

## The Contemporary Strategic Competition: Barriers and Opportunities for USA

Muhammad Irfan<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

---

Maintaining dominance in the contemporary strategic competition is the most important policy objective that US seeks to achieve. This can be achieved if Washington ensures its control in the littoral regions of the Indian Ocean and contains the Chinese influence in the said regions. Accordingly, the strategic competition between China and US takes place in the Indian Ocean. Therefore, the issue is of significant importance. The paper is divided into main three portions. The view of theoretical perspective deals with concepts of strategic competition and the venue where the competition goes on. It covers the main players of the competition, China and USA respectively. The second portion explains the barriers that USA has to overcome in quest of dominating the competition. These include hostile relations with Iran, withdrawal from Afghanistan, China's growing influence and North Korea's Military threat. The third section includes the opportunities that USA can employ in pursuit of dominating the international affairs. These consist of strategy of containment, strategic partnership, increased naval preparations and international protocols and alliance. The analytical methodology is used in preparing the paper.

---

**Keywords:** Strategic competition, Geo-politics, Sea Lines of Communication, Energy Security, String of Pearls

### Introduction

On the matter of international politics, it is argued that the global dominance is the realistic approach to ensure the national security. Only those can share the world power, which control the important geographical regions in the world. In the contemporary era, the economic goals are the integral part of the global geo-politics.

---

<sup>1</sup> The Author is a junior scholar, researcher and columnist. He has completed M.Sc, M.Phil (QAU) and M.A(PU). He also pursues Ph.D. The areas of his interests include International Order, Strategic Issues, dynamics of national power politics and Islamic political and economic Thoughts. Email: [muhammad.irfanmalik.irfan@gmail.com](mailto:muhammad.irfanmalik.irfan@gmail.com)

The energy resources formulate these geo-economic goals of every nation, which it tries to ensure.

The efforts are being globally made to ensure energy security that simply means the ensured supply of energy. Ultimately, the regions, rich in these resources, are much important for the rest of the world. In these regions, the great powers are in clash of interests due to scarcity of resources on one hand and pursuit of maximum power on the other. The Middle Eastern states are laden in the said resources.

The largest exploration and extraction projects of the energy resources are carried out in this region. Saudi Arabia is the largest oil producer in the world. The supply of these resources through the maritime lanes passing through the Indian Ocean and its tributary Seas to the rest of the world gets impetus in the contemporary era.

Similarly, the African countries and the Central Asian Republics are the second largest regions, rich in oil and gas. In the struggle of importing energy resources, the great powers remain at the top due to the huge industrial complexes, the giant machines and the largest populations.

China and USA are much keen in the import of these resources. That is why they involve in the strategic competition for serving their respective strategic interests. Under such scenario, they compete at the political, diplomatic, economic and military spheres. Therefore, the research paper, "The Contemporary Strategic Competition: Barriers and Opportunities for USA" is of significant importance in the contemporary international relations research.

### **An Overview of the Strategic Competition**

Since the contemporary era of human geo-political history begins in 1991, the strategic competition has taken place between USA and China. The strategic competition refers to a state of international relations when the global powers strive to maximize their economic, political and military interests and minimize these interests of the rival in the international system.

This competition in all features is going on in the surrounding regions of the Indian Ocean.

Robert D. Kaplan maintains, "The Indian Ocean will be where global power dynamics will be revealed. Together with contiguous near east and central Asia, it constitutes the new great games in geo-politics."<sup>2</sup>

The struggle for ensuring the national gains between Washington and Beijing in the abovementioned regions has many reasons. In fact, China appears as the second largest economic power in the world. It has vastly growing economy. It has emerged as the second prominent player after USA in the international order. Lyle confirms, "The rise of China is one of the most important phenomenons for international security in twenty first century."<sup>3</sup>

China under the said global role and economic rise needs its industry to work and economy to grow. The economic growth and industry flow indeed depends on the easy access to the cheaper energy. Therefore, it has to import energy from the Middle Eastern and the African countries. Amit says,

"Chinese commercial involvement in all parts of Africa that have vital raw materials increases over the next two decades or so, there will be a commensurate increase in the volume of shipping along the three main trans-oceanic SLOCs that connect the Malacca strait and the Lombok straits in the Gulf of Aden, central east Africa and Cape Agulhas."<sup>4</sup>

Accordingly, he observes the Chinese active involvement in the littorals of the Indian Ocean.

