

Sea Indian Ocean

Indian Ocean Strategic Studies – New York, USA



Mission

Indian Ocean is at the heart of international geo-politics. Some 80% of the world's maritime oil trade flows through three narrow passages of water, known as choke points, in the Indian Ocean. This includes the Strait of Hormuz—located between the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman—which provides the only sea passage from the Persian Gulf to the open ocean. Geo-Politically, the Indian Ocean is becoming a pivotal zone of strategic competition. It is also our belief that national security and human security issues as well as ecological and environmental concerns in the Indian Ocean region are linked to the state of individual, social, ethnic, cultural, linguistic, political, economic and collective rights of people in the region. This newsletter is therefore deeply committed to sharing ground realities, experiences, knowledge and global insights on peace, development and conflict resolution issues as well as the state of human rights and justice in the Indian Ocean region.

China holds its first meeting with 19 countries in Indian Ocean region without India

China held a meeting this week with 19 countries from the Indian Ocean region in which India was conspicuously absent.

The China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA), an organisation connected with the Chinese Foreign Ministry held a meeting of the China-Indian Ocean Region Forum on Development Cooperation on November 21, in which 19 countries took part, according to a press release issued by the organisation.

The meeting was held in a hybrid manner under the theme of “Shared Development: Theory and Practice from the Perspective of the Blue Economy” in Kunming, Yunnan Province, it said.

Representatives of 19 countries, including Indonesia, Pakistan, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Maldives, Nepal, Afghanistan, Iran, Oman, South Africa, Kenya, Mozambique, Tanzania, Seychelles, Madagascar, Mauritius, Djibouti, Australia and representatives of 3 international organisations were present, it said.

India was reportedly not invited, according to informed sources here. Last year, China held a meeting with some South Asian countries on COVID-19 vaccine cooperation without the participation of India. CIDCA is headed by Luo Zhaohui, the former Vice Foreign Minister and Ambassador to India.

According to the official website of the organisation, he is the Secretary of the CPC (the ruling Communist Party of China) Leadership Group of CIDCA. CIDCA's official website said the aims of the organisation is

to formulate strategic guidelines, plans and policies for foreign aid, coordinate and offer advice on major foreign aid issues, advance the country's reforms in matters involving foreign aid, and identify major programmes, supervise and evaluate their implementation.

During his tour of Sri Lanka in January this year, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi proposed to establish a “forum on the development of Indian Ocean Island Countries.”

When asked whether the CIDCA meeting is the same that is proposed by Wang, the Chinese Foreign Ministry here has clarified to the media that the November 21 meeting was not part of it.

At the November 21 meeting, China has proposed to establish a marine disaster prevention and mitigation cooperation mechanism between China and countries in the Indian Ocean region, the CIDCA press release said.

China is ready to provide necessary financial, material, and technical support to countries in need, it said.

China is vying for influence in the strategic Indian Ocean region with substantial investments in ports and infrastructure investments in several countries, including Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

While China has established a full-fledged naval base in Djibouti, its first outside the country, Beijing has acquired the Hambantota port in Sri Lanka on a 99-year lease besides building the port at Pakistan's Gwadar in the Arabian Sea opposite India's western coast besides infrastructure investments in the Maldives.

Two-day G20 Summit in Bali

World leaders from across the planet, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, US President Joe Biden, and Chinese President Xi Jinping, have converged in Indonesia, for the 17th Group of 20 (G20) Summit, taking place in the city of Bali.

The two-day summit starting Tuesday is themed “Recover Together, Recover Stronger” and focuses on global economic recovery, global health architecture, digital transformation, sustainable energy transition and climate change, among other topics. It will be held in person this year after being held virtually in 2020 with Saudi Arabia as the chair, and both online and of-line in 2021 with Italy as the chair.

For a detailed report see: <https://www.thestatesman.com/world/two-day-g20-summit-begins-today-in-bali-1503131090.html>

Rohingya refugees reach Indonesia’s Aceh

Rohingya refugees which was adrift for a month at sea has finally landed in Indonesia’s Aceh, VOA news reported on Monday citing the two rights groups that have been tracking the vessel.

The boat which reached Aceh, Indonesia on Monday afternoon had over 180 ethnic Rohingya men, women and children in it. More than a dozen are reportedly dead.

Moreover, on Sunday, a boat carrying 57 Rohingya men arrived in Aceh province, on the northern tip of Sumatra in the far west of the Indonesian archipelago. Notably, more than one million Rohingya people have

sought refuge in Bangladesh after fleeing persecution in neighbouring Myanmar.

For a detailed report see: <https://www.thestatesman.com/world/boat-adrift-at-sea-for-weeks-carrying-rohingya-refugees-reaches-indonesias-aceh-1503141420.html>

Sri Lanka defence budget 2023

Sri Lanka’s budget experts raised concerns over higher defence allocation in 2023 budget and said the move gives wrong signal on rationalizing the public spending.

