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## Ancient wisdom, modern waters: Reimagining India's maritime strategy for the Indo-pacific

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### Abstract

India's maritime strategy plays a pivotal role in securing its interests in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), especially amid increasing geopolitical rivalries. This paper examines India's current maritime policies, the challenges posed by great power competition, and proposes a unique, ancient wisdom-based approach through the Chakravayuha Naval Strategy. Inspired by the layered war formation from the Mahabharata, this strategy blends traditional Indian strategic thinking with modern tools like maritime diplomacy, surveillance, and defense technologies. Just like the original Chakravayuha had multiple levels of defense, this plan includes satellite and drone tracking, cyber protection, fast-response teams, and AI-powered systems. It promotes self-reliance, builds strong regional partnerships like QUAD+ and IONS, and focuses on smarter, team-based security instead of dominance. Rooted in India's civilizational ethos, it emphasizes transparency, power, strategy, and ethics, offering a dynamic alternative to China's String of Pearls. The paper also gives clear policy suggestions to help India lead in maritime safety while supporting the security of its neighbors.

**Keywords:** Chakravayuha, Indian ocean, security, maritime policy, defense, QUAD+, modern threats

### 1. Introduction

The Indian Ocean has quietly become one of the most important regions in global geopolitics today. It's more than just a stretch of water—it's a strategic hub that carries over 80% of the world's maritime oil trade and connects major economies across Asia, Africa, and beyond. Key shipping lanes and chokepoints like the Strait of Hormuz, the Strait of Malacca, and the Bab el-Mandeb make this region vital not only for commerce but also for global energy security (Brewster, 2014) <sup>[1]</sup>.

For India, this region isn't just about strategy—it's about legacy. With a coastline stretching over 7,500 kilometers and a rich maritime past that includes powerful naval forces like the Chola fleet and vibrant ancient ports such as Lothal and Muziris, India has always been connected to the ocean. Today, this legacy translates into strategic ambitions. By promoting initiatives such as SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative, India seeks to position itself as a reliable regional leader and a primary contributor to security and stability in the Indian Ocean Region. However, things are getting more complex. China is rapidly expanding its naval presence in the region through initiatives like the "String of Pearls," while powers like the United States, France, and the UK are also increasing their maritime engagement. This has turned the Indian Ocean into a space of growing great power rivalry, making it even more important for India to reassess and strengthen its maritime strategy.

Beyond just analyzing India's current maritime framework and the challenges it faces, this paper introduces a new idea—the Chakravayuha Naval Strategy, inspired by the ancient Indian epic, the Mahabharata. The Chakravayuha, known for its intricate, multi-tiered battle formation in ancient Indian warfare, serves as both a symbolic and functional framework for shaping a contemporary Indian maritime doctrine. By combining India's civilizational heritage with strategic foresight, this paper explores how India can carve out a unique, multidimensional approach to secure the Indian Ocean in an era of shifting alliances and intensifying competition.

### 2. India's current maritime security framework

As geopolitical dynamics intensify across the Indo-Pacific, India has taken several decisive

steps to modernize and expand its maritime security framework. This framework spans from doctrines and policy blueprints to institutional structures, surveillance capabilities, and multilateral partnerships. Together, they form a robust but evolving maritime ecosystem aimed at safeguarding India's interests across the region and beyond. India's maritime vision is shaped by a series of policy documents and initiatives that outline both its strategic goals and the means to achieve them. The Indian Maritime Doctrine, originally published in 2004 and subsequently updated in 2009 and 2015, serves as one of the key foundational documents. This doctrine serves as a conceptual guide for maritime operations and emphasizes the importance of sea control, sea denial, and power projection in safeguarding India's strategic interests (Indian Navy, 2015) <sup>[2]</sup>. The doctrine underlines that India's maritime influence extends far beyond its coastline-reaching into the Persian Gulf, the Malacca Strait, and even the Western Pacific. Complementing the doctrine is the Maritime Security Strategy (Ensuring Secure Seas) released in 2015. This strategy lays out a comprehensive plan for enhancing India's maritime security by focusing on coastal defense, maritime domain awareness, blue economy, and regional partnerships (Ministry of Defence, 2015) <sup>[3]</sup>. It moves away from a purely military-centric approach and instead highlights the need for integrated civil-military cooperation to protect India's economic and strategic interests.

