region.¹⁸⁶ Maritime Security Dialogue and 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue were also initiated for interaction of leaders and high officials to discuss security issues.¹⁸⁷ The naval cooperation between India and US elevated their maritime relationship in preserving the power structure in IOR.

India with US, Japan, Australia in 2017 revived the QUAD as a forum among like-minded democracies for naval cooperation in the Indo-Pacific to balance China's expanding maritime footprints with the inclusion of Australian Navy in the annual MALABAR exercises. The aim was to preserve the rule-based order in the seas with freedom of navigation, respect for international laws and security of supply chain lines for free flow of energy and commerce. Though there have been different political priorities by all the countries in the QUAD. For India, QUAD was a medium to engage with its immediate and extended neighbourhood based on its strategic interests with an aim of securing the commons with a free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific not directed against any country. This was highlighted in PM Modi's speeches made in 2018 Shangri-La Dialogue and thereafter in different summits and forums opposing any formal alliance of any sort but tuning it with the hedging strategy because of its historical belief in non-alignment by diversifying its strategic partnerships with multiple countries in the IOR.¹⁸⁸ India did not want to lose its long term trade partner by directly

¹⁸⁵ Press Information Bureau. *Maritime Cooperation with Regional Partners released by Ministry of Defence*, 2022.
<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1807607> (Accessed on 4th December, 2022)

¹⁸⁶ Mishra, V. "India-US maritime cooperation: Crossing the Rubicon." *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India*, 2019.

¹⁸⁷ Waqar-un-Nisa. "Indo-US Naval Cooperation: Geo-Strategic Ramifications for the Region." *Policy Perspectives* 16, no. 1 (2019): 41-59.

¹⁸⁸ Panda, J.P. "India's Approach to the "Quad" and the salience of China." In *Conflict and Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific: New Geopolitical Realities*, by A Rossiter and B Cannon, London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2020: 12-39.

opposing China's strategic objectives in the region as it would affect its economy but indirectly through US partnership, India got a strategic partner to collaborate in protecting its security interests in the IOR from Chinese belligerence.

The two countries (India and US) signed the three important foundational agreements which were initiated by the UPA government but later was passed by the NDA government. Firstly, *Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA)* in 2016 allowed both countries to utilize each other's naval bases in the Indo-Pacific maritime region for logistic support, supplies and refuelling services to address traditional and non-traditional security threats meant for joint military exercises as well as humanitarian relief missions.¹⁸⁹ The *Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA)* in 2018 allowed India access to encrypted communication technology for better interoperability and surveillance.¹⁹⁰ Lastly, *Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement for Geo-Spatial Cooperation (BECA)* signed in 2020 allowed sharing of sensitive data and geospatial information which will help in navigation and targeting.¹⁹¹ These agreements were negotiated and concluded by the current NDA government as these were reciprocal in nature which did not affect India's sovereignty but only enhanced India's naval capabilities in handling maritime threats covering a vast region efficiently in the high seas. The total defence trade and sales between India and US which was nearly zero in 2008 increased to over USD 20 billion by 2020¹⁹² which made US as the third largest arms supplier to India. In general, bilateral economic and trade relations also boosted up from USD 20 billion in 2000 to USD 142 billion in 2018¹⁹³ which later dipped during COVID-19 outbreak. But in 2021, it reached a record of USD 157

Lalwani, S. *Reluctant Link? India, QUAD, and the Free and Open Indo-Pacific*. US: German Marshall Fund of the United States, 2019.

¹⁸⁹ Mishra, V. "India-US maritime cooperation: Crossing the Rubicon." *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India*, 2019.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Mishra, V. "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.

¹⁹² Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, U.S. Department of State. *U.S. Security Cooperation With India*, 2021.
<https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-india/> (Accessed on 23rd August, 2022)

¹⁹³ Embassy of India, Washington D.C. *India-US Trade and Investment*, 2019.
<https://indianembassyusa.gov.in/pages/MzQ>, (Accessed on 9th August, 2021)

billion making US India's largest trading partner and important market for export¹⁹⁴ and this multi-sectoral cooperation has immensely contributed for a greater Indo-US maritime collaboration.

