



China's Increasing Investments and Relationships with Sea Line Countries of Indian Ocean: A Geopolitical Strategy

Saba Shoukat¹, Iqra Ashraf², Hina Ali³, Muhammad Zeeshan Ali⁴

¹ M.Phil. Scholar, Department of International Relations, Bahaudin Zakariya University Multan, Pakistan.
Email: sabashoukat666@gmail.com

² Lecturer, Department of History and Pakistan Studies, The Women University Multan, Pakistan.
Email: iqrachaudhry30@gmail.com

³ Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, The Women University Multan, Pakistan.
Email: hinaali@wum.edu.pk

⁴ Ph.D. Scholar, Times Institute Multan, Pakistan. Email: zeeshanali_1987@yahoo.com

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

Article History:

Received: November 08, 2021

Revised: December 27, 2021

Accepted: December 28, 2021

Available Online: December 31, 2021

Keywords:

Indian Ocean
Strategic Nodes
Sea Trade
SLOCs
Chinese Investment
Oil Supply
Regional Influence

This study aims to investigate how String of Pearls is referred to as a geopolitical strategy adopted by China and a threat to India as India is a growing regional power? China has invested a lot in building its military bases network in the countries of sea lines that are falling on the Indian Ocean. China has also developed commercial facilities and its military bases, which refer to as String of Pearls. This study will find the interest of China in expanding its engagements in the region of the Indian Ocean. China is investing heavily in the construction of ports, roads, military, and commercial bases along with so many huge products in the countries providing China bases to increase its chain of String of Pearls. The study will identify how these investments made by China are paying off back to China. This research paper will cover Chinese investment in Pakistan, Myanmar, Djibouti, Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, Myanmar, Massawa port Eritrea, Iran, Lamu port Kenya, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, etc.

© 2021 The Authors, Published by iRASD. This is an Open Access Article under the Creative Common Attribution Non-Commercial 4.0

Corresponding Author's Email: hinaali@wum.edu.pk

1. Introduction

China is adopting a Strategic Encirclement strategy in and around the Indian Ocean to advance its influence there. Strategic Encirclement is a military term used for a competitive strategy made by a strong challenger to force or attack the enemy on all major fronts. The Indian Ocean is encircled by a glowing ring of Chinese power and influence around India. China and India, both countries are evident of strategic encirclement in a three-pronged manner, i.e., diplomatic, economic, and military (P C, 2017).

In 2001, China began to pursue its strategy String of Pearls in the Indian Ocean through commercial routes with the construction of Gawadar port in Pakistan. China signs the contract with Sri Lanka, Chittagong, and Kyaukpyu to build ports at Hambantota. The String of Pearls is the name of efforts made by China to build nodes or strategic ends on the strategic locations near the Indian Ocean to increase its influence in the Indian Ocean through its sea lines communications or routes, which extend from the coast of mainland China to the port of Sudan. The naval and commercial presence of China in these chock points would be proven as a great threat to India and other major powers in the world (Khurana, 2008).

The strategic culture in the 21st century has moved the focus of countries from traditional facts of security to modern facts that are economy, energy, population, environment, ecology, and control on strategic geopolitical locations. According to China, the strategic culture of China aims to protect its borders and strengthen its defense strategy and economy. We have seen that China considers its every military venture as self-defense measurement even in Korean War and Sino-Indian war. It can be said that every military

based in the chain of String of Pearls has a defensive objective that revolves around the goal to advance its economy and oil supply and protection of borders of China (Rashid, 2020).

This research paper aims to explain that why China is investing in the countries that are providing China strategic chokepoints and routes to the Indian Ocean? This research aims to identify how these military and commercial bases built by China will help China to advance its trade economy and strengthen its influence in the region that is threatening to the other hegemonic powers such as India and the USA in the region?

