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"Renaming of Indian Ocean: A Comparative Analysis"



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First Edition

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Renaming of Indian Ocean: A Comparative Analysis

Abstract

Oceans, seas, estuaries, and waterways have played an extraordinary role in human development and have served human beings as source of food and energy, means of transportation, dominion for influence, and arena of diplomacy and influence. The boundaries of water bodies and landmasses are regular and essential. History shows that oceans are divided into separate regions according to the continents namely: Atlantic, Pacific, Indian, Arctic, and Southern or Antarctic Ocean. Therefore, the strategy for the oceanic division is divergent than the continents due to their connectedness in wide entryways. Besides, the nomenclature of areas, segments of land or water is generally due to the geography, navigation or scientific reasons by casual demonstrations or expeditions, concurred standards, undertakings, and proposals. This study discusses the historical study of how Indian Ocean was given this name. It also analysis the comparative study of continents' name and reasons for their names. The study further explains legal and procedural methods to name oceans and continents and at the end, it proposes policy recommendations for policy makers and Government how to go about renaming Indian Ocean.

Keywords: Indian ocean, renaming oceans, pakistan maritime sector

1. Introduction

Geographical, linguistic, historical, cultural, religious and ideological names can be considered to form an identity that play an essential role in the standardization of naming international entities. Therefore, the traditional Greek cartographers and map makers reflect the concept of the ocean as a circular ring of the river coursing around the landmass. Greek mythology was mainly depicted in the work of Aristotle, Plato, Ptolemy, and Herodotus, whereas Herodotus was known as the "father of history". He was one of the many Greek philosophers who named ancient entities(Oceans, seas, and rivers, etc.) which have a feeble difference in the present day. Greeks myth suggested that the Titans commanded the Earth, stars, seas, and sky. Zeus the King of Gods along with his allies fought against the predecessors and won. Thus, most of the titans were cursed and few were given certain responsibilities. Therefore, a few were responsible for the wind water and balance of the earth, etc.

Similarly, the Greek myth for the ocean was also depicted as ocean river was ruled by and named after, the titan Oceanus also known as Okeanus. He was the son of Ouranos and Gaia they were known as the older generation of God that reigned before Zeus. Oceanus was described as a large river encircling the earth. Oceanus' offspring with Tethys were Oceanides, and all the rivers and springs of the earth, even those that flowed underground such as Styx.[1]

There is long debate in literary and academic circles to change the name of Indian Ocean since few decades. In this regard, a need was felt and a comparative study was undertaken in order to analyze and identify historical reasoning to the names of world's oceans. Aim of the study is therefore set to propose new name for Indian Ocean which can be acceptable for all adjoining states.

1.1. Objective of Study

The significance of the study can be derived from the fact that Indian Ocean is linked with many countries and littoral states but its name is based on India which is contrary to the broader benefits of all other states. Hence, the history and renaming of Indian Ocean need to be studied and work out a consolidated name which should be acceptable to all states surrounding IO.

1.2. Historical Perspective

Greek mythology can be supported through Alfred Wegener's theory of Continental drift, who postulated that about 200 million years ago, a supercontinent "Pangaea" began to break up. Over a million years later, pieces separated into first two smaller super-continents (Laurasia and Gondwanaland) subsequently it was further segmented in the Jurassic, cretaceous period. Despite the fact, many ancient Greek cartographers refined the concept of defining limits and naming the ocean based on the voyage. Later, the Roman geographer, in the middle ages, the Muslim scholars continued and advanced on mapping traditions mostly following Ptolemy's

[1] Morgan Smith, "Cosmic Oceans: The Primordial Waters of Ancient Creation Myths," Ancient Origins (Ancient Origins, July 28, 2020), https://www.ancient-origins.net/human-origins/primordial-waters-0012363)

method.[2] This redefining and scientific innovations due to technologies is still a continuous process. Therefore, to be very precise the study will mainly discuss the origin of the oceans' names.

1.2.1 The Pacific Ocean

A Spanish explorer Vasco Nunez de Balboas took a voyage from Isthmus of Panama to the Pacific Ocean in 1513 which he called Mare del Sur (South Sea).[3] In 1519, the voyage of a Portuguese explorer Ferdinand Magellan set his route to Spice Island. He was the first European explorer to cross the Pacific Ocean.