India launched the SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) initiative in 2015 to strengthen its role and expand its influence as a regional leader in the Indian Ocean Region. SAGAR is India's geopolitical vision for the Indian Ocean, which combines security cooperation, capacity building, and economic connectivity with the IOR littoral states. SAGAR underscores India's dedication to ensuring regional maritime stability and acting as a "net security provider." In 2019, India further advanced its strategic vision by launching the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) to boost collaborative maritime efforts across the Indo-Pacific. While SAGAR is primarily IOR-focused, IPOI extends India's strategic interests into the wider Indo-Pacific, promoting open, inclusive, and rules-based maritime cooperation. Its focus areas include maritime security, disaster risk reduction, capacity building, and sustainable use of marine resources.

India's maritime strategy is operationalized by a wide range of institutions and security forces working across different layers of the maritime domain. At the heart of India's naval power lies the Indian Navy, a modern, three-dimensional force capable of blue-water operations. It is structured into three major commands-Western, Eastern, and Southern Naval Commands-with the Western Command traditionally holding the strategic edge due to its proximity to the Arabian Sea. The Navy operates aircraft carriers, submarines, destroyers, frigates, and maritime patrol aircraft, with an increasing focus on indigenization and self-reliance under the "Make in India" initiative. Recent advancements include the commissioning of INS Vikrant, India's first indigenous aircraft carrier, and an expanding fleet of submarines under the Project 75I program.

Alongside the Navy, the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) plays a critical role in ensuring coastal and offshore security. With a fleet of patrol vessels, hovercraft, and surveillance aircraft, the ICG focuses on law enforcement, anti-smuggling operations, search and rescue, and environmental protection.

The Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) and marine police units of coastal states are also key actors in India's multi-layered coastal security network.

Recognizing the need for real-time situational awareness, India has significantly ramped up its Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) capabilities. One major step in this direction is the establishment of the Information Fusion Centre-Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR) in Gurugram, which facilitates information sharing with partner nations and enhances collective maritime security. In a similar effort, the National Command Control Communication and Intelligence (NC3I) network integrates 51 naval and coastal radar stations to deliver real-time monitoring of maritime movements across the region.

India's approach to maritime security is closely linked with its diplomatic efforts in the region. India strongly values its principle of strategic autonomy, which reflects its preference to avoid alignment with any one bloc amidst intensifying U.S.-China rivalries. This nuanced stance allows India to engage cooperatively with multiple global powers while preserving its independent foreign policy orientation (Mohan, 2012) <sup>[4]</sup>. Over the past decade, India has actively built and participated in a range of bilateral and multilateral maritime frameworks. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD)-involving India, the United States, Japan, and Australia-has become central to India's Indo-Pacific engagement. While not a formal military alliance, QUAD facilitates naval cooperation, strategic dialogue, and shared action on challenges like freedom of navigation, undersea security, and maritime law enforcement. India also plays a leading role in the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS), which brings together navies from across the IOR to foster cooperation, capacity-building, and mutual understanding. Additionally, India's engagement with BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) connects it to regional economies like Thailand, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh, offering a maritime bridge between South and Southeast Asia. Collaborative naval drills enhance India's operational readiness and foster greater interoperability with partner navies. The MALABAR exercise (with the U.S., Japan, and Australia), VARUNA (with France), AUSINDEX (with Australia), and bilateral exercises like SIMBEX (with Singapore) not only enhance India's operational capabilities but also signal its commitment to regional security architectures. These engagements collectively reinforce India's image as a credible and capable maritime partner, willing to work with others to ensure peace and stability in the region.

### 3. Key threats and challenges in the Indian ocean region (IOR)

The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is rapidly becoming a complex and contested strategic space. It connects key trade routes, energy supplies, and economic centers. But this region also faces many security threats that affect not just India but many other countries. These threats come from rivalries between big powers, illegal activities at sea, natural risks, and India's own internal challenges.