The change in US presidency with Donald Trump taking the charge of administration from 2017, uncertainty and incoherent nature in US foreign policy became common as it was more transactional in nature. Though his policies regarding India's rising status in the IOR and attitude towards Chinese rise remained constant to that of the previous administration. Trump's withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and its America First campaign signalled of a reduced role of US in the maritime affairs in the beginning of his tenure. Later through its commitment towards preserving the regional architecture in the IOR and beyond, the presence of US Navy were bolstered up with continued Freedom of Navigation Operation (FONOP) in the region¹⁹⁵ which led to diverging views with India as it did not support joint operations without prior consent from countries in operating in their oceanic space which affected autonomy and sovereignty of other countries. In the 2017 National Security Strategy released by the Trump administration, the US welcomed "India's emergence as a leading power and a stronger strategic and defence partner."¹⁹⁶ Later on, the US Pacific Command was renamed as Indo-Pacific Command pointing India's centrality in the region. The document also explicitly named China as a "revisionist power" because of the strategic challenges it poses by getting involved in maritime disputes with other countries as well as its flagship programmes lacking transparency displaying hegemonic intentions.¹⁹⁷ The decision of Obama administration of making India as its Major Defence Partner (MDP) status in 2016 which prioritised defence trade with India from US side was continued by Trump presidency and through the Strategic Trade Authorisation-1(STA-1) status in 2018 India

¹⁹⁴ Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs, U.S. Department of State. *U.S. Relations with India*, 2022.

<https://www.state.gov/u-s-relations-with-india/> (Accessed on 4th December, 2022)

¹⁹⁵ Choudhury, A, and P Moorthy. "Strategic-Maritime Triangle in the Indian Ocean: An Emerging Indo-US Naval Entente?" *India Quarterly* 74, no. 3 (2018): 1-21.

¹⁹⁶ Executive Office of the President, National Security Council. *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*. Washington DC: The White House, 2017.

<https://trumpwhitehouse.archives.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf> (Accessed on 20th November, 2021)

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

became the third nation to secure high technology product sales from US to India which would contribute in greater maritime cooperation to provide security in the region.¹⁹⁸ The US, on its side also continued a similar trajectory of the previous presidencies while addressing the changing dynamics in the IOR.

Domestically, the Maritime Vision 2030 document also gave an outline of its target in the upcoming 10 years in its area of maritime development including the services and infrastructure required to achieve the efficiency and growth for an enhanced Indian presence in the high seas.¹⁹⁹ The declaration of the position of the Chief of Defence Staff by India will help unite the three wings of Defence under a single unified control and supervision where Navy will get its due resources and respect which will help to take decisions swiftly. The Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) launched in 2018, helps India in collecting and sharing information with similar centers in other regional countries regarding the challenges faced in providing maritime security and safety to raise awareness in protecting the region.

With the COVID-19 outbreak and the Galwan Valley crisis in 2020 an anti-China narrative became dominant across the world where there were advancements made by countries to develop alternative supply channels and economic framework. This led to the establishment of Blue Dot Network (BDN) initiative by US, Japan and Australia with a suggestion for India to join it.²⁰⁰ The Galwan valley crisis allowed India to develop a maritime deterrence by utilising its advantageous position in the seas in the Indian Ocean against Chinese aggression in the northern land borders by spilling over the land conflict to the ocean where it had greater preparedness and outreach. Also with the inclusion of New Zealand, South Korea, Brazil, Israel and Vietnam led to expansion in the Quad membership which was named as "QUAD Plus." Though India has taken time to discuss and negotiate to gain more knowledge about the working of the BDN before joining it, the QUAD Plus was readily accepted by India in exchange of which India was made a part of the newly expanded G7 by the US. India

¹⁹⁸ Mishra, V. "India-US maritime cooperation: Crossing the Rubicon." *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India*, 2019.

¹⁹⁹ Basu, P. "Maritime India: The Quest for a Steadfast Identity." *ORF Occassional Paper* 339 (November 2021): 1-29.

²⁰⁰ Panda, J.P. "India, the Blue Dot Network and the "Quad Plus" Calculus." *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, 2020: 4-22.

while its presidency in the UN Security Council in 2021, made the need for global maritime cooperation for maritime security a single point agenda for focused discussion and active participation. India chaired the debate on 'Enhancing Maritime Security-A Case for International Cooperation'²⁰¹ which points out India's rising leadership role in the international platforms because of its activities in the maritime sphere.