2. Literature Review

President of China Xi Jinping aimed to connect Asia to Europe through Africa, Central Asia, and the Middle East. For this purpose, he initiated projects such as the Economic Belt of Silk Road and Maritime Silk Road. A series of networks were installed, including projects like the infrastructure of seaports, airports, and transcontinental railways worth approximately 1 trillion Chinese cost investment in the region. China needed to advance its influence in the sea routes along with the countries of the Middle East for its geostrategic security and marine trade in the Indian Ocean. To establish its strong influence in these sea routes, China had to invest in political, economic, military and ports development means of every country along sea line having a strategic location allowing China the sea routes or chock points to carry its oil and energy trade. China has invested heavily in Djibouti, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Iran, and Persian Gulf, Kenya to secure its interests. China made its way to reach the Indian Ocean, Persian Gulf, Mediterranean Sea, and South China Sea by investing in these less developed but strategically important countries in the region (Harutyunyan, 2020).

China established its very first overseas military base in Djibouti and named it a 'logistical support facility. The Djibouti port, constructed by China, will secure Chinese interests in the Middle East and Africa, as well as Belt and Road initiative by China (Cabestan, 2020). The establishment of overseas military bases or seaports owned by China aims to gain benefit from the strategic locations of the major sea line countries near maritime chokepoints, coordination, and connectivity among states for regional development, promote trade, improve finance, industrial extraction of resources, exploring economic platforms, diplomatic and military interactions, and cooperation, protection of maritime security for China so that it became least dependent on maritime security of USA (Dutton, Kardon, & Kennedy, 2020).

China has invested \$46 billion in Pakistan to connect Kashgar in Northwest China with the deep seaport of Gwadar in Pakistan situated on the Arabian Sea located near the border of Iran. This project is commonly known as China Pakistan Economic Corridor, a game-changer for the emerging economy in South Asia (Ahmad, Asmi, Ali, Rahman, & Abbas, 2017). CPEC will be improving not only the trade and economic development, but it will also overcome the energy crises. CPEC enhance the connectivity among states in the region and develop the northeast part of China (Abid & Ashfaq, 2015). The primary goal of CPEC was to enhance its trade and economic activities in the region, increase its export at a low cost, and fulfill its energy demands and needs. CPEC is a total geostrategic and economic cooperation partnership between both countries with a win-win situation. This mega project will connect China to Middle East, Europe, Asia, and Africa. CPEC will provide China shortest sea route for the export and import of oil and energy from the Middle East. CPEC will cost China lest cost than that of the Strait of Malacca. To import oil from Africa and the Persian Gulf, China has built an oil refinery at Gwadar. This route is only 2500km long (Ishaq, Ping, & Ahmed, 2017).

The Bay of Bengal is highly rich in hydrocarbons. It enjoys a special economic and strategic importance in the region as it connects South Asia, the Andaman Sea and the Strait of Malacca opens up in the South China Sea. It is located in the north of the Indian Ocean with an area of 2,173,000 square km. Several rivers across the region flow into the BOB that increases its role to contribute to the regional power game (Chaudhury & Basu, 2016). China is adopting the policy of 'Look South' by investing heavily in Bangladesh in the areas around BOB. The primary interest of China in BOB is to reach a safe and reliable route to supply oil and safeguard its investments. Under the Continental Silk Route, China will be able to exert its influence in the region by paving a way for regional connectivity. The Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Forum for Regional Cooperation connects the Yunnan province of China to the BOB. To protect its interests and to exert its strong influence in and around the Bob, China has

offered billions of dollars to the nations of BOB to build roads, construction of seaports, and development of many infrastructure projects there (Humayun Kabir & Ahmad, 2015).

China is interested in Sri Lanka because of its strategic location. Sri Lanka is at the center of the Indian Ocean. Investment in the ports of Sri Lanka will help China to supply the bulk of the energy from Africa. China has a reliable friend named Sri Lanka that will open the doors of huge trade for China shortly (Kahandawaarachchi, 2015).

Myanmar is another country that emerged as a gateway to energy supply for China and India. China is considered the first investor in Myanmar to pave its way to the Indian Ocean. China is involved in Myanmar in both terms economically and for strategic interests since the 1980s. Myanmar has a significant advantage for the exploration of energies with its strategically important geographical location (Sinha, 2009). In 2007 Chinese National Development and Reform Commission approved an agreement on an oil pipeline that linked the deep-water Middle East. China initiated the construction of Oil and Gas pipelines in 2009, through Myanmar to Yunnan province of China, which provides China fourth route to import oil and gas.

