

India's Necklace of Diamonds as a Counter Strategy to the Chinese String of Pearls: Comparative Analysis

Binoy Biswas

Asst. Professor, Srikrishna College, Bagula, Nadia, 741502. W.B.

China wants to be leading super power in the world. That is why they need to expand market, business, trade and other facilities in different countries. They have already taken Border and Road Initiatives (BRI) which is concerned with economic ties, trade expansion, market access, infrastructural development, new establishments or bases so on. The string of Pearls is a part of Border and Road Initiatives, which is mainly a geopolitical strategy to build commercial facilities, making smooth and safe passage for maritime business, establishing military network and bases for protecting trade interests around Indian neighbouring countries in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). The term, 'String of Pearls' has never been used by Chinese Government officially. The term was used by media and is being used in academic practices. Chinese 'String of Pearls' entails establishing maritime bases in Myanmar, Bangladesh, Maldives, Pakistan, Oman, Mauritius, Djibouti to enhance its both commercial activities and trade interests as well as security aspects.

Different Pearls of China:

1. **Bangladesh:** China has developed and modernized the Chittagong Port for smooth and fast transit of commercial activities in the heart of Bengal. China not only invested in port modernization but also invested a lot in other domestic infrastructural development like railway, transport, communication, information technology, gas pipeline etc. They want to get access also Mongla and Sonadia Port of Bangladesh. China has set up naval base in Chittagong in the name of securing trade interest.

2. **Srilanka:** By The 'string of pearls' strategy, China is not only making its presence in the Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal but also capturing strategic location through Debt Trap Diplomacy. Srilanka is the burning instance of it. The island country handed over the Hambantota port to the China for 99 year because of failure of loan repayment. Thus China got full-fledged access to use both commercial and military purpose. Very recently China Sent military survey cum spy ship, Yuan Wan-5 to Hambantota for 19th to 22nd August, 2022. China terms docking of Yuan Wang 5 ship at Hambantota port as normal exchange. It is consistent with the international law and would not affect security of any other country. But India expressed its national security concerns as the vessel is capable of satellite tracking, ICBM locating, sub marine detecting and surveilling of other military establishments and activities.

3. **Pakistan:** China is Pakistan all weather ally. Both China and Pakistan have tied for China-Pakistan Economic Corridor which is part of BRI project. China is investing huge money in Pakistan internal infrastructural developments, selling weapons, lending money, constructing highways and ports. Therefore, by virtue of huge Chinese investments and dependence of foreign aids, Pakistan has always been China's tool to keep India in check. China has got total construction and operating access in the Gwadar Port. The port is being used not only for the purpose of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) but also for military purpose that is the matter of India's national security issue. As this port would be very useful for China in case Sino-Indian conflict.

4. **Myanmar:** The Chinese Army is also constructing a base on Small Coco Island, which is located in the Alexandra Channel, which connects the Indian Ocean and the Andaman Sea north of India's Andaman Islands. These facilities allow China to monitor Indian naval movements in the Bay of Bengal as well as missile tests conducted at the DRDO testing facility in Chandipur. These islands are strategically located between the Bay of Bengal and the Malacca Strait, making them ideal for monitoring Indian naval and missile launch facilities in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands to the south, as well as Indian Navy movements throughout the eastern Indian Ocean. China has also accession Kyaukpyu port for commercial Maritime facility. It can be used as military base against India during conflict.

5. **Maldives:** It is one of the Island countries in the Indian Ocean near Lakshdweep island of India. Chinese army has military base in the Feydhoo Finolhu. It is a tiny islet just 0.5 square miles in area, located 3 nautical miles from the Maldivian capital, Malé. An undisclosed Chinese company received a 50-year lease to the island in December 2016 for a bargain price of \$4 million. Another Chinese developer is building a similar resort at Kunaavashi, an atoll 35 nautical miles from Malé. This development, the Tolarno Maldives Kunaavashi Resort, had also been the object of speculation regarding secret military uses. China's largest, and most visible, infrastructure projects in the Maldives have been on the capital island of Malé and adjacent Hulhumalé. The two most important projects have been the expansion of the Velana International Airport on Malé and the construction of the Sinamale Bridge connecting it to Hulhumalé. The Export Import Bank of China funded both projects. China can easily misuse and take advantage of economies ties against rivals.