One of the biggest concerns in the Indian Ocean is the growing competition between global powers-especially China and the United States. China has been developing ports and naval bases across the region in places like Djibouti, Gwadar (Pakistan), and Sri Lanka. These projects, often called the "String of Pearls," are part of China's plan

to strengthen its presence in the region (Brewster, 2014) <sup>[1]</sup>. While China claims these are for trade, they also help its Navy move and operate in the Indian Ocean. At the same time, the United States has a strong naval presence here, especially through its Fifth Fleet in Bahrain. The U.S. has been working closely with countries like India, Australia, and Japan through the Quad group to balance China's growing power. European countries like France and the UK are also active, as they have territories and security interests in the region. For India, this strategic crowding raises concerns about losing initiative and space in its immediate neighborhood, which it traditionally considered within its sphere of influence.

Even with modern technology, older threats like piracy, smuggling, and naval confrontations still exist. Pirates, especially near Somalia, continue to attack ships, though not as frequently as before (Murphy, 2009) <sup>[5]</sup>. Armed groups often use sea routes to move weapons, which is a big security risk. India and other countries have had to deal with situations where ships enter disputed waters, sometimes leading to tension between navies. These threats remind us that the ocean is still a place where illegal and risky activities happen regularly.

Newer, less visible threats are also becoming serious. One of the biggest is climate change. Rising sea levels and stronger storms threaten small island nations like the Maldives and Mauritius. These changes also impact fishing, trade, and the livelihoods of millions who live near the coast. Illegal fishing, especially by large foreign fleets, is another growing concern. It takes away income from local fishermen and harms the ocean's ecosystem. Other serious problems include drug trafficking and terrorism by sea, especially in areas with weak law enforcement. The Indian Ocean also has several choke points-narrow areas like the Straits of Hormuz and Malacca-that are extremely important for global shipping. If something goes wrong in these areas, like a conflict or blockage, it could affect oil prices and global trade (Kaplan, 2010) <sup>[6]</sup>.

Although India is building up its Navy and improving maritime infrastructure, it still faces many challenges. First, India has limited resources and technology gaps. Its naval ships, submarines, and surveillance systems are growing, but still not enough to cover the entire region effectively (Holmes, Winner & Yoshihara, 2009) <sup>[7]</sup>. Second, India is dealing with too many security demands at once-border tensions with China, managing relations in the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal, and helping with disaster response. This puts a lot of pressure on its resources. Third, China's Maritime Silk Road-a part of its Belt and Road Initiative-offers infrastructure loans to smaller Indian Ocean countries. But many of these countries end up owing large debts to China. Sri Lanka, for example, had to hand over the Hambantota port to a Chinese company after failing to repay its loan (Hurley, Morris, & Portelance, 2018) <sup>[8]</sup>. This kind of strategy allows China to gain long-term control over key maritime locations, which India finds deeply worrying.

#### **4. The Chakravyuha naval strategy: A Civilisational naval doctrine**

As India navigates the increasingly complex waters of the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), it requires not only robust maritime infrastructure but also a guiding doctrine rooted in both strategic clarity and cultural depth. Drawing inspiration from the ancient Indian epic, the Mahabharata, the Chakravyuha Naval Strategy presents a layered approach to

maritime security and engagement. This strategy envisions India's maritime doctrine as a concentric formation-symbolizing defence, deterrence, diplomacy, and dharma-all functioning in a unified system to secure India's maritime interests.

#### **4.1. Symbolism and Structure**

The Chakravyuha was a famous battle formation in the Mahabharata, built like a spiral or maze. In today's context, it becomes a powerful metaphor for India's maritime thinking: a strategic, layered system of defense and engagement.

