



JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES DEVELOPMENT



www.jssd.org.pk
editor@jssd.org.pk

MODI'S INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY: RAMIFICATIONS FOR THE LITTORAL INDIAN OCEAN STATES

Wali Muhammad Baloch¹ & Danish Ali²

¹MPhil in Politics and International Relations, Development Sector Professional, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan. Email: walibalush@gmail.com

²MPhil in Area Studies, Area Studies Researcher, Department of Area Studies, Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan. Email: danishbalochalill@gmail.com

KEYWORDS	ABSTRACT
Indo-Pacific Ocean, One Belt One Road	Indo-Pacific Ocean is a region of strategic importance, which attracts different nations to fulfil their national and international interests. India is keen on gaining an influential image in regional politics. In this context, India faces a significant challenge due to China's economic prosperity and regional political influence. Narendra Modi's Indo-Pacific strategy is an adoption of a policy for countering the One Belt One Road (OBOR) mega-project of China. India is indulged in application of Waltz realistic approach for countering the Chinese Influence in the region. The researchers have examined the phenomenon through different lenses, looking into the lenses of multilateral cooperation and defense alliances, liberalization of trade and soft power politics, militarization and nuclear installation and deterrence in the Indian Ocean. However, Narendra Modi's speech was delivered for peaceful trade and communication with the world for regional stability and collaboration in South Asian Nations. Moving forward, the gap is how Indian's Strategy and adoption of Waltz realistic approach, the 'offensive-defensive policy', reconsider the dynamics of regional power politics and enhance the security dilemma by countering the influence of China in the region. India and the United States' foreign policy reflects China's trade and military presence, cordoning off the Indian Ocean, which they called the "String of Pearls". The research paper adds to littoral state's interest, impact of trade wars, regional powers' strategies, Waltz realistic debates, and Modi's 'India' policy decisions.
ARTICLE HISTORY	
Date of Submission: 15-05-2026 Date of Acceptance: 18-06-2026 Date of Publication: 23-06-2026	
	 2026 Journal of Social Sciences Development
Corresponding Author	Wali Muhammad Baloch
Email:	walibalush@gmail.com
DOI	https://doi.org/10.59075/jssd.v5i4.393
Volume/Issue	5(4), 2026, 245-258

Introduction:

The Indo-Pacific region is one of the largest military and economic zones. The Indo-Pacific strategy is the policy of the United States to rebalance the Indo-Pacific region by countering the rise of

China and safeguarding its national interest. The policy gained vast attention after Donald Trump's statement to counter China's presence in the Indo-Pacific region. The Indo-Pacific strategy was adopted by several other countries, Japan, Australia, and India, under the umbrella of the US. China's geo-economic and strategic policy emphasized spreading its wings by introducing the BRI project Worldwide. Meanwhile, India's interest was to manage the balance of power by adopting the "Counter-string of Pearls" for regional stability.

The process would not merely create a trade war but also enhance maritime insecurity. Weaponization of the maritime zone brings instability, militarization, patrolling of nuclear submarines, installation of missile technologies, and an arms race to affect the balance of power in the Indian Ocean. India's Nuclear safe cities, the Nicobar and Andaman Islands, have raised concern and serious deterrence for China's foreign policy¹. However, China's construction of artificial islands on international waters and its influence on the Indian Ocean's littoral states determine the grievances for India's national security. It includes the strategic ports of Indian Littoral States, like Gwadar Port, Chattogram Port, and Hambantota Port.²

Meanwhile, China's Deterrence Dilemma, interest in presence, and its pragmatic stance in the Strait of Malacca, triggering the alarm between both regional powers by balancing the geo-strategic position of Indian's Naval capability in the Southern parts- Nicobar and Andaman Island. The littoral states, Indonesia and Singapore, are integrated with the ongoing trade war and militarization in the region. Indeed, the Strait of Lombok is a geostrategic position for China during heavy traffic on the northern side; it is an alternative route to engage with trade softly. Each regional power has its axis and blocs to enhance its influence in the region. However, diplomatically, India has been engaged with South China Sea nations in terms of trade engagements, such as Vietnam, Indonesia, and Singapore. These nations have already been in bitter relationships with China due to the matter of South China Sea ownership. The track also strengthens the concept of the Indo-Pacific Strategy after the Naval exercises held among Japan, Australia, India, and the US. Quad Alliance reflects the interest of these regionals' powers in the field of Maritime security, information sharing, Indo-Pacific cooperation, AUKUS has proper pact regarding the advanced defense technology and Australia's nuclear-powered submarine capability and to balancing the China's influence in Pacific Ocean.³

¹ Das Udayan, "Andaman and Nicobar Island India's strategic Linchpin the east", South Asian Voice, 2018, Accessed 26 December 2018.

