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**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Navigating Indian Ocean: Exploring Geo-Politics and Ensuring Maritime Security**

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**ABSTRACT**

This research paper highlights the geopolitics in Indian ocean and discuss impact of historical and contemporary maritime disputes on the stability and security of the Indian Ocean. This paper also explores the challenges and threats to maritime security in the Indian Ocean. The Indian Ocean's conservation is no longer the duty of colonies or global superpowers. The emergence of new national coalitions led by emerging powers such as India and China is reshaping international politics. To do this, we would need to work together on a regional and extra-regional scale. Avoiding China or the United States, whether via the Strings of Pearl or the Indo-Pacific strategy, would be a non-starter. A collaborative strategy should be used to watch, regulate, and manage the Indian Ocean. Qualitative research methods will be used to achieve the objectives of the study. Primary and secondary data on the said topic will provide historical context and qualitative data for analysis. Research findings and policy recommendations will be based on analysis of the Indian Ocean's geo-politics and maritime security.

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**Keywords:** Global Politics, Indian Ocean, Security Cooperation, SLOC

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**Introduction**

The protection of the Indian Ocean is no longer the responsibility of colonies or global superpowers; rather, the situation has gotten more intricate and changing. The rise of new national coalitions headed by rising nations such as India and China is transforming international politics. Non-state actors now have a direct and significant effect on the security of the region, posing new challenges to marine safety. Regional engagement and coherence, on the other hand, offer enormous growth potential (Bhardwaj, & Rahaman, 2021). Given the significance of the Indian Ocean's growing marine industry to the global economy, this is a concerning turn of events. This market accounts for the overwhelming majority of global energy transactions. Many prior decades' lessons seem to be being re-learned. Given this, naval troops are often called upon to conduct diplomatic duties rather than participate in the battle. Consequently, the marine security literature covers a wide range of topics, including physical security, port security, terrorism, and a plethora of other challenges (Childs, 2020).

As a consequence, the Indian Ocean, called "British Lake" by some, became a key shipping path, going via the Suez Canal and the Malacca Straits. This trade brought raw resources, oil, and finished goods from East to West. British sailors and explorers used to refer to the Indian Ocean as a "British Lake." Tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union during the Cold War over resources, commerce, and environmental concerns have made the area a focal point of a global power struggle (Khan, 2016).

Throughout the cold war, it was the venue of this rivalry. Since the end of World War II, governments along the Indian Ocean's littoral have begun to realize their long-held ambition for a more strong voice on matters of regional peace and security (IOR) (Ahmed, 2016).

The marine capacities of littoral governments have not always been able to meet these ambitions, which were previously expressed in terms of the Indian Ocean Community, Peace Zone, and Nuclear Free Zone. Participants along the littoral are emerging as key players, prepared to engage in discussion not just with one another, but also with forces beyond the region (Chandramohan, 2016).

### **Literature Review**

Alpers (2013) It provides an essential historical perspective on the Indian Ocean's role in global trade and cultural exchange. It highlights how historical dynamics continue to influence contemporary geo-politics and maritime security concerns.

Lord (2010) This book explores the United States' interests and strategies in the Indian Ocean, emphasizing the delicate balance between securing access to vital sea lanes and fostering stability in a region fraught with geopolitical tensions.

Rolland (2017) This collection of essays examines China's expanding role in the Indian Ocean through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). It delves into the geo-political implications of China's economic engagements and infrastructure projects in the region.

Joyner (2003) While focused on the Caspian region, Joyner's analysis of energy geopolitics provides valuable insights into similar dynamics in the Indian Ocean. The article discusses how energy resources impact geo-political relations and maritime security.

Khurana (2018) This article emphasizes the importance of multilateral cooperation and security mechanisms in addressing the challenges faced by Indian Ocean states, including maritime security threats.

Hathaway (1997) Study focuses on the strategic choices available to Indian Ocean Island states. It highlights their significance in the broader geo-political landscape and the role they play in ensuring maritime security.

