

Review of: "Project Mausam: India's Cultural Strategy for the Indian Ocean"

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The paper presents a highly original and insightful comparison between two significant initiatives—Project Mausam and the Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI)—and their implications for the Indian Ocean Region. The authors, through their nuanced cultural and soft-power perspective, offer a refreshing and novel take on a region typically discussed in economic and military terms. By highlighting cultural diplomacy as a soft power tool, the paper not only adds to the scholarship but also touches on a theme gaining increasing relevance, particularly in the context of the Indian Ocean.

As women scholars, the authors make a substantial contribution by weaving together historical and contemporary geopolitical issues with a strong emphasis on cultural diplomacy. The introduction draws a clear and compelling connection between historical maritime engagements and today's strategic rivalry in the region, positioning Project Mausam as a potential counterbalance to China's MSRI. The authors' ability to bring in a historical context before diving into modern strategic rivalries showcases a well-rounded and thoughtful approach to a complex subject.

While the article is well-structured, there are areas where its readability could be enhanced, particularly in the transitions between the historical overview and the modern strategic dynamics. A smoother flow in these sections would allow readers to better appreciate the depth of the authors' analysis. Additionally, the paper would benefit from more in-depth case studies where the two initiatives overlap, particularly in key Indian Ocean littoral states, which would help to strengthen the comparison between the initiatives.

Moreover, exploring China's soft power strategies more directly would present a more comprehensive comparison. The emphasis on India's Project Mausam as a cultural diplomacy initiative is insightful, but further exploration of where it has succeeded or faced challenges would add a layer of practical analysis. Additionally, broadening the discussion to include the geopolitical implications for countries beyond India and China, such as ASEAN nations or African littorals, would enhance the paper's scope and impact.

The historical grounding provided by the authors adds significant depth, making the paper not just a timely political analysis but one that is rooted in the region's rich maritime history. The insights presented are thoughtful and offer a meaningful contribution to the discourse on cultural diplomacy and geopolitical strategy in the Indian Ocean. As such, the paper marks a commendable contribution to the field, with its focus on cultural diplomacy and the nuanced strategic dynamics in the Indian Ocean. The paper would be even stronger by including more detailed case studies and a deeper analysis of Project Mausam's challenges. I highly recommend its publication, as it highlights the valuable work of women



scholars contributing to geopolitical and cultural discussions in a region of growing global importance.