China cannot avoid making its roots presence strong in the Persian Gulf because of the hegemony of the USA in the Persian Gulf. To counter that hegemony, China has to increase its activities in the region. Energy security is the primary interest of China in the Gulf (Yoshihara & Sokolsky, 2002).

3. Methodology

The proposed work is based on descriptive and predictive methodological approaches. The study has been done by using data collected from secondary sources. To collect data for this research paper, a detailed study has been made from reliable sources, including newspapers, articles from reliable websites, and articles from journals.

3.1 The String of Pearls: A chain of Chinese military and commercial bases along sea lines

In 2004 the term String of Pearls was used for the first time in a report titled "Energy Futures in Asia" to Defense Secretary. The report revealed that China is adopting a strategy of bases called "String of Pearls." These bases and diplomatic ties stretching from the Middle East to southern China as China is building strategic relationships with sea lanes from the Middle East to the South China Sea to protect the energy interests of China. The report stated that this initiative would also serve the security objectives of China.

Figure 1: What is happening in the Indian Ocean? Farticle_images



In the debate of the String of Pearls, between offensive, and defensive approach of China, there is a common perception that String of Pearls largely aims to hold influence in the

Indian Ocean that is the main point of energy supply for China chokepoint for India (Abbhi, 2015).

3.2 Djibouti

Djibouti is a small African nation laying on the strait of Bab el Mandeb. Djibouti provides a gateway to one of the busiest routes for shipping in the world, called the Suez Canal. Annually 20 thousand ships pass through Djibouti, and it is a contribution to 30% of the world's trade that passes through the shipping route served by Djibouti. The state, Djibouti, enjoy highly strategic importance for the whole world as it is located between two main regions that are highly conflicted, the Gulf region and the Horn of Africa (Bereketeab, 2016). As a state, Djibouti is considered the creation of France as it was under French colonial rule (Abdallah, 2008). In 1976 there was no clear argument about the independence of Djibouti from French colonial rule. Still, finally, Djibouti got independence from the French on 27 Jun 1977 as a referendum held on 08 May 1977 shows 98% voters in favor of independence (Barratt, 1977).

Djibouti is already the largest military installation of the USA in Africa. It also has military bases in Japan and France due to Somalia-based piracy problems in the region. In 2015, China announced it publically that China is building a military base in Djibouti that is China's first overseas military base. The establishment of the military base in Djibouti ties both states in joint security and economic relationships (Downs, Becker, & Degategno, 2017). Djibouti is considered one of the most troubled military nodes in the world as it could become a reason for more instability in the Middle East and North Africa region. China built its first military support base in the Indian Ocean, Djibouti, in 2017, separating the Gulf of Aden from the Red sea. Indeed, China is not using terms of military or naval base for its first overseas permanent military base, but China is calling it by using terms of logistical or support facilities. It is a highly debated concern that base in Djibouti will help China to expand its area of influence not only in the region of the Middle East and North Africa but also in the Region of the Indian Ocean. China will use the Djibouti base for doing military operations in the northwest Indian Ocean, and it will be a great threat to India and its stability (Chaziza, 2018).

China is an emerging global power, and China is managing to cultivate its potential power for its economic interests and its influence in the Middle East as well as in the Indian Ocean (Sun & Zoubir, 2021). It is being said by many analysts that China is trying to take advantage of the weak economic conditions of African nations and adopt a Debt trap diplomacy policy by making a massive investment there. According to a report from the Center for Strategic and International Studies, China is involved in 46 seaports in Africa in one way or other. China may use these ports for its military or diplomatic purposes in the coming future. The Djibouti base is not like ordinary military bases. It has watchtowers, outer perimeter walls, and most importantly, underground quarters having the capability of hosting at least 10 thousand troops. With its increasing military establishment, there is becoming a greater threat to the geostrategic advantage of India (Agarwal, 2020, July 23). After 2013, china began to invest heavily in installing infrastructure projects in Djibouti. These projects include the construction of two new airports, a new seaport, and mainly the Ethiopia-Djibouti railway. The installation of these projects made it abundantly clear that Djibouti is not serving only logistical purposes but it is intended politically to deepen the diplomatic and military influence of China in the western Indian Ocean. The strategic nature of the Djibouti military and naval base of China was confirmed in 2014 after the agreement of Defense and Security was signed between Beijing and the state of the Horn of Africa (Singh, 2017).