##### **4.1.1. Outer Ring - Blue Water Projection**

The outermost layer is where India shows its presence on the high seas-far beyond its shores. It's about projecting power, building trust with partners, and keeping threats at bay. India has built strong relationships through naval exercises like MALABAR (with the U.S., Japan, and Australia), VARUNA (with France), and AUSINDEX (with Australia) (Holmes, Winner & Yoshihara, 2009) <sup>[7]</sup>. It's also setting up logistical bases in places like Oman and Seychelles to support its ships far from home (Brewster, 2014) <sup>[1]</sup>. This "outer ring" helps India to watch over crucial sea routes and respond quickly to emergencies.

##### **4.1.2. Middle Ring - Regional Deterrence**

The middle layer focuses on India's immediate neighborhood-the Indian Ocean and nearby countries. India is using its geography smartly here. India's island territories, such as the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep, serve as crucial strategic outposts near the Strait of Malacca and the Arabian Sea. It's also part of regional networks like IONS (Indian Ocean Naval Symposium) and the QUAD, where like-minded countries work together on maritime issues. This layer is all about deterrence: sending a clear signal that India is alert and ready.

##### **4.1.3. Inner Ring - Coastal Defense**

The innermost layer protects the homeland-India's coastline, ports, and maritime infrastructure. It includes coastal police, the Indian Coast Guard, and high-tech systems like IFC-IOR and the NC3I network, which keep an eye on ship movements and alert authorities to unusual activity. Cybersecurity, submarine cables, and port safety are also a big part of this layer. It's the shield that guards India's economic and digital gateways.

#### **4.2. Strategic Principles**

What makes the Chakravyuha strategy more than just a military framework is the values and principles behind it-drawn from India's civilizational wisdom. These principles shape not just what India does at sea, but how and why it does it. The Chakravyuha strategy is guided by four ancient yet adaptable Vyuhas, or strategic formations, each reflecting a core principle of civilizational Indian statecraft. These principles integrate modern strategic thinking with India's rich philosophical and ethical traditions.

##### **4.2.1 Surya-Vyuha - Enlightenment**

This principle emphasizes transparency and clarity in India's maritime partnerships and operations. India champions a rules-based maritime order, promotes freedom of navigation, and insists on respect for sovereignty and

international maritime law. Initiatives like the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI) reflect this approach by encouraging inclusive, cooperative mechanisms in the region.

**4.2.2. Shakti-Vyuha - Power**

India’s ability to deter threats and respond swiftly to crises is rooted in hard power capability. This includes maintaining a blue-water navy, upgrading aircraft carriers, nuclear submarines, and multi-role warships. It also covers India’s growing role in Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) operations, as seen in missions like Operation Samudra Setu and aid provided during cyclones and oil spills.

**4.2.3 Yukti-Vyuha - Strategy**

This layer reflects the art of blending diplomacy with defence. It is not enough to have military might-India also deploys diplomatic tools to build regional confidence. Engagement through forums like BIMSTEC, IORA, and regional dialogues helps India reinforce its status as a net security provider. Maritime diplomacy, naval goodwill visits, and port calls act as strategic tools to enhance influence.

**4.2.4. Dharma-Vyuha - Ethics**

Finally, India’s maritime doctrine is rooted in moral responsibility and civilizational ethics. Respect for international maritime law, environmental protection, and humanitarian outreach form the ethical spine of India’s maritime engagement. Whether it’s helping climate-vulnerable island nations or providing COVID-19 relief through vaccine diplomacy, India’s actions reflect a maritime dharma aligned with peace and cooperation.

**4.3. Operational Application**

The Chakravyuha Naval Strategy draws inspiration from the legendary multi-layered military formation described in the Mahabharata. It applies the concept of concentric defensive circles to modern naval defense, integrating surveillance, deterrence, direct engagement, and diplomatic maneuvers to safeguard India’s maritime interests.



**4.3.1. Multi-Layered Maritime Defense: Seeing, Stopping, Responding**

A key feature of this strategy is the establishment of a multi-layered defense system. The outermost layer consists of satellite and drone-based surveillance across the Indian Ocean Region (IOR), ensuring real-time tracking of adversarial movements. The middle layer comprises forward operating bases and naval fleets stationed at critical choke points, such as the Strait of Malacca and the Sunda Strait, to enhance India's strategic positioning. The innermost layer is dedicated to rapid response forces, coastal defenses, and cyber command integration, ensuring immediate reaction capabilities against any direct threats.