Manuel (2014) This article offers an assessment of evolving maritime security trends in the Indian Ocean, including piracy, territorial disputes, and the influence of major powers like China and the United States.

Cole (2011) It elaborate China's naval strategy in the Indian Ocean, focusing on the "String of Pearls" theory. It explores how China's maritime ambitions impact geo-political dynamics in the region.

### **Research Methodology**

Qualitative method will be adopted to pursuit the objectives of the study. Different policy documents, government reports, and official statements related to the Indian Ocean region's geo-politics and maritime security will be analyzed. Content analysis helps in identifying key themes, policy objectives, and shifts in government priorities. This analysis can provide insights into how these topics are framed and

discussed in the public domain, potentially uncovering hidden narratives and biases. By applying the method of triangulation and using multiple data sources and research methods. This can ensure the reliability and validity of qualitative findings.

### **Geo-Political History of Indian Ocean**

Those who live near the Indian Ocean have enjoyed more than a thousand years of successful commerce. These people's lives were significantly affected for the worst as a result of these naval endeavors, whether they were cultural or religious in nature, or entailed invasion or slavery. When the Portuguese and other European nations started sailing around the Cape of Good Hope in pursuit of new commercial partners and empires in the East, trade and communication patterns altered radically (Sharma, 2016). Because European maritime activity was largely centered in the East, it didn't have much of an impact on Africa. One of Africa's most valued assets was the provision of secure refuge and sustenance for travelers who had traveled a long and sometimes perilous path. Europe's formidable warships quickly gained control of the Indian Ocean and expanded their reach to the region's most remote areas (Cordner, 2011).

The assistance of naval forces made it easier to create national interests and protect against the operations of other European countries. The British were able to construct an empire in the Indian Water over many centuries by using the force of the ocean in their operations. During the nineteenth century, European fleets were crucial in preserving maritime law and order, putting an end to piracy, and battling slavery (Shafiq, 2014). Following World War II, the decolonization movement ended British sovereignty in the Indian Ocean area. As nations clashed in the area throughout the ensuing conflict known as the Cold War, the region became increasingly important as a worldwide strategic asset. Because of the countries around the water's role as a bridge, most of what the Indian Ocean was used to link Africa, Asia, and Australasia was discovered after this period ended (Das, 2021).

### **The Indian Ocean and Maritime Security**

Global geostrategic significance is progressively moving to the Indian Ocean region. Because of non-regional power, this sector should get more attention. China's involvement, as well as the arrival of regional powers like India (Ghani, Ahmed & Muzaffar, 2017). Concerns range from resource competitiveness and energy security to environmental and economic difficulties caused by climate change. Global and regional industries are increasingly reliant on the Indian Ocean's marine communication channels (Ramadhan, 2020). The waters may include several interconnected security challenges. There are no regional organizations in the Indian Ocean region, and regional security cooperation has a dubious history. Non-conventional risks that threaten shared interests in collective security give the most plausible chances for the formation of discourse and processes regarding collective security (Kalim, 2018).

### **Non- Traditional Security Challenges**

Detecting and preventing non-traditional threats is more difficult. For such agreements to be successful, authorities from both inside and outside the area must be engaged. Because of the region's geography and rich cultural diversity, there is a lot of opportunity for regional collaboration in Indian Ocean maritime security. There is an urgent need to make significant progress in strengthening the collective security

discussion and developing cooperation procedures and practices related to maritime security at all levels of government, non-government, and operational (Iqbal, 2021).

### **Role of South Asian Nations in the Indian Ocean**

The Indian Ocean has long been disregarded in debates about South Asian security when it comes to the future of global politics, economics, and security. The limits of a huge body of water are formed by East Africa, the Indian subcontinent, Indochina, and Australia, as well as the Southern Ocean off the coast of Antarctica. These four geographical masses surround this body of water. The Indian Ocean, the world's third-largest, accounts for about 20% of the world's surface water. Because the Indian Ocean's politics are intertwined with those of four other areas, interdependent economies and interactive strategic processes may emerge within regional systems. This category includes the Persian Gulf, South Asia, Southeast Asia, and Eastern Africa.

