

The conflict between China and Taiwan again came into the limelight as Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan on 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2022. China retaliated by announcing its most extensive air and sea military exercises near Taiwan. It will be a significant strategic loss for India if China invades Taiwan. In his book *Monsoon*, Robert Kaplan argues that for China to increase its military presence in the Indian Ocean, it needs to take control of Taiwan, which is why China is desperate to get Taiwan. Desperation can be seen as China made 969 incursions in Taiwan's Air Defence Identification Zone in 2021. Moreover, in the first five months of 2022, Taiwan reported 465 incursions by China. As China is engaging militarily near Taiwan, its military resources are focused near Taiwan, which brings India in an advantageous position. It means a lesser Chinese military is present in the Indian Ocean that challenges Indian security interests. Therefore, a high Chinese military presence near Taiwan is beneficial for India's security interests; however, China's successful invasion of Taiwan would bring security challenges for India as it will shift China's military presence to the Indian Ocean.

Why does China want to be present in the Indian Ocean? China aspires to break the US hegemony in the world by prospering economically and militarily. The Indian Ocean is the centre pillar if China wishes to continue thriving economically. Therefore, it is a pivotal region to contain China by India and the US from becoming a global power. To reach the Indian Ocean, China has to pass a narrow strait called the Strait of Malacca, which creates a dilemma for China. More than 60% of China's exports and 70% of China's oil imports move through the Indian Ocean through the Strait of Malacca.



Image source: Reuters

In the book *Leveraging high-technology developments in the Chinese military and maritime domains*, Captain Kamlesh Kumar Agnihotri argues that China's indigenous technology is about 2.5 times more advanced than Indian technology in the military domain. The Chinese navy is far superior to the Indian navy in resources and logistics. India must develop its navy till the time China engages with Taiwan to protect its security interest in its neighbourhood. India would be unable to contain China in the Indian Ocean if China successfully invades Taiwan today. Relying on India's Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) to fulfil its security interests may not be able to achieve India's security interests. The QUAD, led by India, the US, Australia and Japan, has not become a military alliance.

China bringing the military into Chinese-built infrastructures in the Indian Ocean also raise security concerns for India. It happened when China had a heavy presence in the South China Sea. In April 2021, Sri Lanka discovered radioactive material on a Chinese naval vessel anchored at Southern Hambantota Port. Also, in 2021, the US intelligence agencies

found that China was secretly building a military facility at the Khalifa port of UAE, as *The Wall Street Journal* (Lubold, 2021). These activities by China are likely to increase further if they conquer Taiwan. Chinese actions to get different routes to access the Indian Ocean can be seen through China-Pakistan Economic Corridor or Rail and Road network from China to Myanmar that gives China direct access to the Indian Ocean. China has successfully carried a freight run from Yangon Port in Myanmar to China's Yunnan province (Chaudhury, 2022).

### Citations

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