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Securing Pakistan's Maritime Future: A Strategic Outlook for the Indian Ocean Region by 2050

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Abstract

Indian Ocean Region (IOR) has enormous significance in the world due to its strategic, economic, political, and security value. Littoral, regional and extra regional powers have their convergent and divergent interests in the region of Indian Ocean (IO) because the economic interests of the whole world joins the strategic and political interests in this region. Major Powers like USA, China, UK, Australia, France and Russia are increasing their role in the region because their interests are dependent on the economic and geopolitical significance of the Indian Ocean. Existence of major powers and India's ambitions for regional dominance is increasing weapons and nuclear arms in the region which has maritime vulnerabilities for Pakistan. The rapid changing regional dynamics, increasing role of extra regional forces, new alliances, presence of India with swift intensification of weaponization and nuclearization, climate change and environmental issues in the region of Indian Ocean has many implications for Pakistan. Pakistan's amazing location in the region of Indian Ocean requires a thorough and deeper reconsideration of its maritime strategies beyond the conventional lens as Pakistan is facing traditional and non-traditional security threats in the region. This research article investigates maritime security vulnerabilities of Pakistan along with opportunities and challenges for Pakistan. This research work is an attempt to secure the maritime future of Pakistan and present a strategic outlook for Pakistan in the Indian Ocean Region by 2050.

Key words: Indian Ocean Region (IOR), Indian Ocean (IO), Strategic, Economic, Political, Security, USA, China, UK, Australia, France, Russia, India, Pakistan, Maritime, Opportunities and Challenges.

The Indian Ocean Region (IOR)

Indian Ocean Region (IOR) refers to the vast region surrounding the Indian Ocean (IO). IOR comprises area of all littoral states which are adjoining Indian Ocean. There are 36 littoral states and 5 sub regions of Indian Ocean named as South Asia, South East Asia, Middle East, Africa and Australia. These 36 littoral states of Indian Ocean Region are encompassing three Continents namely; Asia, Africa, and Australia (Malik, 2017).



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Littoral States of Indian Ocean:

South Asia: Bangladesh, India, Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

South East Asia: Burma, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and Timor-Leste.

Middle East: Bahrain, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, UAE and Yemen.

Africa: Comoros, Djibouti, Eritrea, Kenya, Mauritius, Tanzania, Mozambique, Seychelles, Somalia, South Africa, Madagascar and Sudan.

Australia: Australia.

The total area of the Indian Ocean also includes the following (Fatima & Jamshed, 2020):

- Andaman Sea
- Arabian Sea
- Bay of Bengal
- Flores Sea
- Great Australian Bight
- Gulf of Aden
- Gulf of Oman
- Java Sea
- Mozambique Channel
- Persian Gulf
- Red Sea
- Savu Sea
- Strait of Malacca
- Timor Sea and other tributary water bodies.

Following island nations are also part of Indian Ocean (Fatima & Jamshed, 2020):

- Group of islands which forms Indonesia (in the East of Indian Ocean)
- Maldives
- Mauritius
- Reunion Island
- Sri Lanka
- The Madagascar
- The Seychelles

Location of Indian Ocean:

The Indian Ocean is situated between:

Geographic Coordinates:

Longitude: Approximately 20°E to 150°E

Latitude: Approximately 20°N to 60°S

Boundaries:

Asia: To the North

Australia: To the East

Africa: To the West



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Southern Ocean: To the South

Key Features of Indian Ocean:

Arabian Sea: Situated in the Northwest

Red Sea: Connected to the Indian Ocean via the Gulf of Aden

Bay of Bengal: Positioned in the Northeast

Mozambique Channel: Situated between Mozambique and Madagascar

Interesting Facts about Indian Ocean:

- Indian Ocean is named after the Indian Subcontinent which is situated in its North.
- Indian Ocean is the 3rd largest Ocean of the world after the Pacific and Atlantic Ocean.
- The total area of Indian Ocean is almost 70.56 million Square KM.
- Indian Ocean covers almost 20% of the Earth's water surface.
- Indian Ocean has average depth of 12,274 feet (3,741 meters).
- Indian Ocean is 5.5 times bigger than the total area of United States of America (Fatima & Jamshed, 2020).
- Indian Ocean Region is the most populated region of the world as it is the home to almost 3 billion people of the world (Baruah, Labh & Greely, 2023).