As a result, the ocean has a considerable influence on Asian politics, foreign policy, and the involvement of massive external forces. The Indian Ocean nations, notably South Asia, rely on marine supply channels in the Indian Ocean for energy. The Indo-Pacific Strategy, the Belt Road Initiative, and the Maritime Silk Route all overlap and diverge in this region, giving China and the US a strategic advantage. The geopolitics of an energy supply route is a crucial element in determining a country's degree of energy security (Kaplan, 2014). It defines geopolitics as "the struggle for space and power played out in a geographical environment." Another subfield of geopolitics is energy geopolitics, which encompasses economic geopolitics, diplomatic geopolitics, and military geopolitics.

The IPS and the BRI have prioritized managing energy supply networks and the nations that operate as transit hubs as a primary focus of geography study (Kaplan, 2014). Bangladesh and India will continue to depend on the United States, Europe, China, Central Asia, and the Middle East as their primary providers of energy, trade, and transportation for the foreseeable future. Both nations' economies rely on a calm and orderly Indian Ocean to continue their growth. The river, on the other hand, provides a strategic push to the surrounding land (Mishra, 2016).

### **Economic and Political Perspective**

On the Indian Ocean, there are several economic and political perspectives. However, its strategic value in entering the global power game has lately increased dramatically. Furthermore, it is growing at a fast speed. In the imaginations of political philosophers, the phrase "sea amnesia" has given way to "sea awareness." Although nations are becoming more cognizant of the geopolitical dynamics, the Indian Ocean has become a venue for unusual security challenges. Regional solutions and commitments that go beyond strategic thinking are essential for even this component to be handled adequately, as it pertains to the area's moral, ethical, and legal governance. Because of the existence of non-state actors and the environmental threats, no one nation can provide network security for the IORA area.

The result of this fight has a lot riding on it for the nations of the IOR. These two factors might slow down more than half of the world's container trade and one-third of all marine travel between the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea.

### **Malacca Dilemma**

To understand the significance of the problem, consider China's "Malacca Dilemma," which exposes China's vulnerability in terms of access to the Indo-Pacific region. There is just one major entry point for China into the Indo-Pacific region. The South China Sea, where the pass is situated, is characterized by a maze of overlapping territorial claims made by several of the region's nations (Mullen & Poplin, 2015). Beijing claims control over practically the entire South China Sea because of the "nine-dash line" (Pilling, 2014).

### **Role of ASEAN and Policy Attention**

There are several maritime treaties in existence to manage the Indian Ocean, which is vital to understand. As a consequence, regional organizations such as BIMSTEC and ASEAN are emphasizing maritime policy. The Sulu-Celebes Seas Trilateral Cooperative Agreement (TCA) between Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines contribute to the resolution of maritime security problems. The goal of this agreement was to preserve the seas of Sulu and Celebes from maritime security problems (Benson, 2020). ITLOS and UNCLOS assisted Bangladesh in resolving maritime border issues with India and Myanmar in South Asia (Rosen & Jackson, 2017). Even in Southeast Asia, where the South China Sea and the Southeast Asian archipelago are plagued with maritime territorial disputes, these conflicts jeopardize regional progress toward cooperation. The maritime territorial dispute in the South China Sea is the most contentious in Southeast Asia (Benson, 2020).

### **Role of Extra-regional Powers in IOR Security**

Australia, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore have joined the 15-member Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. This alliance will be the world's largest trade bloc by 2020, accounting for 30% of the world's population and 30% of global GDP, with 2.2 billion people and \$26.2 trillion in GDP (Nikkei, 2020). The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership is an essential economic collaboration between ASEAN and its five primary trade partners, including China (RCEP) (Kalim, 2018). Interregional commerce accounts for 25% of total trade in the

ASEAN area, whereas intraregional trade in South Asia accounts for just 5% of total trade in the region. According to World Bank figures, South Asian trade is presently worth just \$23 billion, much less than the expected value of at least \$67 billion (World Bank, 2021).