Chinese ambitions for ensuring its influence in these regions have two reasons. Firstly, China has to engage in the regions due to economic factor, specifically when competitive trade activities cause rivalry with Asian powers.

---

<sup>2</sup> Robert D. Kaplan, *Monsoon: the Indian Ocean and the future of American Power*, (New York: Random House Paperback, 2011), p.13.

<sup>3</sup> Lyle J. Goldstein, *Five Dragon stirring up the Seas; Challenges and opportunities in improving China's Maritime Enforcement Capabilities*, China Maritime Studies Institute, Naval War College, Number.5, April 2010, p.1.

<sup>4</sup> Amit A. Pandya, *Maritime Commerce and Security; Indian Ocean*, (Washington D.C: Stimson Centre, 2011), p.123.

Till believes, "more general trade rivalries present tension, particularly if such trade patterns are seen as unbalanced either in quantity or quality."<sup>5</sup>

Secondly, China is active in the region due to strategic reason. It pursues to ensure the geo-political interests. Beijing is also keen regarding the strong defensive preparations in the region. Till explains,

"The fear of being contained and so denied its natural and rightful place in orders of things causes resentment in China particularly in military circles advocating a policy of hedging against the potential animosities of the other main players and the strategic encirclement, it might lead to." <sup>6</sup>

Keeping eye on the rising economic power of Beijing, the regional states such as Japan, Indonesia, South Korea, Indonesia and even Australia reshape their security policies and enlarge the military power so that they may not be target if China in future converts the huge economy into impenetrable military might. In return, China ensures to maintain the balance of power on the premise that the disturbed balance of power may lead towards regional instability. Accordingly till agrees,

"A changing economic and military balance between all four of the region's strongest naval powers but especially between united states and China may in itself be a cause of major tension."<sup>7</sup>

This tension makes Chinese decision makers to enlarge the military prowess. The Chinese economic power supported with the increasing military power urge many regional and extra-regional players to come close for the strategic purposes. That is why India and USA have established the strategic relations. Amit says, "Much will depend on the commercial and security intentions and actions of China or on the evolving strategic balance and imbalance between China and India."<sup>8</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Jeffery Till, *Asia's Naval Expansion; An Arms Race in Making*, (New York: Rutledge, 2012), available at <http://www.amazon.com/Asias-naval-expansion-Adelphi-ebook/dp/B00A0ON9K0>, accessed on April 13, 2013.)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p.125.

Thus, the important objectives that China has to achieve in the regions are the ensured access to energy, the security of energy supply lanes and the defensive preparations.

Comparably, The Americans tends to maintain dominance in the international affairs. Mearsheimer explains that the American foreign policy in the post cold war, is focused on achieving global dominance and hegemony through the robust usage of the impenetrable military might.<sup>9</sup>

China has emerged as an important stakeholder in the international order. Currently, it pursues its economic and geo-strategic interests in the littorals of the Indian Ocean and expands influence in the Middle East and Africa. Therefore, Washington has to ensure countermeasures and to prevent China from challenging the US dominant position.

Mearshiemer adds, "Washington will seek to contain Beijing and prevent it from seeking regional hegemony. We can expect the United States to lead a balancing coalition against China that includes India, Japan, Russia, Singapore, and South Korea among others."<sup>10</sup>

Now, The US ultimate objective is to maintain its global dominance and to contain China from achieving it in the international system. For the purpose, USA has to confront some barriers. It also has to utilize the possible opportunities to ensure the desired agenda. The barriers and opportunities can be taken into account as under:

### **Barriers for USA**

The US has to face the various barriers that undermine its capacity to dominate the strategic competition vis-à-vis China.