3.3 Persian Gulf

Since 1996, China has become the world's second-largest consumer of crude oil and, after the United States of America and Japan, the third-largest importer of crude oil in the world. China should build and expand its influence in the Persian Gulf to provide oil and natural gas energy for the most dynamic economy of the world (Ghafouri, 2009). It is being said that China has two frontiers. One is its natural frontier that is its territory line, and the other one is created by China artificially by the installation of its military bases overseas and specifically its military presence in the Middle East.

3.4 Kish Island

For a long time, China kept focusing on expanding its economic interests in the Middle East by staying militarily and diplomatically absent in the region. According to the Iranian press, It seems that China is trying to build a permanent military base in the Gulf as China has signed an agreement based on security and military strategy in 2015. According to some rumors that aired in 2020 in Tasnim, a conservative news agency of Iran, China has signed an agreement with Iran for the lease of facilities on the Kish Island in Iran. The Kish Island is located on the Iranian coastline in the north of the Persian Gulf having a 1,359 km length with 15.45 km width from its west coast to its east coast. A parliamentary headliner named Hassan Norouzi stated that the discussion is under process about handing over the Kish Island to China for 25 years (Rubin, 2020).

In recent years a big shift has been seen by the rapid increase in military exchange between china and the sea line states of the Indian Ocean and Gulf states, including Iran in the Persian Gulf. The strategic nature of economic links created by China through Belt and Road initiatives helped china to expand its military and commercial activities in the region (Gurol & Scita, 2020). China preserves a great incentive to develop a navy "Blue Water" to protect its interests in the Persian Gulf. With the increase in imports of oil and gas from China, the interests of China in the Persian Gulf will also grow. Commentators hold the opinion that the increase in imports of energy and any slight change in the pattern of energy consumption will result in an increased dependency of China on the Persian Gulf and a decrease in the influence of the west on the region. Apart from economic interests, geopolitical interests and rivalry are also linked with the expanding influence of China in the Persian Gulf (Parker, 2000).

3.5 Strait of Hormuz

The Strait of Hormuz is an important and busiest 18km long strait, located between the Arabian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman, providing a gateway to the most important oil-importing countries in the world. The strait is considered as the only link between the Indian Ocean, open waters, and the Arabian Sea. Being a significant actor in the region of the Middle East, China has become successful in expanding its economic, security, and diplomatic relations with the states of the Middle East to ensure its energy and economic growth. This change in the region has threatened the USA and India, and these tensions are extended to the global level, which is likely to extend more shortly. China is not interested only in focusing on relations with oil and energy enriched states, but it is also involved in gas trade, energy project collaboration, including mortgaged contracts, renewable energy development, energy exploitation and exploration with cooperation and two-way investments,

China is dependent on USA maritime security, and China is well aware of the fact that the USA will not entertain China in the long term, and it could be the reason for the deterioration of USA-China relations. So, China started to build its relations with countries of the Middle East and foster its economic engagements there, but China cannot defeat USA supremacy and strategy in the Strait of Hormuz, and this geopolitical strategy of the USA is helping the USA to control or hold back the influence of China in Middle East region. Indeed, the maritime security of China is not strong, but the fact cannot be denied that the land power of China is more important than the USA, evidenced by BRI, a warmly welcomed policy of China by Middle East countries (Meresin, 2020).

3.6 Pakistan

Pakistan enjoys a very important geostrategic location, situated at the apex of the Arabian Peninsula. Many commentators hold the opinion that China's multibillion-dollar project, the China Pakistan Economic Corridor, is a way to exploit the strategic location of Pakistan. The development in the Eastern part of China is more rapid than in the central and western parts of China. The reason for this rapid growth is easy and safe access to the seaports for trade, favorable environment, and conditions for agricultural development. Now China is badly in need of growing its central and western parts. So China needs to open its doors to the Middle East and Europe by its western corridors to deal with its internal economic imbalance tensions (Xiaolu, 2015).