Thus, even with the changing world order and strategic uncertainty after COVID-19 pandemic, India with the support of US got opportunity to obtain a non-hegemonic leadership role to preserve the stability as well as act as an effective balancer in the region. The change of administration in US in 2021 with the upcoming Joe Biden led government did not bring any such changes in its policies towards India and the Indian Ocean. It aimed to continue and strengthen the long term bilateral maritime cooperation manifesting free and open Indo-Pacific and support India in its rise for regional leadership in the IOR and highlighted the Chinese threat with the coercion and aggression in the Indian borders and other regions which is to be handled collectively by fostering partnerships with like-minded countries.²⁰² The formation of AUKUS in 2021 or the trilateral relationship between Australia-United Kingdom-United States for security and defence partnership did not really have any direct implications on India as it was different from the QUAD alliance which was mostly a non-military strategic partnership. While this was a defence coalition which increased the chances of a greater arms race in the region with Australia getting nuclear backed submarines triggering China to do the same which can complicate India's position. India's vision of the Indo-Pacific is more centred around the IOR as compared to the Pacific Ocean and India doesn't prefer to enter any military alliance directly aiming at China as it would give rise to a direct security dilemma in the Indian Ocean but prefers to continue in the QUAD to fulfil its aims and interests in the region.

At the regional level, with Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) and Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) India addressed maritime security issues with regional and extra-regional actors active participating with a renewed dynamism and there has been progress made to

²⁰¹ Basu, P. "Maritime India: The Quest for a Steadfast Identity." *ORF Occassional Paper* 339 (November 2021): 1-29.

²⁰² Executive Office of the President, National Security Council. *Indo-Pacific Strategy Of The United States*. Washington DC: The White House, 2022.
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/U.S.-Indo-Pacific-Strategy.pdf>
(Accessed on 30th November, 2022)

combine both of the institutions. Amidst this progress, the IONS navies cooperate and launch exercises (IONS Maritime Exercise) which strengthen their interoperability capabilities beyond formal meetings of the officers and goodwill visits to protect the seas from rising threats and danger with the combined efforts of the navies. The central theme for discussion in IORA is around the concept of Blue Economy²⁰³ where India along with its own domestic initiatives for development of coastal economy and drafting its Blue Economy Framework is also contributing actively in bringing the countries in the region for sustainable use of the ocean resources. This will help in building a stronger coastal economy for Small Island Developing States (SIDS) like Maldives, Sri Lanka and contribute in their national economy altogether.

In addition, India is partnering with US and other like-minded countries, multilateral agencies under the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) established in 2019 with the aim to promote rapid development of resilient infrastructure to address climate and disaster risks through capacity building, research and technological support for sustainable development²⁰⁴. The Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) launched by India in the East Asian Summit in 2019 is an open, global initiative for countries to work and collaborate together in the area of maritime cooperation for securing the oceans to address maritime resources and ecology, capacity building and resource sharing, disaster management and maritime trade and transport connectivity through existing regional cooperative mechanisms.²⁰⁵ India is also actively taking a part in the US led multilateral initiatives called I2U2 (India-Israel-United Arab Emirates-United States) in 2021 and Indo-Pacific Economic

²⁰³ The Blue Economy consists of utilising ocean resources and coastal infrastructure responsibly for benefit and development of coastal regions through production of goods and services with the aim of economic growth, environmental sustainability and national security which will contribute in the national economy as well as protect the oceans from marine pollution, illegal fishing and exploitation of natural resources.

Press Information Bureau. *Cabinet approves Categorization of the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) as an 'International Organization' and signing of the Headquarters (HQA) with CDRI for granting it the exemptions, immunities and privileges as contemplated under the United Nations (Privileges & Immunities) Act, 1947* released by Ministry of Home Affairs. 2022.