### **Regional Trade**

This lack of inter-regional trade reflects a lack of collaboration among the area's natural markets. It also reflects a history of anxiety and suspicion. Because governments in the IOR put various weights on economic and security problems, they react to calls for collaboration and means of collective security differently. The Indian Ocean's political and economic institutions face both classic and non-traditional dangers. Sea welfare, rather than sea controversies, should lead Indian Ocean management to prevent inhibiting the establishment of ocean governance common agenda, as the essay suggests (Bhardwaj, & Rahaman, 2021). The problems in this ocean may vary as a result of causes such as human population expansion, market economy operation, and climate change. Because of the ocean's significance as a channel, political players often ignore economic and strategic interconnectivity.

## **The Complex Interplay between Geostrategy and Geoeconomics**

The Indian Ocean is fraught with geoeconomic and geostrategic issues. Because the BRI project is so close to the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz, which hold two-thirds of the world's oil, maritime politics are crucial to its success. Because of its strategic and economic significance to both China and Pakistan, the port's location at the crossroads of international shipping and oil trade routes cannot be understated. Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC) connect the port to the Strait of Hormuz and the Persian Gulf. As a result of this, it will be able to assert control over the oil sea lanes and trade links between South Asia, Africa, Central Asia, and Gulf nations (Hellenic Shipping Line, 2019).

### **Pakistan Strategic Leverage in IOR**

Because of the port's remote location concerning Pakistan's other two ports, Pakistan will acquire strategic leverage over India as a result of its construction. If the Malacca Strait becomes clogged, Gwadar would provide an alternative naval route. Gwadar has considerable potential as an alternative to the Indian Ocean and the South China Sea. India and Iran's infrastructure partnership has given Chahbahar more geopolitical prominence as an alternative to Gwadar's port. This is because Chahbahar is geographically closer to India than Gwadar. Chahbahar is part of a larger attempt to resist the "Strings of Pearl strategy," which India claims China is using to surround India for strategic purposes.

### **Role of OPEC States in IOR**

The Indian Ocean and infrastructure politics may be linked to these nations' market stability. Because so many of the IORA nations' oil and LNG projects rely on the maritime route, there are additional geopolitical concerns connected with energy transportation, logistics, and storage. Chokepoints on the Indian Ocean's energy transit routes worsen local and international policy issues. According to OPEC estimates, "79.4 percent of the world's proven oil reserves are concentrated in OPEC member states, with the majority of OPEC oil reserves located in the Middle East accounting for 64.5 percent" of the OPEC total (OPEC, 2019). Approximately two-thirds of the world's oil flow is transported by marine channels, which are crowded in four key places across the world.

The Strait of Hormuz transports about 20.7 million barrels of oil per day, accounting for more than 60% of global marine oil traffic (US Energy Information Administration, 2019). This is a 21-mile-wide waterway between Oman and Iran that connects the Persian Gulf, the Gulf of Oman, and the Arabian Sea. This port is mostly used to export oil and LNG from Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia (US Energy Information Administration, 2019). Political ties are formed via remittances from Indian and Bangladeshi laborers, as well as commerce in natural resources. Geopolitical or geostrategic turmoil in any of these nations would have an immediate impact on Bangladesh and India. Iran's relations with Gulf nations aligned with the US posed a danger to the flow of energy via the Strait. As a consequence, the US and China have expanded their geostrategic footprint in the area.