Malacca strait has also turned out as an important chokepoint as it serves as an important energy passage for china. 80% oil of china passes through the Malacca Strait

(Dabas, 2017). This oil comes from the Middle East, and the USA has hegemony on the Strait of Malacca. China fears that it cannot depend on the USA and its sea security for a long time. This made Pakistan inevitable for China and its energy security at sea because Pakistan will be an energy carrier for the Middle East and European trade shortly. This fact made China invest heavily in Pakistan to use its strategic location for its use when the time comes.

50% oil trade of china depends on the Middle East that is passing through the Dubai Shanghai Urumqi route. The Dubai Shanghai Urumqi route is a 12,000 km long route, but the Dubai Gwadar Urumqi route is only 3000km long, which is less costly for china for its shipment. Not only this, Gwadar will turn into a regional trade hub shortly because of its strategic location. The rapidly growing security Dilemma in the Indian Ocean region has pulled China to grab the amazingly important strategic location of Pakistan, and it has become the biggest threat to India. If Gwadar is turned into a naval port in the future, it will become a nightmare for India by challenging its ea. security (Shahzad, 2021).

3.7 Sri Lanka

China has improved its economic and political relationships with Sri Lanka. China wants to get access to every important chokepoint that can help China to provide sea security for its oil import shipments in the Indian Ocean. For its energy security in the sea, China cannot avoid any strategic line of communication on sea line that will provide it way to reach the Indian Ocean. Sri Lanka is blessed with a unique and strategic geographical location. Development and construction of a seaport in Hambantota started in 2007, which is a part of String of Pearls. The Sri Lankan government got a loan from the Chinese government for the oil refinery and development of the project initiated by the government of Sri Lanka. The port became operational in the year 2010, and it is expected to become South Asia's largest port shortly (Khrisanfova Daria, 2016).

The prime minister of Sri Lanka announced in October 2016 that China's international company, Merchants Holdings Ltd, will be sharing 80% shares of Hambantota port in exchange for one billion dollars as Sri Lanka is indebted to China. The investment of China in the infrastructure of the Sri Lankan port is a gambling move as it did not give any notable benefit to the local economic development of the country. Being the largest power in the region of South Asia, India has to take such type of steps to keep its influence in the Indian Ocean. It should assist its neighboring countries to help them in the development of their infrastructure as well as their human capital. This is one of the important ways to counter the supremacy of China in the Indian Ocean (Gunasekara, 2017).

3.8 Bangladesh

Since China is up to engage the South Asian states to exploit the economic and political potential of these states for its benefits and also to reach in the region of the Indian Ocean to build its hegemony, Bangladesh is also part of the Chinese strategic game in the region. China is providing aid and launching its assistance policy for the development of a new manufacturing base. China is investing heavily in different projects, including the development of road and ports infrastructures and the development of economic corridors, in the less developed countries of South Asia. This strategy will help China to exploit the man labor of these fewer developing countries with its resources (Ranjan, 2019). These countries, including Bangladesh, entertain china with its strategic location for the commercial and military bases of China. In 1975, Soviet Union refused to supply military tools to Bangladesh, leading the defense cooperation between China and Bangladesh. Recently in 2020, a defense deal has been signed between both countries. Under this deal, China provides Bangladesh with modern weapons. After signing MOUs and other defense agreements, the Chinese president stated that both states are agreed on the strategic communication to move their relationship to the next level, and they want to build their cooperation for maritime affairs together. The Bay of Bengal is one of the most interesting points for china because it gives communication ways to sea trade in the region. This Bay of Bengal will help china to fight against India and build hegemony in South Asia. Ibid

3.9 Bay of Bengal

The Bay of Bengal is a gateway for strategic rivalries, and it also connects countries of South Asia and Southeast Asia. The country is one of the countries which covers the maritime

Silk Road project and OBOR. The emerging superpower China, India as a regional power and increasing demand for oil and energy have increased the importance of the strategic location of the Bay of Bengal. For sea trade security, China has been involved in the Bay of Bengal because it connects with the Strait of Malacca, one of the busiest straits in the region. The increasing involvement of China in Bangladesh has threatened India and the USA, those who were already playing in the region. Both states, the USA and India, have increased their economic and maritime investments to balance the influence of China in the region (Pulami, 2020).

