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Should India Worry About China's Naval Fleet in Indian Ocean?

BY AMEERA RAO



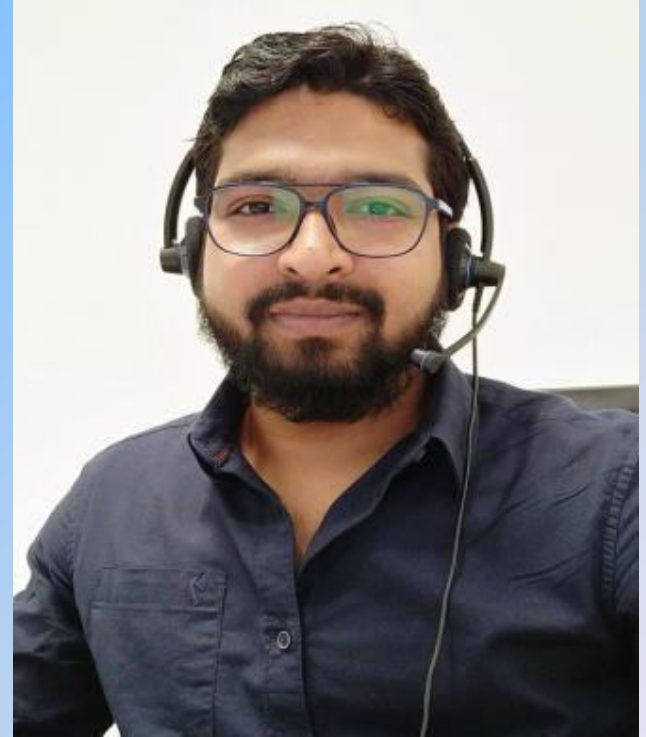
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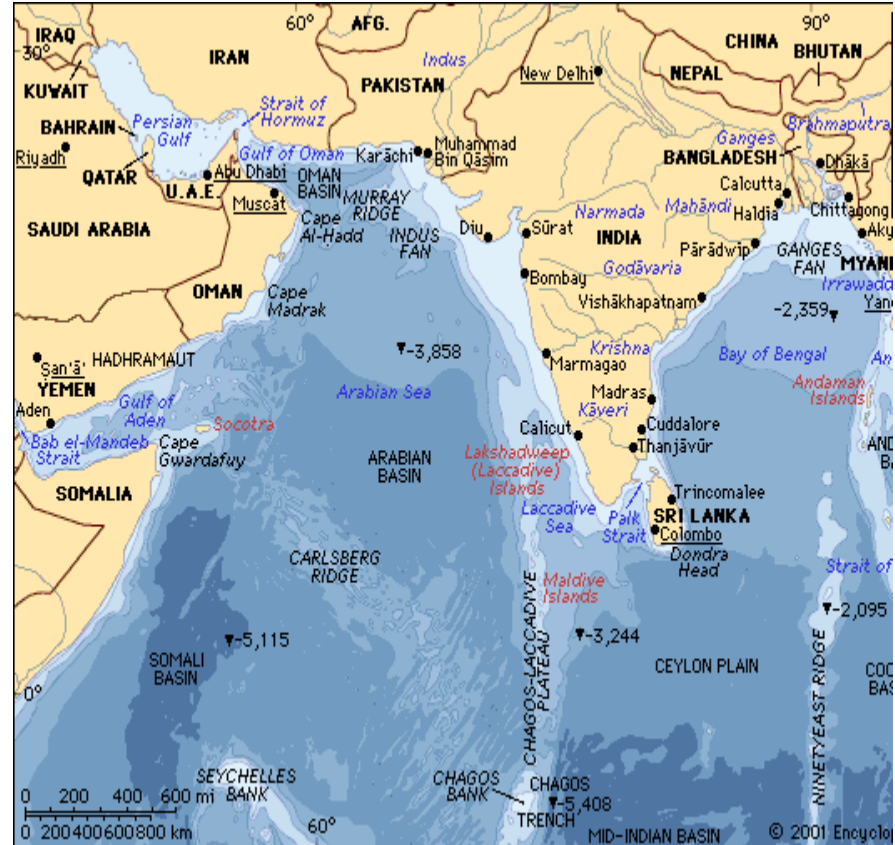


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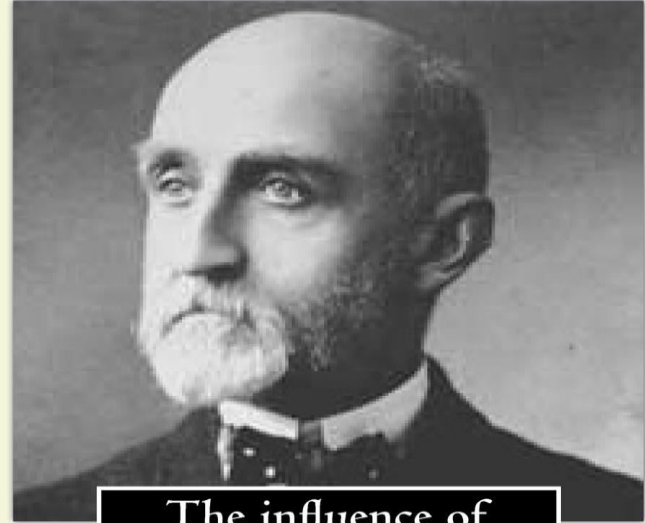
The Observation

- The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) of **the 21st-century represents a geopolitical hotspot.**
- Power politics is gaining traction in the region, with China attempting to form a leading presence in the vast waters surrounding the Indian subcontinent.



Chinese strategy

- The Mahanian notion that “sea power is inseparable from national greatness” still resonates with many Chinese strategists.
- Initially, Under Xi Jinping the CCP adopted a similar approach to his predecessors of “peaceful naval expansion”.