Significance of Indian Ocean Region (IOR)

Indian Ocean has become the most important ocean of the globalized world due to its strategic, economic, political, defense, environmental and maritime significance.

Economic Significance:

Trade and Economic Activities:

The Indian Ocean plays a key role in the economy of the world, contributing notably to international commerce, trade and natural resources. Indian Ocean is connecting the important markets of Asia, Middle East, Africa and beyond. It is facilitating the shipping of oil, goods and natural gas through the main shipping lanes. Indian Ocean is handling 70% of global container traffic (Venkatshamy, 2016). Indian Ocean is center of economic activities in the world and almost 90,000 vessels crisscross Indian Ocean annually. Almost 9.84 billion tons of cargo is transported annually through Indian Ocean (Yadav, 2017). Almost 80% of world's maritime oil is transported through the critical chokepoints of Indian Ocean (Davis & Balls, 2019).

The contribution of Indian Ocean to global Gross Domestic Product is significantly increasing over the years. Countries of Indian Ocean Region produced 10% of the world's GDP in 2014 which was almost \$78 trillion dollars (Llewellyn, English & Barnwell, 2016). The region of Indian Ocean has 157 ports and harbor which shows the economic significance of the region in the world (Malik, 2017). It is anticipated that the economy of Indian Ocean will contribute more than 20% of the total GDP of the world by 2025 (Wignaraja, Collins & Kannangara, 2018).



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Natural Resources:

Indian Ocean Region has abundant natural resources which also add value to the significance of this ocean. The region of Indian Ocean has amazing reserves of offshore oil and gas, mainly the regions near the Bay of Bengal, Persian Gulf, and off the coasts of Australia and Africa. Foothills of the Indian Ocean are producing almost 40% of the total world's offshore oil production (Davis & Balls, 2019).

Millions of people are relying on the fisheries of Indian Ocean for their livelihood. The Indian Ocean is also known in the world due to amazing deposits of minerals such as cobalt, manganese and rare earth elements. The rich deposits of Indian Ocean is emerging the deep-sea mining as a potential industry in the world.

Agricultural Products:

The region of Indian Ocean has also gained a lot of significance due to its agriculture products. The littoral states of this region are producing following significant amounts of agriculture products:

<u>Product</u>	<u>% of World's production</u>
Rubber	77 %
Dates	60 %
Tea	76 %
Wool	45 %
Coffee	20 %
Cotton	27 %
Cashew nuts	55 %

Table No.1: Share of Indian Ocean's Agriculture Products in world's production

Source: Economic Importance of the Indian Ocean (www.shomish.com)

Strategic Significance:

The Indian Ocean holds immense strategic significance in the world. The strategic significance of this ocean is multifaceted, encompassing energy, security, geographic, economic and regional dynamics. The importance of this ocean extends beyond the region which has deep implications for international relations and global economic stability.

The Indian Ocean is connecting Asia, Europe and Africa, facilitating the transportation of energy, goods and commodities. Indian Ocean Region's sea lanes are used for the energy resources transportation which highlights the significance of maritime security. The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) has some critical chokepoints; these points are narrow sea passages which are vital for the energy flow and global trade (Fatima & Jamshed, 2020).

These chokepoints are:

- The Strait of Hormuz
- The Strait of Malacca
- The Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb
- The Mozambique Channel



Chokepoints in the Indian Ocean Region



Figure No.1: Chokepoints in the IOR

Source: Chokepoints in the Indian Ocean Region (www.drishtiiias.com)

Details of Chokepoints of Indian Ocean

<u>Strait</u>	<u>Location</u>
The Strait of Hormuz	Links the Arabian Sea with the Persian Gulf.
The Strait of Malacca	Situated between Malaysia and Indonesia.
The Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb	Connects the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden.
The Mozambique Channel	Waterway between Mozambique and Madagascar.

Table No.2: Details of Chokepoints of Indian Ocean

Source: The political and economic significance of Indian Ocean: An analysis. South Asian Studies, 30 (2).