3.10 Myanmar

China has increased its investment in Myanmar from 2008-2011. China invested heavily in its three major projects in the country, including the Sino-Myanmar oil and gas pipeline project. The investment by China in Myanmar under the umbrella of the Belt and Road initiative is obvious (Yao & Zhang, 2018). Myanmar has a location that serves to provide the pass way between China, South Asia, and South East Asia. Myanmar provides passage as a trading gateway to land-locked provinces of China named Sichuan and Yunnan. Potentially China needs Myanmar and its strategic location to assure its potentially strategic presence in the Indian Ocean. These reasons made Myanmar are worth investing in for China (Shee, 1997).

3.11 China-Myanmar Economic Corridor

Other than the China oil and gas pipeline project, China-Myanmar economic corridor is another great project of China in Myanmar, and it considers as the flagship project of BRI, a developmental program to intensify connectivity in the areas of trade, investment, infrastructure, and capital (Karim & Islam, 2018). The CMEC is covering a 1700 km area from Yunnan province of China to Mandalay in central Myanmar (Ramachandran, 2020). China has invested a lot in this project. This project is serving China in its energy and oil trade as well as in building its economic relations with Myanmar (Zhao & Yang, 2012).

China-Myanmar economic corridor will not only address the issue to provide alternative access to the Indian Ocean of Yunnan, a landlocked Chinese province, for its oil trade, but it also helps China to deal with its Sino-India rivalry. The project will be proving a fortune for China for its geopolitical gambling in the region. It is expected that CMEC will serve in the same way as CPEC in Pakistan, and it could isolate India from the East as a result of Chinese strategy to surround India strategically. India is also investing in Myanmar to keep an eye on the activities of China in the Indian Ocean (Myers, 2020).

3.12 Eritrea

Many analysts call Eritrea 'North Korea of Africa'. China decided to turn Eritrea into the centerpiece of the BRI. In May 2019, foreign ministers of both countries met, and it was announced publically by Eritrea state that both countries aim to have a strong and healthy partnership for the benefit of the people of both states. Eritrea is blessed with two great harbors, Massawa and Assab. China acknowledged its importance; hence in November, China began to build a 134 km long road with the coordination of Eritrea officials. Eritrea is known as one of the least developed countries, and China sees the brutal regime of Isaiiah Afwerki as an opportunity that let China invest in the state to secure its way to the red sea (Bodetti, 2020).

3.13 Massawa Port

In January 2014, China and Eritrea formally signed a construction contract under China Harbor Engineering Company Ltd that is involved in many other port projects around the world. According to this contract, \$400 million amount was decided to invest for the construction period of 40 months. The first phase of the project included the design and erection of 70,000 bulk cargo terminals and 50,000t terminals for multipurpose. This huge port project plan included construction of port area, good yard, incoming roads, inception area, supporting pieces of equipment and facilities, power, water supply, navigation, communication, auxiliary tug, and many more services (Tesfa News, 2015, February 1). The port will facilitate China with rapid growth in the export of gold and copper from the Asmara mine and zinc from the Bisha mine.

3.14. Lamu Port

Recently Kenya has launched a mega project of Lamu port that is a part of the transport corridor between Kenya through Lamu, South Sudan, and Ethiopia. The Lamu Port South Sudan-Ethiopia Transport corridor is a project invested in China, constructed by China Communications Construction Company. Lamu port would be the second most deepwater port of Kenya, and it will be one of the most important ports for strategic and regional connectivity for economic development. The investment in Lamu port helped China to gain access to more markets, political influence, and dependency of Kenya on technology and expertise of China. Lamu port will enable China to have another facility in the Indian Ocean that will help it to gain access to the Indian Ocean without any impediment. Lamu port will enable China to project its power capabilities as well (Mishra, 2021).

