



RESEARCH PAPER

Ball Game between U.S and China in Indian Ocean: Upshot for Pakistan

Dr. Sajid Mehmood Shahzad¹ Dr. Uzma Naz^{*2}

1. Vice Chancellor, Minhaj University, Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan
2. Assistant Professor, School of International Relations Minhaj University Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan

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PAPER INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: October 22, 2021	The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is a center theater of strategic, economic, and political activities because the major powers of the world are involved in these waters. The aim to write this research is to elaborate the ball game between China and USA in Indian Ocean and its effects for Pakistan. The new Quad alliance and the USA strategy of "Asia Pivot" are creating a point of attention for Pakistan and China. USA strategy to stop China from being dominated by one kind of government or coalition of countries that may pose a danger to the USA. Pakistan should adopt a careful approach while handling bilateral ties with both strategically important nations. This research is carried out under mix method approach. To evaluate facts and figures quantitative approach had adopted and to narrate the situation in Indian Ocean qualitative method be used. Pakistan is much aware and concerned about the developments and happenings in the IOR. The options like "China Pakistan Economic Corridor" (CPEC) and Gwadar port are the key projects for Pakistan.
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*Corresponding Author druzma.ir@mul.edu u.pk	

Introduction

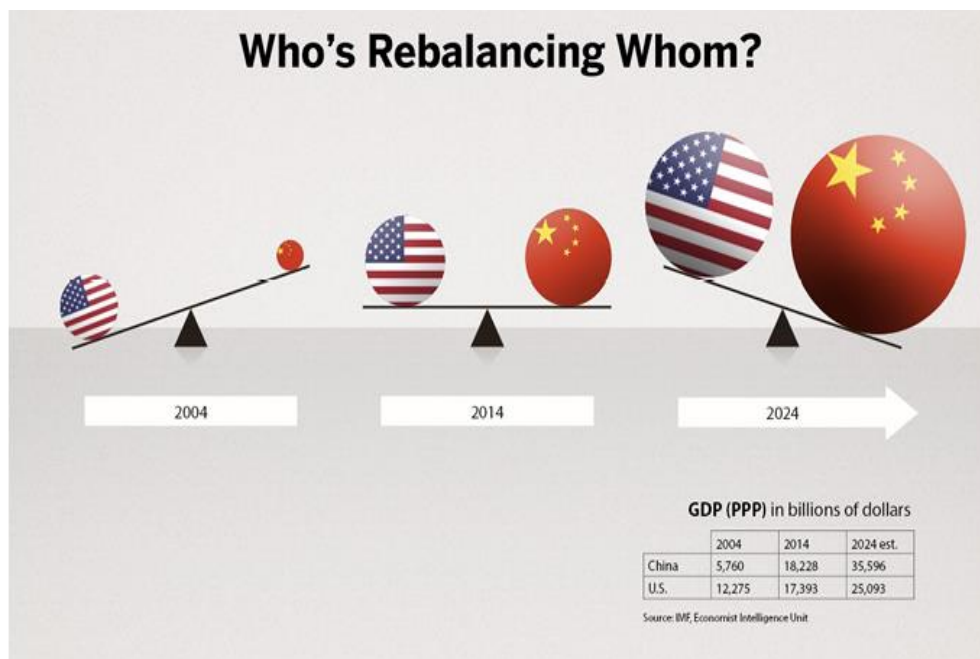
The geographic position of IOR is very vital that connects Middle East's energy-rich countries with Asia's economically flourishing nations. Chinese "Belt and Road Initiative" may be seen as the way forward to reduce its strategic vulnerabilities. The presence of the USA forces in the IOR creates an environment of competition. It was determined by Congress how the USA can contain the rising economy of China. While Chinese economic shift and growth in the marine industry increase the strategic importance of the IOR. The military capabilities of China and trade investment in the IOR may cause the United States to be concerned about its stability. To realize the shifting power dynamics in the (IOR), it is indispensable to understand the China-USA competition (Perrett, 2011).