These are explained as following.

---

<sup>9</sup> John J. Mearsheimer, American Foreign Policy 1993-Present, *The National Interest*, Number 111, January/February 2011, p. 18.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., p.33.

## Hostile Relations with Iran

USA and Iran share hostile relations in wake of latter's suspected nuclear programme. The west along with USA plays a major role in propaganda campaign against Iranian nuclear programme.

Victor states, "The western Nations are scaring the world with the prospect of war against Iran for a year now."<sup>11</sup>

The statements made by the US head of state, Obama also reveals the hostility between the two states that United States would do everything possible to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons and stop an arms race, from getting underway that in unstable region.<sup>12</sup> Subsequently, Iran determines to ensure the national defense. Hussein threatened, "Iran will attack any country whose territory is used by its enemies to launch a military strike against its soil."<sup>13</sup>

USA along with its western allies perceives Iran's growing military might and increasing political influence as threat to its strategic interests in the region. Vladimir observes, "The West sees Iran as a real threat. That threat perception is driving development of missile defense system in Europe and the Middle East."<sup>14</sup>

Similarly, both states are on the opposite sides in the Syrian conflict. Atul argues, "In an open defiance of well established international practices, Washington is blatantly using Turkey, Israel, Saudi Arabia, Qatar and UAE to lead an armed insurgency inside Syria."<sup>15</sup>

These hostile relations with Iran are in favor of China. This makes Washington more vulnerable in the strategic competition.

---

<sup>11</sup> Victor Mikhin, US, Iran Keeping up Belligerent Rhetoric, *Oriental Review.Org; Open Source Journal*, February 13, 2012, available at <http://www.orientalreview.org/2012/02/13/us-iran-keeping-up-belligerent-rhetoric/>, accessed on May 1, 2013.)

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Vladimir Evseev, The Iranian Threat, *Oriental Review.Org; Open Source Journal*, April 4, 2012, available at <http://www.orientalreview.org/2012/04/04/the-iranian-threat/>, accessed on March 12, 2013).

<sup>15</sup> Atul Bhardawaj, Responsibility to Protect Or Instigate to Intervene, *Oriental Review.Org; Open Source Journal*, April 12, 2013, available at <http://orientalreview.org/2013/04/12/responsibility-to-protect-r2p-or-instigate-to-intervene-i2i/>, accessed on May 1, 2013.)

## Withdrawal from Afghanistan

The Afghan war inflicted harm to the US prestige. The Afghan armed resistance defeats USA. Nikoley explains, "USA is burning enormous resources in a futile war."<sup>16</sup> Burning resources means that Washington could not achieve the desired objectives. Elena also agrees, "The Taliban has won a victory over the foreign forces which have been in Afghanistan since 2001."<sup>17</sup>

The Taliban victory indicates that the American strategic interests in the region after 2014 will be at stake. Elena states, "A civil war can break out, or rather continue, after 2014, which could lead to the Taliban ending up to power."<sup>18</sup> Under such circumstances, the US rivals will be enjoying upper hand in the strategic competition.

## China's Growing Influence

China is growing the economic and political influence in Africa and the Middle East to ensure the share of global power until 2030. Many believe that China appears to become the world's largest economy in the coming years.<sup>19</sup>

For the geo-economic purpose, the new Chinese leadership has made an official visit to Durbin to participate in annually held summit of BRICS.<sup>20</sup> Alexander defines it as the Chinese maneuver to upgrade the global agenda.<sup>21</sup>

---

<sup>16</sup> Nikoley Malishavky, Afghanistan under US Occupation, *Oriental Review.Org; Open Source Journal*, December 28, 2012, available at <http://orientalreview.org/2012/12/28/afghanistan-under-u-s-occupation/> accessed on May 3, 2013.)