6. **Seychelles:** It is an archipelagic country. The country allowed China to set up naval base on their land. Although Chinese authorities say that the Seychelles base will be used to supply naval ships on anti-piracy missions off the coast of Somalia, and that China will not station its troops abroad.

7. **Djibuti:** The country is a strategically located in the Horn of Africa. China began constructing its first People's Liberation Army (PLA) overseas base at Djibouti's Doraleh Port in March 2016 which is a clear reflection of the Communist nation's foothold in the continent. Djibouti is a strategic port on the mouth of the Red Sea and route to the Suez Canal with easy access to the Arabian Sea, the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean because Chinese 50% imported oils passes through the route. Recent satellite images show that the PLA's upgrading and modernizing work is going in full swing at this overseas base over the past six months to probably increase Chinese influence in the African continent where China is a major stakeholder in all arenas. Although China says that this port would be used for security, anti-piracy support, UN peace-Keeping and Humanitarian Relief. But this naval base will definitely be a crucial for China at the time of conflict.

8. **Choke Points:** The Strait of Malacca is one of the world's busiest canals, the transit point for merchant ships as well as giant oil tankers to the Middle East and Japanese ports and other parts of East Asia. In addition, the strait is of great economic importance for the countries of the region and the rest of the world. Strait of Malacca is one of the choke points of Chinese's export import sea line. 80 per cent of China's oil imports pass through the Strait of Malacca. Therefore, Strait of Malacca is only sea route for China until it develops alternative route. Therefore China is very much interested to develop friendly relations with countries like Malaysia and Singapore which surround the Malacca Strait. It is said to have they have naval base in Coco Island. Another important choke point is Strait of Hormuz. It is the world's most important oil transit chokepoint because of the large volumes of oil that flow through the strait. In 2018, its daily oil flow averaged 21 million barrels per day (b/d), or the equivalent of about 21% of global petroleum liquids consumption. China is trying to control by making agreement and enhancing military cooperation with Iran.

Impact of Chinese String of Pearl on India:

- **Strategic impact:** Strings of pearls will definitely reduce India's top position in the Indian Ocean as China is developing and constructing ports, bases surrounding neighbouring countries. The strategic influence of India, which it enjoys in modern times in the Indian Ocean, will get lowered. Neighbouring countries will have options and bargaining capacity between India and China in all aspects and Chinese will have better chances than India.
- **Economic impact:** It will affect adversely on Indian economy and hamper internal development works because country have to increase its defence budget due to security concerns. It may further escalate tension around southeast and east area.
- **Maritime security:** Definitely, Indian maritime security have to face new emerging challenge in Indian Ocean region owing to China's presence on the Indian Ocean and the Bay of Bengal. It will pose a significant threat to India's safety through the water. China is growing more firepower with more submarines, desecrators, ships, and vessels as it threatens Indian maritime security.

Moreover, China is supporting and assisting actively anti Indian forces and countries. They also misguiding and misleading neighbouring countries. India argues that china is trying to encircle India with the dual (commercial and military) use port capabilities. India is very much concerned about maritime so-called national security. That is why India is also taking some defensive or counter measures which is known as Necklace of Diamond.

India's Counter Strategy:

India is combating China's String of Pearls Strategy with a multifaceted approach. The plan calls for the construction of ports, the installation of sophisticated Coastal Surveillance Radar (CSR) systems to monitor Chinese warships and submarines, the importation of cutting-edge surveillance aircraft that can locate Chinese submarines, the operation of an airport in the neighbouring country to monitor the Chinese port, the strengthening of defence ties, the expansion of bilateral ties with South Asian Nations, island nations in the Indian Ocean Region, South-East Asian Nations, and regular performance.

Some of the important actions that are undertaken by India to counter the Chinese Navy and its influence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region -

Different of Diamonds of Necklace:

1. **India's Act East Policy:** India's Act East Policy is closely connected with its long-term vision of developing its North-Eastern Region (NER) which is considered as a gateway to Southeast Asia. Prime Minister Modi has shown a strong commitment to developing the infrastructure of the region in transport, highways, communication, power and waterways. It was launched in 2014 as an effort to integrate India's economy with South-East Asian nations. It has been used to make important military and strategic agreements with Vietnam, Japan, the Philippines, South Korea, Indonesia, Singapore, and Thailand helping India to counter China.