It is part of the US strategy to contain China from being dominated by one kind of government or coalition of countries that may pose a danger to the U.S and to promote a rules-based system and order that sustain regional stability in the IOR Region. While characterizing the Indian Ocean, China sees it as a revisionist force that threatens American "hegemony, influence and interests," according to the United States National Security Strategy (Kathleen, 2017).

Security and economic challenges to the USA are posed by the increase of strategic rivalry among communist states, according to the United States National Security Strategy. To create "a networked security design capable of deterring aggression, preserving stability, and assuring open access to shared areas," the Indian Ocean Strategy places a high priority on developing alliances and partnerships. In the South China Sea, China's aggressive activities directly threaten the law and principles that each Asian nation represents. Rex Tillerson, the USA Secretary of State, said:

"Americans consider China as a rising rival who seeks to weaken both the West and the Rest" (Maitra, 2018).

The Quad group may be an informal geopolitical alliance of governments concerned about China's possible threat to their interests. According to some analysts, it is one of the major strategic reactions to Chinese growth in the Indian Ocean. The motive of India for participating in efforts to resurrect the Quad appears to come, at least in part, from the sense of a need for enhanced cooperation (Aljazeera, 2020).



Source: <https://www.belfercenter.org/>

According to the U.S. and Chinese objectives in security, politics, and economics, Pakistan has maintained strong connections with both countries. Pakistan has many strategic allies, including Afghanistan, which it continues to cooperate. Due to the historically transactional character of the US-Pakistan relationship, Pakistani officials should adopt a careful approach while handling bilateral ties with both strategically important nations. A significant component of "China's Belt and Road Initiative", CPEC is increasing Pakistani economic dependency on the countries linked with new Chinese initiatives. The United States appears to have no desire to compete with China in the area (Shahzad, 2019; Rahim, et. al. 2018).

Literature Review

"The Importance of the Indian Ocean: Trade, Security and Norms" (2018) by Pabasara et al explain in the article that geographically and in terms of communication, the Indian Ocean is ideal. Uncontrolled, Chinese growing development might pose a danger to the rest of the globe. It was also noted that the United States will help the GCC countries in their struggle against Iranian influence in this region. The researcher also highlighted the issues of maritime security and piracy in the Indian Ocean. 65 % of vital food supplies, 31 % of gasoline, and 50 % of the oil trade are done through the Indian Ocean. There are several hotspots in the Indian Ocean, which are strategically important like "Horn of Africa", "Persian Gulf", and Arabian Sea, and "Bay of Bengal". Chances of piracy and terrorism have always been seen as a threat near to Somalia and in the "Strait of Malacca" (Pabasara et al, 2018).

"Impact of Pakistan Maritime Affairs on Blue Economy in Backdrop of CPEC" (2020) describes that Pakistan has a 1,000-kilometer coastline and a 240,000-square-kilometer "Exclusive Economic Zone" (EEZ). To earn and share money created by living and non-living marine sources, it has been recommended that an "Ocean Business Forum" comprising solely of Indian Ocean coastal nations be established. The importance of the IOR has attracted the attention of major global powers. These choke points are strategically significant and are the busiest in the Indian Ocean because "Strait of Hormuz, Malacca, and Strait of Bab el-Mandeb". An international electrical and currency catastrophe is possible if there is even the tiniest disruption. Every day, about 17 million barrels of crude oil trade is done through these routes (Shahzad, 2020)

"Geoeconomics and Geosecurities in the Indian Ocean Region" (2019) by Timothy Dyole describes in his book the China surpassed the United States in 2014. Rather than taking place on land, more than 80 percent of international trade took place through oceans routes. To shorten the threat of terrorism and piracy the Navel forces of different states always watch the activities of terrorist groups. The Indian Ocean is home to three significant SLOCS that are heavily used for trade, business, and associated transit of world energy (Dyole, 2019).