Figure.1: Megalian's Route: 1519-1522

The voyage was extremely dangerous with storms Magellan and his crew crossed the Atlantic Ocean (South sea) and the treacherous and cold waters of the Strait which took his name for surviving. They were the first Europeans to see the Ocean which Magellan named Mar Pacifico (Pacific Sea- Calm Ocean) for being very tranquil as compared to the strait.[4]

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[2] "History of Mapping," History of Mapping | Intergovernmental Committee on Surveying and Mapping, accessed March 17, 2020, https://www.icsm.gov.au/education/fundamentals-mapping/history-mapping)

[3] David Stanley, "South Pacific ." Internet Archive, January 1, 1970. https://archive.org/details/bub_gb_EDGapfBX-CAC/page/n39/mode/1up.

[4] "Ferdinand Magellan." History.com Editors, A&E Television Networks, October 29, 2009. https://www.history.com/topics/exploration/ferdinand-magellan.

1.2.2 The Atlantic Ocean

The Atlantic Ocean is the second-largest ocean in the world after the Pacific Ocean, separating Europe and Africa. The name of this ocean is driven from Greek mythology, which is the waters beyond the strait of Gibraltar called Atlantis Thalassa 'Sea of Atlas'.

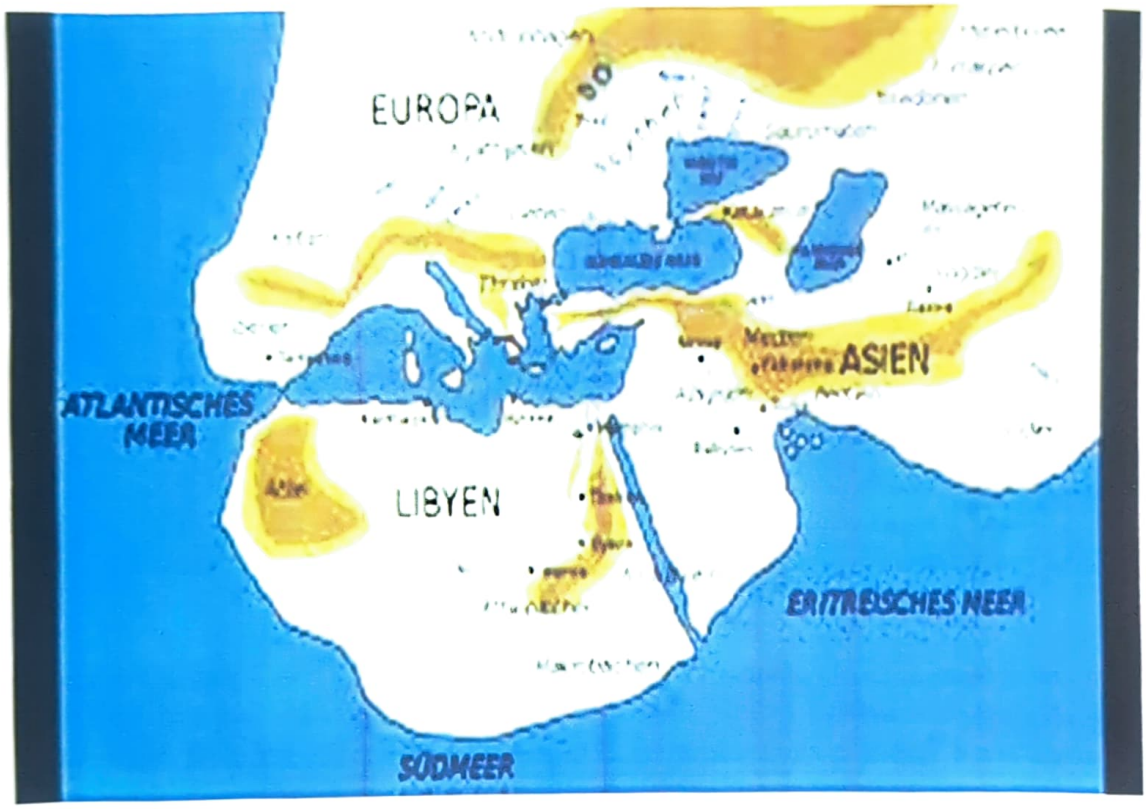

Figure 2: Herodotus Histories – Book 4, Melpomene, Part 2

According to Greek mythology, Titan Atlas was the son of Lapetus and the grandson of Gaia (Earth), and Ouranos (sky). Plato's infamous myth about Atlantis was briefly described by Herodotus who named this water body as Atlantis Thalassa[5]the sea beyond the Pillars of Hercules. The pillar refers to the significant feature before entering the Mediterranean sea (the rock of Gibraltar in Europe and the Jebel Musa) in the African region. There are several geographical features named to honor Atlas including Atlas Mountain ranges in North Africa and the sea off the Strat of Gibraltar and the North African coast. It later extended to the entire Ocean.

[5] "THALASSA," THALASSA - Greek Primordial Goddess of the Sea (Roman Mare), accessed March 21, 2020, https://www.theoi.com/Protogenos/Thalassa.html)

1.2.3 The Arctic Ocean

The smallest ocean is known to the Arctic ocean which is bordering six countries namely Canada, Denmark, Iceland Norway, Russia, and the US.[6] The word 'Arctic' comes from the Greek myth "Arktos" which is Ursa Major; a constellation that lies in the northern sky means "the Great Bear". The ancient Greek cartographer and astronomer Ptolemy in the 2nd century identified the study of constellations for oceanic navigation.