- **Strategic Choke Points: Turning Geography into an Advantage:** India’s location is one of its greatest strengths. The Andaman & Nicobar Islands, for instance, sit close to the Strait of Malacca—a key route for global shipping. The Chakravyuha strategy smartly turns these chokepoints into "trapping zones" where India can limit the movement of rival navies. Alongside traditional power, India may use modern tactics like electronic warfare and misinformation to confuse and deter potential threats before they grow serious. By managing these vital routes, India maintains both maritime control and strategic leverage over the region.
- **Diplomatic Chakravyuha: Partnerships with a Purpose:** India’s strategy isn’t just about ships and submarines—it’s also about strong partnerships and smart diplomacy. India works with multiple regional and global alliances like the Quad (with the U.S., Japan, and Australia), ASEAN, and other IOR nations. However, it avoids relying on just one power, keeping its strategic autonomy intact (Mohan, 2012) <sup>[4]</sup>. India also supports the capacity-building of smaller navies in the region—providing training, equipment, and humanitarian aid. This builds trust and creates a wider web of regional security, where everyone benefits from shared safety and cooperation.
- **Exit and Recovery: Preparing for the Unknown:** Recognizing the unpredictability of naval warfare, the strategy incorporates contingency planning for Indian naval assets. Even the best plans can face setbacks. That’s why the Chakravyuha strategy includes contingency planning. If things don’t go as expected, the Indian Navy may have fallback routes and backup logistics, ensuring that troops and ships can retreat, regroup, and return stronger. India also invests in better ports, naval infrastructure, and supply chains to keep operations running smoothly, even during prolonged missions or emergencies. This emphasis on resilience and flexibility reflects a mature approach to maritime security—one that prepares not only to fight, but to adapt, recover, and endure.

**4.3.2. Detailed Conceptual Framework of the Chakravyuha Naval Strategy**

Manifestation (Identifying the Threat Landscape) - The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is full of security challenges from both countries and terror groups. China's 'String of Pearls' approach, which involves developing strategic ports and facilities from Djibouti to Gwadar, poses a challenge to India's regional influence. Modern threats now also include cyberattacks, spying, and economic pressure. Pirates, smugglers, and climate risks like rising seas only make things messier (Mohan, 2012) <sup>[4]</sup>.

**Description (Chakravyuha Structure in Naval Strategy) -** The Chakravyuha Naval Strategy is structured into three concentric layers, each fulfilling distinct defensive and offensive roles. The outer layer emphasizes surveillance and intelligence gathering, using satellite-based tracking, drone reconnaissance, and electronic warfare to detect potential threats. The middle layer is responsible for proactive defense and deception, deploying rapid-response fleets, decoy operations, and misinformation campaigns to mislead enemy forces. The inner layer is dedicated to direct conflict engagement, utilizing naval strike groups, missile defense systems, and amphibious warfare units to neutralize threats effectively.

**Prediction (Anticipating Threats Using Data-Driven Models) -** A crucial aspect of the strategy is the integration of AI-driven maritime surveillance through advanced reconnaissance platforms such as RISAT satellites and P-8I Poseidon aircraft. These assets provide real-time tracking and intelligence on enemy movements. Predictive modeling has to be employed to analyze adversarial fleet patterns, enabling proactive countermeasures. Additionally, simulated cyber-warfare exercises are conducted to bolster India's maritime cybersecurity infrastructure, ensuring resilience against digital threats.

**Investigation (Data Analysis & Threat Assessment) -** Continuous assessment of naval threats is conducted through the analysis of regional conflicts, tracking Chinese naval deployments, and evaluating QUAD responses. Maritime security audits should be carried out to fortify India's naval bases against conventional and cyber threats, ensuring the integrity of maritime defense mechanisms.

