



## Struggle for the Legacy: Sino-India Rivalry over Energy Sources in the Indian Ocean

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### Abstract

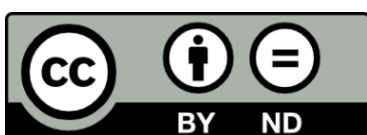
Global economic power has shifted from the Atlantic waters to the Indo-Pacific waters. China and India are robust rising powers competing for ultimate regional and global politico-economic opportunities. Energy has become a common factor for both nations, leading to overlapping spheres of influence, strategic responses, and national interests. This article addresses the puzzle of the absence of military confrontations over the issues of energy sources in circumstances that carry enormous potential for conflict. This study aims to contribute to filling the research gap in interpreting the rivalry between China and India over energy resources. The analysis extends through an eclectic approach, incorporating assorted through assorted debates from different realist thought strands. It treats the theories of international relations as emphasising the structure of international relations. However, there is a complex interplay with the perceptions of those structures by the foreign policymakers of a country. The tentative hypothesis of this study has been that “energy rivalry between rising military powers in the Indian Ocean has increased tension, though not to the extent of violent confrontation”. They bargain for regional hegemony, but a deterrent effect prevents an armed conflict between two rising powers. The findings suggest that the tentative hypothesis is supported by substantial evidence regarding energy-based rivalry. Amidst aspiration to dominate, especially over security and energy affairs, neither China nor India would entrench towards a “Mutually Assured Destruction” (MAD). Besides acquiring defensive and offensive military capabilities, they are also concerned with diversifying its energy policies, including land routes for energy supply. The possibility of mutually assured destruction provides an incentive for deterrence, preventing violent confrontation over energy issue in the Indian Ocean.

**Keywords:** Regional Hegemony, Mutually Assured Destruction, Spheres of Influence, Historical Rivalry, Indian Ocean Region

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## INTRODUCTION

This study focuses on the Sino- Indian rivalry over energy sources in the Indian Ocean. Hunting, exploring and exploiting energy sources and safeguarding acquired energy assets have become key concerns of competition and rival moves by these emerging powers. This competition requires military expansion and techno-defence accomplishments. The littoral states of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) had witnessed increased activities by the 'Great Powers' in the recent past largely due to seeking spheres of influence by China and India simultaneously. The situation has become further complicated by the increasing demand for energy from emerging economies of China and India. The economic growth and military development of China and India indicate their transition from emerging power status to great power status. The end of the bipolar world order has marked the beginning of a new type of rivalry. The end of the bipolar world order marked the end of the traditional competition and the emergence of new of alliances implying a new world order.

The current world order has been described differently by various scholars. It is, according to some, a unipolar order (Kagan, 2018; Zakaria, 1999; Fukuyama, 1992) while others perceive it as a multipolar world system (Kupchan, 2012; Mearsheimer, 2001; Kennedy, 1989). There is substantial evidence to suggest the

latter perspective is correct if drawn from recent developments in the international political system. The opening of previously closed economies of China and India provided the necessary impetus for economic growth and their consequent rise to great power status in world affairs. The gradual rise of China and India resulted in changes in politics in the Indian Ocean Region (Mohan, 2012; Malik, 2011; Kaplan, 2011; Holslag, 2010). The nexus between these changes and the thirst for energy sources remained little explored within the present scholarship of international relations. It has brought out the economic growth potentials of rising powers heavily dependent on the availability of energy. Availability of energy is serious for both India and China as they are not self-reliant on energy. They have become dependent on external sources of energy and big consumers of the same (Malik, 2011; Hong, 2008; Klara, 2008). Put simply, rising powers depend heavily on external energy sources to enhance their economy and industrialisation (Yergin, 2011; Zhao, 2008). The simultaneous economic growth of China and India and their dependence on the import of energy through sea routes in the Indian Ocean and the resulting competition over energy sources between China and India remains a little academically treated area of study (Zhu, 2018; Philip & Dannreuther 2011; Klare, 2008). This kind of study is warranted in the context of China and India being



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traditional rivals. There are few studies on the form and content that energy competition would provide to the traditional rivalry between India and China (Cheng, 2017; Lanteigne, 2016; Cole, 2016). This study aims to fill that gap in the literature.

