

Maritime Security of India: an Evaluation

Avishek Naskar^{1*}

^{1*} Department of International Relations, Jadavpur University, Kolkata- 700032, e- mail:
ju.naskar.avishek@gmail.com

Abstract

Although India's ancient maritime tradition predates' Greek, Roman and Carthaginian exploits in the Mediterranean, little is known about the maritime policy of the period. For this reason, the experts on India's maritime growth opined that Western historians, which rarely mentioned of the sea-faring skills of the ancient Arabs, the Chinese or Indians. In fact, tangible evidence of India's widespread cultural, religious and linguistic imprint- dating back two-three millennia years is available. It is found not just around the Indian Ocean rim, but extending from the Mediterranean to the Pacific. Hence in the field of maritime activity Sardar K.M.Panikkar, statesman diplomat and visionary who discovered that Indian Ocean regions saw the world's first oceanic-sailing activity. He argued that the ancient Hindus possessed the skills to construct a sturdy ocean going ships and knew the use of magnetic compass for accurate navigation. He clinches his extensive arguments by stating that: "Millenniums before Columbus sailed the Atlantic and Mgellan crossed the Pacific, the Indian Ocean had become a thoroughfare of commercial and cultural traffic". During the 12th and 13th centuries, as Central Asian hordes poured down our mountain passes to conquer the rich Gangetic plain, India's maritime power gradually withered and oceanic threats passed into the hands of the Arabs. When the Portuguese adventure Vasco-da-gama arrived of the Calicut the sultanate of Delhi was ruled by Afghan-Lodi dynasty also in southern India, did not give much importance on maritime security. Panikkar emphasized that India's fate has been determined not on land frontiers but on the oceanic expanses. He declared that India will be in imperiling if the Indian Ocean ever ceases to be a protected sea. For that reason, he made it clear in 1945 that Indian Ocean is strategically important. Indian Ocean is geo-strategically important for India's growth as a nation and as a cosmopolitan civilization. India belongs to a rugged area zone having high mountains domination her northern areas. During 1980's Indian Ocean became a centre of great power rivalry. USA tried to establish war air base at the Indian Ocean and this created ocean zone 'a zone of conflict'. For this, Indian Ocean turned into a strategically important area for India. With the advent of globalization and liberalization, India's ocean became a vital area of business transaction. Moreover the bombing at World Trade Centre in 2001 by Taliban and it's growing terrorist activities at Afghanistan and Pakistan. India's maritime securities have become a vital point to be taken into account. From this point of view, my investigation in this paper will be concentrated on India's maritime policy from the security perspective particularly (i)energy import and export over oceans (ii) environmental problem disaster management (iii) as well as terrorist infiltration in this region, (iv) India-China imbroglio over the sea.

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The primary purpose of maritime security of the India is to develop socially, economically and chronologically of human life, as well as protection of the nation concerned from natural calamities and external threat in the sea-shore area. Not only that, every nation of the sea-shore areas must protect its sovereignty and through this, it can build a nation state. It is a fact that living and non-living resources are plenty in the nearby areas of the sea-shore. Among this, in respect of non-conventional energy's security, the most of the vital elements are wave, temperature, current and wind. Therefore, maritime security in a country can be taken as primary factor which is of pivotal importance.

In respect of countries of Asia-Pacific region, maritime security is a significant issue. The most important reason for this is its geopolitical location. For example, China, by its 'island building' project has extended its maritime security of the South-China Sea. As a result of this, the security of countries like Japan, Vietnam and Philippines, etc., have been at stake. Therefore, it is understood, that the excessive maritime security strategy of a state is undoubtedly is a matter of agony to other states. As for example, China, not only expanded its excessive security strategy and confined it to Japan, Philippines and Vietnam, but the maritime concern of Indonesia is also affected. All this combined together may be called 'maritime axis'.ⁱ

Again, if one goes to the maritime strategy of Australia, it is found that its strategy is 'Indo- Pacific framework'. As a result, not only the Pacific and Indian Ocean states are under this domain, the great powers like Russia and USA who are located at a far distance, their maritime strategic policy are also targeted at Pacific and Indian Ocean Region (IOR). It appears from this that the hegemony of the great powers and their sovereign integrity are of prime factors, which necessitated the strengthening of maritime security strategy of the small powers for their protection. India is not an exception to this.