<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1837897> (Accessed on 29th November, 2022)

²⁰⁵ Ministry of External Affairs. *Indo-Pacific Division Briefs*, 2022.

https://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Indo_Feb_2020.pdf (Accessed on 21st October, 2022)

Framework for Prosperity (IPEF) in 2022 for economic sustainability and inclusive growth in the region. It aims in development of alternative supply chains for trade to avoid complete dependency on China amidst uncertainties in the post-Covid world and leveraging India's geopolitical and geo-economic presence in both Eastern and Western sides of the Indian Ocean. In bilateral grounds, India and the US have declared "U.S.-India Climate and Clean Energy Agenda 2030 Partnership" in 2021 to collaborate in usage of clean technologies urgent climate action.²⁰⁶ US is also participating for the first time in 2022 in the Indian Navy led multilateral MILAN exercises held since 1995 for interaction among navies and multilateral operations at sea to harbour strong partnerships for securing the common concerns in the ocean.

Under the NDA government's regime, the bilateral relationship between the two countries as well as the multilateral maritime cooperation has increased by boosting up its defence sectors and domestic budgets dedicated to the development of naval infrastructure. India is playing an active role in sharing global responsibilities concerning the Indian Ocean by providing maritime security in terms of its national interests and an emerging leadership role in the region which increased its status in the international affairs. Hence, a growing camaraderie could be traced in the US-India bilateral relationship with more convergences of ideas and interests in the aftermath of the Cold War making it one of the most valuable strategic partnership which is contributing efficiently in securing the region structure by preserving its stability in the Indian Ocean Region with the growing power asymmetry and uncertainty in Asia.

India is establishing itself as a non-hegemonic, rising power to preserve its strategic interests in the IOR in containing Chinese expansionism and securing the vital chokepoints and protecting the SLOCs for free flow of trade and commerce. Similar national interests have developed on the US side which led to cooperation to protect the broader maritime interests in securing the global commons and preserving the power architecture in IOR. The ideological flexibility at the leadership level on both sides of the administration contributed to the harmonious maritime relations that gradually developed between the two countries. Domestically, India's expanding maritime interests through enlargement of the naval

²⁰⁶ U.S. Department of State. *U.S.-India Joint Statement on Launching the "U.S.-India Climate and Clean Energy Agenda 2030 Partnership"*, 2021.
<https://www.state.gov/u-s-india-joint-statement-on-launching-the-u-s-india-climate-and-clean-energy-agenda-2030-partnership/> (Accessed on 10th November, 2022)

expenditure budgets and continuation of the hedging policies by robustly diversifying its relationship with cooperative linkages with multiple like-minded countries and through multilateral organisations helped India fulfil its maritime objectives in the IOR.

Concluding Remarks

Since the 21st century, the IOR has appeared to be one of the important arenas of global politics with every state's increased attention towards its maritime power ambitions to maintain their presence and influence in the seas in protecting their maritime interests for both economic and security aspects. The Cold War drawing to a close and globalisation and opening up of the economy by PM Narasimha Rao brought immense opportunity for India and United States to cooperate in the contemporary times based on converging national interests in protecting the seas and preserving the Asian architecture. The challenges were faced from traditional security threat like China's expansionist behaviour in the ocean and securing the commons from non-traditional threats arising from piracy and maritime terrorism and play an active role in providing humanitarian and disaster relief.

During the UPA rule we find India's growing power status getting slowly recognised and accommodated in the US led international order where US facing the heat of global financial crisis was declining in terms of power and seeking strategic engagements with countries to share security responsibilities in the IOR where India emerged as the leading power with convergence of security interests. The New Framework for Defense Cooperation (2005) and Indo-US Nuclear Deal (2008) are strong examples of US taking the effort to support India in achieving the desired status in the international system. Similarly, through the Maritime Security Framework and the bilateral Strategic Dialogues US recognised India's growing maritime power in the IOR. India on its part expanded its Navy's budget, procurement of defence equipments and upgradation of naval facilities in its strategic islands and ports to increase its domestic capabilities and diversified its relationship with other countries in the neighbourhood because of its belief in strategic autonomy as well as formulated its first ever Maritime Doctrine and Maritime Strategy to focus on the development of its Navy in power projection and creating deterrence in the region to protect from conventional and non-conventional security threats in the region. In terms of facing transnational threats, India and the US have cooperated on acting against terrorism by forming Joint Working groups and cooperating on cyber intelligence and data sharing. Also for humanitarian assistance and

disaster relief, new agencies and organisations were formed to address the immediate crisis from the Indian Ocean Tsunami and cooperated multilaterally through IORA and IONS.