<sup>17</sup> Elena Gladcova, Afghan Taliban Announces its victory over NATO, *Oriental Review.Org; Open Source Journal*, October 11, 2012, available at <http://orientalreview.org/2012/10/11/afghan-taliban-announces-its-victory-over-nato/>, accessed on May 2, 2013.)

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Alexander Salitzeki, China and BRICS; Upgrading Global Agenda, *Oriental Review.Org; Open Source Journal*, March 13, 2013, Available at <http://orientalreview.org/2013/04/03/china-and-brics-upgrading-global-agenda/>, accessed on May 4, 2013.)

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

Accordingly, China strives to ensure the energy supply lanes through string of pearls strategy (SPS). Chris Allis explains, "The SPS strategy has been developed partially in response to the lack of progress on Kra Canal Project in Thailand, which would directly link the Indian Ocean to the South Chinese Sea."<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, Tony explains the string of pearls strategy as following:

From Sudan and Iran, across the Indian Ocean, and back to China's shores in the South Chinese Sea, represents a "string of Pearls" or a series of geo-political assets China is developing to protect this vital logistical route. This string includes a Chinese port in Pakistan's Baluchistan region, another facility in Myanmar and expanded facilities in the South China Sea off the coast of Vietnam.<sup>23</sup>

All these developments show the active Chinese presence in the regions, which would decrease the US dominant position.

### **North Korea's Military Threat**

North Korea with nuclear capability is another barrier for the US. The hostility between North Korea and US is a grave challenge to the US Interests. Recently, Poyang Yong reiterated its commitment to defend the country and warned during the standoff, "We will do everything possible for the survival if the sanctions on DPRK are not ended."<sup>24</sup>

This reveals that there is misperceived mistrust between the two sides. Accordingly, nuclear-armed North Korea is an obstacle in the way USA pursues the strategic objectives in the region. It can threaten the international maritime shipments from the south Chinese Sea. It can form an alliance with China in order to challenge the US presence in the region.

---

<sup>22</sup> Chris Allis, China's String of Pearls Strategy, *China Briefing*, March 18, 2009, available at <http://www.china-briefing.com/news/2009/03/18/china%E2%80%99s-string-of-pearls-strategy.html>, accessed on May 3, 2013.)

<sup>23</sup> Tony Cartalucci, Globalist Blitzkrieg Signals largest Geopolitical reordering Since WW2, *Oriental Review.Org; Open Source Journal*, May 16, 2013, available at <http://orientalreview.org/2013/05/16/globalist-blitzkrieg-signals-largest-geopolitical-reordering-since-ww2/>, accessed at May 17, 2013.)

<sup>24</sup> Dawn (Islamabad), April 10, 2013.

Under these circumstances, North Korea gives rise to the Chinese strength versus USA and causes a hurdle in the way USA strives to remain alive in the strategic competition.

### **Opportunities for USA**

USA should utilize the following opportunities in a pursuit of dominating the contemporary strategic competition.

### **Strategy of Containment**

China's economic growth depends on the transportation of oil and energy resources from the Middle East and Africa through the Indian Ocean. That is why China attempts to increase its influence in the region. Tony believes:

For China's part, they have begun building presence on African continent, especially in Sudan where they have established a 1,000 miles oil pipeline from the nation's vast heartland to Port Sudan on red sea. They have provided relief to country for UN sanctions and buys majority of Sudan oil exports.<sup>25</sup>

Under such scenario, Washington should contain China, which is a useful instrument in weakening the Chinese position. Its political, economic and diplomatic influence in the Middle East, Africa and the Indian Ocean should be minimized. Tony aggress, "It is quite clear that Washington is using its control of the Middle East and the control of seas albeit challenged control, to check China's vastly superior financial and economic position."<sup>26</sup> He further speculates:

US has expanded its role in Afghanistan and is attempting to balkanize Pakistan in the process, specifically Baluchistan region where China is establishing a naval presence. The US is also heavily involved in destabilizing Myanmar to affect regime change and subsequently establishing a Washington dependent government.<sup>27</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> Tony Cartalluci, Globalist blitzkrieg signals largest geopolitical reordering since WW2, *Oriental review; Open Dialogue research Journal*, May 16, 2013, available at <http://orientalreview.org/2013/05/16/globalist-blitzkrieg-signals-largest-geopolitical-reordering-since-ww2/>, accessed on May 21, 2013.)

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

Accordingly, if US is on the path to curb the Chinese involvement in the ME, Africa and the littoral regions of IO, it would dominate the scenario of the contemporary strategic competition. Therefore, Washington has to seek the following steps as countermeasures:

- The minimized Chinese influence in the ME and Africa

Curtailing the growing Chinese influence in the said regions is the coherent strategy. US decision makers have to establish the normal relations with Iran and its Shia crescent as a viable option. That is how Beijing's diplomatic interaction with Iran and like-minded states would decrease. Parallely, Saudi reservations regarding US tilt towards Israel should be overcome.

Riyaz should be integrated as earlier once again into American circle of influence. South Africa (through BRICS) and Northern Africa have inclined towards Beijing for their own strategic constraint. These states should be integrated into American influence. USA has close ties with Egypt. It should expand relations to other North African states. Accordingly, the Chinese influence would be minimized.

### **The Restrained Sea lanes**

Presently, China succeeds to overcome its energy constraints in term of the safe maritime trade and supply lanes. China's sea trade lanes pass through the significant chokepoints of the Indian Ocean. It begins from the Strait of Hormuz, passes through Arabian Sea, goes up to the South Chinese Sea, passing through the Strait of Malacca. These maritime routes should be restrained. Beijing's free navigation if decreased, can prove a considerable strategy. Hence, energy supply shortage would undermine the China's growing economic and political influence. For the purpose, a strong naval force in the region, equipped with nuclear capabilities should be deployed.

- The Destabilized String of Pearls

China has rationally embarked on the alternative options in order to ensure the security of energy supply. These alternatives involve the "String of Pearls strategy" (SPS). It aims at developing the Chinese naval bases at Gwader in Pakistan, Hunbatatta in Sri Lanka and a naval base near the southwestern shores of Myanmar.

These projects through strong diplomatic relations with the respective states or by sabotage activities can be ceased.

### **Strategic Partnerships**

US can project power worldwide because it has the largest navy with blue water capabilities. However, it, being the extra-regional actor in the Indian Ocean, has to deepen the strategic relations with the regional states in pursuit of hedging against China. Many regional states in this regard may help USA. Sarah maintains, "Whilst maritime states remain more committed to a counter act that includes helping America preserve its maritime ascendancy."<sup>28</sup> Accordingly, Washington should understand the significance of regional alliances and should convert the entire South East Asia into friendly bloc. Sarah explains, "Within South East Asia, the US has treaty alliances with the Philippines and Thailand as well as important security partnerships with other countries including Singapore and Indonesia."<sup>29</sup> These partnerships should be confirmed as part of the strategic policy.

Similarly, the Strait of Malacca and the Southern part of South Chinese Sea should be emphasized and be converted into the area of US naval mobility. More importantly, this region in context of North Korea's military threat can favor the American interests.