This article comprises six parts. In the first part, I discuss the study's research questions and problem statements. The second part addresses the literature review and the theory of knowledge which informed the analysis of this study. The third part explained the methodological foundation of the article. The fourth part of the article elaborates on Sino-Indian rivalries and their military build-up. The fifth part examined the results and discussion of the study. The final part summarises the conclusion and recommendation.

### Research Questions

This study aims to pursue the following research questions.

1. Why has energy become the most crucial factor in the clashes between rising powers in the Indian Ocean region?
2. Why do the major powers not resort to violent clashes despite increasing competition over energy sources and the power sensitivities that emerge from mutual responses?

### Problem Statement

There is a general agreement to treat China and India as rising great powers

in the arena of international affairs of the present world order. The unique characteristics of both China and India have been that they have never been imperial powers and possessors of colonies elsewhere to exploit raw materials and extensive markets overseas (Kohli, 2020; Tells & Mirski, 2013; Hong, 2012). The metamorphosis of their legacies has come through enormous political, economic, and foreign policy changes, painstaking efforts of economic development, and concrete industrial policies adopted throughout the last five decades. The veins of their economies are filled with blood injected by the industrial capacities. In the above context, energy sources have been prioritised by domestic foreign policy formulators according to the perceptions of external structures of international affairs of the present world order to achieve their external economic and industrial policy goals. Moreover, both powers possess nuclear arsenals and are well-equipped by modern militaries with enormous technological and strategic advancements. Therefore, a mass-scale military confrontation will end up with destructive effects for both actors while inviting the other global and regional powers to the battlefield. However, China and India have not entered a direct violent conflict so far. In that context, it is important to study why they do not resort to violent conflict.



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### REFLECTIONS FROM THE EXISTING LITERATURE AND THE THEORY OF KNOWLEDGE

Scholars in the field of international relations have provided different theoretical lenses to approach this rivalry and competition such as liberalism, constructivism realism Marxism, etc. However, the present research has adopted the theoretical perspective of realism to study the above problem because, by many measures, it remains the most appropriate theory to approach the structure of international relations as the world is still divided based on national sovereignty and it is anarchical by nature. Though some have observed increasing sovereignty of some states while some states lessening their sovereignty (Shah, 2008). Even this increase in sovereignty could be viewed as related to the anarchical nature of international politics. Consequently, this study is informed by a realist school of thought on international relations. However, it takes an eclectic approach within realism, considering different strands of thought that complement one another.

The basic tenet of realism despite different strands has been its reliance upon the states as the major actors struggling to ensure its survival and constant struggle to increase its power. Almost all the sub schools of thought share the fundamental idea of anarchy in international politics. Hence, states are not in the habit of obeying the

orders of any of the equals. It also held that all the states are equal in terms of sovereignty as they are not obeying anyone. This is an inherent feature of international politics, even to date at least in theory.

The realist school of thought emphasizes structural aspects of international relations. However, it has different strands of thought. Hence an eclectic approach incorporating the different arguments from different branches of thought of the same school was used in the construction of the theoretical basis of this study.

The evolution of the theory of realism has been neither linear nor uniform but has taken diverse directions. Power resides in the relationships among international actors dominantly elaborated by classical realists. The writings of classical realists were the primary critical source on international relations until they were challenged by the developments within the realist school itself. Neorealism, which emerged the discourse in the 1970s, became the focal point of debate during the 1980s and 1990s. It challenges the main premises of classical realism.

However, it should be noted that neorealism is to be regarded as a critique of the liberal approach and other radical approaches in the field. This insight of neorealist critique is helpful to understand why China has not resorted to direct violent confrontation despite increased tensions concerning energy resources in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). The



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following discussion delves into various emphases within the realist school of thought on this subject.

In this context, the present research employs eclectic or heterogeneous strands of thought within the Realist School to understand and construct the theoretical framework for studying China's rise in terms of economy and international affairs. This approach is selected on account of its ability to provide multiple perspectives to understand changes in international relations over the energy-based rivalry that has attracted considerable scholarly attention (Lintner, 2019; Zhu, 2018; Rumely & Chaturvedi, 2005).