The challenges which India is facing in her coastal region, it tries to develop strategy legally to control those challenges. Among the illegal activities, the prominent are anti-national activities like drug-smuggling, women trafficking, and above all other criminal activities, such as, consumer and intermediate goods are illegally smuggle out through sea-routes. India has been taken important role to stop all these smuggling and for this it has strengthened its maritime security.

The security of the coastal region is very important. It is for this reason that coastal region's states are giving primary importance and engaging themselves as early as possible to protect their coastal region. It is essential because if coastal region remains

unprotected, external states' interference like spread of industrial and defense installation at coastal regions are to be happened and all these will surely bring about a threat to the state or states whose coastal regions are unprotected. Hence the security of the unprotected coastal states faces threat which is to be called as 'cross border activity'. For all this reasons Indian Ocean is strategically very important than Bay of Bengal and Arabic Ocean.ⁱⁱ Because through Indian Ocean, supply of energy has been regularly going on. But it has been facing external threats like, drug-trafficking, sea-piracy and other illegal activities like gun-running, etc are rampant in this area on the way for which strengthening of maritime security on the part of India is urgently essential. Andaman and Nicobar Island is located by the Indian Ocean region. Various reports of the experts on the maritime security argue that if industrial establishment is built up in the Indian coastal region, the managerial activity in those establishments may act as a major concern for technological security in the area.

It is for this reason that the Government of different states has been building industries in the coastal sector and trying to develop infrastructure needed for maintaining maritime security. France, Japan, Russian, United Kingdom and United States of America have taken these measures to strengthen their maritime security zone. Following this, India has taken this step to safeguard its coastal sector.

The coastal land of India is 7517 kilometre (km) when length of land based area is 5422 km whereas, taking Lakshadweep into account, the coast line areas of Andaman is 1962 km. In fact, Indian coastal line comprises nine Indian states like, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, West Bengal including Union Territory like Goa. Therefore, India has large coastal wet lands which have covered 41,401 square km, 27.13 per cent of the territory of India.ⁱⁱⁱ

If one considers from point of view of width, the entire southern part of great India is located on the great sea. Now, the location of the Sundarban is in the East of Bay of Bengal, on the south, Indian Ocean and on the west, Arab Ocean. These three great oceans always determine the maritime strategy of India.

Now, it is pertinent to evaluate the maritime security. Now, we may classify these regions into three zones. Such as,

- i. The evaluation of maritime security can be done centring on the Sundarban sanctuary.
- ii. Strategic relevance of the Indian Ocean.
- iii. The goods, commercial transaction and internal security of India depend on the maritime security of Arab Ocean.

Bay of Bengal, the area which is essentially covers around the area of Bay of Bengal. It is evident that the Bay of Bengal is a vast area which covers 21,73,000 square kilometre.^{iv} The maritime trade of Eastern Sri Lanka, Eastern India and the Bay of Bengal located in the downstream of Bangladesh, where Thailand, Malaysia and Myanmar are located. All these areas' maritime trade is done through maritime connectivity of Bay of Bengal. Since, the expansion of British rule is done through Bay of Bengal, it is pertinent that the integrity of India depends on the safeguard of maritime security in this region. Again, from 1990, the rapid economic growth of China as well as trade could be possible through Bay of Bengal, taking Indian Ocean as their gateway. Therefore, the Bay of Bengal has created a new dimension so far as strategic position of India is concerned in this region. At present, India has taken Sea Lines of Communication security (SLCs) and trying to develop it in order to secure maritime security in this area. Security connectivity in oceans, oceanic continent, naval activities exercises are done here. Not only that, side by side India itself making all out efforts to develop relation with international organizations like, BIMSTEC, IORA, BABIN, BCIN, IONS, INSTC and making development of Chabahar port which is in Iran. It is important from political and economic point of view.^v

On the other hand, China has taken various measures to develop BRI initiative, Gwadar and Hambantona port.^{vi} In future, all these activities may lead to a great challenge to Indian North- Eastern region. China has developed a well connectivity system in this area, which lead to rapid economic growth of China. India apprehended this. Hence, to face all these challenges it has attempted to make distinct its maritime security adjacent to the region of Bay of Bengal.