President Ranil Wickremesinghe in his capacity as the finance minister presented 2023 budget in the parliament on Monday (14) which was expected to signal the policies needed to move out of the country’s economic crisis including hard reforms to satisfy the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to help approve an already agreed \$2.9 billion loan.

Wickremesinghe, who is also the defence minister, allocated 539 billion rupees for both defence and public security, while allocating 322 billion rupees for health and 232 billion for education, the budget document showed.

High defence budget comes when the country’s armed forces are not fighting any external or internal war. Wickremesinghe, however, allowed armed forces personnel, other than special categories, to retire after 18 years of service. The earlier duration for voluntary retirement was 22 years.

“The elephant in the room is defence. We are spending over 500 billion rupees to maintain the tri-

forces and police. That’s a huge amount of money,” Sujeeva Mudalige, the Chief Executive Officer at PricewaterhouseCoopers told a post-budget forum on Tuesday.

“It’s 13-years since the end of the conflict. I Think there needs to be a review on this. The quantum of defence doesn’t mean you are secure. If you take 10% of defence at 50 billion rupees to double Samuradhi or imagine health or education getting an additional 50 billion, what transformation will the country get?”

Since the final years of the war, Sri Lanka has always given the top priority to defence and the highest budget allocation had always been given to it because of a large number of armed and police forces, who were mainly recruited during the war.

However, the public have now started to raise questions about if high public resources allocation for the armed forces is rational as there is no war.

No politician has antagonized military leaders since the final stage of the war and the military personnel had been highly regarded by the general public despite international probe against their alleged human rights violations in the final stage of the war.

Military since the end of the war has been in forefront in rescue service during time of disasters.

For a detailed report see: <https://srilankabrief.org/sri-lanka-analysts-frown-upon-wickremesinghes-high-defence-budget/>



Britain, Mauritius and Chagos Islands

Britain is on the cusp of decolonising Mauritius – again. The first attempt at decolonisation took place in 1968 but went unfulfilled when London kept hold of an island group that had long been regarded as Mauritian territory: the Chagos Archipelago.

In recent years, the international community has handed down a clear and consistent view that Britain's occupation of the Chagos Islands is illegal. Now, London and Port Louis are engaged in talks over the future of the islands – the final act, perhaps, in the decolonisation of Mauritius.

Britain's foreign secretary, James Cleverly, has suggested that an agreement on the status of the Chagos Archipelago will come "by early next year".

But what might a settlement look like? The answer depends almost entirely on what can be agreed about the future of Diego Garcia, the largest island of the Chagos group. It's the site of a critical US military base that Britain has dutifully hosted for the past 50 years.

The case for full decolonisation

For a detailed report see: <https://theconversation.com/why-britain-should-immediately-withdraw-from-mauritius-chagos-islands-195830>

Establishing Balochistan govt in exile is biggest milestone : Naela Quadri Baloch

Naela Quadri Baloch, a senior leader of the Balochistan freedom movement who currently lives in exile in Canada, is a fearless fighter for the Baloch cause.

The former college professor and her husband, an independent filmmaker and human rights activist, were brutally tortured by the Pakistan government and the country's intelligence agencies.

But Naela is now busy lobbying to bring back full independence to Balochistan.

For a detailed report see: <https://www.thestatesman.com/world/establishing-balochistan-govt-in-exile-is-biggest-milestone-naela-quadri-baloch-1503141250.html>

Chinese spy ship spotted in Indian Ocean Region

Chinese spy ship 'Yuan Wang 5', known to be fitted with various tracking and surveillance devices, has entered the Indian Ocean Region, ahead of a plan by India for a likely test firing a long-range ballistic missile in the Bay of Bengal, people familiar with the development said on Tuesday. It is learnt that the Indian Navy is keeping an eye on the movement of the Chinese ballistic missile and satellite tracking ship.

The docking of the ship at Hambantota port in August had triggered a diplomatic row between India and Sri Lanka. There is no official comment on the reports of the presence of the spy ship in the Indian Ocean Region.

As per laid down protocol, India recently issued

For a detailed report see: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/chinese-spy-ship-spotted-in-indian-ocean-region/article-show/96034201.cms>

Strictly bilateral talks might not be the best way to resolve the Chagos dispute. The United States must be engaged in the process, too.

Indeed, finding a long-term agreement between Washington and Port Louis is complicated by Britain's persistent attempts to serve as an intermediary. Colonialism and illegality are hard to accommodate in diplomatic accords, after all.

Britain ought to announce the full and unconditional decolonisation of the territory as a backdrop to Mauritius and the United States discussing the issues that concern the two of them: basing rights, a status of forces agreement, and support for a resettled Chagosian community, to name three.