Realist scholars have been the most vivid advocates of national power and the international structure as the currency of international relations. They provide a more plausible space to analyse the factors that affect the states' reactionary behaviours in the international system. China's rise and its foreign policy reactions in both international bilateral and multilateral settings have been polemic and widely addressed themes in contemporary realist analyses. The most common conclusion of the realists on China's rise expresses that it is an offensive rise (see Mearsheimer, 2006 p.160, for example). Accordingly, China's external behaviour in various stages has been described as an assertive or offensive one. The inferences of the classical realist on Chinese entrance to the regional and international arena demonstrate two conclusions. The first

is that China expects to have a challenge-free Asian region. The second is that China will further expand this inspiration towards other regions (See, Mearsheimer, 2010., 2006 for example). This strong neo-realist argument on China's offensive and provocative rise has been the most popular argument on China's development in the international and regional political, and economic atmosphere.

This does not mean that China's provocative and challenging behaviour will unavoidably lead to a military confrontation with existing great powers. Defensive realists provide a sort of balanced overview and optimistic hope in analysing the rational behaviour of great powers. For them, based on technological advancements and geographical realities, great powers will be more strategic rather than going directly to hostilities. Those strategies are more future-driven and rational since survival is more surely made by supporting the status quo rather than behaving offensively (Walt, 2002; Brown et al., 1995; Glaser, 1990). China does consider India as a regional rising power and maintains a strategic reactionary foreign policy in bilateral relations. Despite the vitality to dominate especially over security and energy affairs, both China and India will not entrench towards a "mutually assured destruction" (MAD). The prominent US Cold War analyst John Gaddis asserted that the long peace that reigned during the Cold War was



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mainly because of deterrence and “mutual fear” (Gaddis, 1983, p.171-172). Steve Weber argues that great powers have entered into a form of “joint custodianship” instead of engaging in military confrontation (Weber, 1990).

Since the multifaceted arguments of realism provide more plausible paradigmatic spaces to comprehend China’s reactions to Sino-Indian affairs and developments of energy-related matters in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), realist thoughts are used in this study.

### METHODOLOGY

The analysis of this study is informed by different strands of realist debates in approaching the structure of international relations to comprehend its impact on foreign policymakers of China. However, confining to structural aspects of realism which consider the structural realm of international space is not sufficient. In this context, an additional framework is needed to cover the actor-oriented reality of foreign policy making. China’s reactions to Sino-Indian relations and its responses in energy-related matters in IOR are not merely the results of the structural reality of regional and global political-economic dynamics. They are essentially being shaped by the influences of domestic politics including the public opinion and concerns of spheres of influence and the desires of foreign policy elites.

State-to-state affairs are not just dealings among physical territorial entities but live powerhouses that are made of decision-makers who are set in different policy-making levels. Textual analysis is used to fill this vacuum. The experts of the research methodology pointed out that the main objective of textual analysis is to understand how people think, and consequently act, by studying patterns displayed in their discourse, broadly defined (Frey et al., 1999). Therefore, the documented evidence, texts, reports, and records are used to analyse the actor-oriented part of interactions.

Moreover, given the complexity of the existing theorisation of China-India competition and rivalry over energy, an eclectic approach was used to analyze the inferences of existing texts and form fresh perspectives. As mentioned at the outset, different strands of realism are tested and triangulated by core liberal and constructivist assumptions. Liberalism usually stands for the cooperation among the nations and their enthusiasm to form collective actions in the context of anarchy. Constructivism defends the formation of norms that bind nations to solidarity. These core arguments and inferences assist in analyzing the deterrence that prevents a possible military confrontation between rising powers with rival desires.