QUAD, in the domain of maritime security is important. For instance, the US, Japan, India and Australia formed the QUAD. Fundamentally, in the middle of 2000 the QUAD was vehemently activated. The joint naval exercise of this QUAD took place at Malabar in 2007. The Malabar is situated on the Bay of Bengal. But China vehemently opposed this venture of the QUAD, resulting in the death of this venture. Now, it is everybody's guess when this venture (QUAD-2) will again come into operation.^{vii}

A report of the Ministry of Shipping shows that in India 97 per cent of the external trade is done through the ocean. Hence, the significance of maritime security is prevalent before independence. If one goes to the history of maritime security of India, one will find that in 1976 a Maritime Zone Act was passed. According to this act, India's maritime region was divided into five coastal guards. The Indian Coastal Guard (ICG) has taken the management of five coast guards (for instance: North-West, West, East, North-East and Andaman Nicobar Island). The security of this zone

is seen by Indian Coastal Guard (ICG). Therefore, it can be easily understood that Bay of Bengal is strategically important so far as east, North-Eastern Andaman's maritime security is concerned. The head quarter of Indian Coastal Guard is at Gandhi Nagar, Chennai, Mumbai, Port Blair and Kolkata. The air station of Coast Guard Air Enclaves (CGAE) was formed in order to firmly establish the maritime security in the region concerned.

Now, we may look at the management of the coastal states and Union Territories situated near by Bay of Bengal. Among the coastal states and Union Territories, 12 nautical miles (nm) police force have been deployed. India is traditionally known as a rich maritime heritage zone. It is for this reason that the Exclusive Economic Zone of Bay of Bengal uses 200 nm. But the authority claims that India will extend 350 nm very soon.^{viii}

Andaman comprises 723 islands and rocks.^{ix} By the side of these islands there are Thailand, Myanmar and Indonesia. All these states are nearby India and hence, they are strategically important. Not only that, in 1980s when cold war era was going on US used Andaman's Port Blair as its ideal naval port. It had some obvious reason. The USA conducted its naval exercise in Indian Ocean using Port Blair port and in this way it fulfilled its power vacuum in this Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Therefore, the tri-service (Andaman- Nicobar-Indian Armed Forces), geographically command of the Indian Armed Forces at 10 degree north parallel are strategically very important from the point of view of its integrity. Similarly, Lakshadweep comprising 36 islands which is 325 square kilometre length is located in this area, with 4 lakh square kilometre EEZ covered falling under India's territory and the maritime part of Bay of Bengal. Hence, all these areas are strategically vital for maritime security.

Ganga, Padma, Bramhaputra and Meghna rivers are important for location of Delta forest of Sundarban. These rivers zone covers 4262 square kilometre, having the forest of Mangrove, being 2125 square kilometre (on the Indian part). This area is very critical so far as natural reason is concerned. For this reason, the boundary agreement in 1974 between India and Bangladesh is delayed. The Government of both the countries ratified this agreement in 2011. Here, the climate is really beautiful. This region is rich in pisciculture, trade, moreover, flow and low tide prevalent in this area are immensely nice. It is for this reason that this region is a free field for smugglers. The awareness of maritime security among the high officials is of great importance. In 2015, the Indo-Bangladesh government attempted to initiate a treaty, Trans- Boundary Protected Area (TDPA). In this region, there has been no political boundary only for free grazing of animals and birds. This trans-frontier

conservation area of peace-park is a part of Bay of Bengal. Hence, this strategically traditionally important area is needed coastal security.^x

At the outset, it can be stated that the green Himalayan range is situated on the north of India. India is the land at the foot step of this great Himalaya. As a result, this natural location of India, since long past, India has been chosen as one of the greatest oceanic resource. It is for this reason that India has built up a different character for its own security. India, to a large extent, is depended on sea resource. India faces naval threat from external power for which it has stressed upon this aspect in making its foreign policy, particularly with its neighbours. Therefore, it is obvious that Indian Ocean is a central issue so far as its strategic position is concerned for which it can be regarded as a place of top strategic importance.

Indian Ocean is situated on the way of south-east monsoon and it is only for this reason that from ancient time Indian Ocean is influenced by its civilization which India upholds. Almost 4000- 5000 years ago Indian citizens were adventurous. They liked to live on the sea-shore of Indian Ocean. For instance, the ancient civilization like Babylon (situated on the west sea-shore of Indian Ocean) is very much linked with Indian Ocean. Various documents of the ancient Vedic age that the influence of Indian Ocean is very much seen at 2000-500 BC. Even before the birth of Christ, in the 3rd Century, on the southern part of India non-Aryan people lived (included in the Hindu kingdom). Then Indian Ocean was a great naval power. The naval power of non- Aryan was removed; Pallava dynasty took control of the Indian Ocean by its naval strength. Afterwards, Indian Ocean was seen as a great empire of Cholas. Before the Christ, in 1007, emperor Rajendra defeated Shri Vijayan's navy and established the authority of Cholas at Malaysia. That was done obviously over the zone of Indian Ocean. Yet, the Mughal Empire was a great land power but during the period of Mughal empires Arabians, for trading purpose, came down through Indian Ocean. It appears from this, that from commercial point of view, the Indian Ocean was important because, Arabian's trading activity continued nearly 200 years.