<https://southasianvoices.org/andaman-and-nicobar-islands-indias-strategic-linchpin-in-the-east/>

² Shannon Tiezzi, "Our Islands are better than Vietnam, The Diplomat, Feb, 05, 2016, Accessed 26 December 2018.

<https://thediplomat.com/2016/02/chinese-media-our-artificial-islands-are-better-than-Vietnams/>

³ Panda Ankit, "US, India, Japan, Philippine, navies demonstrate joint presence in South China Sea", The Diplomat, May 11, 2019, accessed 25 December 2018.

The bilateral exercise (JIMEX) was held between India and Japan, and (RIMPAX) between Australia and India. The multilateral exercise MALABAR was held in 2015 among all of them. It also shows that every nation which is part of the Indo-Pacific strategy has some grievances or threats of interest from China. India has also engaged in civil nuclear deals with Japan and the US and also indulged in maximizing security in the Indo-Pacific Ocean by controlling the Bangladesh-held maritime zone and securitizing towards littoral states.⁴ India always tried to influence over maritime discourse in Indian Ocean region through the usage of different means of tools. India adopted the policy of soft power, harmony, and diplomacy towards Southeast Asian countries through the Indo-Pacific strategy.⁵ India's grand chess strategy is to weaken the nations by installing proxies and cutting them diplomatically from the world to counter and harden the presence of China toward the Indian Ocean region. Weaponization in the Exclusive Economic Zone and international waters has become a serious issue for the region. Controlling water means controlling the veins of different nations.

Literature Review:

According to Michael Pompeo, Trump's Indo-Pacific strategy is merely based on confronting economic challenges. It is purely for economic purpose and with the problems engaged in economic term bilateral and multilateral free trade agreement. China's growing economic problem and Trans-pacific partnership faces difficulties in this stance. US claims that the IPS is for economic enhancement channels. The researcher does not agree with it, because it is not purely based on economic terms but has different dynamics of holding a hegemonic grip on the region by suppressing one another.⁶

According to Narendra Modi's statement at the Shangri-La Dialogue, India's leadership position in the region has compelled its foreign policy to become neutral in Indo-Pacific strategy. Modi's statement insisted that India rejects the US strategy as not conducive to the Indian economy. Additionally, India's diplomacy is still underpinned by a traditional non-alignment movement. India is still a part of IPS in this picture. Meanwhile, India's grand strategy of counter- string of pearls rejects it, and India is still increasing its naval and maritime power.⁷

<https://thediplomat.com/2019/05/us-india-japan-philippine-navies-demonstrate-joint-presence-in-south-china-sea/>

⁴ Hali Sultan, "India Penchant for Chabahar Port", Pakistan Today, 04 July 2019, Accessed 29 January, 2019.

<https://www.pakistantoday.com.pk/2019/07/04/indian-penchant-for-chabahar-port/>

⁵ A. Annex, "1982 convention on the law of the sea in the dispute concerning", 26, June, 2015, Accessed 30 January 2019.

⁶ Remarks: Secretary Pompeo - United States Department of State." U.S. Department of State. Accessed December 31, 2018.

⁷ "India's don't like to be a subordinate hence rejected Indo-pacific strategy", The Economics Times, 25, October, 2017, Accessed 31 December, 2018.

In view of Alyssa Ayres, the foreign affairs expert, the potential strategy is reconciling the boundaries of the Indo-Pacific Ocean, being adopted in Indo-Pacific strategy in geographical terms. The Trump administration has elevated the Indo-Pacific to a high-priority policy in regional politics, as suggested in the National Security Strategy NSS. The strategy explains Indo-Pacific as a region in which as a geostrategic stance in which new revision of world order is taking place in which China is playing a significant role in position of arising global power in region with eco-militarily and cooperation terms. It is partially agreed that the strategy is going to create a new world order, but the way in which the rivalries are taking place in the shape of weaponization of maritime zones would need a more proper stance in a functional way. In which new world order would be peaceful rather than burn with conflicted situation.⁸

Mr. Vijay Sakhuja and Mr. Kapil Narula discussed that the maritime dynamics in Indo-Pacific strategy are focused on oil trade via the Middle East to the region. In the future, the conflict of interest will be based on the trade of natural resources in the Indo-Pacific maritime Zone. Partially, it would be based on oil trade, but the picture is vaster than geo-economic terms. It would be clearer that it is not only about trade terms. UNCLOS has clearly defined the trade routes in international Law, with certain nautical-mile discipline. But still, there are dysfunctional subjects that highlight the problem. India's strategy is not merely based on trade and natural resource purposes in the Indo-Pacific Ocean.⁹