India exists as a state capable enough to become the global power. This can be used as counterbalance to China. Therefore, strategic alliance with New Delhi should be established which would be helpful in the strategic competition specifically when New Delhi seeks foreign cooperation for balance of power in the region and stresses on the need of strong naval defense. Selman believes: The inauguration of the Indian Navy's latest naval base, INS Dweepprakashak, in The Lakshadweep Island under southern Naval Command on 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2012 is meant to face Chinese "String of Pearls" strategy.<sup>30</sup>

---

<sup>28</sup> Sarah Raine, A Delphi Paper on Regional disorder: The South China Sea Disputes, chapter three South East Asia- between Emerging Great Powers Rivalry, *International Institute of strategic Studies (IISS)*, March 14, 2013, available at

<http://www.iiss.org/en/publications/adelphi/by%20year/2013-7c11/regional-disorder--the-south-china-sea-disputes-42ba/ap436-05-chapter-3-d906>, accessed on may 23, 2013.)

<sup>29</sup> *ibid*

<sup>30</sup> Selman Rafi, Evolving Strategic Competition in the Indian Ocean, *Oriental Review: Open Dialogue research Journal*, April 19, 2013, available at

The common objective of hedging against China is in interests of both USA and India. Therefore, the strategic relations between the two are the best option in pursuit of strategic partnership against China's growing influence. That is why US administration has inclination towards India. Selman adds, "To achieve objectives in the region, USA plays upon Indo-China problems in its own advantage. It continues to engage India with itself as part of its strategy of encircling China."<sup>31</sup>

It reveals that a strategic partnership between New Delhi and Washington is workable. Therefore, the current bilateral and strategic relations can be enhanced to make China's recent maneuvers worthless and cease its supply lanes.

### **Increased Naval Preparation**

Naval preparation is another option that US should pursue. Strong naval bases in the Indian Ocean would play a pivotal role to project power outside the country's maritime boundaries. It is important to mention that the US decision makers cannot ignore the increased naval deployment and preparations in the region for various reasons. First, the strategic competition has increased the importance of the Indian Ocean. Sarah maintains:

The sea understandably attracts the attention, including through the conduct of intelligence gathering activities, of the US as the pre-imminent naval power, as well as other regional powers.<sup>32</sup>

Accordingly, Washington accurately plans to enlarge the naval might in the region. Selman confirms, "USA is also enhancing its naval presence in the region which is recognition of the fact that this region is gaining central position in the world political affairs."<sup>33</sup>

---

<http://orientalreview.org/2013/04/19/evolving-strategic-competition-in-the-indian-ocean/>, accessed on May 24, 2013.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Op.cit., Sarah Raine, Chapter Four; The US in South East China Sea, available at <http://www.iiss.org/en/publications/adelphi/by%20year/2013-7c11/regional-disorder--the-south-china-sea-disputes-42ba/ap436-06-chapter-4-af26>, accessed on May 22, 2013.)

<sup>33</sup> Op.cit.

Second, China in pursuit of energy security and balance of power has enhanced the naval capabilities in the eastern seas of the Indian Ocean, which has fuelled fears in Washington. That is why USA should maintain the increased naval power in the littoral regions. Mahdi states:

China's new underground nuclear submarine base close to vital sea lanes in South East Asia has raised US concerns, with experts calling up for shoring up of alliances in the region to check Beijing's military clout. US should lease a squadron of F-16 fighter jets and navy vessels to Philippines, where Washington once had naval and air bases, as a part of deterrence strategy.<sup>34</sup>

Third, USA has to support the allies in the region against the Chinese superior naval power. It has to provide state of the art military equipment and weapons to the allies. Besides, increased US naval presence is necessary to check any misadventure by the Chinese naval force against the sovereignty of South East Asian allies. Although, US have stationed the naval vessels in the Indian Ocean, yet the reorganization of bases and deployments in accordance with the new environment is required.

Pervaiz maintains that the history of US naval presence dates back to 1949 when it established its first deployment in Bahrain. The US fifth fleet was set up in Bahrain and Kuwait in 1985 to monitor the Indian Ocean, the Persian Gulf, the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea to monitor the sea line of communication through the region. Two aircraft carriers are deployed in the region accompanied with the fifth fleet; two or more possibly may come from the Pacific region in case of war or emergency. US involvement in Afghanistan, engagement with Iran over the nuclear dispute has compelled Washington to re-organize its force level in the region.<sup>35</sup>

Under such scenario, the current naval bases including Bahrain, Qatar and Diego Garcia may be expanded on one hand and new bases should be built on the other so that in case of emergency, the services of these assets may be employed.