All major players in the Indian Ocean Region are seeking a stronger hold in the area. India's Western and Southern Navy Commands were stationed throughout the area. Whereas earlier this year, the Sultanate of Oman and Vietnam awarded India berthing rights in the IOR.

Rise of China and Prospective of United States

USA perceptions on Chinese economic rise, the policymakers of USA grade China as rival in the IOR. As China's economy grows, it poses direct competition to the national interests of the United States of America. In Indian Ocean, Beijing aims to undermine the USA alliance structure. Beijing's aggressiveness stems from fear and opportunism in response to the perceived USA threat. The United States must prepare for all possibilities, though (Yung, 2010)

"As China's influence grows, many experts and politicians regard it as a growing rival that seeks to undermine the West and the existing rules-based system. For economic and strategic reasons, India's ascent is seen favorably by many USA strategic analysts" (Orlik, 2020).

United States 2017 “National Security Strategy”

In 2017 the USA Administration derived National Security Strategy (NSS), which dictates this. The "great power competition has resumed" and the "Indian Ocean Region is again under process. China and Russia are seen as revisionist powers and competitors that "threaten to destroy American security and prosperity". "The "Indian Ocean Region" is positioned at above of the list in the regions evaluated, above Europe and the Middle East. China intends to replace the United States in the international system, by extending its (state-driven economic model), and change around the regional as well as in international arena"(National Security Strategy, 2017).

China's infrastructure projects and trade policies, according to the paper, "enhance its geopolitical ambitions." According to National Security Strategy (NSS), "we are pleased that India has emerged as a significant global force with increased strategic and defensive clout," which is the first of six regional settings it analyses. US officials said that the USA would enhance the cooperation, security and strategic relationship with India and other regional actors, while also supporting the country's leadership in the IOR. The aim to enhance quadrilateral collaboration with Japan, Australia, and India". Past expectations that interaction with opponents through international forums and trade would transform them into allies have been proven wrong, according to the NSS most of the time, strong allies have always not trustworthy (National Defense Strategy, 2018; Muzaffar, et. al. 2018)

United States 2018 National Defense Strategy

The re-emergence of long-term strategic rivalry by communist states is viewed as the threat to the United States' economy and security. In 2018 National Defense Strategy was derived by USA. The modernization of Chinese military and economic influence in international system is a source of attraction for regional countries to join hands with China in this competition. USA wants to establish a "networked security strategy which is capable of deterring aggression of Chinese economy and preserve stability in the Indian Ocean, The Defense Strategy prioritizes to develop relations and alliances to reorder the Indian Ocean Region (Strategy Development Division, 2019).

USA Aims and Objectives

Implement the IOR's strategic characteristics to prevent Asia from being prominent by one hegemony or partnership of nations that may pose a danger to America. Preventing wars, such as regional rivals India and Pakistan, and safeguarding high seas and crucial maritime freedom. Assist open societies and promote shared ideas such as human rights, democracy, or religious freedom by working with like-minded partners. Carry out anti-piracy activities and reach adhoc marine security agreements with China, India, and regional nations (White, 2020)

The Quad

In November 2017, Australia, India, Japan, and the United States conducted official discussions on the Indian Ocean. The Quad is characterized as "an informal geostrategic alignment of governments worried about China's possible threat to their interests." According to the US Pacific Commander, China is a "disruptive transitional power in the Indian Ocean area." Reviving the four-way security group,

according to India, is a vital component of controlling China (Rajesh, 2021).