On the beginning of the 17th century, primarily Dutch, British and French started their colonial domination, and that was only possible because they used Indian Ocean for these purposes. Similarly, in the middle of 17th century the British and French, by their strength of naval power, were able to establish control over India. But in 1751 AD, yet the Maratha dynasty faced the challenge of the British and that was possible only for the spread of naval army deployed in Indian Ocean. The Marathas routed out in 1783 AD the French domination by their naval power. In this way, the primitive stage of Indian Ocean could be described as a place of rivalry of different foreign

powers that used Indian Ocean for their own interest. In fact, in India, the British became all powerful and griped the Indian Oceanic zone which the historians believed that Indian Ocean turned into 'a dominant check points'. It is a spread over Malacca to the sea-shore of Malaysia, including Suez Canal- all areas are under the naval dominance of British power. From 1784 AD to 1941 AD, Indian Ocean became 'essentially a British lake'. In December, 1941, the Japanese intervened which eliminated the British hegemony in the Indian Ocean. During the First World War, the British naval power faced tremendous challenge from Germany in the Indian Ocean but that was temporary. In November, 1914, the German cruiser certainly left the area. Royal Australian Navy (RAN) dominated Cocos Islands and 12 troops, survey ships and streamers and others non-combatative mission were used in the Indian Ocean and the British made its influence. In fact, on 2nd October, 1934, in the Indian ports in Red Sea Zone, the RAN officially changed and converted into Royal Indian Navy (RIN).^{xi}

In 1941, when Japanese navy entered into Indian Ocean, the supremacy of the British navy ended. Not only that, the British navy destroyed in places like Singapore, Andaman etc. The presence of Japanese navy in Indian Ocean and the presence of American Navy in the Pacific region created a challenge like direct military maritime threat to India. After the 2nd World War, Indian Ocean faced a great power vacuum. This vacuum was filled in by US. In fact, the purpose of US was to counter Soviet threat. As a result of this fight of the cold war, the recent liberated Indian Non-Aligned Movement faced a serious threat by the great powers. In 1971, during Indo-Pakistan war the American Seventh Fleet marched Bay of Bengal (to establish its hegemony in South Vietnam) including Dhaka and India which jeopardize the maritime security of the Indian Ocean. To counter

US, Soviet Union sent 26 naval vessels to Indian Ocean. It appears from this that Indian Ocean is traditionally and strategically an important place since India is located adjacent to Indian Ocean. It is obvious that India's foreign policy making is influenced by the maritime security position of the Indian Ocean.^{xii}

An evaluation of the maritime security position in Indian Ocean reveals that some issues which are important for evaluation are like China's support to Pakistan, Big powers rivalry, India's maritime troops sent to Dhaka and direct American maritime threat to India. All these led to an unbalanced situation so far as India's maritime security and foreign policy making are concerned particularly from political and strategic point of view.^{xiii}

In 1970, certain changes in the Indian maritime security situation occurred. During this time, India's policy towards Indian Ocean particularly its Indian navy deployment in the area is extended. On December, 1973, United Nation conference on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS III)-III took a resolution in which it declared Indian Ocean as a 'Zone of Peace'.

Despite declaration of the Indian Ocean as a 'zone of peace', the naval activity of the super powers has been increasing day by day. In 1968, Soviet Union made their presence felt in Indian Ocean permanently. In response to this, America's Polaris A3 Submarine launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBM) was stationed at Diego Garcia. Here, US also stationed air craft. Therefore, though Indian Ocean a 'zone of peace', in fact, before globalization the big power rivalry game was in full swing in Indian Ocean.