4. Conclusion

China is an emerging economy and an unbeatable regional power. Oil, gas, and energy supply is a major interest of China that is carried through the Indian Ocean. China has adopted a strategy of strategic encirclement to encircle the Indian Ocean by the installation of "String of Pearls." The String of Pearls is a chain of military and commercial bases around the Indian Ocean made by China for its commercial operations. Indian Ocean has become a center for the geopolitical composition among major powers, the USA, China, and India. China wants to advance its influence in the Indian Ocean because oil and energy supply and trade of China transit the Indian Ocean. Sea lines of communications play a significant role in this regard as China has built its military and commercial facilities in the sea line countries that fall in the Indian Ocean. These countries are less developed countries of the region. These SLOCs are providing China ways to the Indian Ocean for its shipment. China is investing in these countries heavily to build strong relationships with these countries. These investments are paying China in the form of the least costly trade. Through building military, commercial and diplomatic relationships with these countries, China paved its safe way for maritime trade to counter the hegemony of the USA in the region. These military bases are proving a threat to the security system of India because of the strategic locations of the military bases that are considered part of the String of Pearl. By building its strong influence in the region, China intends to become a regional hegemonic power in competition with India. The game is not over; the result of continuous power politics in the region is yet to be seen.

References

- Abbi, A. (2015). String of Pearls: India and the Geopolitics of Chinese Foreign Policy. *E-international relations*.
- Abdallah, A. A. (2008). State building, independence and post-conflict reconstruction in Djibouti. *Post-conflict peace-building in the horn of Africa*, 8(1), 269-279.
- Abid, M., & Ashfaq, A. (2015). CPEC: Challenges and opportunities for Pakistan. *Journal of Pakistan Vision*, 16(2), 142-169.
- Agarwal, R. (2020, July 23). China's Expansion in the Indian Ocean: A Big Worry for India. Retrieved from <https://diplomatist.com/2020/07/23/chinas-expansion-in-the-indian-ocean-a-big-worry-for-india/>
- Ahmad, M. S., Asmi, F., Ali, M., Rahman, M. M., & Abbas, S. M. (2017). China-Pakistan economic corridor: In the context of 'String of pearl strategy. *International Journal of Business and Social Research*, 7(8), 26-42.
- Barratt, J. (1977). Djibouti Independence. *South African Institute of International Affairs*, 5.
- Bereketeab, R. (2016). Djibouti: strategic location, an asset or a curse? *Journal of African Foreign Affairs*, 3(1), 5-18.
- Bodetti, A. (2020). Through Eritrea, China quietly makes inroads near the Red Sea. *The Diplomat*, 25.
- Cabestan, J.-P. (2020). China's military base in Djibouti: A microcosm of China's growing competition with the United States and new bipolarity. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 29(125), 731-747. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2019.1704994>
- Chaudhury, A. B. R., & Basu, P. (2016). Meeting with China in the Bay of Bengal. *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, 12(2), 143-160. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/19480881.2016.1226751>
- Chaziza, M. (2018). *China's Military Base in Djibouti*: Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies.