According to U.S. Energy Information Administration (EIA) 23.7 million b/d (million barrels per day) of oil was transported from the Strait of Malacca in 2023 which is the primary chokepoint in the Asian region. In 2023 20.9 b/d (million barrels per day) was transported from the Strait of Hormuz which is equivalent to almost 20% of global petroleum liquids consumption. 8.6 million b/d (million barrels per day) of oil was



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transported from the Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb in 2023 which is 3rd most important chokepoint in the region of Indian ocean.

These chokepoints have global implications. The strategic significance of Indian Ocean extends to global economic stability, as disturbance to energy flow and trade at these chokepoints can have far-reaching consequences. The dynamics of the region can impact the international relations, with states seeking to protect their national interest in the region.

Indian Ocean's Defense Significance:

The defense significance of Indian Ocean is driven by its strategic location, naval presence of regional and major powers, defense cooperation, security challenges, and technological advancements. The security of this region is very critical in stability and prosperity of the world. The amazing strategic significance of Indian Ocean makes it a center for defense and security efforts. Naval presence of major power like USA, France, UK, Australia and Russia along with the regional power like China, India and Pakistan in the Indian Ocean shows the defense significance of this region in the world (Maupin, 2017). This Ocean is a main area in the world for naval power projection, many countries have their divergent and convergent interests in the region and they are maintaining a naval presence to ensure security and protect their interests.

Countries are maintaining their presence through alliances, partnerships, agreements, regional security initiatives and bilateral and multilateral exercises. Regional and major players are using advance technologies for maritime surveillance to monitor maritime activities in the region. Countries are investing and focusing on their naval capabilities, including surface combatants, submarines, and amphibious ships, to operate efficiently in the Indian Ocean (Berlin, 2011).

Environmental Significance:

Indian Ocean has noteworthy importance in the world due to its biodiversity. The region of Indian Ocean is home to various marine ecosystems, including mangroves, coral reefs and sea grass beds. This region has also importance as many endangered species like whales, turtles and dolphin are found in this ocean (Richmond, 2016).

This region plays a vital role in climate regulation. The patterns of Monsoon are shaped in this region which affects the weather and agriculture of this whole region a lot. The change and variability of global climate is influenced by circulation patterns and heat content of Indian Ocean (Joseph, 2014). Indian Ocean has global implications for biodiversity, climate regulation and human well-being. Sustainable management of the resources of Indian Ocean is vital for maintaining the environmental significance of this Ocean.

Political Significance:

The region of Indian Ocean has great political significance due to its strategic position, global connectivity and resources. Regional dynamics of the region shows the political significance of this ocean. This region is a center of rivalries for the major powers of the world. Nations are vying for security, influence and economic interest in this region.

Many regional organizations like Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) and Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) are working in this region. The forums of international organization facilitate dialogues and discussion on various issues like maritime trade, security and sustainable development. The Indian Ocean has many terrorism and piracy



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threats, requiring international collaboration and cooperation for maritime security (Chatterjee, 2014). Regional states have competing claims and interests due to maritime boundaries issues in this region.

The political significance of Indian Ocean is shaped by its regional dynamics, strategic location, global governance frameworks, security challenges, and economic interests. The security and stability of the region is critical for global prosperity, making it fundamental for nations to collaborate and concentrate on common challenges.

Shifting Dynamics in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)

The center of politics has been shifted from Euro-Atlantic region to Indo-Pacific region and this shift has embraced the Indian Ocean Region with global strategic, political and economic significance. The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) has been emerged as a global stage where regional and extra regional powers are struggling for their interests.

USA and China are the main strategic rivals in the region of Indian Ocean and the world is witnessing a clash of hegemons in the region. Containment of China is the major objective of US in the IOR and existence of US in this region is an effort to balance the equation of power (Bhadrakumar, 2020). USA is supporting India in the region as India is aiming for regional power. The alliance of US and India is also an effort to reduce the influence of China in the region. USA has many interests in the Middle East and rivalry of USA with IRI is also a major reason of their presence in this region (Bhadrakumar, 2020).