Under the NDA rule we find a similar stand taken in the Indian Ocean in a more progressive manner because of overlapping of security interests between India and US which has increased because of the rising threat from Chinese assertive behaviour in the region through initiatives like BRI as well as growing transnational threats in the form of terrorism, natural disasters and piracy. In the strategic front, we find bilateral agreements being signed like US-India Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean Region in 2015 which exclusively focuses on the maritime developments happening in the region and India being a key player to balance the power structure which is getting disrupted by Chinese aggressive intention rising out of competing strategic interests. The DTTI, LEMOA, COMCASA and BECA agreements have contributed exponentially in the growing collaboration and sharing of resources related to defence and communication technology. India while increasing its maritime presence has revised its Maritime Strategy to address issues of security cooperation and broadening its areas of interests to developing infrastructure through Sagarmala Project. In continuation of its predecessor government, India diversified its relations with other countries through diplomatic policies like Act East, Link West, Project Mausam and SAGAR. India and the US are also cooperating multilaterally through QUAD, IPOI and CDRI to resolve peacefully the traditional as well as non-traditional security issues emerging in the region. The important role played by the interaction of the navies by conducting joint combat operations at sea through exercises like Tiger Triumph, MALABAR, MILAN are central to the robust growing bilateral relationship in the maritime sphere.

Several challenges are confronted by the bilateral relationship because of the different priorities based on their national interests but huge prospects also arise after looking at the gradually progressive trajectory in this strategic partnership in future with new avenues of cooperation being utilised to preserve the power structure in the region. From the Indian side, the bilateral cooperation is induced by changing structural realities which is transactional in nature rising out of converging security concerns. On the other end, the domestic constraints that arise with India's belief in strategic autonomy does not allow India to transform this strategic partnership into rigid alliance like formation. The next section will conclude highlighting the areas of challenges faced by the two countries with the prospects of cooperation arising out of shared interests with India's enhanced status through its legitimate power to preserve the rule-based maritime order in the seas.

Conclusion

The power transition in the Indian Ocean Region is leading to a higher degree of uncertainty and asymmetry in the post-Cold War era due to the systemic changes which followed with the fall of the USSR, unipolar moment of the US and the rise of Chinese expansionism and its hegemonic assertiveness in the region. This has compelled several countries, out of converging strategic interests, to cooperate and maintain the power equilibrium, in order to preserve the stability of the regional structure. The geopolitical and geo-economic interests attached to the strategic location of IOR have also made the region significant in the strategic discourses of several states. For instance, the region's important choke points and the Sea Lanes of Communications (SLOCs) needed protection as the economic growth and political security of the nation-states depend on the uninterrupted flow of trade, energy and commerce which passed through it. Thus, the like-minded states such as India and the US came together through a web of cooperation and engagements at bilateral and multilateral level which was needed to counter the emerging challenges from state and non-state actors for the proper working of the globalised networks.

Historically, the US with its dominant presence in the IOR since British withdrawal from the Suez Canal in 1956 started to search for like-minded partners for sharing the responsibilities for maintenance of status-quo in the international system with a liberal democratic world order as its core principle. The expansionist behavior and offensive intentions of states like the USSR and China have been challenging the existing order in the maritime region by disrupting the power balance. To deal with the uncertainty, a strategic partnership with India was sought by the US time and again; but due to changing priorities and other compulsions which include Cold War dynamics, it could not become a reality. However, the beginning of the post-Cold War era brought in a new context to transform India-US bilateral relations in the IOR. In fact, the decline of the US power and the emergence of India in the IOR brought them together with similar national interests pertaining to the region to balance the threat perceptions from current revisionist powers like China. Apart from this, the common traditional security concerns in the maritime realm led to a 'spill-over effect' in accommodating the non-traditional security threats emerging from non-state actors in the region which also made both the countries actively cooperate in maritime arena in IOR. Against this setting, the current study tried to analyze such cooperation that India and the US are currently involved in the IOR using the broad Neo-Realist framework (primarily,

Waltzian Idea of Three Images) as a theoretical lens. It tried to observe the shifts in the India-US maritime relationship caused by the effects of events occurring in international sphere majorly as well as in the realm of domestic affairs and leadership. In addition, the study also employed the Waltzian notions of Balance Of Power (BOP) to understand the convergences of strategic interests of both the countries while tracing the impact of such a relationship on the status of India's rising power that was examined through the status transformation theory.