According to Dr. Devendra Kumar Pandey, the influence of the Indo-Pacific has increased because of increasing economic and military interests of regional powers. Historically, India's focus was on South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region, but changing geopolitical situations, economic interdependency, and maritime security have changed its foreign policy. In addition, India is a key player in the Indian Ocean. China is expanding its economic and military power in the Indian Ocean by forming alliances with neighboring countries. Moreover, China is growing its influence in Indo Pacific have risen concerns among several regional countries.¹⁰

Navnit Kumar, in his book "India and Indo-Pacific Power, Strategy and New World Politics," highlights India's approaches towards the Indo-Pacific. According to Kumar, in maritime security, India is modernizing its Navy, expanding naval infrastructure, and developing aircraft carriers and submarines to safeguard its maritime interests. India has increased its defense and security cooperation with regional power countries. In addition, connectivity and economic diplomacy

⁸ Ayres Alyssa, "The US Indo-Pacific strategy needs more Indian ocean", Council on foreign Relations, 25, May, 2018 Accessed 31 December 2018.

⁹ Sakhuja, Vijay, and Narula Kapil, "Maritime Dynamics in Indo-Pacific, focused on Indo-Pacific strategy", 2016, Accessed 31 December 2018.

¹⁰ Pandey D K. India's Indo-Pacific Strategy and Its Implications for Regional Security: A Contemporary Analysis. *Int J Contemp Res Multidiscip.* 2026;5(2):1076-1080.

occupy a central place in India's Indo-Pacific policy. Sagarmala programme is such a type of initiative for digital connectivity and investments seek for economic growth.¹¹

Research Question:

1. What is the strategy of India in the Indian Ocean?
2. Why do China's presence and India's Indo-Pacific strategy create a security dilemma for littoral states in the Indian Ocean?

Hypothesis:

India's Indo-Pacific strategy was chalked out to check China's influence in the region. It caused more insecurity and began a new phase of strategic competition among the various regional actors. Besides, this strategy is aimed at undermining OBR and CPEC projects.

Structural Realism:

Kenneth Waltz's perspective of Neo-realism would be applied as a theoretical framework in the thesis. Modi's Indo-Pacific strategy is analyzed under the framework of structural realism in the Indian Ocean maritime security zone. The securitization process from the perspective of neo-realism creates a security dilemma for other littoral states in the sense of approaching neo-realist behavior in regional politics. Mr. Waltz preferred the theory of international politics for understanding the international dynamics, where hegemony creates gaps, and creates competitive dilemma. It emphasizes that Pakistan, Bangladesh, Iran and Sri Lanka play their roles in blocs politics. Waltz produced a combination of economic reasoning from a modern perspective to link it with political theory in a system-level theory of the international political system. The USA and China's International interest to gain influence in Indo-Pacific region put the other Asian Nations in Indo-Pacific international political behavior. Like many other reductionist theorists, he focused on the behavior of individual states- where especially Quad lateral alliances - India, Japan, The USA and Australia- according to their interest individual interests establish several international forums and signed economic and defense treaties to counter the China's Influence in South-East China and Indian Ocean. Waltz turned it to explain the international system based on their relations at the system level. He focused on the distribution of power in terms of the number of major powers rather than delving into their culture and political structure, i.e.; The Build Back Better World (B3W) power of distribution on the global level. Indeed, polarity was discussed by several thinkers, but Waltz logically creates and stance that how polarity is beneficial or not. According to him, multipolarity and unipolarity are signs of an unstable political system at the global level, but stability remains through bipolarity. He urged that a bipolar world focuses only on each other and relies on their internal growth for balance of power, which is a sign of long-lasting peace like as cold-war period, but he advanced his statement after the Cuban Missile Crisis. The Phenomenon

¹¹ Kumar, Navnit. *India and Indo-Pacific: Power, Strategy and New World Politics*. Blue Rose Publishers Pvt Ltd, 2026.

of Bipolar world creates consciousness to The USA and Indian interest in regional politics of Asia and Indo-Pacific regions. The China, a global emerging power reflects the Waltz's Bipolarity stability Phenomenon.¹²

Structural realism, Kenneth Waltz work on system-level analysis of state structures, focuses on international relations, dividing human nature and individual-based analysis, regime-type structures like as communist and democratic setups, and most prominently systemic efforts.¹³ His work on "Anarchy" became famous at the systemic level of analysis. He believed that nothing matters but the factor of the system. Indeed, according to him, the balance of power has no limited criteria on an ideological basis; communist blocs struggle to balance power against each other. However, the question arises that is China's emergence in Indo-Pacific region balance the power sharing in regional politics? In his realist's view of international politics, he believed that the proliferation of nuclear weapons brings peace for everyone, because it is unimaginable to use them against each other, and it balances the threat of deterrence (but with limited nuclear deterrence), which India faced not much opposition in nuclear testing. But in the case study of Iran, he was cautioned and urged that it would make Iran more secure and careful to continue its behavior in international politics.