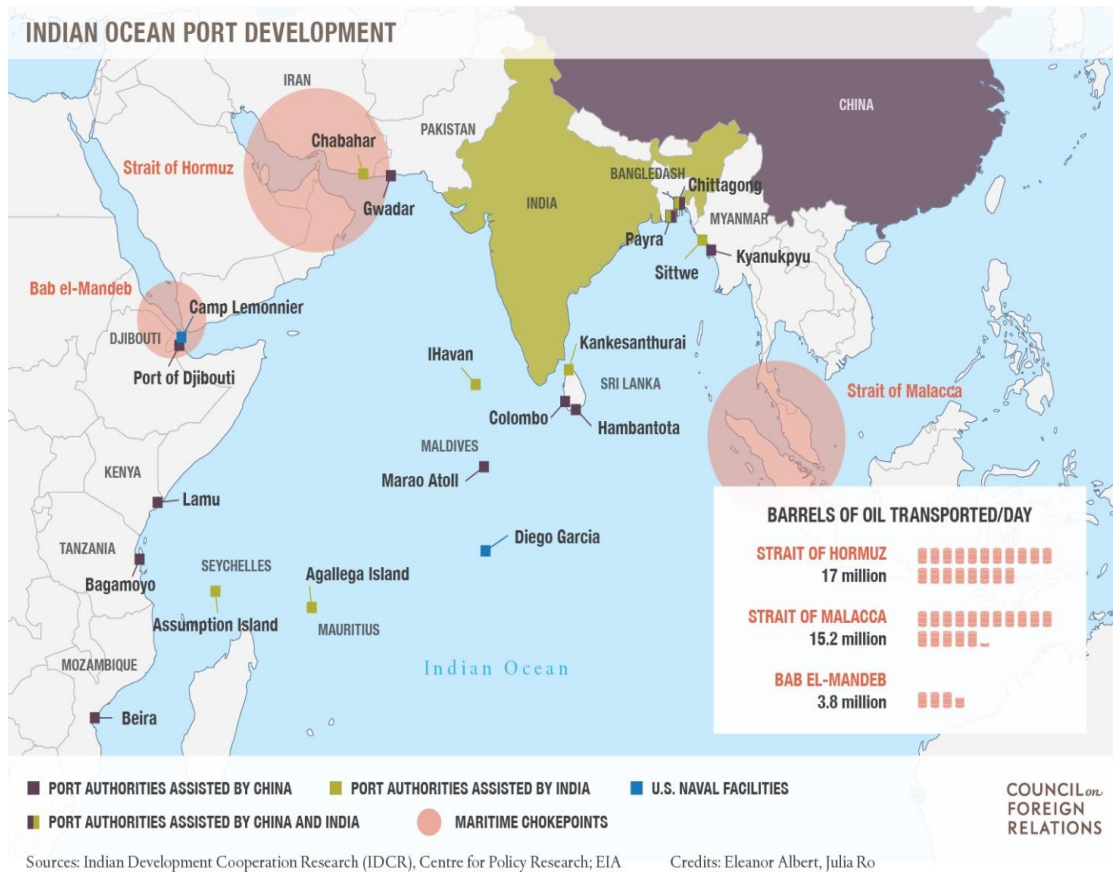
Source: <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine>

Great Game

"Great Game" is a geopolitical competition in Indian Ocean, as defined by the author in his book. Trade, investment, and infrastructure development are seen by some experts as the basis for a new great game in the Indian Ocean. This new "Great Game" is creating geopolitical and military competition among the nation states in IOR. As of right now, the struggle is mostly economic, but it is taking on greater geopolitical and military dimensions as time goes on. For instance, some analysts believe that China might be prepared to strengthen its influence on India's security in exchange for enhanced Chinese security (Godement, 2021).

Geo-Political Importance of Indian Ocean

A geopolitical paradigm may be useful to policymakers as they struggle with China-USA rivalry related policy statements. The "Great Game" in the Indian Ocean, The emergence of a new Great Game centered largely on commerce, investment, and infrastructure development. Henry Kissinger, the former secretary of state, talked about the "systemic breakdown of world order" and the "eroding international system." Kissinger claimed that "classic patterns of great power competition are returning". Most of the world's important SLOCs and trade routes pass through the Indian Ocean. China and India's competition is intertwined with the United States and China's because of this region's importance (Kostechna, 2010).