China is increasing influence in the region and India is currently unable to reduce their influence despite their all efforts and alliances. Introduction of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has shifted dynamics in the region of Indian Ocean. BRI is a very futuristic and ambitious economic plan which has changed the strategic environment outlook of the region. China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a flagship project under the BRI and the development of this project has changed the role of Pakistan in the region (Tabish & Shahzad, 2024). This project will help China as it will reduce their dependency on the Strait of Malacca (Khan, 2019).

The development of Gwadar port is main project of CPEC and Gwadar is emerging as an economic hub that will play a vital role in the regional prosperity (Tabish & Shahzad, 2024). Gwadar is strategically very significant for Pakistan and China as it is 500 KM away from the chokepoint of Strait of Hormuz (Krupakar, 2017). It will provide strategic depth to Pakistan on one side and protect the Chinese interests on the other side (Bearak, 2019).

The introduction of BRI and CPEC has raised the competitive environment in the region. Rivalries, partnerships, alliances and competition are shifting dynamics in the IOR. Pakistan-India rivalry, protection of Sea Lines of Communication, security challenges, maritime chokepoints, presence of extra regional players, Sino-India rivalry are the maritime security concerns for Pakistan in the region which are produced by shifting dynamics in IOR (Qayyum, 2021).

Strategic Analysis of Indian Maritime Policy in Indian Ocean

Study of “Indian Maritime Doctrine” (IMD-2004) and the evolution of “Indian Maritime Security Strategy” (IMSS) from 2007 to 2015 reveal shifting maritime priorities of India in the region. This includes:



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Primary Focus:

Net Security Provide: India is aiming to be a “Net Security Provider” in the IOR, rather than a regional maritime policeman.

Extended Area of Operation: Maritime security strategy of India includes following new areas (Khurana, 2015):

- Gulf of Aden
- Gulf of Oman
- Mozambique Channel
- Ombai-Wetar Straits
- Red Sea

Strategic Objectives:

There are two main strategic objective of Indian in the region of Indian Ocean:

1. To counter rising influence of China through alliances and partnership
2. To contain naval capabilities of Pakistan

Strategic Shift of India in the IOR:

“Security and Growth for All in the Region” (SAGAR) and the shift from "Look East" to "Act East" policy is reflecting strategic maneuvering of India in the region (Qayyum, 2021). India is trying to contain China in the region, US-India cooperation under Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), joining QUAD, QUAD 2.0, and entrance in Australia-India Mutual Logistics Support Arrangement (AIMLSA) and Defense Science and Technology Implementing Arrangement (DSTIA) are all India’s effort to contain China in the region (Lendon, 2020). India has numerous interests in IO, including oceanic resources, economic security, security of SLOCs, and center of naval security architecture. India is currently failing to contain China in the region despite their all efforts and alliances.

Strategic Analysis of Maritime Policy of Pakistan in Indian Ocean

Analysis of Pakistan’s Maritime Policy, 2002 reveals that the core maritime interests of Pakistan are (Ahmad, 2024):

- Promotion and protection of maritime interests
- Development of infrastructure in coastal areas
- Conservation for the maritime environment
- Extend maritime activeness in the western region of Indian Ocean

Karachi and Bin Qasim ports are bearing all the military and economic maneuvering load of Pakistan, both these port are prone to attack in war and conflict. These ports don’t provide the required strategic depth to Pakistan. The introduction of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has changed the regional dynamics. The development of Gwadar Port in Pakistan is a major project under the CPEC. This port has amazing strategic position in the region and it provides strategic depth to Pakistan in the region.

“Maritime Doctrine of Pakistan” was launched in 2018 that ended the journey of ‘sea-blindness’ with ‘sea awareness’ (Khan, 2019). The analysis of last two decades shows that Pakistan naval forces have maintained the balance in the region. Pakistan Naval Force has advantage over the superior Naval Force of India in the region. Pakistan has adopted offensive sea denial strategy with increased dominance of submarines and



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maritime aircraft equipped with latest missile (Sakhuja, 2002).