John Mearsheimer first defined offensive realism, which is a part of structural realism. There are five main assumptions of offensive realism, which were precisely defined by Mearsheimer; he included further analyses of offensive realism by the behavior of aggressive states, which makes the international system anarchic; an anarchic international system; offensive military power by great powers; states cannot be certain about other nations' intentions; survival; and rational actor theory.¹⁴ However, an anarchic system creates economic opportunities or economic wars in the system-level. Economic competition between China and The USA brings new economic warfare's and defense engagements in the region or not?

According to Waltz, in his book, Theory of International Politics, he divided structural realism into two fictions: defensive and offensive realism.¹⁵ As we understand it, offensive realism was also elaborated by Mearsheimer. But Waltz's defensive realism was the standard idea of understanding the systemic level of politics through the lens of the theoretical framework of realism. Hence, offensive realism more clearly defines the intention of actors to seek influence and power by engaging with an aggressive model of behavior of hegemony and domination.

¹² Micheal Desch, and Kenneth Waltz, "And the Power of Pure Theory, Waltz Had a Gift for Rigorously Linking the Theoretical With The Practical", The national interest, 15, may, 2013
<https://nationalinterest.org/commentary/kenneth-waltz-the-power-pure-theory-8472/>

¹³ Kenneth Waltz, "1924-2013, Knowing the Asia-Pacific", The Diplomat, Magazine, 15, march, 2013.
<https://thediplomat.com/2013/05/kenneth-waltz-1924-2013/>

¹⁴ Sverrir Steinsson, and John Sheimer, "Theories of Offensive Realism and Rise of China", E-International relation of studies, 06 march 2016.

¹⁵ Jefferey Taliaferro, "Security Seeking Under Anarchy Defensive Realism Revisited", International Security, 2001,

Research Methodology

The Research is based on a qualitative method relying on primary and secondary sources, and further extends to a descriptive methodology, in which the researcher gets the help of books, eBooks, journals, research articles, and so forth. Focus limit: securitization and weaponization of Indo-Pacific Ocean by India's Indo-Pacific strategy and the ramifications for different stakeholders on it.

Findings:

Geo-Strategic Importance of Indo-Pacific Region:

The Western Pacific World is quite near to the Asian Pacific region. The Pacific region connects both western and eastern world, southern and northern hemisphere. It covers the largest part of the world's regions. The powerful and active states are surrounded by the Pacific Ocean. While if we include the Indian ocean of Asian African region then the vast part of the world area covers by it. It connects from the East African continent to the central part of the Pacific Ocean toward the Pacific Rim to the Western Pacific to the eastern part of the Americas. Asian Continent has geo-political, geo-economic, and geo-strategic importance of attractive magnitude and fraction.

The region has a wide proportion of diversity in climate, diverse environmental changes, mountainous ranges, strategic geography, Arctic and tropic region and most importantly the Himalayan ranges which are the main source of rivers and climate changing source. Indo-Pacific region expands its wings with the possession of different cultures, traditions, ethnics, languages, and political developments. According to a World Bank report from 2018, around half of the population lives in the Indo-Pacific region. The region is full of natural, energy, and solar resources, which can claim to be one of the largest contributors to the world economy, marketing, and international trade. Two largest world population are situated in the region; India and China. Indeed, the world's largest economies are growing to make their mark in the region: the US, China, Russia, India, Japan, and so on. It is not surprising to say that four declared nuclear states are in the neighborhood of one another in the region, and undeclared nuclear states are also situated in the region. It deals with the powerful alliances and rival blocs that contain each other's influence in the region. Meanwhile; China and India are experiencing as an emerging economy in the world and trying to conclude their influence in Indo-Pacific region because of its geo-economic and geo-political attraction of the region. Indo-Pacific region has significant importance as one of the fundamental gateways for economic and strategic change for world economic and military powers. The vast net GDP of the region is around 56 percent of the world's economy, which is \$36 trillion, and it is increasing day by day.¹⁶