Source: <https://www.cfr.org/background/competition-indian-ocean>

Also, Mahan, Mackinder, and Spykman's theories may be seen in India's strategic discussions about how to effectively prevent any future Chinese border aggression. Recognition of the expanding economic, geopolitical, and security ties between Western and Asian economies is essential to the concept of Indian Ocean. The distribution of resources and attention can be affected, among other things, by the way, policymakers identify and conceive regions (Spykman & Mackinder).

Geo-economic importance of Indian Ocean

Oil reserves in the Indian Ocean are "16.8% and natural gas reserves are 27.9% of the world's total. In 2017, the economies of the Indian Ocean produced 35.5 % of iron and 17.8 % of its gold". This region is also producing 28 % of the worldwide fish, and fish capture in the region has been increasing steadily since the 1950s. Many nations have been able to develop strong export businesses as a result. Global frozen fish exports were accounted for 4.5 percent by Indonesia and India in 2017, for example. The trade-driven expansion has been helped by the region's wealth of natural resources (ESRC, 2019; Yaseen, et. al. 2016)

Key maritime routes connect the Middle East, Africa, and East Asia with Europe and the Americas through the Indian Ocean. These Sea routes handled more than 50 % of seaborne from this part of the world (ESRC, 2019).

"Port container traffic has quadrupled from "46 million TEUs in 2000 to 166 million TEUs in 2017 at the region's ports. During the period 2011-2017, the average annual growth rate of container traffic in the USA. was 2.5%. Greater connectivity inside the area has resulted in stronger relationships with commercial partners outside the region. "Since 2000, China has been the region's most significant

commercial partner, accounting for 16.1 % of the region's total goods trade, up from 4.8 % in 2000. Between 2000 and 2017, trade with key partners such as the EU (16.8% to 12.0%), the USA (13.9 percent to 7.9%), and Japan has dropped 14.6 % to 6.5 %” (ESRC, 2019).

China's Emerging Strategic Culture and the String of Pearls

The President of China Xi Jinping unveiled his "Belt and Road Initiative," a new global development strategy. The long-term objective of this massive project would be to make Beijing the dominating force in Europe, allowing China to eclipse the European Union and the USA as the world's main economic and geopolitical powers. However, it is difficult to overlook the importance of safeguarding all of these interests and investments. This is owing to Beijing's massive economic and commercial development, as well as the consequent demand for marine geostrategic security. China has a complex plan for marine defence (Brewster, 2014).

China signed a deal with the Cambodian government for the rights to more than one-third of the Ream naval facility. The agreement is in place for the next 30 years, with an automatic renewal clause every ten years after that. According to speculations, China constructed a surveillance base on Coco Island in 1992 to monitor marine activity in Bay of Bengal, especially Indian Navy. China maintains special connections with three East African countries: Djibouti, Kenya, and Sudan. China is strategically located at the mouth of the “Bab el Mandeb strait”, which connects the Red Sea with Indian Ocean. Chinese firms have taken control of the Doraleh port (Jinxin, 2014).

Energy and Trade

The result of economic rise, China has become dependent on marine routes that extent the Indian Ocean for trade and energy. A large portion of China's energy must be import by sea, making it vulnerable from a strategic standpoint. There are ambitious plans for China to develop its naval force with projection capabilities outside its coastal waters (Mullen, 2020).

Autonomous Region of Xinjiang Uyghur in the west and the Gwadar port are being linked by overland energy lines. Chinese susceptibility to interdiction of seaborne energy channels may be greatly reduced by the construction of land-based energy pipelines. Some experts predict that Russia and Iran will continue to strengthen their overland energy links. The United States may no longer be able to provide all of the country's oil demands in the future, according to one analyst (Mullen, 2020).

