TED ANTALYA MODEL UNITED NATIONS 2019

Forum: DISEC

Issue: Implementing settlements between China and India for the cessation of the (ongoing) conflict in the Indian Ocean

Student Officer: Didem Zeynep ÜNAL

Position: President Chair

INTRODUCTION

As the Indian Ocean- due to its geographical position and resources- is a strategic region for economy, both India and China have their own strategies and policies that show their interests for dominating the region. As these interests are contradicting , it is considered as a conflict between China and India. Although there are no such claims today, if this conflict is not immediately solved it may lead to military conflict, which is a risk that the region cannot take.

At the moment, despite the ongoing conflict, the Indian Ocean is also threatened by problems regarding development, overfishing, problems caused by climate change, natural disasters and piracy. That is why the international community should collaborate to cease the conflict between India and China before it causes any further damage in the region and should focus on the sustainable development of the region.

DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

1. Maritime Conflict

   Generally maritime conflicts or disputes are the conflicts that occur regarding the usage or sharing of international waters due to conflicting interests of parties.

2. Maritime Silk Road

   Maritime Silk Road is the region of Silk Road, which was a major trade route in history. Today, the Chinese are aiming to re-activate this route in order to enhance their economic dominance by controlling the Indian Ocean.

3. Look East policy

   The "Look East" policy is the Indian policy which refers to an Indian superiority in the South Asia and later on India becoming a major party in global economy and politics.

4. String of Pearls metaphor

   This metaphor is used to describe the situation in which China initiates or engages in projects in the Indian Ocean in order to have places and facilities from which Chinese naval forces can benefit.

5. <u>One Belt One Road Policy</u>

This refers to the policy the Chinese follow in order to re-activate the Maritime Silk Road.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

Historical Background

Briefly explaining, it can be considered that since the 18th century when the Indian Ocean became a "colonial ocean" and when it was dominated by European colonial parties especially the British, the Indian Ocean has been playing an important role in global trade. As aforementioned from the 18th century to 1940s the states that possess a coast to the Indian Ocean were colonised and the region was under British superiority. This was until 1971 when the British fully withdrew from the region and 150 years of British dominance was over.
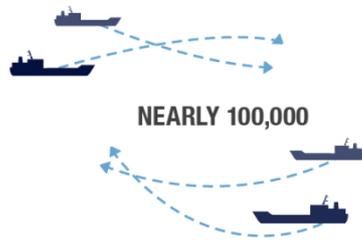
After the colonial era of the region continued to play a significant part in global economy and to this day its socio-economic influence on international politics has grown gradually. The region drew the Chinese attention mainly after 1978 when the Chinese economic expansion became obvious. However, since 1949 ,according to China, the Chinese have been defending the coasts.

Chinese Interests and the Chinese Strategy

In order to comprehend the issue in detail, it is crucial to realize both parties have their interests and their valid reasonings behind their actions, which basically explains the "conflict". Although China doesn't share any borders with the Indian Ocean, which makes it irrelevant to the issue in a shallow sense, it has certain interests that comply with their ongoing policies and the situation they have been facing since the beginning of history.
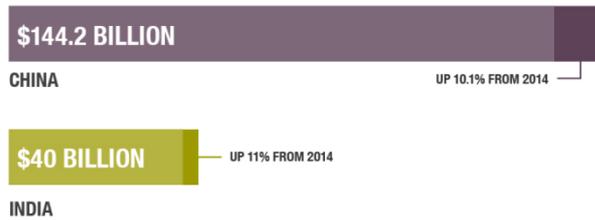
INDIAN OCEAN BY THE NUMBERS
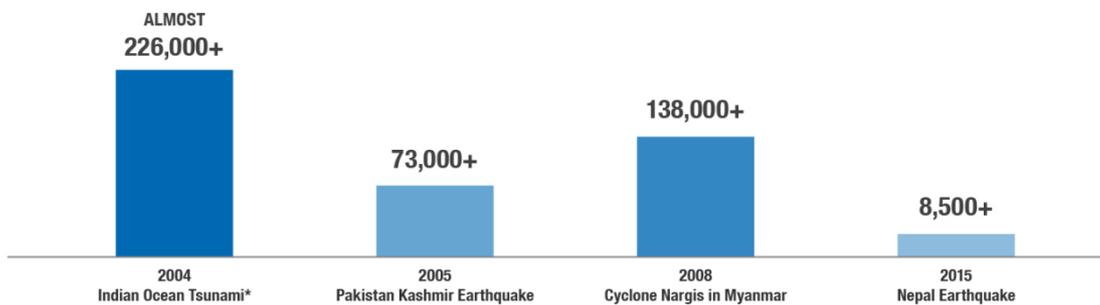
SHIPS THAT TRANSIT THE INDIAN OCEAN ANNUALLY:

NEARLY 100,000

Source: Stimson Center

CHINA VS. INDIA MILITARY BUDGET EXPENDITURES, 2015

$144.2 BILLION
CHINA
UP 10.1% FROM 2014

$40 BILLION
UP 11% FROM 2014
INDIA

Sources: Xinhua, Indian Finance Minister Arun Jaitley

DEATH TOLLS FROM MAJOR REGIONAL NATURAL DISASTERS

ALMOST 226,000+	73,000+	138,000+	8,500+
2004 Indian Ocean Tsunami*	2005 Pakistan Kashmir Earthquake	2008 Cyclone Nargis in Myanmar	2015 Nepal Earthquake

*most affected countries: Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand

Sources: UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction, Nepal Ministry of Home Affairs

1

      The first aim of China is to have access to energy. As a country, China is fully dependent on imports when it comes to energy policies. It is a well-known fact that the Indian Ocean is in a strategic position by the means of energy since " almost 40 % of the world's offshore petroleum is produced in the Indian Ocean."[2] As a country who has been importing more than half of its oil, China regards having control over the Indian Ocean as a beneficial aspiration.

      Secondly, the Chinese aim to strengthen their economic relations with the countries in the Indian Ocean. Having lost their dominant position for trade in the earlier history, nowadays China, as a nation that is economically growing day by day, aims to regain their important position as a country who has strong trade connections worldwide. As the Indian Ocean provides significant connections with many states economically and as it is also one of the main trading routes for certain goods today, one of the major ones being oil, China aspires to dominate the trade in the ocean.

      Thirdly, just like the first China aims to create a territory of regional cooperation in the region. The Chinese want to cooperate with other member states in the region in order to reach a multilateral consensus about the way of continuing trade and economic activities in the region while ensuring Chinese development as well as the sustainable development of the neighboring states.

---

[1] https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/competition-indian-ocean
[2] https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/competition-indian-ocean

Indian Interests and the Indian Strategy

Having observed that the Indian waters helped the United States to be a dominant and an important party in global politics and economy, as a state which has a "dream of being a leading power" India firstly believes controlling the region would simply help them achieve their dream. From the Indian point of view, throughout the history, excluding a short lasting period before the thirteenth century, the superior power of the Indian Ocean has been the Portuguese, the Dutch, the British, the French, basically every colonial country that wasn't even a neighbor to the region. Thus, for India it is simply logical to be the dominant party upon the Indian Ocean. According to the Indian Ministry of Defense, Indian security goes beyond their borders and also includes the Indian Ocean.

India's second interest, or rather strategy, is their "Look East" policy, which aims to dominate South Asia. This strategy consists of two stages, the first one is; being an active trade partner with countries in the South Asia and the second; going beyond South Asia to become a dominant power globally.

The last one of Indian interests/strategies is to take action against the Chinese policies in the region as according to an Indian point of view they pose a threat and many challenges.

Mutual Interests of these Parties

One of the most important aspects of the issue is the fact that both China and India have parallel aims which provide a common ground for collaboration. Both China and India want to have a stabilized Indian Ocean after the pacific era, both strive for sustainable development and both have to cover the security challenges that the region brings.

The fact that these parties are in a conflict is simply caused by their rivalry and the fact that they both aim to be the dominant power in the region. However, considering all the other challenges the region faces, which is explained in detail in the next section, while solving the conflict these common grounds should be used in order to leave rivalry behind to make both parties mutually fulfill their demands in the region.

Challenges of the Indian Ocean

Besides the ongoing conflict between India and China the Indian Ocean has also been challenged by these phenomenons:

1. Fisheries

   Fishing is one of the main economic activities in the region however due to environmental problems the world faces and the problem of overfishing both the food security in the region and the economy of the region is being threatened. In order to fully achieve sustainable development India and China have to cooperate and also in order to have a secure marine environment no conflict should be present in the region.