2. Construction and availing of port facilities:

- **Chabahar Port, Iran:** India is developing Chabahar port in Iran. Chabahar gives India a strategic position. It is strategically located close to the Chinese Gwadar Port in Pakistan and is close to the Strait of Hormuz. The Iranian Port is also accessing Afghan. So India can reach and make business with the Central Asia by using this port. This port will be very crucial for India for securing trade interest, importing oil from Middle East, as a strong counter base during any conflict with China.
- **Sabang Port, Indonesia:** India is building a deep-sea Port at Sabang in Indonesia. It has strategic significance as it is located right entrance of Strait of Malacca and India's Andaman & Nicobar Islands. This strait is one of the world's famous choke points. A large chunk of trade and crude oil passes on to China through this region. In 2018, India got the military access to Sabang Port. Therefore this port will provide supporting base for India against any security threat in Indian Ocean Region and South East Asia Region.
- **Sittwe, Myanmar:** Sittwe Port is a deepwater port constructed by India in 2016 at Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine State in Myanmar, on the Bay of Bengal. It is situated at the mouth of the Kaladan River, the port is being financed by India as a part of the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project. The project is aimed at developing transport infrastructure in southwestern Myanmar and northeastern India and to provide alternative connectivity to Kolkata without having to use the circuitous Siliguri corridor.
- **Mongla, Bangladesh** – Being a landlocked neighbouring country of India, Bangladesh is tied with India on many aspects. India would help Bangladesh to modernize Sea Port in Mongla. Both neighbouring countries have expressed their interests in developing deep sea military base in Sonadia. India can also use the Chittagong port in Bangladesh.
- **Duqm Port, Oman** – India got military access to the Duqm Port in 2018. It is strategically located port with naval facilities in Oman. This facility is close to the Strait of Hormuz. More than 30% of oil exports pass through the Strait of Hormuz. It facilitates India's crude oil imports from the Persian Gulf. Besides this port is situated between two Chinese bases-Djibuti and Gwadar.
- **Changi, Singapore:** – India has signed an agreement to access Changi Naval Base of Singapore, which is strategically located close to the Strait of Malacca. Indian Navy will get logistic support and ships will be refueled at the port.
- **Assumption Island, Seychelles:** In 2015 India and Seychelles jointly agreed to development naval bases in this region. This gives the military access to India. This base is of strategic importance to India as China desperately wants to increase its presence in the African continent through the maritime silk route.

3. Military and Naval Exercise: India has established a strategic naval alliance with Myanmar in order to modernize and train its navy, giving India a larger presence in the region. Additionally, India has quadrilateral agreements for military co-operation in the area with the USA, Australia, and Japan. The four nations, often referred to as the "Quad," conduct combined military drills in the IOR region.

4. Building Coastal Radar Networks:

- **Bangladesh** - India and Bangladesh recently signed a contract calling for the installation of 20 coastal surveillance radar systems. India would be able to keep an eye on Chinese warships that have been frequenting the Bay of Bengal.
- **Maldives** - Ten coastal radar systems will be installed there by India. These radars will transmit real-time pictures, videos, and information about the whereabouts of ships travelling through the Indian Ocean. Bharat Electronics Limited is the project's implementer (BEL). Already 7 projects have been finished. Rest of the projects are progressing at full speed now.
- **Sri Lanka:** There are 6 Coastal Surveillance Radars (CSR) in Sri Lanka. According to various estimates, India intends to build at least 10 more CSR in Sri Lanka. The governments of India and Sri Lanka are making continual attempts to strengthen their relations.
- **Mauritius:** There are 8 coastal surveillance radars in place in Mauritius.
- **Seychelles** - The Seychelles have installed 1 Coastal Surveillance Radar (CSR). In the Seychelles, the first coastal surveillance radar went into operation in 2015. On Mahe, the major island, it was dedicated. The little islands of Astove, Assumption, and Farquhar will see more Coastal Surveillance Radar installed. In Seychelles, there are plans for 32 more Coastal Surveillance Radar Systems.
- **Information Fusion Centre:** The Country has established the Gurgaon-based Information Fusion Centre for the Indian Ocean Region (IFC-IOR), which will share current maritime information with allied nations. To give the Indian Defense Establishment a complete real-time image of Chinese presence in the area, all Coastal Surveillance Radar Systems are networked

5. India-France Reciprocal Agreement: India and France recently agreed to a strategic agreement that allows both countries' warships to access each other's naval bases throughout the Indian Ocean. The Indian navy now has access to significant French ports, including one in Djibouti, the location of China's sole overseas military installation.