USA Growing need for Energy

"Fracking" or hydraulic fracturing has radically changed the USA energy landscape in the last several years. Russia and Saudi Arabia lost ground to the USA as the world's top energy consumer in 2013. USA energy dependence has declined in recent years, but it is expected to continue for some time. This means the United States must obtain these supplies from other countries.

Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

According to “USA-China Economic and Security Review Commission” the President Xi Jin ping is reshaping China's foreign policy. China has become both an

ideological opponent and a strategic partner for other countries. China's overcapacity in the manufacturing and construction sectors is to be relieved by the BRI. "One Belt, One Road" or "Belt and Road Initiative" is a Chinese initiative. In the Indo-Pacific and beyond, the BRI is a conceptual instrument that has given China's trade and investment operations policy coherence. By the ancient routes of the Silk Road, China's historical commercial connections with the West were built. Country sections following go into depth about these, as well as CPEC and the "Kunming to Kyaukphu Corridor" (KKC) (Andrew, 2019).

Chinese Influence in IOR

Now, Chinese military presence in the IOR extends beyond commerce and investment. The Chinese influence in the area, according to some observers, is growing quicker than originally predicted. Starting with Djibouti, this includes the development of a network of naval and military bases across the Indian Ocean's coastline. A recent Chinese naval strategy that centered on Taiwan and China's coastal areas has been extended to include "Far Sea Defense." Andrew Hammond says that China's policy reflects its growing power and confidence on the international stage. Hammond China is unlikely to threaten USA supremacy in the Indian Ocean in near future. Support from China for Pakistan is part of China's larger plan for India's encirclement and containment. The primary reason for Chinese vision to increase its presence and influence in the region is to safeguard the maritime lines of communication that are vital to its economic well-being. Which are anticipated to grow more competitive in the Indian Ocean (Sara, 2019).

USA Assets in IOR

Assets of the USA military assets in the Indian Ocean region include aircraft and ships.

Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti

"About 4,000 USA and partner military and civilian personnel are stationed at Camp Lemonnier in Djibouti, the major center of operations for the USA".

Diego Garcia

Diego Garcia is a Facility center in the IOR south of India; it is home to a USA Navy Support Facility. Facilities in the IOR and the Persian Gulf offer logistical support to the forward-deployed military. Diego Garcia is home to about 2,500 USA and partner military and civilian personnel (Erickson, 2018)

United States Central Command

Naval Auxiliary Activity Bahrain is home to the United States Central Command and the Fifth Fleet. Naval Auxiliary Activity in Bahrain, as part of the "CENTCOM" Area of Responsibility, provides operational assistance to the US and its coalition allies (Erickson, 2018).

Pakistan Position in China-USA Rivalry

Pakistan maintains relationship with both sides of the current power USA and China. Islamabad's connections with Washington and the strategic stability of South Asia are, however, subject to differing opinions in light of the USA -China

competition based on security, political, and economic objectives. Pakistan has always maintained close ties with United States and China. Included in Pakistan's current relationship with the United States is Pakistan's continued assistance in Afghanistan, which will continue to be needed long after the USA military draws down from that country's territory. USA funding to Pakistan has declined, yet the country's greatest export market and a preferred destination for top Pakistani students remain in the United States (Maitra, 2018).

Chinese weapon factories are now Pakistan's top supplier, and the CPEC is expected to provide \$62 billion in economic benefits. Beijing provides constant aid in dealing with issues like terrorism as well as moral support in internationalizing the Kashmir problem, something the United States does not give.

Therefore, Pakistani officials should be cautious in handling bilateral ties with both strategically important nations, and not be persuaded into taking sides with any one. Pakistani foreign policy analysts believe that the current political environment in the United States is in a state of flux, which makes it difficult to estimate the impact of USA-China competition.

They argue that the alarmist American language on China is motivated by domestic political concerns ahead of the November election, rather than a clear indicator of USA policy going forward." Policymakers should be cautious in handling bilateral ties with both strategically important nations, and not be persuaded into taking sides.