In this context, the research questions addressed in the thesis are, *firstly*, what set of factors (systemic, domestic, leadership) define the shaping of Indo-US maritime relations? ; *secondly*, what are the areas of convergence and divergence in Indo-US maritime relations?; *lastly*, what are the impacts of such an alliance on the power structure in the IOR which includes the interaction of a great power and a rising power and its impact on the power status of India?. These questions are examined and discussed through the three core chapters in the thesis. Accordingly, the methodology adopted for the study is a review and a mixture of historical and empirical analysis of the content from the secondary literature based on existing publications on India-US relations along with primary data sourced from government documents and annual reports issued by different ministries/departments of both the countries as well as information from various international organizations and think tanks.

The first chapter, a theoretical one, employed Kenneth Waltz concept of Defensive Neo-Realism and the notions of BOP where the fundamental postulation implies that the international system is anarchic and states possessing different capabilities try to either disrupt or maintain the balance (in accordance with their specific interest). The general perception characterising the Indo-US relationship as more of a strategic cooperation based on shared interests rather than a tight alliance makes Defensive Neo-Realist framework a suitable theoretical tool to analyse the relationship. As stated in the theoretical analysis, the element of cooperation between the status-quo powers leads to the convergence of national security interests (conventional and non-conventional) mostly with the aim to balance the aggressive intentions accompanied with the revisionist/competing power (Chinese rise in the IOR in the present case). Waltz's idea of 'Three Images' or three classifying layers of systemic, domestic and individual(leadership) level factors is applied throughout the study for better understanding of the interaction between the two countries at different levels where the key systemic, domestic and personality level factors and their intricate linkages that determined the course of relationship are emphasised. The study went on to highlight the impact of this bilateral relationship on India's rise in the international arena and that its status

ambitions can be better understood through status transformation theories primarily from the works of T. V. Paul, as seen in the theoretical analysis. Lastly, the emergence of India as a seafaring nation in the strategically significant IOR from the pre-independence era can be located to India's present posture in the region based on its earlier maritime tradition.

The second chapter broadly gives an overview by outlining the major events involving the two countries mostly driven with misperceptions and misunderstandings arising from both sides because of their different worldviews during the Cold War which made the leaders adopt strategies inimical to each other. The international system was dominated by the Cold War binaries and bloc politics between the US and the USSR with rigid alliance formation on both sides in curbing influence of each other while India focused on non-alignment and Third World solidarity (somewhat a *via media* position) for newly independent nations to avoid military conflict. India's decision of non involvement in the Cold war bloc politics by pursuing active non-alignment policy not only preserved its hard achieved independence and sovereignty but also helped India seek assistance from diverse countries for its security and economic development through non-cohesive means. However, contrasting interests led the US to actively support India's hostile neighbor Pakistan to achieve success in its containment policy towards the USSR which made India to develop an indifferent attitude towards the US. The US support to Pakistan was considered as an obstacle to India's status ambitions by bringing in arms race into South Asia. Similarly, India was preoccupied with wars from territorial disputes with its two competing neighbors- Pakistan and China, which in turn made India realize the need for economic as well as defence development for security purposes internally through the expansion of domestic capabilities as well as seeking foreign investments and aids externally from major powers. The overall involvement towards land based security challenges with lack of naval resources limited India's ability to emerge as a maritime power at that time, a point that warrants greater emphasis.

