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INTERNATIONAL RELATION ISSUES AND VISION OF INDIA IN INDO-PACIFIC

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Abstract

In recent years, Indo-Pacific Region has experienced new vision and international relation issues of India, a big country in Asia region. This is new concept starting from Shinzo Abe in Japan and later, Donald Trump in USA.

China and India has 2 big countries in Asia and has shown strength and high competitiveness in Asia region.

By using qualitative, synthesis, historical and dialectical materialism methods, this papers aims to figure out vision and international relation issues of India, a big country in Indo-Pacific context.

INTRODUCTION

Seas, as well as oceans, are considered as living space, the source of life, and the future of mankind. During the recent era of globalization, governments have made maritime development strategy in order to exploit all benefits of the ocean resources. In several developing countries, the maritime development strategy is becoming one of the country's strategies for the sustainable development. Therefore, many countries and territories have achieved the high rate of economic growth. Besides, from a geopolitical perspective, ocean is also seen as "the key" for building power for national country, especially superpowers with global ambition of influence in world politics. Because of the Geographical Explorations of the 15th and 16th centuries, people had a certain understanding of the sea and the world. Portugal and Spain became the world's first sea powers in the between 16th century and 18th century. Then, there was competition against Portugal, Spain by Netherlands and France. Since the 18th century, Britain had established a naval hegemony after defeating Spanish and French. In the first half of the 19th century, The Pax Britannica was made possible by the basis of ruling the waves and keeping the peace while Britain's Royal Navy controlled most of

the key maritime trade routes¹ and enjoyed unchallenged sea power. In the 20th century, the major of superpowers were maritime superpowers such as United States, Russia, Japan, Britain, France, Germany and China. Moreover, these superpowers had better conditions to develop both economic power and military power.

It means that to become a superpower, the country must be “a maritime superpower” (Stavirdis, 2017) In this context, the developed countries has attempted to be the maritime superpowers and the oceans has become competitive battlegrounds. Meanwhile, maritime power is defined as the national defense strategy and country development strategy.

Currently, East Asia has 5 countries participating in G.20 including China, Japan, Korea, India and Indonesia. The world admired their miraculous economic achievements when NICs have successfully become “dragon” economies from the poor countries or underdeveloped countries after only 30 years while the similarly development in European capitalist countries took hundreds of years. The miraculous development of East Asian countries continued to be maintained in the 1990s of the 20th century. Other Asian countries such as Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia... are expected to “take off” in the future due to spectacular developments. The Financial Crisis of 2008 originating in the United States affected many countries, however, economies in East Asia still maintained the development.

Unlike China, India's rise has been welcomed by the world. India is also considered as a great power becoming “a maritime power” in the future with the coastal areas surrounded by India Ocean - one of the most important seas in the world. India approached and affirmed the importance of Indian Ocean Region in its development, thereby making India to be the most powerful influence in this area.² However, China's Naval Expansion in the Indian Ocean has threatened India's strategic interests in this ocean.

METHODOLOGY

We mainly use qualitative analysis: synthesis, analytical, inductive methods combined with explanatory methods.

We also use historical and dialectical materialism methods.

MAIN RESULTS

Challenges in Indo-Pacific Region from China

All of China's ambitions are described in the “String of Pearls” strategy³ by an effort to control the strategic maritime route from the Pacific Ocean through the Indian Ocean, and the vision towards a strategic project “One Belt, One Road” (OBOR). China's implementation of the "One Belt, One Road" initiative applied to both the Pacific and Indian Ocean has partly shown the ambition to impose a new colonial-style dominance with the largest Chinese presence in Africa.

In Indian Ocean, China also boosted its presence through the implementation of “String of Pearls” strategy by construction of harbors along the northern

Indian Ocean coast such as Gwadar port (Pakistan), Hambantota port (Sri Lanka), Chittagong port (Bangladesh). Through the “One Belt, One Road Initiative” (BRI), China has invested in the construction of road, rail and sea infrastructure to expand its influence in Central Asia, South Asia. As can be seen that the various levels of participation of many countries in “One Belt, One Road Initiative” show an increasing influence of China in the region. This situation raises doubts and concerns in many other countries, especially countries with territorial disputes and strategic competition with China like India.⁴

Besides, China is also building a “Blue-Water Navy” [In Chinese: 远洋海军; In Vietnamese: “Hải quân viễn dương” hoặc “lực lượng hải quân vùng biển khơi”], a maritime force capable of operating globally aiming to protect shipping routes and become a dominant force in Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean.