America's military is hosted by a diverse cast of national governments on every continent. Dealing with Mauritius should be no more difficult than negotiating with Australia, Poland, Saudi Arabia, or South Korea.

Either way, London has no constructive role to play in these discussions, which concern the territory's future rather than its past.

In an exclusive interview with IANS, she spoke about the trauma being faced by the people of Balochistan and how important it is for the people of Balochistan to get backing from the international community.

She also spoke about the love extended by the people of Balochistan to India.

Here are some of the excerpts from the online interview.

a NOTAM (Notice to Airmen/Notice to Air Missions) about a missile test.

It is not clear whether India will go ahead with the plan for the missile test in view of the presence of the Chinese spy ship.

According to experts, the Chinese vessel was last spotted in the Sunda Strait of Indonesia. The visit of the Chinese ship to the Indian Ocean comes amid increasing concerns over growing forays into the region by Chinese military and research vessels.

India is bolstering defence and security ties in the Indian Ocean with like-minded countries in the backdrop of concerns over China's growing forays into the region, considered the backyard of the Indian Navy.



HISTORY - ARCHIVES

China looks at amplifying its presence in Indian Ocean Region: Report

The China-Indian Ocean Region Forum on Development Cooperation can be perceived as another expansionist attempt by China to amplify its presence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) by investing in ports and infrastructure in the IOR countries, especially in South Asia, Mizzima News reported.

According to the report, against the backdrop of the recent setbacks that China faced in the region, including in Sri Lanka and Pakistan, the China-Indian Ocean Region Forum is a clear attempt by Beijing to reclaim some of the lost ground.

Luo Zhaohui, the chairman of the China International Development Cooperation Agency (CIDCA), said: “The Indian Ocean connects Asia, Africa, and Oceania and serves as an important window and route that connects China and other countries in the region to the rest of the world.”

Zhaohui, who is also the former Chinese Ambassador to India, said in order to grow the blue economy, China will strengthen cooperation with Indian Ocean countries and will advance the implementation of the Global Development Initiative in the region.

Representatives of 17 states and three international organisations attended the meeting virtually. Though Beijing claimed that India was invited to the forum, there were representatives from the country at the meeting.

For a detailed report see: <https://www.aninews.in/news/world/asia/china-looks-at-amplifying-its-presence-in-indian-ocean-region-report20221216222321/>

According to Mizzima News, the CIDCA, an official Chinese agency, hosted the forum along with the People’s Government of Yunnan province on November 21. It said the CIDCA seems to have been established with a view to counter the strong influence that India holds in the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA), an organisation with 23 member states.

China, which has an eye on the strategic benefits the IOR has to offer, has repeatedly said the Indian Ocean is not India’s ocean. The country is looking towards expanding its economic, military, and political influence in the region. the report said.

According to Mizzima News, dominating the region will not be an easy task for China as the US through a host of initiatives like the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework is seeking to closely integrate itself into the region.

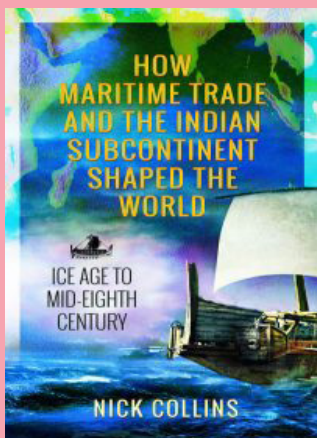
“So, clearly, China will need to rethink its approach of luring its neighbours and smaller countries in the region. The country will also have to also shed its hostile outlook when it comes to other actors in the region,” the report said.

Recently, Mizzima News reported that China continues with its ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) through Myanmar as only Myanmar could give it access to both the Indian Ocean and the Pacific to fend off the perceived encirclement of its borders.

BOOK REVIEW

How maritime trade in the Indian Ocean shaped the world

- Nick Collins



The book is based on huge reading and rare sources and with an attractive writing style, and full of fascinating sidelights illuminating the historical narrative, also citing an author with life-long experience in international shipping.

economic progress and global human contact. Trade and exchange of ideas have been at the heart of economic, social, political, cultural and religious life and maritime international law. However, the author, Nick Collins, explains that these claims are borne out by the history of maritime trade beginning in the Indian Ocean and connecting to Southeast Asia, Japan, the Americas, East Africa, the Middle East especially the Persian Gulf, the Mediterranean and Europe.

As a matter of fact, this development pre-dates the end of the Ice Age with world-wide flooding and led to the establishment of land-based civilisations in the above regions with particular effect on the Greek and Roman empires and even China’s ‘Celestial’ empire.

According to the book, world-wide maritime trade has been the essential driver of wealth-creation,

<https://safety4sea.com/cm-book-review-maritime-trade-in-indian-ocean/>

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