**Determination (Strategic Resource Allocation) -** Strategic resource allocation plays a crucial role in maintaining naval superiority. This involves budgetary planning for naval expansion, acquiring advanced technologies such as hypersonic missiles and AI-driven submarines, and securing control over key maritime trade routes, particularly the Malacca, Sunda, and Lombok Straits.

**Diagnosis (Assessing Naval Vulnerabilities) -** Identifying vulnerabilities in India's coastal defenses is a priority, with a special focus on the Andaman & Nicobar and Lakshadweep islands, which serve as strategic outposts. Cyber command centers should be reinforced to counter digital threats, while asymmetric warfare tactics used by adversaries should be analyzed to enhance India's preparedness against

unconventional threats.

**Verification (Testing & Simulations) -** Naval readiness is ensured through different exercises with QUAD and ASEAN allies, AI-driven naval combat simulations, and cybersecurity stress tests. These simulations help refine response mechanisms, ensuring India's naval forces remain agile and combat-ready in the face of evolving threats.

**Treatment (Implementing Countermeasures) -** The Chakravyuha strategy incorporates various countermeasures, including the deployment of stealth warships, AI-guided torpedoes, and decoy fleets designed to mislead enemy intelligence. Expanding indigenous shipbuilding capabilities, particularly through projects like the INS Vikrant-class aircraft carriers, strengthens India's self-reliance in naval defense and warfare (Ministry of Defence, 2023) <sup>[9]</sup>.

**Reinforcement (Strengthening Maritime Alliances) -** To enhance regional security, India actively seeks to expand QUAD+ by incorporating ASEAN nations. Bilateral naval exercises with Gulf and African nations further strengthen maritime cooperation. Additionally, strategic basing agreements with Mauritius, Seychelles, and Indonesia extend India's operational reach, reinforcing its presence in the IOR.

**Progress (Evaluating the Strategy's Effectiveness) -** Periodic assessments of naval capabilities should be conducted to measure the effectiveness of the strategy. Feedback loops from ongoing naval operations provide insights for continuous improvement. Cyber and electronic warfare units should undergo regular upgrades to ensure they remain at the cutting edge of modern naval warfare.

**Tracking (Continuous Monitoring & Adaptation) -** The final component of the Chakravyuha Naval Strategy involves 24/7 satellite-based maritime tracking, AI-automated threat detection, and real-time fleet movement updates. Quick-response protocols ensure constant vigilance, allowing India's naval forces to swiftly counter emerging threats. This dynamic approach ensures that India's maritime defense remains adaptive, resilient, and strategically superior in the evolving geopolitical landscape.

The Chakravyuha Naval Strategy is India's ticket to owning the IOR's future. Its layered setup and proactive steps turn threats into challenges India can handle, all while staying true to its strategic roots.

**Table 1:** Beyond Bases: How India's Chakravyuha Strategy Outpaces China's Naval Network

Feature	Chakravyuha Naval Strategy	String of Pearls	Why Chakravyuha Naval Strategy is More Effective
Defensive Depth	Multi-layered, deception driven	Base-centric	Provides flexible, depth-based responses instead of static, vulnerable outposts
Strategic Reach	AI-driven maritime zones	Physical naval bases	Covers vast areas with less infrastructure
Allied Support	QUAD+, IONS partnerships	Bilateral China centric alliances	Builds trust-based, multilateral support, reducing dependency on single allies
Cyber Warfare	AI-driven naval defense	Limited cyber integration	Better prepared for future digital threats
Surveillance Capability	Satellite + Drone + AI-based monitoring	Port-based monitoring systems	Ensures real-time threat detection across IOR
Ethical Engagement	Law of the seas, humanitarian aid	Strategic interests-based outreach	Promotes rules-based order, gaining international legitimacy
Operational Flexibility	Flexible, mobile naval units with fallback plans	Rigid, fixed base structure	Allows rapid adaptation to threats
Environmental Sensitivity	Sustainable and secure maritime practices	Negligible emphasis	Aligns with global green goals, improving soft power appeal
Information Warfare	Strategic deception and digital operations	Primarily conventional presence	Capable of shaping narratives and confusing adversaries effectively
Diplomatic Integration	Integrates regional diplomacy with defense	Primarily economic and bilateral influence	Strengthens strategic ties without dependency