Figure 3: Arctic Region

He explained that Calisto, a nymph bearing Zeus'child Arktos in Greek mythology was turned into a bear by Zeus' wife Hera.[7] Although there are many varying legends to the myth, the region got the name from the constellations which the Greek astronomers predicted. It was also named as the Artic due to the region it connects to the Baltic sea therefore its name from Arktos changed to the Arctic.

1.2.4 The Antarctic Ocean

Antarctic Ocean or the Southern Ocean is mostly known as "opposite to arctic". Consequently, it is known as the south pole region. The Antarctic Ocean is significant for the convergence of warm and cold water.

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[6] "The World Factbook: Arctic Ocean." Central Intelligence Agency. Central Intelligence Agency, February 1, 2018. https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/xq.html.

[7] "Constellation Guide." Constellation Guide. Accessed March 21, 2020. https://www.constellation-guide.com/constellation-list/ursa-major-constellation/.

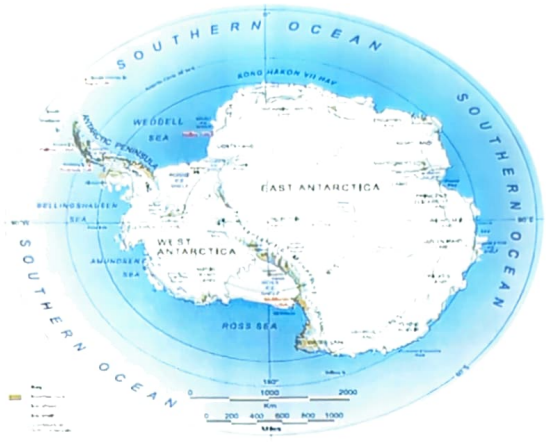

Figure 4: Southern Ocean

The International Hydrographic Organization (IHO) recognized ocean limits in 2000 by combining the southern Atlantic, portion of Indian and the Pacific Ocean (between 60°S – Antarctica Coast), and called it Southern Ocean.

2. Naming of Indian Ocean – An Evolutionary Process

Ancient Aryans had experience of migrating along the sea-shores of Africa, Arabia, and Iran and hence they were familiar with the concept of the sea. They used the term "Sindhu" to denote the Arabian Sea, which later came to be called the "Sindhu-Sagara".

The Indus valley region has considerably ample history, as the Indian Ocean was a route of communication, provided access for civilizations to influence trade, gain control of lands washed by its waters. The evidence of voyage through oceans and seas roles back to the advent of civilizations, the Sumerians (Mesopotamians) in the 4000 to 3000 B.C coasted along the Persian Gulf into Bahrain and Sindh (Indus Valley).[8] The Indus valley civilization traded with the ancient Mesopotamians and Egyptians through shipping lanes. Another civilization, Indo-Aryans founded the Vedic civilization that existed in the Sarasvati River and Ganges river around 1500BCE. They named Sindh as Indus which meant River in their language.