At this early and uncertain stage, when heightened tensions coexist with continued efforts to negotiate a feasible trade deal between the two economic giants, Pakistani authorities appear to have adopted this tactic.

Pakistan as a Neutral Actor

During the Nixon period, Pakistan played an important role in bringing the United States and China together. Policymakers believe Pakistan may serve as a "neutral actor" to help ease tensions between the two superpowers, as well as a "melting pot" for Chinese and American interests to converge and create development throughout the region (including in Afghanistan).

Due to the benefits of maintaining mutually beneficial ties with the two biggest global powers, Pakistan would not be unduly dependent on any of them.

Although Imran Khan has stated that Pakistan's economic destiny is now interwoven with China, he did it in a frank manner. According to this remark, if Prime Minister Khan's administration were forced to choose a side under greater pressure, it would likely choose to cooperate with China, owing to its economic stability and emerging power in the region.

Such pressure should be avoided, given the fragile nature of the current bilateral USA.-Pakistan relationship. As a result of Khan's efforts, ties between the USA and the UK have improved. As a result, Pakistan's ambition to retain strong ties with China and the new Biden administration will be tested.

China-Pakistan Relations

CPEC, a significant component of China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative,

has increased Pakistan's economic dependency on China, as well as its military and defence ties with China (BRI). CPEC, according to Prime Minister Khan, is "a symbol of Pakistan-China friendship."

It was also described as "an important pilot project of BRI collaboration" by the Chinese Foreign Ministry's representative. Washington's opinions on CPEC have evolved over the years. As a result, the current USA administration views CPEC negatively, the lack of openness might lead to increased expenditures and corruption, which would raise Pakistan's debt load. China has rejected these accusations by claiming that Pakistan's overall debt is less than one-tenth of the amount owed by CPEC projects (Shahzad, 2019)

The United States is unwilling to compete with China in Pakistan's infrastructure funding, as well as unwilling to shoulder the financial burden of unsustainable lending practices. Washington has a right to be concerned about Pakistan's economy, given the country's slow development, inability to improve its tax collections and difficulties in growing exports. Although BRI projects might provide leverage for China's strategic goals, Pakistan's dire need for foreign investment certainly outweighs any prospective threat.

Pakistan Posture and Economy

Last year's IMF loan of \$6 billion over three years (with an additional \$1.4 billion to fight COVID-19) has helped Pakistan reduce its reliance on China to some extent. Pakistan's dependence on China is expected to increase as a result of any financial restrictions resulting from a prospective downgrade, regardless of the truth or motives of the FATF rankings.

An increasing financial dependency on China has not left Pakistan powerless in its dealings with its strong ally. As it turns out, the concept of building a deep seaport at Gwadar came from Pakistan, not China's "string of pearl" philosophy to sustain a strong presence in IOR.

In addition to putting strain on Pakistan's bilateral relationship with the United States, Pakistan's growing economic and geopolitical connections with China have created new problems for Pakistan's relations with its neighbors.

Conclusion

The "great power competition has restarted" and that the Indian Ocean is of special relevance. There is an assumption that Chinese plans to replace the United States in the region, expand its economic model, and restructure the region in its favour. Pakistan's maritime strategy is peace driven in the region. An official meeting on IOR was held in November 2017 amongst representatives of Australia, India, Japan, and the United States of America. Governments concerned about China's prospective danger to their interests create the Quad, which is described as "an informal geostrategic alignment." Some analysts believe that trade, investment, and infrastructure development will provide the foundation for a new great game in the IOR. China may be willing to increase its influence on India's security in exchange for increased Chinese security to compete China's growing influence, the United States needs a new, coordinated economic and development policy for Asia. Pakistan's strategy is to maintain peace and security in the IOR. The United States of America's strategic interest is to ensure the smooth flow of commerce by

safeguarding sea lines of communications in the IOR. North America grew skeptical of China's new strategy and investment in Gwadar as a way to control the sector's tolerant economic system.

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