

Drivers of India's Ocean Diplomacy in the Small Island Developing States (SIDS) of the Indo-Pacific: A Fuzzy AHP Modelling Approach

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Abstract

Indo-Pacific geopolitics is now redefining the ocean diplomacy of India and other countries in the region including China, Vietnam, Indonesia and Australia. Therefore, the Small Island Developing Countries (SIDS) have now acquired immense diplomatic interests in the renewed regional architecture. This paper examines the dynamics of India's ocean diplomacy in the Indo-Pacific and outlines 12 enablers which can strengthen India's engagements with the SIDS countries of both the Indian Ocean as well as the South Pacific Ocean. These enablers have been grouped into three broad sets namely geo-economic enablers, geo-strategic enablers, and, environmental and healthcare enablers. First, the weightage of individual enablers and sub-category of the enablers have been calculated by employing Fuzzy Analytical Hierarchy Process (AHP), a mathematical modeling technique. Given the indeterminateness of the enablers, the relative importance of each enabler has been determined by using linguistic variables which were represented as triangular fuzzy numbers. Then, the Centre of Area Defuzzification method was used to convert the fuzzy evaluations into their corresponding crisp values. The results reveal that among all geo-economic enablers, 'sub-regional cooperation' is the most significant variable. While, among the geo-strategic enablers and environmental and healthcare enablers, factors like 'support for democratic governance' and 'abating vector and water-borne diseases' are the most important ones respectively. Also, in terms of the global weights of the 12 enablers, it is found that the top five enablers that can potentially drive India's ocean diplomacy with SIDS include the following: sub-regional cooperation, aid-for-trade, trade capacity building, abating vector and water-borne diseases, and, management of water-related ecosystem. This study has implication for policy-making in India especially in context of determining the areas in which the resources can be allocated to strengthen India's engagements with the SIDS countries. Also, it contributes to the discourse on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), besides extending the work on the Indo-Pacific architecture.

Keywords: SIDS, Indo-Pacific, India, Ocean Diplomacy, SDGs

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