From the discussion in the chapter, one can sum up a few trends in the India-US maritime relations in the Cold War period. India on its part having a long strategic coastline with islands on both sides sits in center of the Indian Ocean which gives India an advantageous position compared to other countries in emerging as a strong maritime power in providing regional security in the IOR. Since independence, India has been seeking status of a major power but due to its involvement in border disputes all the resources were driven with a continental mindset and constraints on the development of the naval capabilities limited its status ambition from becoming a reality. It was only during the Indo-China War of 1962 that

India got support of the US by way of defence equipments as well as extended naval security to protect its borders which in turn generated a China-Pak friendship. Since the 1970s, defence investments started to increase and the Indian Navy's successful role in the Liberation War of Bangladesh (1971) gave India a formal recognition as a rising power with strong naval capabilities to emerge as a regional power in future. In other words, with Pakistan being a constant Cold war ally to the US by getting support through military aid, India got the support from USSR to balance the hostilities from the immediate neighbors and also in certain periods of time brought the US closer to China. In addition, India's stand of establishing IOR as a Zone of Peace with the aim of limiting military activities and influence of extra-regional navies did not go down well with the US. Moreover, there was constant opposition to global nuclear non-proliferation treaties and agreements on the part of India. This followed from a perception that India deserved more recognition in the international system in order to become a preponderant power in the region while the international system considered India as an inconsistent power challenging the status-quo world order.

Furthermore, the Pakistan factor has been a constant obstacle in the full development of strategic ties since the Cold War times. India's close defence partnership with USSR has also irked the US, though India received some defence supplies from the US occasionally depending on the power dynamics of various times. During the Cold War times, it can be generalised that more divergences in strategic and maritime interests was reflected between the two countries which started dissolving with the demise of the USSR. In the aftermath of Cold War, the rise of the US as a sole power at the structural level and the domestic economic reforms in India initiated under PM Narasimha Rao's government led to fresh defence and naval bilateral engagements which were temporarily disrupted by India's nuclear tests but later resumed through backchannel dialogues which brought recognition to India as an important power.

The final chapter gives detailed analysis about the recent developments in the bilateral relationship with common interests growing at the national level and domestic consensus at the leadership level contributing to active strategic cooperation in the contemporary times. It emphasizes the policy contributions made by the UPA and NDA governments in projecting India's strength and capabilities as a leading player in the region as well as active engagement with the US through multi-sectoral cooperation. The systemic level changes in the world order from 1991, especially after the dismantling of Cold War binaries along with India's opening up of the economy, brought in new scope of opportunities for a renewed

relationship between India and the US. Thus, both the countries collaborated in maritime and defense areas more actively with the rapid economic growth and more so with military and navy modernization of China in IOR acting as a trigger. Domestically, Indian markets were opened to foreign investments through restructuring of economic policies by the Indian leadership to make a conducive environment for partnering with the US while the US leadership brought the necessary changes in their domestic laws to accommodate India's new nuclear status showing ideological flexibility by the leaders belonging to both sides.

At the same time, the transition of power and uncertainty brought a few divergences as well in the post-Cold War times as certain aspects of their foreign policy positions were determined by past actions and historical memory. The lack of clarity and coherence in the policies of US administration (with continuing cooperation with Pakistan and betterment of relations with China in certain periods of time) has led India to adopt hedging practices even after having a growing and vibrant strategic partnership with US. The US vision of open, inclusive and free Indo-Pacific region with the FONOPs has differed from that of India where India campaigned for an inclusive Indo-Pacific without explicitly targeting any country and avoided any joint operations for navigation to preserve its strategic autonomy and sovereignty. The China factor gained attention because of its expanding maritime footprints through expansionist policies of the BRI initiative and the 'String of Pearls' with hegemonic intentions for which the US considers India as an effective balancer and took a hard stand against China. In sum, India's broad strategy was to collaborate with US while never explicitly challenging China though India launched several strategic, diplomatic and economic initiatives to counter China's hegemonic rise in IOR.

The study argued that from Indian perspective, in order to balance the power asymmetry created by Chinese assertiveness with naval bases and infrastructural developments in other countries circling India in the Indian Ocean, internal domestic military capabilities were not enough. Hence, seeking external partnership with other like-minded countries in the IOR became a necessity. Furthermore, the partnership with the US would help India boost up its own ambitions and sharing global responsibilities helping India rise as a non-hegemonic status-consistent major power. The Indo-US Civil Nuclear Deal under UPA administration had a huge impact on the bilateral relationship through which India's position as a strong regional power and its status ambitions were accommodated by the US by recognizing it as a de-facto nuclear weapon state. During the UPA regime, the bilateral agreements initiated by the administrations on both sides contributed to greater collaboration in defence and maritime