Pakistan has emerged as a mature and sensible sea guardian by adopting No-First-Use policy in clash and conflicts (Sakhuja, 2002). Pakistan naval capabilities are challenging Sea based deterrence of Indian Navy in the region. On one side LEMOA has given access to US to the naval bases of India that is paving way for China's presence at Hambantota and prospectively at Gwadar on the other side (Bhadrakumar, 2020).

The security challenges after the 9/11 demands a multilateral approach and Pakistan is ensuring its articulated and safe existence in Western Indian Ocean. Pakistan has to tackle maritime complexity like oceanic nuclearization, countering proactive doctrines and securing SLOCs. The changing dynamics in the region of Indian Ocean is producing many challenges as well as many strategic opportunities for Pakistan.

India's Growing Naval Expansion and its Implications for Pakistan in Indian Ocean Region

The region of Indian Ocean will be a theater of rivalries and competition between littoral, regional and extra regional powers in the future. Key geostrategic position of India and maritime advantage provides a special comparative edge to India in the IOR (Rehman, 2024). Currently the world is witnessing an intensive naval rivalry between India and China in the region of Indian Ocean. Growing maritime expansion and modernization of China in the world is the main concern of India.

India is trying to compete with China by spending a lot on the development of its naval capabilities. India has spent a lot on air craft carriers, ballistic missile submarines and state-of-the art anti-submarines warfare capabilities. India has signed Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) with US under the US "pivot to Asia" strategy and the main objective of this agreement was to strengthen the naval capabilities of India in the Indian Ocean Region (Qayyum, 2021).

Nuclear aspirations of Indian Navy in the region are posing significant challenges to the stability of South Asian region. Increasing weaponization and nuclearization of India to compete with China has many implications for Pakistan. Increased defense budgets, huge spending on nuclear capabilities and military modernization poses security vulnerability for regional states of the region especially for Pakistan because both have historical enmity in the region. This naval and military assertiveness can allow India to exert coercive force and nuclear leverage against Pakistan (Rehman, 2024). India's military ambitions and rapid escalation of weaponization and nuclearization is leading a new race of arms in the region which is causing insecurity and instability in the region of Indian Ocean.

Indian Ocean's nuclearization is posing a transformative challenge for Pakistan. India is developing its naval missile system and submarines having the nuclear capability, the region of Indian Ocean is becoming a zone of military competition and power projection. This expansion is directly threatening the national security of Pakistan. This development is also threatening the maritime interests of Pakistan which includes protection of sea lines of communication, coastline, economic hub and ports (Usman, 2025).

Indian Ocean is a critical artery for trade and energy sources of the world, as a result nuclearization and weaponization will be problematic for the whole region not only for the regional countries of Indian Ocean. Nuclear ambitions of Indian Navy are worsening military capability disparities in the region, compelling Pakistan to regulate its deterrence policies. Pakistan has to maintain the balance through strategic alliances and strengthening its naval capabilities (Usman, 2025).



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Extensive modernization in the naval force of Pakistan is inevitable in the developing circumstances of the region. Pakistan has strategic and security threat as rapidly escalating situation is developing the risk of a possible naval blockade. Pakistan has to focus on increasing its maritime platforms to protect its naval assets. Pakistan should develop its naval capabilities to counter naval doctrine and rising force posture of India, ensuring a naval deterrent to maintain stability and balance in the region. Pakistan is bolstering its naval capacity by strengthening its submarines and surface warfare capabilities with the help of China and Turkey in order to maintain balance in the region (Khan, 2019).

Evolving maritime strategies and land-based military doctrines are mutual dependent in Pakistan-India dynamic, stressing the need for a comprehensive and inclusive approach that combine both the land and sea power to attain the strategic objectives (Gray, 1992). Maritime strategic calculations are necessary to comprehending possible patterns of tactical interaction between Pakistan and India because of their historically strained relations and recent developments in the region of Indian Ocean. In this context, the ongoing modernization program of India, Pakistan's effort to maintain a strategic balance, and the raising naval rivalry pose a possible threat to regional stability and peace in the future.

Climate Change and Environmental Issues in Indian Ocean Region

The region of Indian Ocean is highly vulnerable to environmental issues and climate change. The impacts of Climate change are posing a significant threat to economic and coastal security of littoral states of the region.