---

<sup>34</sup> Mahdi Darius Nazemroaya, Geo-Strategic Chessboard Pushing India towards War with China *Voltairenet.org*, October 24, 2009, Available at <http://noliesradio.org/archives/7762>, accessed on April 30, 2013.)

<sup>35</sup> Pervaiz Asghar, Dominant Naval Presence in the Indian Ocean, *Maritime Realm and Beyond*, November 5, 2012, available at <http://pervaizasghar.com/2012/11/dominant-naval-presence-in-the-indian-ocean/>, accessed on May 25, 2013.)

## International Protocols and Alliance

The arrangements of International protocols, aimed at addressing the clash of interests at sea and energy hub, is an ideal approach. This approach can be pursued into two ways. First, USA should conclude international protocols with China for co-existence at maritime lanes and energy supply. In this way, China's desired agendas regarding energy security can be accommodated on cost of the agreed restrictions against the enlargement of Chinese naval forces in the littorals of the Indian Ocean.

Second, the supply of energy should be handed over to UNO that would keep a strict control on the distribution of energy to the countries in accordance with their respective needs. Hence, Beijing would not attempt to ensure the energy security through defensive build-ups in the littorals of Indian Ocean. Therefore, the littoral regions would remain in the grip of USA and Washington might dominate the struggle of ensuring the strategic interests in the region. Dmitry suggests, "It is more in America's own interests to bind tomorrow's global powers to the kind of international order that no longer needs a superpower."<sup>36</sup>

Similarly, Selman observes, "Another dilemma of USA is that it cannot altogether sideline Chinese Navy. USA seizes every opportunity to incorporate China's Navy into international alliances, as US China understanding at sea is crucial for the stabilization of world politics in the twenty first century."<sup>37</sup>

This is a complicated option due to the anarchic and realistic structure of the international system. However, it is quite viable for USA particularly when its economy faces recession.

## Conclusion

US can ensure dominance in the contemporary strategic competition only when it succeeds to maintain dominant position in the littoral regions of the Indian Ocean. Therefore, only those will dominate the international politics who dominate these littoral regions.

---

<sup>36</sup> Dmitry Minin, The Return of Empires (1), *Oriental Review: Open Dialogue Research journal*, February 25, 2013, available at <http://orientalreview.org/2013/02/25/the-return-of-empires-i/>, accessed on May 26, 2013.)

<sup>37</sup> Opcit, Selman Raffi, Evolving the Strategic Competition in the Indian Ocean.

Thus, the previously mentioned barriers to the US are a grave challenge that should be dealt accordingly. The North Korean nuclear capability is a serious challenge to the US interests in South Chinese Sea and the Philippines Sea by dint of DPRK leadership's bold and adversarial attitude. On the other hand, defeat in Afghanistan and Iran's emergence in the Middle East gives rise to Washington's weakness in the competition against China.

Among all the opportunities, containing Chinese economic and diplomatic influence in the littorals of Indian Ocean is the most significant countermeasure. The establishment of strategic partnerships and alliances is also equally important. As far as naval increased deployment is concerned, this can be delayed temporarily due to economic crisis. Nevertheless, provision of the naval equipment to the allies cannot be compromised. The already deployed US naval power can sufficiently be utilized.

The international protocols and alliance has also much importance. Particularly, binding China into an alliance would persuade it not to build naval bases in the littorals of the Indian Ocean. Thus, Washington would be the sole controller of these littorals regions, which would solidify the American dominance in the international affairs. For all the said objectives, Washington has to increase political, military and diplomatic interaction in the region and put the abovementioned opportunities in practical form to curb Chinese interactions.