¹⁶ Khushboo Ejaz and Umbreen Javaid. "Indo pacific policy: Response of regional states" (Research Gate: 2018)

The rapid shift in power competition has been seen from West to East after the Cold War period. Around 90 percent of world raw materials, hydrocarbons, oil, and other resources are being traded by sea routes. It has created an atmosphere of trade competition and marketing cooperation among the nations for the sake of emerging as a global entity.¹⁷ The geo-strategic and geo-political importance of the Indo-Pacific region has increased due to the attraction of the world economy toward it. In such competition, the role of the Indian Ocean and South China Sea (SCS) is vital to understanding the ongoing economic and strategic disputes over maritime zones common among emerging powers. The Indo-Pacific region is geo-economically strategic due to the defensive policies of powerful nations in it. The politics of the Indo-Pacific region includes the Rebalancing of the United States, India's policy of East, Global shift from East to West, the rise of China, the regional security dilemma and its responses, great power competition, implications on maritime security, and traditional and non-traditional threats. The Indo-Pacific region defines the interests and values of around half of the world population. It is a region that consists of multiple religions, ethnicities, sects, and beliefs. It includes different significant straits, which play an important role in the connectivity of straits with other regions.¹⁸

Moreover, the region is facing with several levels of security challenges; like as competition and rival apparatus in global and regional level, concerning dilemma of sovereignty, and maritime security challenges. It also shows the increasing phenomenon of non-traditional security challenges are indulged in region like as drug-trafficking, terrorism, climate change affects and several new challenges which are being faced by civilized world. The regions attract the world through the value of its natural resources, excessive production of energy, and international trade value. The risks of traditional threats are highly fused with nuclear proliferation, formation, and installation in the region. The region is claimed to be the largest nuclear-armed region in the world. North Korea diverts the attention of the world and the US towards itself because of the process of nuclearization in the Pacific Ocean.¹⁹

India's strong presence in the Indian Ocean region seems to be stronger in terms of maritime security. In this regard, it addresses the concerns of IOR states. Indian approach is benevolent according to the adopting policy of Indo-Pacific strategy, but the analyst of realistic perspective applied it to be malevolent for the IOR states. India's relationships with other states are similarly based on historical grounds. Her involvement in the domestic politics of Sri Lanka, the Seychelles, and Bangladesh provides access to fulfill international channels easily in the high seas. A few analysts believes that India's presence is not threatening for any one in IOR but the few analyses it as dangerous for the security of IOR. It is because of China's grievances on it and at the same time

¹⁷ Niharika and Abhinav Goyal. "India and China in the Indian Ocean Region", *Indian Ocean and Maritime Security: Competition, Cooperation and Threat*, (Taylor & Francis London: 2016) 53

¹⁸ Peter Lehr, *The Challenge of Security in the Indian Ocean in the 21st Century*, (Heidelberg Papers in South Asian and Comparative Politics: 2003) p: 13,

¹⁹ Saroj Bishoyi. *Emerging Trends and Regional Responses, Geostrategic Imperative of the Indo-Pacific*

the security challenges are being challenged by Pakistan. The observation of circling the IOR is quite different; Indian policymakers intended it to be China's policy to cordon off the region by the One Belt One Road policy and relate it to the "String of Pearls" strategy of China against India. It is accepted that the challenge for unwilling states of Indian influence relates to the Indo-Pacific strategy of India and other major powers to provide an easier pathway for them to securitize the region.²⁰

India is focusing her foreign policy in case of Indian Ocean as security maximizing phenomenon. For going ahead, the consideration is to seek opportunity by bringing the littoral states under the Umbrella of her influence by adopting the greater chances of benefit in the shape of common interest. Hereby, India is assuming the threat to contain China's hegemonic stance in the South China Sea. Both major powers are involved in bringing the littoral states into their consideration for common interest. China is seeking influence in the Indian Ocean, and India is widening its sphere of influence in the South China Sea. Indeed, through bilateral and multilateral agreements and engagement, both are maintaining their influence. In the politics of maritime, India is creating a discourse to have ability to forcefully exercising her power in maritime routes. India's capability is to cooperate and create a free atmosphere for exchanging mutual benefits to attract the littoral states of ASEAN nations. This is why India is bringing the states of the South China Sea under the Umbrella of its cooperation.²¹

