Maritime Power Projection in South-China Sea

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What is the issue?

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The Malabar naval exercises in the Bay of Bengal is seen as a maritime response to China's aggression in Dokalam.

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Why India's plan might not succeed?

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- Modern-day trading nations regard the **oceans as a shared global common,** with equal opportunity rights for all user states.
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- Unless a sea-space is a site of overlapping claims (Ex. South China Sea) or a contested enclave in a geopolitically troubled spot (Ex. Persian Gulf), no coastal state can deny another the use of the high seas.
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- This balance only changes during war.
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- During peace-time operations, the maritime forces enjoy assured access to the seas that lie beyond national territorial waters.
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- Given the **Beijing's key role in the geopolitics and economics of the Indian Ocean region,** a plan to deny its warships entry into India's surrounding seas is unlikely to succeed.
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What India can do?

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- India could now resort to **a strategy of counter-power projection** by expanding the scope of its naval deployments in the South China Sea.
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- Indian Navy could plan to use the South China Sea's geopolitically sensitive spaces for the strategic power projection.
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- Such a strategy is bound to have a **deterrent effect on China's naval posture** in the Indian Ocean region.
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- After an arbitral tribunal invalidated many of China's historical rights within the nine-dash line, Beijing has been extremely cautious about perceived challenges to its authority.
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- This vulnerability must be taken advantage of by India.
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- The Indian Navy must plan for counter-presence in China's near-seas, where Beijing cannot prove a territorial infringement, yet feel the pinch of a perceived violation of its political sphere of influence.
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Source: Live Mint

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