After globalization various issues relating to maritime security of Indian Ocean came to light. Among them, the rise of China and its influence in Indian Ocean could be cited. In fact, China and India are geographically vast and densely populated area in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). For economic growth of these two countries, a development trading system is essential. Hence, import-export facilities are required. Moreover, the energy consumption of these two countries is high. Maritime security becomes important for supply of energy. Moreover, for smooth export- import of energy facility a tight military security is essential in this area. For this reason, the spread of maritime security are important matter for both the countries. In fact, China with its globalised economy has the advantage to make its influence in the Indian Ocean in 1993. China claimed that it makes its presence felt in the Indian Ocean as a major importer of oil resource. Therefore, the security of the resources is of important factor in the development of both these countries. Central Asia and South Asian zone are rich in hydrocarbon. Statistics show that Turkmenistan possesses 31.7 bcm, followed by Uzbekistan 3.4 bcm, and then Kazakhstan 1.1 bcm. In June 2018, Kazakhstan possibly produces 38.7 billion cubic meters hydrocarbon.^{xiv} Hence, the energy import of these two countries (India and China) are organized through this Indian sea. India, still now has not been able to construct pipelines for this purpose. Moreover, maximum import of ONGC Videsh Limited to the foreign countries are made through swap dealing process.^{xv} It is for this reason that Indian Ocean is one of the areas of connectivity of South East Asia. Even Central Asia also depends on this process of dealing. But China is ahead of connectivity measure and it achieved significantly in this regard in Central Asia by constructing pipeline. The spread of China in Indian Ocean is a matter of concern to India. If the influence of East, Yellow and South Ocean is satisfactory, then it would bring about a challenge in respect of its economic development particularly in South and South West of Indian

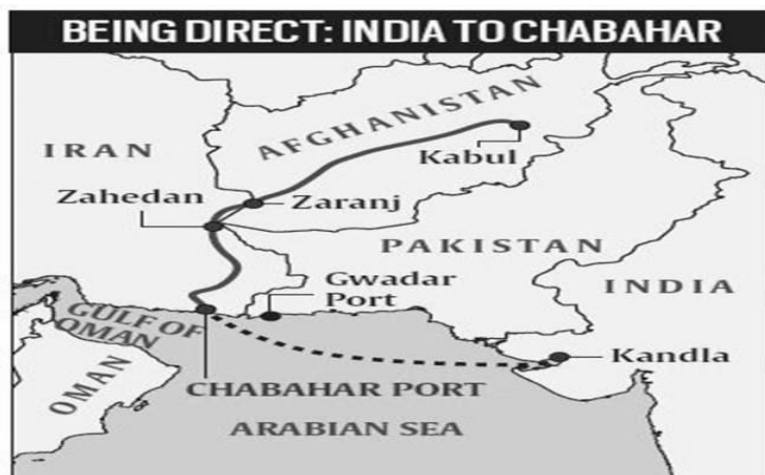
Ocean. It is for this reason that military surveillance is necessary to counter rising China. At present the massive trade link of China with European Countries is made through Indian Ocean.

China has become a land locked country in her north, west and south. The silk route, pipeline connectivity, road (Karakoram Highway), rail (South-Xinjiang railway) all these made it land locked. It is situated on the northern part of India. As a result, its influence falls on India's present connect Central Asia policy. Here, small Silk Route centered discussion held among the high officials of the concerned countries. But India did not participate in this meeting held in December, 2017 at Beijing, the capital of China. India's programme for energy security and economic connectivity could not be materialized. India's delay in this programme made an adverse effect on maritime security. Now, the strategic relation of Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran with China has been developing. After that, the continental bridge of Eurasia with China was possible for Indian Ocean.^{xvi}

Any study on India's maritime security over Indian Ocean could not be possible if one does not know the place of Malacca. Hence, the knowledge of Malacca's location is very important because, the place of Malacca is waterways connector to Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean. From ancient times China, Greece-Roman empire, many kingdom of India, Arab traders, Java, Sumatra and Malaya- all these states have been using this valuable sea-lake which can be called 'Malacca Strait'. At present this region, mostly India, US, China used this Malacca Strait as oil import route. Moreover, China for its energy security protection used Indian Ocean as gate entrance where Malacca strait spreads its naval power. Not only that, Japan, South Korea and others 'tiger' economies sent their industrial goods to non-American destination. This resulted in the incident of smuggling, terrorism, and piracy in the Malacca Strait region. Data shows that in 2004, 46 billion tones were carried in this region whereas in 2020, this volume of carrying will increase to 6.4 billion tons.^{xvii} Therefore, it is quiet natural that India will strengthen its military intervention at the entry and exit point of Malacca Strait. Not only that, it will establish its military superiority in the region. This will make Indian Ocean a challenge to China. Some Chinese analysts argue that, "India is trying to achieve military superiority at the entry and exit points of 'its' ocean: the straits of Malacca, Hormuz, and Bab-el-Mandeb, the Suez Canal, the Cape of Good Hope, and the Agalega, Archipelago. If bilateral relations between India and China should deteriorate, India could put China in a vulnerable position by choosing to play out disagreements in the Indian Ocean". It is understood from the above statement that maritime security is very much essential through which Indo-China bilateral relations could be made and balance

of power between these two nations could be developed. By these measures, India can be able to make its energy security, economic and trade relations firm.^{xviii}