- Dabas, M. (2017). Here is all you should know about 'string of pearls', China's policy to encircle India. *India Times*.
- Downs, E., Becker, J., & Degategno, P. (2017). *China's Military Support Facility in Djibouti: The Economic and Security Dimensions of China's First Overseas Base*. Retrieved from
- Dutton, P. A., Kardon, I. B., & Kennedy, C. M. (2020). *Djibouti: China's First Overseas Strategic Strongpoint*. Retrieved from United States:
- Ghafouri, M. (2009). China's policy in the Persian Gulf. *Middle East Policy*, 16(2), 80-92.
- Gunasekara, S. (2017). Sri Lanka Suffers from China's Indian Ocean Strategy. *Asia Pacific Bulletin*. Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/10125/43959>
- Gurool, J., & Scita, J. (2020). China's Persian Gulf strategy: Keep Tehran and Riyadh content. *The Atlantic Council*, January, 24, 20.
- Harutyunyan, A. (2020). Middle East and North Africa as a Part of Chinese String of Pearls Strategy. *Orbis Linguarum*, 18(3), 60-71.
- Humayun Kabir, M., & Ahmad, A. (2015). The Bay of Bengal: Next theatre for strategic power play in Asia. *Croatian International Relations Review*, 21(72), 199-238.
- Ishaq, M., Ping, R. J., & Ahmed, B. (2017). Pakistan-China Economic Corridor (CPEC): Opportunities, Threats and Challenges. *International Affairs and Global Strategy*, 52(9), 9-16.
- Kahandawaarachchi, T. (2015). *Politics of ports: China's investments in Pakistan, Sri Lanka & Bangladesh*. (Doctoral), University of Washington, Retrieved from <http://hdl.handle.net/1773/33536>
- Karim, M. A., & Islam, F. (2018). Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor: Challenges and Prospects. *Korea Institute for Defense Analyses*, 30(2), 283-302.
- Khrisanfova Daria, V. (2016). The relationship between China and Sri Lanka as a part of the String of Pearls strategy. *Tomsk State University Journal*, 143.
- Khurana, G. S. (2008). China's 'String of Pearls' in the Indian Ocean and Its Security Implications. *Strategic Analysis*, 32(1), 1-39. doi:<https://doi.org/10.1080/09700160801886314>
- Meresin, A. T. (2020). China's Geopolitical Strategy in the Strait of Hormuz. *Chinese Journal of International Review*, 2(2), 2050009.
- Mishra, A. (2021). A Chinese-built port in the Indian Ocean: The story of Kenya's Lamu port. *Observer Research Foundation*.
- Myers, L. (2020). The China-Myanmar Economic Corridor and China's Determination to See it Through.
- P C, D. (2017). China's Strategy of Encirclement. Retrieved from <http://www.indiandefencereview.com/news/chinas-strategy-of-encirclement/>
- Parker, T. (2000). China's Growing Interests in the Persian Gulf. *The Brown Journal of World Affairs*, 7(1), 235-243.
- Pulami, M. J. (2020). Stimson. *South Asian Voices*.
- Ramachandran, S. (2020). The China-Myanmar Economic Corridor: Delays Ahead. *China Brief*, 12-17.
- Ranjan, A. (2019). The Making of Bangladesh-China Relations. *Jindal School of International Affairs*, 2(1), 32-44.
- Rashid, W. (2020). A string of Pearls-China's Emerging Strategic Culture. *Strategic Studies*, 37(4).
- Rubin, M. (2020). China's next military move: A base in the Persian Gulf.
- Shahzad, S. M. (2021). String of Pearls: Chinese Economic Strategy Concerning the IOR Amid Growing Security Dilemma, with an Emphasis on the CPEC. *Pakistan Journal of Social Sciences*, 41(2), 399-408.
- Shee, P. K. (1997). The political economy of China-Myanmar relations: Strategic and economic dimensions. *Southeast Asia*, 19(1), 33-53.
- Singh, A. (2017). China's military base in Djibouti: Strategic implications for India. *War on the Rocks*, 15.
- Sinha, T. (2009). China-Myanmar energy engagements: challenges and opportunities for India. *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies*(134), 1-5.
- Sun, D., & Zoubir, Y. H. (2021). Securing China's 'Latent Power': The Dragon's Anchorage in Djibouti. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 30(130), 677-692.
- Tesfa News. (2015, February 1). USA 400 Million New Massawa Port Project Contract goes to Chinese Company CHEC. *Tesfa News*.

- Xiaolu, L. (2015). A Chinese Perspective on CPEC: Background, Benefits and Risks. *Journal of Contemporary Studies*, 4(2), 1-16.
- Yao, Y., & Zhang, Y. (2018). Public perception of Chinese investment in Myanmar and its political consequences: A survey experimental approach. *Policy Brief, International Growth Centre*.
- Yoshihara, T., & Sokolsky, R. (2002). The United States and China in the Persian Gulf: Challenges and Opportunities. *Fletcher F. World Aff.*, 26, 63.
- Zhao, H., & Yang, M. (2012). China-Myanmar economic corridor and its implications. *East Asian Policy*, 4(2), 21-32.