The Pharaonic times also illustrate the export of spices from the East Indies or spice countries in the East. During the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C.E, evidently Indian and Arab ships have been known to set sail from Southern Arabia to Malabar(Kerala). During the 6th century, the Sindh region which is now in Pakistan was conquered by the Persian Achaemenid Empire. Thus, the Persian dialect (Kharoshti) is believed to have transformed the word Sindhu to Hindu.

[8] DC Web Designers (410)740-9181, www.dcwebdesigners.com. "Description of the Indian Ocean." The Indian Ocean in World History | Historical Overviews. Accessed March 21, 2020. https://www.indianoceanhistory.org/Learning-Tools/Historical-Overviews.aspx.

The Indian Ocean was known as the Erythreaen Sea which mainly was due to the Red Sea due to the color.[9]



Figure 5: Periplus of the Erythreaen Sea

Evolutionary voyages executed by Alexander the Great in 326 BC from Indus to the Persian Gulf with Nearkhos are carved in history. The phonetical change of the word Hindu was changed by the Greeks during this period to 'Indu'. Westerns (Greeks and Romans) also used the Persian terminology and omitted the 'h' words such as Indo, Indies, Indika.

Pierre Desceliers was one of the Dieppe group of chart-makers, who during the 1530s depicted French and Portuguese discoveries in a style that was strongly influenced by contemporary Portuguese charts. Thus, the name for the Indian ocean set on his map is La Mer Des Indes Orientales. This map is the revitalized version of medieval mappemonde which was developed by the Greeks.[10]

Westerners also called Indian Ocean as Eastern Ocean because they reached India in search of safer trade route and Spice Islands following easterly routes.

[9] Serena Bianchetti et al., Brills Companion to Ancient Geography: the Inhabited World in Greek and Roman Tradition (Leiden: Brill, 2016))

[10] Colin Wight, "Desceliers' World Map." THE BRITISH LIBRARY. The British Library, June 13, 2008. http://www.bl.uk/onlinegallery/onlineex/mapsviews/desceliers/.



Figure 6: Map of the world - Pierre Desceliers, 1550

During the 15th century, Chinese explorers who reached Indian Ocean across Spice Islands called it Western Oceans. Indian Ocean has also been known as the Hindu Ocean and Indic Ocean in various languages. Portuguese imperial strategist Albuquerque defined the Indian Ocean as *"Mar Clausum"* means (enclosed sea). East India Company in 17th century, was established and found ways for exploration, exploitation, and colonial rule. The period of Dutch and English rule persisted in the region which further phonetically changed the region's name to 'India'.

2.1. Geographical / Political Map of Indian Ocean

On the Northern side, the Southern limits of the Arabian Sea and the Laccadive Sea, the Southern limit of the Bay of Bengal, the Southern limits of the East Indian Archipelago, and the Southern limit of the Great Australian Bight.



Figure 8: Limits of oceans and seas, printed by IHO (special publication n° .28), 3'd edition 1953

On the West side, it is from Cape Agulhas in 20" long. From Eastern side, it is Southward along this meridian to the Antarctic Continent. On the East side, the Southern point of Tasmania down the meridian 116"55' E to the Antarctic Continent from South East Cape, whereas, it is the Antarctic Continent on the South.

2.2. Political Map of Indian Ocean from HPN

Political maps are designed to show governmental boundaries of countries, states, and counties, the location of major cities, and they usually include significant bodies of water. Google shows maps of disputed areas from points of view of researchers' search area. Thus, political maps cannot be used as an authentic document in court of law or at any international forum.