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### Rising Rivalry of China and India in the Indian Ocean

As rising powers in the Indo-Pacific region, both China and India have acquired economic momentum after opening their economies and have sought greater recognition and engagement in world political affairs. Energy sources, along with the safety and security of sea routes to transport them, have become vital significance for both countries (Cooper, 2003). In addition to the above, they were traditional rivals based on border issues between the two states. The ambition to become a great power/hegemony. The Chinese Belt and Road Initiative and the supply of energy through pipelines were strategic moves taken by China to ensure an uninterrupted supply of energy while encircling India and its allies. The Specialists in international politics noted this move as a response by China toward India and its attraction to the United States in the context of energy-based rivalry in the ocean (Karim, 2017; Kaplan, 2009). The Indian Ocean complicates issues between the two states while the free-market logic of capitalism compelled them to cooperate. This situation needs to be analysed to understand the forces that shaped Chinese Foreign Policy responses in the above-complicated rivalry situation. Understanding the rival situation and the added dimension of energy-based rivalry requires an understanding of the traditional rivalry between the two

states based on the borders of the states.

### Border Dispute

China and India inherited disputed borders as colonial legacies emerging from the McMahon Line demarcating territories between China and British India. Though China and India shared many things in common and initial friendship as new states after 1947, the border issue emerged as the centre of the gravity of conflict and rival situation giving birth to a variant of strategic relationships with countries of South Asia and others. As China is claiming some territories of present India as its territories, a war based on rival claims and counterclaims always remains a possibility. With the intention and calculation of the possible conflict over these contested borders between the two states both China and India have adopted various foreign policy strategies to win the hearts and minds of the small states in the South Asian Region. Further, the big neighbour attitudes of India towards the Small States in South Asia also worked as a push factor for those small states towards China (Kodikara, 1965).

The border contestation issue cannot be treated in isolation, as the present-day-China-India rivalry over energy sources is closely related to both old and new conflicts. Both China and India depend on the sea route to transport critical energy supply for their industries and transportation of



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the goods produced by both nations. Traditional rivalry together with new rivalry on energy is ghosting the mindsets of top foreign policy makers of the two nations. It can be gleaned from different foreign policy options adopted by the two nations such as Look East by India and Belt and Road Initiative and String of Pearl strategy by China. China has perceived the Look East policy of India as a strategic move by China to debacle its status in the Indian Ocean Region with its competitors including Japan and the US while India perceives Chinese strategy meant to encircle India within the South Asian Region which India thought of as its traditional sphere of influence. These rival perceptions have led both countries to modernise their militaries in the anarchical political structure dominated by sovereign states.

### Indian and Chinese Military Modernization

The China and India border dispute in 1962 resulted in a military confrontation. It provided the impetus for both countries to engage in military modernisation. Recently, due to the obvious rivalry among them, both India and China have significantly enhanced their military strength by acquiring modern weaponry. Both states have invested heavily in military affairs. The recent military expenses provide examples of such development and readiness for a possible confrontation. The objective of such

spending has been to modernise forces. Both powers have been working on upgrading old weapon systems and developing new ones in the Indian Ocean due to the need for security of resources through the Indian Ocean (Tariq, 2015, p. 3-4). The IOR's safety and security were linked to China's assertiveness, contrary to military pundits' predictions. In the case of China, this meant that it was a more formidable opponent in the event of a confrontation with US regional friends or partners in ASEAN (O'Donnell & Pant, p. 586-587). Additionally, it was anticipated that certain military advancements in both states would put U.S. interests at risk by escalating the competition for regional security and jeopardising Asian stability. Different kinds of alliances within the IOR could arise from it. It is supported by the historically high level of strategic caution that the US and India have demonstrated toward minor nations like Bangladesh, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and Pakistan (Tariq, 2015, p. 21). The power struggle between the two countries can be understood through the lens of their respective military might.

### Nuclear Arms Race in China and India

People concerned about the state's pursuit of developing nuclear weapons have taken note of outside influences on nations' attempts to maintain their security and sovereignty (Keohane, 2005; Waltz, 1997). It is believed that states developed nuclear weapons





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because they thought they would make them more secure against dangers from outside. According to Scott D. Sagan (Sagan, 1996, p. 55), stable nuclear deterrence is likely to result from two opposing states sharing nuclear weapons. There is historical evidence to support that China and India's strategic decision to build nuclear weapons to prevent and lessen rival strikes on one another.