Ocean Warming:

The sea level is rising in the Indian Ocean Region as the ocean is warming quickly and volume of water is expanding. The rate of warming of Indian Ocean is faster than other Ocean of the planet. The warming of Indian Ocean is increasing anthropogenic activities in the region and it is exacerbating severe weather events like floods and cyclones (Roxy et al., 2020). The rise in sea level has devastating effects on the communities of coastal areas and ecosystems. Low-lying areas of the region are facing frequent erosion, flooding, and saltwater intrusion, posing threats to countries like Bangladesh, India, Maldives and Sri Lanka.

Climate change and Monsoon Patterns:

Global warming is projected to lead to more erratic and intense monsoons patterns in the region. Change in monsoon pattern will affect ocean ecosystems and marine productivity. Climate change is changing the dynamics in the region of Indian Ocean which can reduce the monsoonal rains causing droughts in the region (Patwardhan, Kulkarni & Krishna Kumar, 2014).

Ocean Acidification and Coral Bleaching:

Acidification and rising temperature are the main cause of widespread coral bleaching. Indian Ocean's delicate ecosystem is under threat as Ocean acidification is disrupting marine life, mainly shellfish and coral reefs (Westmacott, Cesar, Pet-Soede & Lindén, 2000). Acidification and increase in temperature is affecting biodiversity, changing marine ecosystems which are a threat to livelihood of millions of people which are dependent on aquaculture and fisheries of Indian Ocean.



Climate Velocities and Extreme Weather Events:

Climate velocities are accelerating in the Indian Ocean, mostly in the deeper layers, posing main challenges to sea life and protected area design. Climate change is mounting the intensity and frequency of extreme weather events like marine heat waves and cyclones in the region of Indian Ocean. These events have harsh impacts on coastal communities, marine life and economy (Dalpadado et al., 2024).

Maritime Security Vulnerabilities of Pakistan

<u>Vulnerability</u>	<u>Brief Detail</u>
Presence of Extra Regional Powers	Presence of extra regional powers like US, UK, France, Russia and Australia for their interests in the region is the cause of multifaceted security vulnerabilities for Pakistan. Impacts: Increase in military activities and possible shift in regional balance of power.
Weaponization and Nuclearization	Rapid weaponization and nuclearization of India in the region is posing maritime security vulnerability for Pakistan. Impacts: Beginning of new arm race and instability in the region.
Pakistan's Geographical Position	India's proximity to Pakistan is posing a main security challenge for Pakistan. Impact: Karachi and Port Qasim reduce strategic depth of Pakistan.
Climate Change	Climate change a main threat to marine ecosystem and maritime security of Pakistan. Impacts: Rising Sea levels, ocean acidification, salinity, change in Ocean temperatures and increased frequency of intense weather.
Limited Naval Capabilities	Pakistan has limited naval capabilities due to economic vulnerabilities. Impacts: Maintaining balance of power, monitoring and surveillance of Exclusive Economic Zone in the Arabian Sea is a challenge for Pakistan.
Maritime Crimes	Pakistan's waters are vulnerable to terrorism, smuggling, human trafficking and piracy, producing a serious security risk for Pakistan. Impacts: Creating instability in the region and damaging the economy of Pakistan.
Incomplete Maritime Infrastructure	Ports and Coastal areas of Pakistan requires modernization, expansion and development.



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	Impact: Unable to tap the true potentials of maritime sector.
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Traditional and non-traditional Maritime Security Threats for Pakistan

Pakistan's maritime security is facing numerous traditional and non-traditional threats. These threats are impacting the security, economy, environment and regional stability of Pakistan. Effective maritime security strategy is required to manage traditional and non-traditional security threats. These threats include:

<u>Traditional Threats</u>	<u>Non-traditional Threats</u>
Naval conflicts Power projections by other states Territorial disputes	Armed robbery Arms smuggling Climate change Cyber threats Drug trafficking Environmental degradation Human trafficking Illegal exploitation of marine resources Maritime terrorism Piracy Pollution