sectors. In domestic front, the increased budget of the Indian Navy for proper infrastructure development and through the launching of India's Maritime Doctrine and Maritime Strategy addressed the conventional and non-conventional security challenges emerging in the region. Speaking of non-traditional threats, the Joint Working Groups in the realm of combating HA/DR, terrorism, piracy are also new focal areas. At the regional level (through IORA and IONS), India actively participated to focus on maritime security issues collectively with naval exercises like Spitting Cobra, Salvex, MALABAR and MILAN held with the US. On parallel, with its belief in strategic autonomy and pursuing hedging policies, India diversified its partnerships with multiple countries to avoid getting involved in rigid alliances while in general India continued its engagements with US in IOR.

The NDA regime continued the similar trajectory set by the previous government by following the pattern of hedging but in a more pronounced, comprehensive and multi-faceted way with the aim to fulfill India's interests. In US perspective, India was considered as a key security provider of the region and Chinese rise as a potential threat as evident in the joint statement of the US-India Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and the Indian Ocean Region in 2015. The US supported India in upholding itself as a major power is provided by the three foundational agreements of LEMOA, COMCASA and BECA that led to pooling of resources in terms of technology, communication, data and logistics transfers. At the diplomatic level, in continuation to the naval exercises with US, India with hedging policies bolstered its capabilities by equally engaging with various countries and islands holding strategic position in the region to develop an inclusive democratic order. India through multilateral initiatives (QUAD, CDRI, IPOI, IPEF) is also involved in the development of alternative economic supply chains and address maritime security issues in a holistic manner. Thus, the systemic conditions consisting of power transitions and uncertainty in the IOR throughout the post Cold War era, India with the support of US has established itself as a rising resident power assuming regional responsibilities in securing the seas from the traditional and non-traditional challenges faced in the region.

To sum up, it is through the prism of Defensive Neo-Realist framework that the focal theme, Indo-US maritime relations is addressed through the interplay of systemic and domestic factors leading to interest based cooperation on traditional security challenges but later spilled over to incorporate non-traditional security issues as well. The roots of this cooperation lies in the 1990s even though there were inconsistencies during that time, but in the later two decades, we find the relationship growing to accommodate these inconsistencies within the

larger common interests that the both countries have in the IOR. There has been a substantial shift in the systemic level with the post-Cold War multi-polar order and China's rise as a revisionist power with emergence of threats from non-state actors in the strategically important IOR which made India and the US cooperate in providing maritime security and secure the economically viable SLOCs.

In response to these international level changes, there has been intersection of national interests at the domestic level and the ideological flexibility at leadership level which contributed to the growing convergence of strategic policies in the IOR as compared to the larger divergent perspectives during the Cold War times. This shows the willingness on the part of both the states to improve the relationship and make it relatively a durable one. The pivotal role of India and its growing importance as a key actor in the regional affairs will make the US to continue its ties while fulfilling India's status ambitions. The US support is warranted to secure the peace, balance and a stable order in the IOR. India, as a non-hegemonic resident power, with its soft balancing strategy will cooperate with the US at the traditional front while adopting asymmetric balancing through multilateral interactions with diverse countries to address non-conventional security aspects with emerging transnational threats in the region. In a nutshell, maritime security became one of the key issues of cooperation both under UPA and NDA regimes. At the same time, by observing the gradual progressive trajectory of the relationship in the maritime realm it can be inferred that it is not a full-fledged alliance but a balanced cooperation which is issue based and interest specific depending on the convergence of shared ideas and interests vital for the security in the IOR.

Seen from the Defensive Neo-Realist framework, the element of transactional cooperation gets easily tuned with the Indo-US cooperation at the maritime realm based on common national interests and issue specific convergences rising out of structural realities. The cooperation takes place not because of serving the goals of the universal common good but as a response to the power politics among nation-states in the systemic level. The systemic changes brought in by the revisionist challenges thrown by China and the prevailing transnational threats in the region has made the two countries to develop a similar consensus at the domestic level to collaborate on the maritime front to protect its national security interests in the IOR. Thus, Indo-US maritime cooperation is the outcome of the changing regional power architecture in the IOR and this bilateral strategic partnership is positioned to preserve the status-quo in the international order.

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