### **Choke Points**

The Malacca Strait has two significant oil traffic choke points. It is the quickest shipping route between Asia and the Indian Ocean. The Strait of Malacca, a waterway between Indonesia and Malaysia, carries 30% of world maritime crude oil traffic (equivalent to 15 million barrels per day) (US Energy Information Administration, 2018). The Malacca Strait is critical to China because it carries 90% of the crude oil going via the South China Sea. Because of its position between Africa and the Persian Gulf, this strait links Asian markets with those in the Middle East and African oil producers. The Malacca Strait and the Suez Canal are important chokepoints for South Asian nations. The Suez Canal connects the Mediterranean and Red Seas at sea. Africa and Asia are divided by the Suez Canal, which connects the two seas. (Bhardwaj, & Rahaman, 2021).

### **Important Sea Routes in IOR Suez Canal**

The canal provides a quicker path between the North Atlantic and Northern Indian seas, avoiding the South Atlantic and Southern Indian oceans. Travel time from the Arabian Sea to London, for example, is reduced by around 8,900 kilometers (5,500 miles) (World Shipping Council, 2020). The Suez Canal and the SUMED Pipeline offer an important strategic economic route for transferring fuels such as crude oil, petroleum products, and LNG from Asia and Africa to Europe and North America. The Canal's northward petroleum flow allows for a vital connection between the Persian Gulf and European and northern US markets. This approach accounts for 9 percent of the total energy provided by the sea. SUMED was utilized in the transaction of about 8% of the world's total LNG (US Energy Information Administration, 2019). The Canal transports crude oil from the Middle East and Africa to Singapore, China, and India. Russia provided for the majority of petroleum exports heading south (24 percent). As Libyan crude oil output and exports have increased, so has Qatar LNG production, making the Canal even more crucial (US Energy Information Administration, 2019).

### **The Bay of Bengal**

The Bay of Bengal is the geostrategic center of the Indian Ocean area. According to Chinese authorities, increased port and rail links between China and Bangladesh might help reduce congestion on the Malacca Strait. Following opposition from India, Japan, and the United States, Beijing withdrew its support for the Sonadia deep-sea port project. When assessing Bangladesh's geostrategic and geopolitical position toward the Bay of Bengal, both defensiveness and partnership as possibilities must be considered. Bangladeshi and Indian coast guard regional and zonal commanders meet regularly to discuss marine safety and security problems. Because the maritime borders of Bangladesh, India, and Myanmar have been resolved amicably, it demonstrates that more collaboration and the development of new government institutions are not viable.

### **Bab el Mandeb Strait**

South Asian nations must also cope with the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. The Taiwan Strait is rapidly becoming a geostrategic chokepoint for both the US and China. Djibouti and Yemen are linked by a small strait that spans the Horn of Africa and into the Middle East. The establishment of China's first overseas military installation in Djibouti for \$590 million demonstrated Beijing's capacity to project military strength into the Indian Ocean and the Horn of Africa. This facility is located in the country of Djibouti (Khan, 2021). The conflict between government soldiers supported by Saudi Arabia and a southern separatist movement reportedly affiliated with them and sponsored by a Southern Transition Council financed by the UAE is causing tensions in the Bab el-

Mandeb Strait. Alternative types of energy have grown more costly as a consequence of the continuing situation in Yemen, which has driven up the price of oil (Khan, 2021).

### **Zero-Sum Game**

Furthermore, the situation in Yemen has devolved into a gigantic power struggle, with both the US and China actively participating in the zero-sum game being played by Saudi Arabia and Iran. Crude oil, condensate, and other raw commodities begin their journey from Asia to Europe, North America to the United States, and Europe through this trade (US Energy Information Administration, 2019). In 2017, 3.6 million BPD traveled north to Europe while 2.6 million BPD traveled south to Asian markets such as Singapore, China, and India. This Strait contributes to 9% of all marine petroleum flow (US Energy Information Administration, 2019).