The influence of
sea power upon
history, 1660-1783.
HISTORY OF
NAVAL WARFARE.

A. T. MAHAN

Chinese strategy

- In 2015, China publicized its current naval strategy doctrine titled “Near Seas Defense and Far Seas Protection.”
- Near seas defense in neighbouring island chain, including the East China Sea (ECS), the Yellow Sea, and South China Sea (SCS) while far seas protection elsewhere.
- This doctrine is rooted in the ideas of Mahan and Mao.

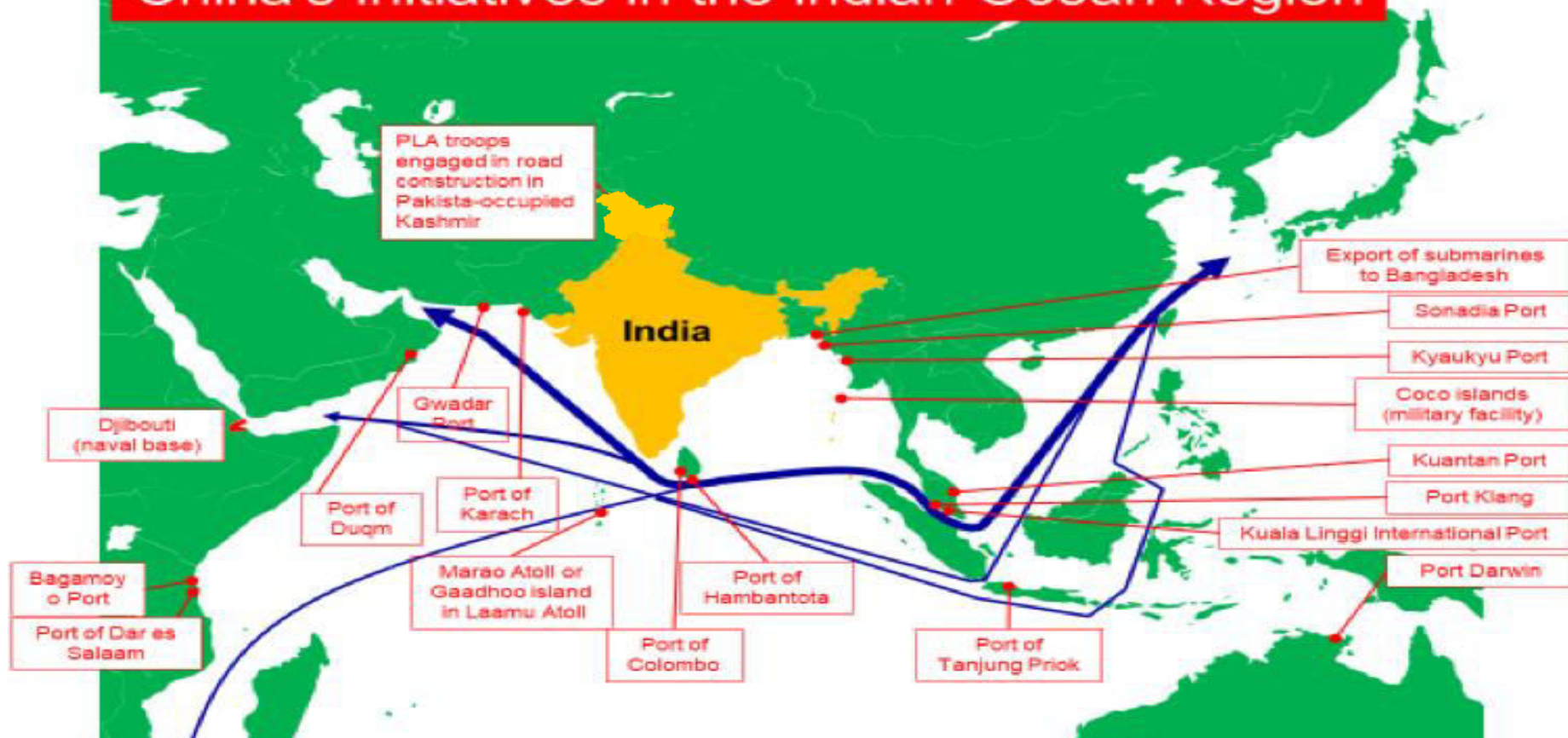
The curious case of IOR

- Chinese stakes in IOR have been increasing continuously.
- Approximately 80% of China's oil transits through the Indian Ocean and Malacca Straits and 95% of China's trade with the Middle East, Africa and Europe passes through the Indian Ocean.
- The importance of securing international sea lanes is the most significant reason for China to engage in the IOR actively.
- China's defense white papers have also disclosed similar themes and narratives in their strategy which include the protection of overseas energy routes and investment, development of blue water capabilities and the need to promote logistics abroad.

The curious case of IOR

- However, soon the PLAN began rapidly modernizing its capabilities in IOR.
- It has enhanced shipbuilding, aircraft carriers, nuclear submarines, major surface combatants, advanced anti-ship, anti-air and anti-submarine weapons, warfare ships, auxiliary ships etc. in IOR.
- Its anti-piracy missions have enabled it further to explore the waters of the IOR, particularly in and around the Gulf of Aden.

China's Initiatives in the Indian Ocean Region



Overall observation

1. **Djibouti** is the only permanent base China currently hold in the IOR.
2. Talks have taken place to set up bases in Pakistan's Gwadar port and Sri Lanka's Hambantota, **plans have not yet materialised.**
3. China's BRI, is a part of its global naval plans but as of now it has **strictly economic and commercial interests.**
4. **China's so-called 'debt-trap diplomacy'** also adds towards developing credible military interests elsewhere.

India needs to be cautious

