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Abstract

India and China are geographically located in Asia. Both these countries are massively populous and are also fast emerging economies. The relation between the two countries had been rich in the past but after 1949, it witnessed many ups and downs. India and China have been culturally connected since old times. Buddhism also got spread to China from India. After becoming sovereign independent nations in 1940's, relations between the countries formally took shape. Henceforth, the relations went through the good times when slogans like "Hindi-Chini bhai bhai" were raised but subsequently went low due to Tibet and other boundary issues. The resentment over these issues pushed both these countries to a short duration of war in 1962. The Sino-Indian war of 1962 led to serious setback in bilateral relations and thus started the phase of animosity, articulated by the phrase "Hindi-Chini bye-bye". Hereafter, it took several decades to bring back relations to the normal.

In recent years we are witnessing that the emerging geopolitics and maritime security in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is emerging as one more concern in the bilateral relations. The growing strategic importance of IOR is pushing both countries to increase their influence in it, in order to secure their respective interests. As India Shares a vast coastline with Indian Ocean, so it becomes very important for her security. Also, with the onset of industrialization and the growing requirements of energy, India is looking towards sea for various resources to meet them. Similarly for China, Indian Ocean holds importance for the fact that it is a very important energy transport corridor from Gulf region. China has a dilemma about Malacca Strait being choked anytime, which can severely disturb the energy supply to China and thus will severely affect the Chinese economy. This dilemma is known as 'Malacca Dilemma'. Of late, Beijing is focussing more towards IOR to provide security to the sea lanes of communication (SLOCs) and subsequently protect its economic interest. China's recent Blue Books and Defence White Papers are also reflective of their focus towards IOR. All this has turned IOR into a 'zone of competition and rivalry'.

This study constitutes five Chapters. Chapter first gives the brief introduction about the topic and an idea about what is to be researched. It also includes literature review, structure of the thesis, research methodology and research objectives. Chapter second studies the historical background of the relations between the two countries particularly from post-independence period. It traces the course of relations which were better initially but ultimately due to many conflicting issues like Boundary issue, Tibet issue both countries fought a war in 1962. It also highlights many

contemporary irritants in the relations, which can potentially harm the normal course of relations between India and China. Lastly, it highlights the shift in rivalry and competition from landwards to seawards in the Indian Ocean. As both the countries are shunning their sea-blindness and are expanding their naval outreach, there are chances that it can take an ugly turn unless managed properly.

Chapter third gives an overview about the Indian Ocean, its geography, its maritime history and the emerging geopolitics in it and its associated region. It examines geopolitical and geo-economic significance of the Indian Ocean as there are lot of resources in it. Its geopolitical significance can also be gauged from the fact that it is home to many island territories and important SLOCs as well. It is mainly for these SLOCs that many countries are trying to increase their presence in this region. This chapter also looks into Indian Ocean as a crucial space for international politics and analyses various threats and challenges that this region faces.

Chapter fourth examines China's recent focus into far sea waters, its naval outreach and maritime strategies in the Indian Ocean. It also studies China's Politico-Strategic engagements with the Indian Ocean Region countries in order to maintain its strategic influence in the region. It also examines projects like 'China-Pakistan Economic Corridor' and 'Maritime Silk Road', as components of umbrella project that is 'Belt and Road initiative'. These projects are aimed at diversifying the energy transport options and thus reducing the vulnerabilities emerging out of potential choke point blockades particularly from Malacca Strait. It looks into China's 'String of Pearls Strategy' in the Indian Ocean, which overtly has economic and commercial purposes but can also be used for military ambitions as well.

Chapter fifth is the last chapter and attempts at studying India's seaward focus. Of late, it is being seen that India is paying due attention towards seas as well. This is being necessitated due to the reasons like maintaining its strategic upper-hand in its backyard and also responding to the presence of extra-regional powers which are trying to assert themselves in this region. This chapter examines various maritime strategies of India in the Indian Ocean through which it is developing its maritime infrastructure and naval preparedness in the region. It also studies various multilateral initiatives led by India in the IOR in order to improve interoperability and enhance the security architecture of the region.

Lastly, an overall conclusion is given in which some findings have been highlighted and accordingly some suggestions have been put forth to increase the India's influence in the IOR.