2. Disaster Relief

   With the current situation of climate change and environment, it is estimated that the Indian Ocean region will be challenged by many natural disasters. In past cases, both parties have shown efforts to help disaster relief but in order to prepare for the future disasters it is a *sine-qua-non* that the parties collaborate and cease their conflict.

3. Search and rescue

There have been flights that disappeared in the region and in these cases both parties try to help the search and rescue missions.

4. Piracy

In the recent years, as the activity of the pirates in the region increased. Both India and China independently engaged in anti-piracy policies .

MAJOR PARTIES INVOLVED

ASEAN

As ASEAN is an organization that consists of Asian member states both policies of the parties affect the ASEAN member states. India's "Look East" goal is simply achieved by becoming the dominant power in South Asia which means in order to achieve its goal India not only has to trade with almost all of the ASEAN member states but also has to dominate them. Similarly, Chinese economic policies also include collaborating with ASEAN member states in order to enhance its socio-economic and military presence in the Indian Ocean.

Bordering States: UAE, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Indonesia, Myanmar, Pakistan and Kuwait

Just like the ASEAN member states these bordering states are also included in both parties' strategies. Both countries aim to develop the region sustainably which can only be done via the development of the bordering states as well as a stronger connection with all these bordering states.

USA

For the United States of America, the conflict between India and China provides an opportunity to eliminate Chinese economic expansion. That is why the United States is trying to prevent the One Belt One Road policy by trying to ensure that there is no Chinese military presence in the region.

United Nations

Although the United Nations doesn't have many direct actions regarding the issue specifically the conflict, as it has many actions regarding sustainable development-the most outstanding one being the Sustainable Development Goals- and the challenges faced by the region like overfishing and piracy.

Additionally UN has the UNCLOS(United Nations Convention on Law of Sea) which is the core document for maritime issues and disputes and the Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace.

TIMELINE OF EVENTS

DATE	EVENT
18th century	The Indian Ocean was dominated by European colonial states.
1968	The British withdrew from the Suez Canal which was the first step for them leaving their dominant position in the Indian Ocean.
1971	The Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace
1982, December 10	The United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea was signed.
1991	India commenced implementing their "Look East" policy
2003, September 4	It was officially announced by the Indian government that they were in the second stage of the "Look East" policy.
2004, June 23	India documented the "Theory of India's Navy" which introduced the idea of building a nuclear deterrent capability on the Indian Ocean, and this situation was the sign that India aimed to control the Indian Ocean.

PREVIOUS ATTEMPTS TO RESOLVE THE ISSUE

Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace

This declaration, established in 1971, was released concerning the possible arms race in the Indian Ocean. It declares that there should be no military presence that can possess a threat like weapons of mass destruction in the region.

This declaration was the main document that regards the military issues in the region separately and additionally there has been many resolutions that were regarding its implementation.

RELEVANT UN DOCUMENTS AND TREATIES

UNCLOS (defines piracy, sets guidelines for fisheries, relevant in the sense that it outlines an approach for maritime disputes and also defines many terms regarding the issue):

https://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf

Declaration of the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace:

http://www.worldlii.org/int/other/UNGA/1971/74.pdf

POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS

A possible way of solving the issue could be creating an organization which would arrange and help the negotiations between China and India. This organization can also work with the United Nations Security Council in order to ensure both parties cooperate to cease the conflict and reach a consensus by encouraging the UNSC to impose sanctions if they are not willing to cooperate.

Additionally with the help of the United Nations Development Programme, a regional action plan for sustainable development can be established.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Author, G. (2018, May 25). The Great Game in the Indian Ocean: Strategic Partnership Opportunities for the U.S. Retrieved from http://cimsec.org/great-game-indian-ocean-strategic-partnership-opportunities-u-s/36590

2. Author, G. (2018, June 03). China's Rise and Indian Ocean Ambitions. Retrieved from http://cimsec.org/chinas-rise-indian-ocean-ambitions/36668

3. Chapter 2 China India Engagement in the Indian Ocean. (n.d.). Retrieved from https://www.springer.com/cda/content/document/cda_downloaddocument/9789811057250-c2.pdf?SGWID=0-0-45-1614139-p181018673

4. United Nations. (n.d.). UNCLOS. Retrieved from https://www.un.org/Depts/los/convention_agreements/texts/unclos/unclos_e.pdf

5. United Nations. (n.d.). Declaration on the Indian Ocean as a Zone of Peace. Retrieved from http://www.worldlii.org/int/other/UNGA/1971/74