## 5. Policy Recommendations

India should formally include the Chakravyuha Strategy in its naval plans and policies. This would help guide the Navy in future planning, training, and operations, especially in handling modern security threats. India needs more access points across the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). By signing logistics agreements with countries like Mauritius, Seychelles, and Indonesia, Indian ships can refuel and restock more easily during long missions. India needs more access points across the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Logistics agreements-like the ones with the U.S. or France-let India's navy use foreign ports for fuel, repairs, or supplies without setting up full bases (Brewster, 2018) <sup>[10]</sup>. By signing logistics agreements with countries like Mauritius, Seychelles, and Indonesia, Indian ships can refuel and restock more easily during long missions. India should work to include smaller IOR countries (like Maldives and Sri Lanka) in its security group with the US, Japan, and Australia (QUAD). These countries are right in the ocean's heart, and they're often caught between India and China's tug-of-war (Mohan, 2012) <sup>[4]</sup>. This would make the alliance stronger and more balanced in the region.

India should focus on building its own advanced tools for deep-sea operations and maritime cybersecurity. This would reduce dependence on foreign technology and boost national security. While initiatives like the Defence Research and Development Organisation's (DRDO) autonomous underwater vehicle projects mark a promising beginning, there is a need to accelerate progress. Strategic partnerships with private sector firms could enhance the pace and scale of innovation in this domain. Equally critical is the advancement of cyber-maritime technologies. As ports, naval assets, and undersea communication cables become frequent targets of cyber intrusions, India must invest in artificial intelligence systems capable of detecting and responding to such threats in real time. Training a dedicated cadre of "cyber sailors" equipped to manage and respond to digital warfare scenarios is also imperative.

India can become a regional leader by helping small island countries improve their coast guard and naval capabilities. This promotes friendship and creates a safer, more stable Indian Ocean region for everyone. This isn't just about being kind-it's a smart move. When India helps its neighbors build stronger navies, it makes the whole Indian Ocean Region (IOR) safer for everyone. It also helps these countries stay closer to India, rather than relying on China for support. It's like helping your neighbor fix their fence so the whole street stays safe and friendly.

## 6. Conclusion

India's position in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is not merely a matter of geography but a reflection of its growing responsibility and leadership in maintaining regional security. As geopolitical rivalries intensify, particularly with China's assertive maritime posturing through the String of Pearls strategy, it has become essential for India to adopt a more dynamic and layered maritime defense strategy. The Chakravyuha Naval Strategy, inspired by ancient Indian wisdom from the Mahabharata, presents a modern, multi-dimensional framework that combines traditional strategic principles with advanced technological tools. Unlike conventional naval doctrines, Chakravyuha offers a multi-tiered defense structure-integrating satellite and drone surveillance, AI-driven threat detection, cyber maritime command, and forward-operating naval units. This

comprehensive approach enhances India's capability to detect, deter, and neutralize threats well before they reach its shores. By strengthening alliances such as QUAD+ and fostering regional capacity-building with smaller IOR states, India also positions itself as a maritime security provider rather than merely a participant. Furthermore, investing in indigenous technologies like autonomous underwater vehicles, AI-guided surveillance systems, and cyber-resilient naval platforms reduces India's dependency on foreign systems, thereby reinforcing strategic autonomy and long-term sustainability. The strategy also ensures that India's naval doctrine remains adaptive and future-ready by incorporating regular war-gaming simulations, feedback mechanisms, and real-time maritime data analytics.

In essence, the Chakravyuha Strategy represents a paradigm shift from reactive defense to proactive deterrence-where India not only safeguards its national interests but also contributes to the collective stability of the Indian Ocean. It acknowledges that a strong and technologically empowered navy, guided by timeless strategic thinking, is essential in navigating the turbulent waters of 21st-century maritime geopolitics.

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