The Cold War politics in the bipolar world order and strategic relations maintained by the two superpowers with other powers of the world made both China and India nuclear weapon-capable states. Nuclear scientists considered China to be one of the world's five nuclear weapon states and India has been excluded from such status (Kristensen & Korda, 2018). Presently, China has produced 410 nuclear warheads with about 318 land-based ballistic missiles, 72 submarine-launched ballistic missiles, and 20 bombers (Kristensen & Norris, 2023, p. 109). According to available information, China's nuclear stockpile will further increase in the coming years (Kristensen & Norris, 2016., Schneider, 2014). Moreover, China is the only one of the five recognised nuclear weapon states that qualitatively expanded its warheads (Hettiarachchi & Abeyrathna, 2015, p. 100).

According to nuclear experts, India has readied between 130 and 140 nuclear warheads for delivery, spread between

roughly 60 land-based, 16 sea-based, and 48 bomber missiles (Kristensen & Korda, 2018, p. 362). According to several analysts, equities will rise during the ensuing ten years (Norris & Kristensen, 2015., O'Donnell & Pant, 2014). India was found to have produced a variety of land-based ballistic missiles. (Zarychta, 2016, p. 70). India's short-range ballistic missiles are centred on focusing on Pakistan. The medium-range missiles are focused on Western, Central, and Southern China while long-range missiles are capable of striking targets beyond China (Davenport, 2017). The focus of Indian missiles on Pakistan and places in China indicates the foreign policy makers' calculations and their perceptions of both traditional and new rival situations concerning the strategic triad relationship among China, India, and Pakistan within the Indian Ocean region and South Asia in particular.

The most serious development is not likely to be incursions but rather the build-up of nuclear weapons that take place at the border. The modernisation of both countries' military capabilities suggests a potential arms race. The latest achievement by China is the DF-41, which is an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) that can carry multiple nuclear warheads to the US. Meanwhile, India developed the Agni-5, which can carry nuclear warheads to cities such as Beijing and Shanghai.



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### Strategic Influence and Sino-Indian Relations

Understanding the structure and substance of global politics in the twenty-first century is essential to China and India's concurrent ascent (Kaplan, 2011; Malik, 2011; Garver, 2011). Based on the analysis of available data, it appears that China and India have been encountering one other throughout Asia and the surrounding oceans. The nineteenth century was defined by a grand game between the British and Russian Empires in Central Asia, according to traditional geopolitical strategists (Petraszczyk, 2021). Scholars also have noted certain parallel lines in the competition.

China had been viewed by India through the lens of rivalry: From India's point of view, China had been surrounding India strategically (Scott, 2008, p. 255). China's influence and ability to project power across land and sea has grown in India. One step in this encirclement is China's building of infrastructure building in the North and its military build-up in Tibet. Through its "String of Pearls Policies," strategic influence on the nations of South Asia, and its desire to have a naval presence in the Indian Ocean, China has been encircling India from the south. Conversely, during the 1990s, India has been gaining strategic influence over China. To counter China's growing power and influence, India needed to forge strategic

alliances. In the Northeast, India has deployed long-range aircraft, progressively taking on a more significant security role in the Malacca Strait, and the much-publicized Look East Policy (LEP) has been extended into China's southern region. Targeting states in East and South Asia, India recently expanded its Act East Policy (AEP).

### Sino-Indian energy Competition

One of the specific qualities of the political economy of the twenty-first century has been Geopolitics taking hands with Geoeconomics (Luttwak, 1990). It has been reported that China reported a growth rate of over ten per cent since 1982 while India reported economic indicators revealed that Chinese economic growth had reported a growth rate of over 10 per cent while India has approached a growth of double-digit figures in the 1990s (Pardesi, 2015, p.16; Zhu, 2012, p.103). This increased economic growth has been essentially connected to the high demand for energy consumption and energy imports because industrialisation made the two countries dependent on external energy supply. They had to import energy. The drive for energy resulted in exploring other sources of energy rather than oil such as hydrocarbons. It was amidst the uncertainty of the availability of oil as a source of energy for the growing demands of industrialisation in both states. Due to their late entry into the global



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economy, China and India are finding it challenging to compete with the large oil companies that have steadily dominated the sector for more than a century (Klare, 2008). China had looked to Africa for energy sources in that setting (Melbar, 2013; Hong, 2008). According to reports, it has sucked up acres in areas where Western and Japanese businesses had historically dominated the market (Beri, 2010). Similar to China's response to the Darfur conflict, China and India appeared to be concerned about moral disputes (Agubamah, 2014, p. 227). China and India came under fire for their involvement in Myanmar, where they repeatedly supported the military junta in return for the exploitation of the country's natural gas reserves (Zhao, 2008 p.176).