- Impacts of Indo-Pacific strategy on region: The foundation of Indo-Pacific maritime cooperation with littoral states is India's mission to connect its relationship with the Pacific Ocean. In such geographical stance the vision of Modi is to follow the international rules and order to engage her with coordination with ASEAN nations for the aim of gaining peace and prosperity of the region. Modi has used a platform of negotiation and dialogue to further escalate bilateral and multilateral policy with the approach of regionalism and desire to control the driving seat of the Indo-Pacific region. India is indulging her to create an environment of security cooperation in terms of maritime engagement with neighboring nations especially it includes the littoral nations of Pacific Ocean. The term blue economy (exploitation of marine resources) is one of the most powerful stances of any developed nation to control the seashores. It is all about the cooperation on sustainable development of expanding the economic purpose. Hereby, it can provide easy access for India to exercise military capabilities in the region.²²

The rise of China is the main factor behind strengthening the relationship between the US and India. China and India exchanged border clashes during the Sino-Indian dispute. On the other

²⁰ Shannon Tiezzi, "The Maritime Silk Road vs The String of Pearls" *The Diplomat* (Japan: 13 February, 2014) Accessed 04 April 2019

²² Rajeev Ranjan Chaturvedy, "India's Indo-Pacific Embrace", (21 JUNE 2018) RSIS,

hand, the bitter relationship between India and Pakistan was based on constructed enmity since their birth. The interest clashes between both on the Chinese construction of naval bases and civilian seaport as long-ranged geographical expansion purpose in Indian Ocean. Chinese bases include the areas of Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Djibouti, and Sudan. Indeed, the fact is that China is supporting Pakistan in every forum as a natural ally, and it cannot be dismissed by the Indian government. Recently, Trump's administration questioned the status of India in the US market, but still Modi's government did not displease it. India is growing her strong relationship with US in military, technological, diplomatic, geographical and economic affairs. India also continues to purchase arms and military equipment from Russia, which has created obstacles; it can properly and automatically lead the nation toward facing sanctions under the legislation of the US.²³

Modi is seeking to maintain relationships with both the US and China according to India's interests. New Aggressive Phase of Indian Emergence in Regional Politics: India has molded its regional policies with the peaceful rise of China. The domination of China, India has become a strategic partner with the US, and it has adopted the Look East policy. Furthermore, to have strong ties, it with littoral states India is converging towards ASEAN states and Japan the sole rival of China in technology and status quo. This new phase of regional policy would be a "Game Changer" for the Indo-Pacific region. As the two great powers reside in this region. Both are fundamental on economic, political, and security levels. To counter the containment policy of China, India has evolved its policies. The New Delhi government prioritizes the security of national interests in its core values and policies. For this, India is trying to emerge as a bellicose state to compete with China. US-Indian ties are getting stronger with the passage of time. History depicts that it was a triangular strategic partnership including the US, India, and China. But with the changing interests and dominance of China, this triangle no longer exists. The new strategic partners are the US and India. Whereas India is playing well on the diplomatic level, on one side it is strengthening its ties with the US, and on the other side it does not disrupt its relations.²⁴

New Aggressive Phase of Indian Emergence in Regional Politics:

India has molded its regional policies with the peaceful rise of China. In the face of China's dominance, India has become a strategic partner with the US, and it has adopted the Look East policy. Furthermore, to have strong ties, it with littoral states India is converging towards ASEAN states and Japan the sole rival of China in technology and status quo. This new phase of regional policy would be a "Game Changer" for the Indo-Pacific region.²⁵ The two great powers reside in

²³ Kevin Rudd, "The US might be reorienting to the region, but so is the region responding to the deep gravitational pull from China, Strategic trends across the Indo-Pacific region", (The Interpreter, 07, May 2019) Accessed April 2019

²⁴ "Indian Navy, Ensuring Secure Seas: Indian Maritime Security Strategy", (Naval strategic publications, October 2015) 37

²⁵ Abraham Samuel, "Emerging Indo-Pacific Geopolitics: Challenges and Opportunities for India" Accessed 12 March 2019

this region. Both are fundamental on economic, political, and security levels. To counter the containment policy of China, India has evolved its policies. The New Delhi government prioritizes the security of national interests in its core values and policies. For this, India is trying to emerge as a bellicose state to compete with China. US-Indian ties are getting stronger with the passage of time. History depicts that it was a triangular strategic partnership including the US, India, and China. But with the changing interests and dominance of China, this triangle no longer exists. The new strategic partners are the US and India. Whereas India is playing well on the diplomatic level, on one side it is strengthening its ties with the US, and on the other side it does not disrupt its relations with China. India has made certain deals with the US; the US is supporting India on both the national and international levels. For US, India's blue economy, nuclear deterrence and its capability to counter China has made certain interests to invest in India. The main purpose of this strategic partnership between two democracies is to hinder China's assertiveness and dominance.²⁶