Again, 26/11 Mumbai terrorist attack proves that the security of Indian Ocean, side by side Arabic Ocean is important,^{xix} because, this will safeguard the integrity along with connectivity of Chabahar port in Iran and Gujarat port. Energy import from Central Asia will depend on the India's maritime security. The map given below shows that India has been importing energy from Afghanistan via Iran through Chabahar port. Not only this, India is also engaged in importing energy from energy rich countries like Turkmenistan and Kazakhstan using Chabahar port as a means of connectivity.^{xx}



Source: <https://www.financialexpress.com/india-news/5-ways-india-will-benefit-from-irans-chabahar-port/959255/>

At the foot of Himalayan range, India is encircled on three sides by oceans. For natural environment India's strategic importance is fully dependent on oceans. The Palk Strait of India- Sri Lanka, fishiculture, Sundarban security in the IOR and energy trade connectivity in the west-all these are important. Moreover, it spreads its influence in the sphere of communications, warfare and food habits in mankind from the beginning of civilization. Therefore, it can be undoubtedly said that in the present day age of globalization, the key factors of Indian growth depends on the following factors:

- i. Firm maritime security
- ii. Large measure on its position of naval force
- iii. Merchant maritime with the spread of well guarded system
- iv. Fishing and naval power of great ocean
- v. Port facilities
- vi. Ship building industry
- vii. The systems of maritime finance.

All these will help India to become self-sufficient in maintaining and sustaining maritime security.

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- ^{iv} Smart Border management: Indian Coastal and Maritime Security, September, 2017, p. 2
- ^v Smart Border management: Indian Coastal and Maritime Security, September, 2017, pp. 2-3
- ^{vi} Mohan, C.R., *Samudra Manthan-Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 109
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- ^{viii} Choudhury, R.R., *Sea-Power & Indian Security*, (Washington: Brassey's (UK) Ltd; English ed. Edition, 1999), pp. 13-14
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- ^x Kaul, S., *Andaman and Nicobar Islands: India's Untapped Strategic Assets*, (New Delhi: Pentagon Press, 2015), pp. 18-21
- ^{xi} Choudhury, R.R., *Sea-Power & Indian Security*, (Washington: Brassey's (UK) Ltd; English ed. Edition, 1999), p. 17
- ^{xii} *Ibid.*, p. 18
- ^{xiii} Fourth YB.Chavan Memorial Lecture by Admiral (Retd.) Arun Prakash, "Maritime Security Of India: Future Challenges", November 26, 2013 Available at: <https://youtu.be/bul1Ln8ob2I>
- ^{xiv} <https://thediplomat.com/2018/11/central-asia-gassing-up-china/>
- ^{xv} **SWAP Deal:** unit of India's Oil and Natural Gas Corp Ltd (ONGC) is in early talks with Gazprom for supply of natural gas through a complex swap involving Russia, China and Myanmar. ONGC Videsh's managing director, Verma said in 2016, "Myanmar is sending gas to China through an existing pipeline ... if Russia can provide equivalent gas to China, then we can reverse the flow of gas from Myanmar to China and bring that gas to India". Unlike a cash transaction, in a share swap transactions, the synergy risk is shared by shareholders of both acquiring and target companies.
- ^{xvi} Mohan, C.R., *Samudra Manthan-Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Indo-Pacific*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 109-117
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- ^{xx} On 2nd May, 2018, I interviewed, First Secretary, Embassy of Turkmenistan situated at New Delhi who apprised me of the fact that Chabahar port has become an important place for energy supply from Turkmenistan to India because India's relations with Pakistan is not congenial and there is the possibility

of terrorist attack for which this port is used for energy import. It reveals from the interview that Turkmenistan is very much eager to establish relation with India in the sphere of supply of natural gas to India and India important market for energy. For this reason, Turkmenistan is very much interested in developing relations with India.

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