Opportunities for Pakistan

<u>Opportunity</u>	<u>Brief Detail</u>
Economic Development	Pakistan has to unlock its economic potential, maritime sector of Pakistan can boost the economic development of Pakistan through, increased investment, trade and job creation.
Foreign Direct Investment	Pakistan's maritime sector offers various investment opportunities for local, regional and international investors. For Example: Port development, Coastal tourism, seabed mining and shipping.
Maritime Center	Development of Gwadar Port under CPEC can transform this deep sea port into a regional maritime hub.
Regional Cooperation	The development and expansion of Gwadar port under CPEC is opening new door for all the regional countries especially for China, Afghanistan and Central Asian Republics (CARs). Regional cooperation will result in improving trade integration and fostering stability.
Security Development	Pakistan has the chance to develop advanced and innovative security trends with regional maritime states under the regional security complex.



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Strategic Partnerships	The world is witnessing the emergence of China as a new economic power in the world. Pakistan has the unique opportunity to improve its strategic partnership with China which can boost economic development as well as enhance maritime capacity and security.
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Challenges for Pakistan

<u>Challenge</u>	<u>Brief Detail</u>
Climate Change	Climate Change is the major challenge as Pakistan is among those states which are the biggest victim of environmental changes in the world.
Great Power Competition	Regional and Extra regional players are struggling for their interests in the region of IOR, increased power competition can influence the maritime interest of Pakistan.
Historical Rivalry with India	Pakistan's historical rivalry with India is posing a major challenge for Pakistan which creates security concerns and tensions.
Insufficient Regional Frameworks	The lack of cooperation mechanism and effective regional framework is hindering the ability of Pakistan to tackle maritime challenges.
Lack of Cooperation Frameworks	Littoral states of Indian Ocean Region are facing the challenge of absence of an efficient cooperation framework.
Security	Pakistan is facing traditional and non-traditional maritime security threats in the IOR.
Strategic Alliances	New strategic alliances are emerging in the IOR which can damage the national interest of Pakistan in the region.

Proposed Maritime Security Strategy of Pakistan (MSSP)

Presence of Extra regional powers, rivalry of India with China in the region, military ambitions of India's naval force which are increasing arms race in the region, climate change and environmental issue are posing many traditional and non-traditional security threats to Pakistan. Pakistan has to adopt innovative military and non military options for the protection of its national interest and to counter these threats effectively.

New dimensions are emerging from the comprehensive strategic investigation of the Indian Ocean Region. Pakistan has to consider the dimensions which are emerging from the policy analysis of Active states while developing Maritime Security Strategy of Pakistan. The proposed maritime security strategy for Pakistan deal the complex naval security challenges of Pakistan in the region of Indian Ocean through a cooperative and



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comprehensive approach. In the context of emerging challenges for Pakistan in the region, an inclusive maritime security strategy can include:

- Pakistan should address the external players by enhancing regional cooperation in the Indian Ocean. Pakistan should strengthen its relations with neighboring states through intelligence sharing, joint exercises and coordinated patrols.
- Pakistan should focus on naval domain awareness in order to manage the presence of extra regional powers in the Indian Ocean. Improved monitoring and surveillance capabilities can help Pakistan to track the activities of extra regional players.
- Establishment of Regional frameworks can play a vital role in capacity building. Training and capacity building programs for regional partners are required to deal traditional and non-traditional security threats. Pakistan's role in strengthening regional agreements and organizations can promote maritime security cooperation in the region.
- Pakistan should revise and formulate National Maritime Policy (NMP) and National Maritime Strategy (NMS) that comprehensively deals the changing dynamics of the region. Pakistan should focus on the development of a robust Sea-based deterrence capability and contemporary needs while formulating these policies.
- Pakistan should effort to mitigate increasing weaponization and nuclearization in the region. There is need to support the non-proliferation initiatives and support international agreements and frameworks to prevent the rapid spread of nuclear weapons. Diplomatic efforts can play a vital role in confidence building, promoting transparency and reduction of tensions between the neighboring countries which will ultimately result in slowing the arms race.
- Regional stakeholders should develop center for sharing intelligence, technical information and surveillance of naval moves in the region of Indian Ocean.
- Progression of Pakistan's Navy equipped with latest weapons and submarine fleet is necessary to maintain balance, peace and protect the national interests of Pakistan in the Indian Ocean Region. The status of Pakistan's Navy assured with second-strike capability is essential for the interests of Pakistan and region.
- Non-Traditional threats like climate change and maritime pollution are posing new challenges for Pakistan and littoral states of the Indian Ocean. Coastal communities and marine ecosystem are the direct victims of climate change and marine pollution. Pakistan should develop strategies to mitigate the impacts of these non-traditional security threats. Enhanced cooperation in this regard can help to prevent and respond the environmental issues.
- Pakistan should focus on the betterment of ocean health. This will serve the purpose of MDGs as well as in the growth of blue economy of Pakistan.