7. India's Strategic Cooperation

Apart from getting direct access to the strategically placed naval bases, India is also developing new naval bases, developing the old bases and is enhancing bilateral and multilateral relations with other nations to garland China such as

1- Mongolia: Prime Minister Modi is the first Indian Prime Minister to visit this country. Both the countries have agreed and will collaborate to develop a bilateral air corridor using India's credit line.

2- Japan: India and Japan have jointly declared to build the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC).

3. Philippines: India has tied with Philippines on an agreement for selling Brahmos It is \$374 million deal which will counterbalance China-Pakistan security nexus in the Indian Ocean Region .Not only it will be a good market for Indian defence industry but also will give the China to taste its own medicine.

4- Vietnam: India is maintaining good relations with Vietnam and has so far sold Brahmos Missile and 4 patrol boats to the country.

5- Central Asia: Prime Minister Modi visited all the 5 countries of Central Asia -Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan and Tajikistan — in one go and becomes the first Indian Prime Minister to do this. Within 4 years, trade with Central Asian countries has doubled after his visit.

It can be concluded that India has maintained healthy relations with all the nations in China's periphery. This will give strategic access to India and the pattern can be seen as the necklace of diamonds garlanding China in a counter encirclement. India is doing everything to protect its interest. India's Necklace of Diamond was made to counter China's String of pearls. However there have been a lot of strategy challenges in the successful implementation of it, as China has escalated its economic relation with almost 90% of the countries in the world, it has provided financial aid to majority of the countries even to countries run by terrorist groups China's One Belt and Road Initiative is regarded as the world's risk project in terms of finance. However , India is increasing its relation with many countries like Japan , US , Sri Lanka to counter the China influence in the Asia region and especially in the Indian Ocean region, it has also adopted the Act East policy to gather more support against China , after the South China Sea conflict, most of the Asian countries are supporting India.

Bibliography and References:

1. <https://www.indiatimes.com/news/india/here-is-all-you-should-know-about-string-of-pearls-china-s-policy-to-encircle-india-324315.html>
2. <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/readersblog/youthwrites/necklace-of-diamonds-vs-string-of-pearls-india-china-standoff-43458/>
3. <https://testbook.com/ias-preparation/string-of-pearls-china-upsc-notes/>
4. <https://thediplomat.com/2015/02/the-small-islands-holding-the-key-to-the-indian-ocean/>
5. <https://asiatimes.com/2020/07/string-of-pearls-vs-necklace-of-diamonds/>
6. <https://www.hindustantimes.com/india-news/india-myanmar-working-to-operationalise-sittwe-port-in-early-2021/story-JdJWJeb4nL6Gtw9PAFxl1M.html>
7. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/05/12/maritime-competition-in-indian-ocean-pub-87093>
8. https://www.jstor.org/stable/48544289?seq=13#metadata_info_tab_contents
9. Chakraborty.B &Nandi.D (2016), an outline of Indian Foreign Policy and Relations (1st Edt.) Kolkata, Mitram, ISBN- 978-93-80036-84-7, Pp-28-57, 202-249, 320-375, 393-411, 470-496, 520-523.
10. Kothari. R & Khan. E (2017), India Becoming Global Power in the Twentieth-First Century Rising Challenges and Newer Opportunity (Edt), New Delhi, Atlantic, ISBN- 978-81-269-2190-4, Pp-192-200, 234-290.
11. Mansbach. R. W & Taylor.K.L (2018), Introduction to Global Politics (3rd Edt.), New York, Routledge, ISBN-978-1-138-36933-7, Pp-205-216.
12. Chatterjee. A (2018), International Relations Today-Concepts & Application (2nd Edt), Lucknow, Pearson, ISBN-978-93-530-6126-5, Pp-191-216.
13. Sen.A.K(1986), International Relations Since World War-I (4th Edt), New Delhi, S. -Chand & Company, Pp-483-511,611-666.
14. Bhattacharyya. D.C & Gangopadhyay.R,(2012), International Relation Since the Twentieth Century, Kolkata,Vijaya Publishing, Pp-306-320.
15. Ranjan .A (2019), India in South Asia-Challenges and Managements(Ed), Singapore, springer, ISBN-978-981-13-2019-4, Pp-57-74,203-215,235-254,269-289.