3. Change of Name of Antarctic Ocean- Procedure Adopted for Change of Name

IHO proposed change of name of Antarctica ocean to Southern Ocean. Sixty seas have been given new names, but are not promulgated, due to disagreement on draft of 4th edition of *Limits of Oceans and Seas (S-23)*, circulated since Aug 02. In 2000, in response to IHO motion on Southern Ocean, out of 68 member nations, 28 responded, out of which, 27 members (except Argentina) agreed to redefine the ocean, reflecting importance placed by oceanographers on ocean currents. The proposal for name *Southern Ocean* won 18 vs 9 votes for *Antarctic Ocean.*

3.1 Nomenclature of South China Sea - A Case Study

Southeast Asian states have always been regarded as sensitive, an extreme nationalistic region that tends to assert their claims. The claimants of the U- shaped or nine-dash line boundary water body is China, Indonesia, Vietnam, Malaysia, Thailand, Brunei, Taiwan, Cambodia, and Singapore. Although, China claims the Exclusive Economic Zones of many littoral states that share the sea. The historical name for this sea was known as the Champa Sea from the 6th century till the 16th century, which was named after a Great Empire in central Vietnam in today's border of Quang Bing.[11] During the 16th century, the trader and sailors reached this region had trading opportunities in China as well as in India. Therefore, they called this water body "Mar da China" which means the sea of China.

China supports its territorial and geographical claims by the inheritanc. It propagates its culture, ancient history and beginning with the Hans dynasty from 206 BC-220 AD.[12] The dynastic incursions and balance of power performed an essential role in setting up Chinese influence in the world.

Although many states are still in dispute with China's dominion in the South China Sea, countries like Indonesia attempted to release a new map to promote the initiative to change the name to North Natuna Sea for the economic zone that belongs to them. Similarly, the Philippines called for a name change as well, Filipino call the South China Sea as 'West Philippines Sea', the Vietnamese can claim the ancestral significance of the sea like China uses its history as an inheritance. Therefore, many researchers believe that littoral states may reclaim their rights on the sea and they may acquire US' support.[13] Whereas, the reconstruction of the name initiated by Indonesia, Vietnam and the Philippines is an approach against many countries that claim the sovereign entities as their ancient inheritance. The nomenclature along with the recognition of boundary is the source of dispute among many countries. Similarly, the Sea of Japan is also a very prominent case of a dual nomenclature that is a source of contention amongst the Koreans. Mainly Koreans, Russian have named oceans in their language.

Moreover, many scholars debate that the name of sovereign entities is meaningless, the South China Sea is not under the jurisdiction of China like the Indian Ocean is not under the jurisdiction of India. Therefore, the Indian ocean is likely to fall under the category of disputes. Especially, the South Asian region which is already a region of immense instability and to add fuel to the fire India's eagerness to become regional power would certainly create turmoil due to their emerging Hindutva ideology. This would caste a shadow over all the states especially

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[11] Adam Bray, "The Cham: Descendants of Ancient Rulers of South China Sea Watch Maritime Dispute From Sidelines." National Geographic, June 18, 2014. https://www.nationalgeographic.com/news/2014/6/140616-south-china-sea-vietnam-china-cambodia-champa/.

[12] Malik, Mohan. "HISTORICAL FICTION: China's South China Sea Claims." World Affairs 176, no. 1 (2013): 83–90.

[13] Le Hong Hiep, "Beijing's South China Sea Stance Is Driving Vietnam into America's Arms." South China Morning Post, July 25, 2019. https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/opinion/article/3019890/beijings-south-china-sea-stance-driving-vietnam-americas-arms.

Pakistan with India's agenda to propagate a negative image of Pakistan and suppressing its advancement in the Indian Ocean.

4. Analysis / Recommendation

After a detailed discussion in the abovementioned sections, it can be easily stated that Ancient Greek cartographers introduced the concept of defining limits and naming the ocean based on the voyages, like Sindhu Sagraa and Roman geographers, traders, and voyagers followed the same tradition in the middle ages, like Indika, Indo. Similarly, Muslim scholars also followed the naming of oceans based on their voyages experiences while charting maps like Behr e Zulemat, Behr e hind, Khaleej a Bangal, Behr Munjamad Shamali, Behr Munjamad Juubi whereas, Littoral states consider naming the seas' and oceans according to their advantage and boundary due to a psycholinguistic effect that generates reason for ownership or historical attachments, like Arabian Sea, Bay of Bengal, South & East China Sea, English Channel, Persian Gulf / Arabian Gulf / the Gulf. The following table can illustrate that naming of oceans were based on any of the following characteristics:

a. **Inheritance** - South China Sea

b. **Nationalistic / Social** - Atlantic (Greek mythology)

c. **Evolution** - Indian Ocean

d. **Historical / Voyages** - Indian Ocean / Gondwanic ocean

e. **Sea/Weather Condition** - Pacific Sea / Dead Sea / Southern Ocean

f. **Geographical Condition** - Southern Ocean / Eastern Ocean / Western Ocean

As far as options for Pakistan is concerned, there are three options available:

a. Pakistan should not raise objection on nomenclature of IO.
   If need is felt for change of name, issue can be raised by academia, preferably from outside.