### **The Emerging Challenges in the Indian Ocean**

Traditional maritime disputes between states, as well as non-traditional issues such as environmental threats and non-state actors, are all part of the geostrategic-economic interplay. There are links between the two since the geostrategic and geoeconomic interface is linked to both classic maritime warfare between states and unconventional threats (maritime terrorism and piracy) (Saud, 2017). Bangladesh realized the need of defending its territorial seas after establishing its maritime borders. BIMSTEC, IORA, and ASEAN are collaborating to combat maritime piracy in the current era, using lessons learned from the Somali coast. Even though piracy occurs in the waterways between India and Bangladesh, the Indo-Pacific region is becoming an increasingly dangerous site for high-seas criminals. This criminal nexus may be seen in action in the Bay of Bengal, where extortion, armed robbery, and kidnappings are widespread. Sulu Sea pirates have been connected to extremist organizations such as Abu Sayyaf and have terrorized the waterways around the Malacca Strait (Benson, 2020).

### **Piracy and Terrorism**

Piracy and terrorism are on the rise as illicit maritime commerce and trafficking expand. A variety of illegal activities take occur in Bangladesh's waterways. According to the authorities, the most prevalent transnational sea crimes in Bangladesh are piracy and drug smuggling (Sharma, 2014). The Bay of Bengal, which links Bangladesh to South and Southeast Asia, serves as a geopolitical and economic pivot for the BIMSTEC nations. The South-Southeast Asian "Quad," commonly known as the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor, or BCIM for short, might profit significantly from this region. Population growth in the Bay, climate change, overfishing, habitat loss, pollution, and water quality deterioration are all factors contributing to the Bay's present shape (Sharma, 2014).

### **Regional Cooperation and Scope**

Given the gravity and scope of these concerns, regional collaboration is critical, requiring the nations around the Bay to put aside their political differences and collaborate. Countries in the Bay of Bengal Large Marine Ecosystem (BOBLME) Project region are now collaborating to safeguard the area's marine resources. This effort, which seeks to improve environmental and fisheries management in the Bay of Bengal, will help coastal residents in the region (Kabir & Ahmad, 2015). The Bay of Bengal, which is part of the Indian Ocean, is surrounded by the coastlines of Bangladesh, India,



Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Thailand. It is worth 3.71 trillion dollars in monetary terms (Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India, 2019).

### **Security against Smuggling and Human Trafficking**

Despite international and regional conventions and agreements, a smuggling route for narcotics, human trafficking, and armament continues to transit through the Bay. Not only has combating piracy become a key security concern for the nations around the Bay of Bengal, but so has preventing illicit drug trafficking, unlawful people trafficking, illegal trespassing, and cross-border terrorism (ASEAN). Emerging efforts such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) may have made security-related concerns one of their key objectives as they attempt to develop cooperative security and political frameworks in the Indian Ocean.

### **Narcotics and Drugs Smuggling**

The narcotics smuggling and human trafficking have grown in the Bay of Bengal, which is located in the middle of the Golden Triangle and Golden Crescent, both of which are hubs for drugs and small weapons trafficking. Malaysian authorities captured significant quantities of crystal meth aboard ships leaving Penang in 2019. Criminal organizations employ motherships to carry narcotics over the Andaman Sea, the Bay of Bengal, and even to Australia and New Zealand (Das, 2021). Illegal meth has been discovered in shipping containers in neighboring countries such as the Philippines and Malaysia. According to a Myanmar Police investigation, chemists from Taiwan and China are recruited to build meth laboratories in the country, while the precursors and lab equipment are largely imported from China (Allard, 2019).

The Bay of Bengal and the land point that serves as a border crossing between Bangladesh and Myanmar are the main routes for drug trafficking in both nations. The Bay of Bengal, which connects the Andaman Sea and the Malacca Strait, will experience a sustained flow of maritime drug trafficking in 2019 and 2020. This operation's targeted targets were Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and Malaysia, as well as extra trafficking to the Pacific Islands, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Australia, and New Zealand. People were smuggled not only into the Pacific Islands, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Australia, and New Zealand (UNODC, 2020).