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- Pakistan has to prioritize the protection of its Sea Lines of Communication (SLOCs) and establishing extensive maritime procedures for the law enforcement agencies in the given complexities of Indo-Pacific dynamics.
- Pakistan is currently facing many economic challenges. The true potentials of Pakistan's maritime sector are not fully utilized yet. Pakistan has amazing maritime prospects which can play a vital role in the economic growth and development. There is need to take the advantage of blue economy and maritime sector of Pakistan which can boost the economy of Pakistan.
- Excellence and dominance is completely dependent on research and development and advancement in technology. Handsome allocation in budget for research and development, science and technology is required to enhance the defense capabilities of Pakistan armed forces.
- Enhanced naval monitoring and surveillance capabilities are required to detect and respond all kind of traditional and non-traditional security threats. A focus on developing asymmetric warfare capabilities, including warm attacks and drone warfare to counter numerical superiority of India in the region of Indian Ocean.
- Terrorism, piracy, armed robbery, smuggling and human trafficking are also posing many security challenges for Pakistan in the region of Indian Ocean. Pakistan should implement robust measures to combat these non-traditional threats, including intelligence-led operations and naval patrols.
- Pakistan can balance the alliance of US with India by increasing its collaboration and cooperation with China. China has introduced a mega project of economic development named China Pakistan Economic Corridor under the Belt and Road Initiative hence joint exercises and regular visits of ports between both the countries can further increase mutual reliance. Pakistan and China are already enjoying healthy relations in the region and both should collaborate to support the blue economy and other maritime related projects, and this increased cooperation between both the countries will maintain the balance in the region too.
- Enhanced collaboration and cooperation under the Regional Maritime Security Patrol (RMSP) framework is required in the evolving dynamics of Indian Ocean Region. Efforts and strong measures are required to build a joint patrol force under the RMSP which addresses the requirements of all stakeholders of the region rather than depending on a neighbor's concept of a 'Net Security Provider'.
- Pakistan should focus on the coastal development and infrastructure building. There is need to develop the container ports as 95% of our trade is dependent on Sea. The development of port is necessary to protect the economic interests of Pakistan in the region.

Conclusion:

Indian Ocean's economic, strategic, political, defense and environmental significance renders the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) a focal point of global competition and attention. IOR constitutes a key maritime thoroughfare which underscores its paramount significance in global decision making. Regional players like India, China and Pakistan



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and extra regional powers like US, UK, Australia, France and Russia are striving for their interests in the region. Presence of Great Powers in the region and developing alliances, partnerships and agreements are shifting the dynamics in the region of Indian Ocean. India is aiming for regional dominance and India's naval expansion with rapid escalation of weaponization and nuclearization is beginning a new arms race in the region. The rapid changing regional dynamics, increasing role of extra regional players, new alliances and partnerships, presence of India with swift intensification of weaponization and nuclearization, climate change and environmental issues in the region of Indian Ocean has many implications for Pakistan.

Pakistan is facing traditional and non-traditional maritime security threats in the IOR which requires a thorough and deeper reconsideration of its maritime strategies beyond the conventional lens. A comprehensive maritime security strategy is required to address maritime security vulnerabilities of Pakistan. Introduction of CPEC and expansion of Gwadar Port has increased the role of Pakistan navy in the region. Development of Gwadar and maritime sector of Pakistan is offering many opportunities for Pakistan and regional countries in the context of shifting regional dynamics of the region. Pakistan should utilize all available opportunities and counter all the challenges to ensure maritime security of Pakistan and to achieve its national and maritime interest.

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