4.1 Pakistan should not raise objection on nomenclature of Indian Ocean (IO).

4.1.1 Pros: Pakistan has never objected on term Indian Ocean since independence. Our forefathers and political leaderships has never raised this issue. This implies that political masters in Pakistan understand the efficacy for using term "Indian Ocean".

4.1.2 Cons:

a. India claims IO as India's Ocean. Any objection raised on the nomenclature of IO will inherently accept Indian claim which can be counterproductive.
b. Present diplomatic, political environment is not conducive for raising this issue from Pakistan.
c. New name must satisfy scientist, historian or socio-political activists at global level.

d. IHO's publication is still on-hold since 1953. No edition has been published due to inter-state politics. It is not likely that this proposal will go through smoothly in times to come.

4.2 Proposal of change coming from outside / Academia

4.2.1 Pros

a. India's reaction will not be intense over this matter if it comes from any third country other than Pakistan. It will be taken as an academic proposal from literary circle.

b. If change occurs, Pakistan will have stronger diplomatic victory over India.

c. Pakistan's influence in maritime arena will be multifold.

4.2.2 Cons

a. Regional and international players are not likely to support change due to India's strong influence in Indian Ocean Region.

b. It is a time-consuming process and can take 30-50 years.

4.3 Suggestions for Renaming IO

There are three options available:

4.3.1 Option-1:

a. Denis N. Fernando, Secretary and Director of Planning, Mahaveli Development Authority, Sri Lanka has already floated the proposal "GONDWANIC OCEAN".
b. It was the initial name of the entire region including Asia, Africa and Australia. Gondwana or Gondwanaland[i] was a supercontinent that existed about 550 million years ago.
c. Reason for supporting Gondwanic is because states tend to refer cultural or historical heritage for claiming territories.
d. This name suggests that Australia, Africa, and South Asia are included in this ocean. Therefore, no one can claim the ocean based on boundary or nomenclature.

4.3.2 Option-2

a. Afro-Asian Ocean for its waters not only touches Indian coasts of about 2,000 miles but also the entire east coast of Africa, which is 4,000 miles in length, the south coast of Arabia which is 720 miles, the western shores of Iran and Pakistan, which are about 960 and 600 miles respectively.

b. On the east are Malaysia, Indonesia and Australia with its coastline of 2,400 miles on the Indian Ocean.

c. Besides, there are number of islands in the ocean. To call this vast expanse of water, that stretches from Zanzibar to Singapore, by the name of Indian Ocean is misleading.

d. It can therefore, be changed to 'Afro-Asian Ocean'. The only issue will be the support from Australia, as Australian continent is not represented in new proposal

4.3.3 Option-3

a. AFRO-AUSTRALASIA OCEAN (Africa, Austral-Asian continent) is suggested because most of Australasia lies on the Indo-Australian Plate with the latter occupying the Southern area.

b. Utilization of current names of all three major land continents are represented in new proposal. Australia and Africa, are likely to support the new proposal, and may take leadership role for bringing change.

4.4 Conclusion/Recommendations

a. Options for change of name of Indian Ocean are recommended as discussed vide para 4.3. and reproduced as under on the order of priority:

i. GONDWANIC OCEAN
ii. AFRO-ASIAN OCEAN
iii. AFRO-AUSTRALASIA OCEAN

b. In this regards, Foreign office should be approached to initiate same proposal.

c. The issue should be raised in academic circles, and debates should be generated at national/international level conferences/seminars.

d. Pakistan should be in supporting role and foreign institutions and think tanks should voice this issue.

e. The topic should be well deliberated in academia, diplomatic and military circles before launching.

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