### **Inter-Governmental cooperation**

Because of the Maldives' proximity to Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, India, and Sri Lanka, human and geographical networks for drug trafficking have emerged. This has placed Bangladesh, island nations such as Sri Lanka and the Maldives, as well as other countries largely reliant on opium cultivation, in a precarious situation. This is especially important for countries near the sea. Bangladesh is in a perilous situation due to its placement between the Golden Triangle and the Golden Crescent. In Afghanistan, the Golden Crescent is a well-known landmark (Myanmar-Thailand). Drug trafficking is constantly expanding, as shown by the fluidity and secrecy of networks stretching from Afghanistan to the Maldives, the Indian Northeast, Thailand, and the Malacca Strait. These networks extend from Afghanistan to the Maldives, passing via India's northeast, Thailand, and the Malacca Strait. Individuals engaged in the illegal trafficking of goods and people may be able to disguise their actions due to the availability of current information and communication technology.

### **Role of Non-State actors**

Although non-state actors have been using technology for a long time, the new technologies will have significant maritime implications. These new inventions will also have an influence. As a result of these disasters, there will be fatalities, pollution, and cargo damage, all of which will have an impact on the economy and society as a whole. When it comes to sea transportation, two of the most significant factors are safety and security, as well as minimizing pollution. Despite vast sums of money being spent and cutting-edge equipment being deployed, the amount of illegal operations on the water has not diminished much. As a consequence of the interplay between man and machine, human factors and training are critical in governing the usage of evolving technology and reducing incidents at sea (European Council for maritime Applied R&D, 2020).

### **Safety of SLOC**

Furthermore, determining future danger levels and using known methodologies to associate risk levels with marine motions are critical. This is a concern since anticipating how harmful something will be in the future is difficult. While there is little sign that terrorist threats will diminish, ships and ports are likely to remain targets of terrorist strikes for some time. This is worsened by growing worries about cyber security, which may jeopardize SLOC safety. It is just a matter of time until criminal organizations all over the world are supported in their illicit actions by entirely autonomous remote operations, shore-based control of ships and underwater vehicles, and fully autonomous remote operations (Mishra, 2014). They will be able to put these skills to use shortly. Another critical problem is illegal fishing that is not reported to authorities and is not controlled (IUU fishing), sometimes known as wild fishing. Allowing trawlers and other boats to wander the waters freely is unacceptable. To do this, we would need to collaborate on a regional and extra-regional scale (Masala, 2015).

### **Conclusion**

South Asian and maybe IORA states will need to go beyond their respective national and political-strategic lenses to serve the region's best interests. This will keep the amazing game going. As a consequence, avoiding China or the US, whether via the Strings of Pearl program or the Indo-Pacific policy, would be a non-starter. To observe, control, and manage the Indian Ocean, a collaborative approach should be adopted. The IOR states should have summit meetings regularly, and engineers and maritime experts should be able to have open and honest discussions based on research. Advances and innovations in the maritime industry should be shared by all countries. The senior leaders should prioritize developing uniform governance norms in the areas of fisheries, pollution, and illegal migration. An overemphasis on geopolitical factors will exclude coastal governments from solving humanity's biggest crisis ever. Whether or whether they receive foreign funding, the region's governments must concentrate their efforts on developing high- quality marine infrastructure. Respecting national authorities and strategic autonomy, which states wish to maintain, may help to decrease geopolitical pressure.

### **Recommendations**

The nations in the Indian Ocean region strengthen diplomatic ties and promote dialogue to address common interests, such as maritime security, piracy, and environmental protection.

It is suggested for the ratification and enforcement of international agreements and conventions related to maritime security, such as the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and anti-piracy agreements.

The establishment of a regional information-sharing mechanism among Indian Ocean nations to exchange intelligence on maritime threats and promote a collective response should be focused.

The development of economic cooperation initiatives, such as trade facilitation, investment in infrastructure, and energy resource management, to benefit all nations in the region is need of time.

Emphasize the conflict resolution mechanisms and diplomatic solutions for territorial disputes, encouraging the use of arbitration and mediation.

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