As China has emerged as India's main energy rival, energy concerns have affected ties between the two countries. The fact that China was planning for its energy security before India was recognized by Indian policymakers (Collin, 2019; Cole, 2016). A thorough examination of the actions of Indian and Chinese businesses has revealed that there was intense rivalry in their relationship (Bajpai et al., 2016). In its struggle with China's trading partners, India has been defeated in several bids for oil projects in African and Central Asian countries since 2004 (Huchet, 2008).

It is pertinent to note that the Sino-India energy competition has been taking place in the Indian Ocean

Region. It has been a space of competition. China emerged victorious from Myanmar's 2006–2007 offer of significant energy resources, leaving India behind (Sinha, 2009). Although India saw the region as her traditional zone of predominance, it signalled major ramifications for Indian leadership. The requirement for the Sea Line of Communication (SLOC) has been China's strategic objective to simultaneously guarantee the security of energy resources in the Indian Ocean. China has been facing difficulties in securing energy supplies throughout the Indian Ocean, despite its success in gaining allies such as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Myanmar, as well as in reaching the Middle East (Kraenner, 2008). It was in the context of the present hegemon in the Indian Ocean, Japan, a traditional rival of China and India, and the other East Asian States entering into strategic alliances. The fact that China won Petro Kazakhstan's 2005 offer indicated that the rivalry has extended to Central Asia (Sachdeva, 2017). It has served as a warning that rivalry may go further. Indian involvement in the energy sphere, which was necessary to tap into a region that China claimed as part of its territory but that other Southeastern Asian states disputed, further exacerbated the situation (Bajpai et al., 2016). The rivalry came to light when Vietnam and India tried to drill for oil in the South China Sea at the end of 2007. However, the move had been successfully blocked by China (Nguyen et al., 2017). However, it was



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possible to increase Indian military and economic involvement in the South China Sea.

### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of traditional rivalry indicates that it is necessarily revolving around complicated border issues of the modern nation-state, which societies in Asia were required to emulate in their political frameworks without a neutral arbitrator. The complicated border issue has been at the core of the conflict which has been a colonial construction. The difference in ideologies has added impetus to the content of the rival situation. Internal factors such as leadership and complicated political demography further aggravated the traditional rivalry. Both China and India wanted diverse populations to imagine themselves either Chinese or Indian who essentially had no such habit of identification. During the high peak of traditional rivalry between China and India, there were wars and military confrontations from time to time along the complicated borders of the two states. Military presence showcasing rivalry has been a mark of rivalry even to date. The contested borders had worked to create two types of strategic triads in the Indian Ocean. There are the US and its other allies with Pakistan. The other triad is around the Soviet Union and its communist partners in Eastern Europe and India. They have different objectives which include preventing China from having

any kind of power in the Indian Ocean region. In response to the above, China opted to remain disengaged and isolated with the strategic calculation of securing its national interests showing a greater level of isolation from the rest of the world affairs. However, economic power and consequent military advancement led its leadership to seek a great stake in the international realm wherein it has shown a keen interest in establishing naval bases in the Indian Ocean region to curb US presence in the Ocean region together with its traditional strategic partners in Asia-Pacific and newfound partner of India after the cold war political order of the world. In this scenario, China seems to develop strategic relationships with former Soviet republics of Central Asia and the smaller neighbours of the South Asian Region.