In 2014, China is simultaneously engaged in building its first overseas military base in Djibouti⁵. China is setting up another base in Gwadar (Pakistan). Moreover, it is clearly that China wants to implement a major strategic part to threaten India by China's investment in the construction of the deep-water ports in Indian Ocean coast and the establishment of naval bases in Gwadar (Pakistan), Djibouti. Another important factor is that China's growing naval presence in Indo-Pacific to counter India's dramatic rise, especially in the field of military.⁶

In order to create influence in two important strategic spaces, Pacific Ocean and Indian Ocean, China has also conducted relations with strategic allies in these two regions. In South Asia, China has boosted military ties with Pakistan to put directly pressure on the neighboring country - India, including nuclear and missile proliferation. In the Korean peninsula, China has neglected North Korea's nuclear program that is making indirectly advantages for Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in nuclear issue with South Korea, Japan, and the United States. Both Pakistan-China Strategic Engagement and China's strategy toward to the North Korean have exacerbated the security challenges in Indo-Pacific area.

DISCUSSION

India's Vision and Policy

The term "Indo-Pacific" is being used increasingly in global geopolitical and geo-strategic approaches in recent years. The term is sometimes known as the Indo-West Pacific, comprising the tropical waters of the Indian Ocean, the western and central Pacific Ocean, and the seas connecting two the regions of South East Asia. Therefore, Indo-Pacific space is not including the mild sea area and at the extreme in Indo-Pacific. Besides, tropical waters in the Eastern Pacific, along the Pacific coast of the Americas, are also other territorial waters. From the perspective of many scholars, especially Indian scholars, the “Indo-Pacific” region is used to refer to the territorial waters stretching from the coast of East Africa and West Asia, across Indian Ocean and West Pacific, to the coast of East Asia.⁷

The “Indo-Pacific” region has many different approaches depending on the country's perceptions of national strategic interests. However, in the most common way, “Indo-Pacific” region covers the entire Indian Ocean and East Asia region bordering Pacific Ocean. In the strong development of globalization, trade between countries has accelerated on the trend of “co-development” while sovereignty disputes related to the right to exploit resources on the oceans became the first concern of the great powers. This feature has affirmed the importance of freedom of navigation, ensuring global interests in foreign policy of nations, especially powers relating ocean.⁸ For instance, India, Japan, most of ASEAN countries has always the national interest in there because their trading depends on maritime routes for transporting goods. Therefore, freedom of navigation both Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean play an important role in these countries. Especially, the United States which is not located in this region clearly defines its great interests in this strategic region.

Actually, “Indo-Pacific” is not a new concept. This term which has rooted from geobiology means the tropical waters from the west coast of Indian Ocean to the west and mid-west of Pacific Ocean. Gurpreet S. Khurana, Executive Director of National Maritime Foundation in New Delhi (India), is considered as the first user of the term “Indo – Pacific” in the article published in 2007 with title: “Security of Sea Lines: Prospects for India-Japan Cooperation”. According Khurana, common interests and maritime interests of India and Japan could not reach if these countries have different strategic awareness (Khurana, 2007). Therefore, the term of “Indo – Pacific” was born as a new strategic vision in the open region linking the two important oceans of the world - Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean.

In fact, the concept of “Indo – Pacific” has been used frequently by high-ranking officials, politicians, strategic analysts and military leaders in several countries. In 2007, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe gave a speech to the Indian Parliament on “Confluence of the Two Seas”, where spoke of a “sea of freedom and of prosperity” in Asia. After that, the “Indo-Pacific” concept basing on comprehensive cooperation of these global strategic partners in the 21st century has been supported by Indian and Japanese politicians and scholars (Bhatia and Sakhuja, 2014).

In 2010, US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton used the term Indo - Pacific in a speaking in Honolulu: "Expanding our work with the Indian Navy in the Pacific, because we understand how important the Indian-Pacific basin is to global trade and commerce".⁹ This speaking had meaning of United States-India strategic convergence in the region. In 2012, Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh used the “Indo-Pacific” term during his speech at India-ASEAN Summit in New Delhi (India). The term extends the scope of Asia - Pacific and emphasize the development of India in the region.¹⁰ In this context, “Indo-Pacific” term became popular by Australia when this country released its Defense White Paper 2013-2016, which carried the first government articulation of “Indo-Pacific” concept of the important area in its security strategy (Common wealth, 2016).

CONCLUSION

The most obvious difference in the current India-United States relation is viewpoint of relativity. India insists on a “partner” but not an “ally”. Therefore, India is considered as a weakest link in “Quartet” – an alliance to fight China in Indo-Pacific due to Indian foreign policy of not aligning itself with any major powers. In the new context, India still appreciates ASEAN's role in connecting and maintaining stability of the Indo-Pacific region. Maintaining relations with ASEAN is still in the process of implementing India's “East Action” strategy.

Especially, India pursues a full involvement with China based on the belief that there is enough strategic space in Asia for both China and India by “win-win” formula. The simultaneous rise of the two great powers of India and China is a great development for region and the world in the future, therefore, India needs to have a wise behavior for these two rising countries. Accepting the concept of “Indo-Pacific” clearly shows India's intentions. However, these are just initial steps, India can be success or not depending on several factors while the major factor is China.

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