India's Regional Securitization Policy:

Indian government will continue its policy of strengthening its security partnerships with Washington, Tokyo, Singapore, Hanoi, France, and Canberra. As Modi has again taken over the government, his regional policy would be the same as it was before. But it seems like that few changes would be done just to make the policies more productive. These alterations would be according to the changing interests. Modi would not like to make China aggressive, as he knew that China is very ruthless and determined about its security and political concerns. New Delhi would adopt the softer side of foreign policy with China. Until it gains a strong foothold in the Indo-Pacific region.²⁷

Modi government would continue to accelerate its regional politics more in order to gain its motives. In the coming years, the foreign policy will face hurdles. As China increases its pressure on building the Belt and Road Initiative through South Asia and the Indian Ocean to counter this encirclement, India needs to strengthen its defense and military budget. It will need its allies like Australia to circumvent this strategic threat. The US is there to assist India, as it has been India's strategic partner since 2016. And provided the arms and new technological weapons to India. But still, in order to gain strategic dominance over great China, India needs to mold its policies according to the changing environment. India has been involved in speeding up its trade liberalization by including the ASEAN-centered Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). New Delhi would elaborate its economic reforms to liberalize its trade with Washington,

²⁶ Iskander Rehman, "Keeping the Dragon at Bay: India's Counter-Containment of China in Asia", (Asian Security volume 5: 2009) issue-2 pp-114-143.

²⁷ Chris McLachlan, "Andaman and Nicobar Islands as Strategic Deterrent, The territory has a potentially crucial role in bolstering India's presence in the Indian Ocean.", (The Diplomat: May 06, 2014)

Iran, and other states. It has signed the “Asia Reassurance Initiative Act” with Washington that promises the backing of India in strategic partnership and security concerns.²⁸

Development of traditional and non-traditional threats in the Indian Ocean

For decades, the Indian Ocean has been a significant route for international trade. Now, in this contemporary world, its geostrategic location has exacerbated its significance in the context of the economy, politics, and natural resources. Environmental issues are one of the main concerns. Indian Ocean's strategic location makes it a hub of the economy and a global hub for trade. It is the intersecting venue for many foreign and local states' interests and objectives. The multifaceted geopolitical structure of the Indian Ocean has created the perplexing subjects of marine security, compound security, and governance to focus. With multiple socio-economic regions, security threats in the Indian region are high. On the whole the political environment of this region is in a difficult situation and its ignitable stage for many conflicts. The third part of many world conflicts has erupted from this region. And it has been the platform of the world's greatest wars.²⁹

Many security threats reside in the IOR: political turmoil, terrorism, illicit trafficking, piracy, non-state actors, and rebellious encounters. These security challenges need persistent policy and efforts to counter. The Persian Gulf, the fundamental source of the world's crude oil and an international trade route, is situated in this region. The prominent threat in the Indian Ocean is piracy compared to other threats. Somali coast has been the venue for enormous piracy and armed robbery in the IOR. Illegal activities of (PAGs), Piracy Attack Groups, have been accelerated on the Somali coast. The vast area of IOR 2019) “Indian Ocean Rising: Maritime Security and Policy Challenges”, (19th Street, NW, 12th Floor Washington, DC 20036, Stimson, JULY 2012). Accessed 15 March 2019. 55 has made it difficult for multinational coalitions to counter these attacks. So, every transition going through this path has made anti- piracy armies and policies. Illegal transfer of narcotics, humans, and weapons is widespread. These threats are found due to crippled security control at some main export points.

AL-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula is the cause of maritime terrorism in the IOR. Their intentions and activities, although not so abrupt, to shut down Bab-el-Mandeb, the important choke point, are a serious security concern. Many states are situated in the IOR, and as a trade belt, security issues are common. IOR is the dominant route for the trafficking of heroin/opiates, amphetamine-type stimulants and cannabis. Although the land smuggling is mostly done but still the sea route is fundamental. Weapons trafficking are also done and infuriate conflicts to the politically unstable states and accelerate civil wars and terrorist activities.³⁰ Non-state actors also got ammunitions and arms through sea routes easily. Land guided missiles, rifles, snipers, hand guns, explosives, hand

²⁸ or India in the Indo-Pacific?” (Ian Hall Indo-Pacific election pulse, 24 May 2019)

²⁹ David Michel, Russell Stickford, “Indian Ocean Rising: Maritime Security and Policy Challenges”, (19th Street, NW, 12th Floor Washington, DC 20036, Stimson, JULY 2012). Accessed 15 March 2019.