China and India also witnessed a deterioration of warm relations in their relations during the early state of their bilateral interactions. However, the deterioration of diplomatic relations has made the two countries clueless in formulating their strategies. It led both countries to formally re-establish diplomatic relations in the 1970s. Several changes in the sphere of domestic politics, including leadership changes in both countries, led to the formal reproaching of relations in the 1990s. It resulted in lessening traditional rivalry on border disputes leading to changes in Chinese and Indian rise in international relations. It is related to the simultaneous rise of



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China and India. The two states recorded a high level of growth and showed further potential for growth if the cooperative strategy was formulated by both states. The security of raw materials which includes energy sources is closely related to rivalry and cooperation at the same time. Sometimes, rivalries may be objective/real perceptual, or imaginative. Whatever it is, the necessity of security for resource requirements through the Indian Ocean led both powers to upgrade old weapon systems while developing brand new ones, sometimes leading to a nuclear arms race between the two states. Both states seem to be thinking of the strength of the stock of nuclear arms as providing an effective deterrence of war. In this context, China has declared its policy of no first use of them over others. The issue, though, comes when China fails to specify that it covers disputed areas, such as India's Arunachal Pradesh. In addition to their long-standing rivalry, China and India's rivalry has taken on new dimensions as a result of economic expansion, the need for raw materials for industry, and the need to preserve state interests. These worries are for both the raw material's safety and the transportation system. They caused both nations to decide to modernise their armed forces and station them in different parts of the globe.

Though China is not situated within the Indian Ocean It is connected to it through the Malacca Strait, a vital route for China because it is the major route

of transport of energy to China. China has been suspicious of the US, its allies in the Pacific region, and the Indian Ocean including India as rivals, and this could block vital supplies to its peaceful rise. The rivalry is further complicated by the fact of countermeasures adopted by strategic moves such as 'Look East and Act East' which aimed at establishing strategic partners in East Asia marked by rival situations between China and states in the region due to various reasons such as the Chinese claim over certain territories and resource competitions. Chinese response has been developing strategic partnerships alone with the littoral states through sea routes and land based on free trade but suspected as strategic military moves which encircled India both by sea and land.

## CONCLUSION

China seemed to struggle with whether to opt for an aggressive or assertive stance in its new rivalry with India. The Chinese foreign policymakers eased their stances over border issues with India lessening the tensions though not completely over forever. The calculative reasoning has been the reaping benefits of the market in India for its industrial products. China meanwhile has sought to pull small neighbours of India capitalising their tense sentiments with that of India. To counter the Chinese, move in South Asia, India had entered a strategic alliance with the United States and other allies of the United States aiming



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to curb Chinese influence in the South, a sphere that India considered its hegemonic sphere of influence. China responded by increasing its presence in the Indian Ocean region by seizing the opportunities created by India itself. It was observed that India still lacks the economic power to help its neighbours. In contrast, China, with huge economic capacities, ventured into investing in infrastructure development activities in economic capacities ventured into investing in infrastructure development activities in almost all the South Asian Nations. The sidelining of Pakistan by the United States as its closest ally in the Indian Ocean region and increasing cordial relations with India had drawn Pakistan closer to China, adding a new dimension to military cooperation and power rivalry in the Indian Ocean region. The Chinese engagements included the Hambantota harbour project in Sri Lanka and other harbour project and infrastructure development projects in the Maldives, Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Pakistan. It is to be noted that the increasing presence of China has been seriously taken by the United States, Japan, and India. In the recent past, the United States and its allies had taken initiatives to increase their military and economic ties with Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Bangladesh excluding Pakistan.

The case of crude oil excavation in various parts of the globe had become the terrain of the high-level contest in Central Asia and Africa wherein

Chinese companies and Indian companies were involved. China feared for the security of Chinese nationals and their properties overseas. Particularly of possible interruption of oil and other energy supply through the Indian Ocean. It is revealed that Chinese engagement in the Middle East and African continent had become more assertive and the Chinese government had ignored the type of human rights and democratic regime. China had favoured less democratic/anti-democratic regimes to have an edge over the rest of the world powers. The Chinese Belt and Road Initiative and the supply of energy through pipelines were strategic moves taken by China to assure an uninterrupted supply of energy while encircling India and its allies. The specialists in international politics noted this move as a response by China towards India and its attraction to the United States in the context of energy-based rivalry in the ocean.

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