³⁰ Indian Ocean, Regional Security Threats”, (IAS scores, 2019)

grenades and heavy machine guns are imported. As far human smuggling is concern, Gulf of Aden and southern Red Sea are fundamental points. High level of trafficking is done between Somalia and Yemen. This has caused the huge volume of civil war situations in these countries. Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing is common in Somalia.³¹

The weak and crippling government does not have any control over its exclusive economic zones. This has caused the huge loss to the economy of Somalia and increased smuggling of fisheries. Other than trafficking and piracy, intrastate and interstate disputes concerns are fundamental threat to safety and security of IOR. These concerns involve the multistate naval commanders to act. Being the vast constituency, IOR is the substantial part of many states that surrounds it. Many littoral states surrounding it used it for naval exercises, other than trade route. The Strait of Hormuz lies closer to Iran. Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) conducted several military exercises there. But whenever these exercises were conducted, an official announcement was made. But when Iran was blamed for conducting covert nuclear operations, sanctions were put on Iran. This act created wrath among Iranians. As a reaction, they held a huge military exercise during the political instability and pressure between the USA and Iran. Iran also threatened to block the Strait of Hormuz. A lot of tension and rigidity evolved; this did not create any devastating results, but still turmoil and pressure were built. This situation was a threat⁵⁶ not only to trade but also to the national and strategic interests of other littoral states.³²

Conclusion:

Indo-Pacific region is not only a geo-strategic location for powerful nations for the purpose of economic communication. But it has great geopolitical and geostrategic value. In this research paper, it is clearly defined how different states are applying the Kenneth Waltz structural realism approach to fulfil their national interest. The approach which is being applied by India is a mixture of both defensive and aggressive realism. It is applicable to the power-gaining state India under the umbrella of Modi's administration. Today's modern world power-politics approaches are quietly different if it can be analyzed with the Past. In the context of the 21st century, states are involved in proxies, diplomacy, the application of soft power, threat politics, economic sanctions, and aid politics to suppress weaker states. However, India is following the same formula to overcome the influence of China in the region. While India and China are both economically dependent on each other, approximately 120 billion in trade and market value is between the two countries. But the politics of gaining dominance over the Indian Ocean is leading India to design nefarious maps. It cannot be denied that whoever controls the Indian and Pacific Ocean routes can be declared a powerful nation to control the veins of littoral states. Moreover, the globe seems to be shifting in the

³¹ Syed Ghulamraza, "Non-traditional Maritime Security Challenges in the Indian Ocean", (Center for Peace Security and Developmental Studies) Accessed 12 March 2019. [http://www.cpsd.org.pk/meritime security-2.php](http://www.cpsd.org.pk/meritime%20security-2.php)

³² David Michel, Russell Stickford, "Indian Ocean Rising: Maritime Security and Policy Challenges", (1111 19th Street, NW, 12th Floor Washington, DC 20036, Stimson, JULY 2012) Accessed 21 March 2019

shape of multipolarity from West to East. Such kind of shift is creating the regional security dilemma, its responses, and 79 global power competition on maritime. On the other hand, India is playing the cards of traditional dialogue to securitize the Indian Ocean Maritime zones from external threats. This is causing serious traditional and non-traditional threats in the region. Both India and the US are engaged in the region to counter the dominance and influence of China's rise. India is claiming that it is a question of its sovereignty. The dilemma concerning sovereignty is most probably not acceptable to the other littoral states. Such a policy is creating a rival apparatus in global and regional politics. Indeed, China is rising rapidly in every corner of Asia and the Pacific region. It has established economic and military ports in Djibouti, Sri-Lanka, the Maldives, Pakistan, and African countries. It is seeking ways to bring the Arab nations into the fold of its One Belt One Road initiative project. China is the largest importer of oil and other raw materials in the Strait of Malacca. While keeping in mind, India claims that it is part of China's strategy to cordon off the Indian Ocean and to compel India to come into the fold of Chinese dominance. Hereby, India is also going to structuring her own regional and geo-strategic policies for countering the Chinese presence in region. Modi's Indo-Pacific speech, in economic terms, was opposite to his stance, which he is claimed to be aligned with in terms of the Indian Ocean. India, with the help of the US, Australia, and Japan, has engaged in quadrilateral alliances. Meanwhile, the interests of India and Iran are quite contrasting in the case of littoral states. India is in favor of Iran for bringing it in her regional expansion policy but on the other hand US is against of Iran's powerful position in region. At the same time the US is India-centric in the region of Indo-Pacific region. US is vigorously active to make India more capable of countering the rise of China.