

## ***THE STRING OF PEARLS: CHINA'S MARITIME POLICY TO ENCIRCLE INDIA***

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### **I. Introduction:**

It is avaricious to expect that the diplomatic relations between nations always remain the same. Many factors affect the general relationship between individuals and nations to become friendly and rival nation-states. In 21st century states are maintaining diplomatic, trade and agreements with their allies. For example, India-Russia friendly relations since independence kept in the interest of India. In UNO Security Council 17 times Pakistan has raised questions about the Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK). But every time Russia has refused the POK issue through its Veto power and supported to India. 2013 India has signed Iran's Railway Project to construct a rail line an approximately 628 km from Chabaharport to Zahedan along the border with Afghanistan. But, after 13 years of the agreement, Iran has terminated the contract due to delay in starting the project and also cancelled \$ 1.78 billion worth the Persian Strait "Farzad-B gas field which was discovered by Indian "Oil National Gas Corporation (ONGC)". National Iranian Oil Company (NIOC) had informed to ONGC Videsh Ltd (OVL) that, rejection of companies bid and same project was tendered to Petropars natural gas field (Times of India 2021). It shows that the every State trade and diplomatic relations are based on its own interests.

### **II. India -China: Panchasheel for Peaceful Co-existence:**

India and China have become independent countries among the 62 countries after World War II. The history of republic of china begins after they put an end to the Qing dynasty and the civil war under the leadership of Chinese Communist leader Mao Zedong and have gained independence on 1st October 1948. China is growing in all fields including science, technology, education and medicine etc. It grabs the opportunities to grow into the largest economy in the world. The leaders of the two countries in the initial stages mainly focus on co-existence with neighbouring states. It has drafted its foreign policy on 29th April 1954 as the Panchasheel agreement that was signed by the India Prime Minister "Jawaharlal Nehru" and China Prime Minister "Chou En Lai "during Asian Prime Minister's Conference at Colombo. Panchasheel contains five principles like, peaceful co-existence,

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Mutual respect for sovereignty & territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression and equality & mutual benefits. It was treated as a mile stone in the India and China relations. But in course of time many conflicts have been raised between these two nations. Particularly, china's frequent attacks on certain areas of Indian Territory and occupied several parts of India. These includes 1962 "Aksai chin" of Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim incident 1967, "Tulungla" of Arunachal Pradesh "Despang plains" in April- May 2013, "Chumur" in 2014 & 2015, "Dokhlam" Crisis in 2017 and May 5th 2020 "Galwan" attack showing China's antagonism towards India. In 1914 Simla convention decided that, McMohan line is a demarcation line between China and India (Dr. Srikanth Kondapalli 2020)<sup>3</sup>. The line is named after Henry MC Mohan, foreign secretary of British India and the chief negotiator of the Simla convention. Nationalist China Representative leader Chen Yifan and first China's premier Zhou Enlai wrote a letter to Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru on 7th November 1959 to line up each side to exercise actual control in the Western sector. Zhou Enlai used the term the "line of Actual control (LAC)" is a notional demarcation line that separates India-china. China occupied the aksai chin and entered 20 kilometres inside the Indian Territory. Due to these incidents the Indo-Sino (India-China) war was occurred in October-November 1962; as a result relations between the two countries began to decline (TJ Reddy VSM (Retd) 2021)<sup>4</sup>. On the other hand, china has established relations with many countries to become the world's No.1 Economy. In this endeavour, China has started construction of the Silk Road with Pakistan and harbours in Maldives and Srilanka against the India's interest and also to pose challenge to the security issues. In addition to this, china offer loans to port constructions and trade agreements with many countries to control the Indian, Arabian Sea routes. It is a strategy to block sea routes and reduce international maritime trade opportunities to India and have intension to challenge the India in terms of security.

### **III. China Maritime Trade & Transport:**

Maritime transport is the easiest and cheapest way to transport and also to strategically attack on enemy nations during war. Due to this reason, many countries have entered into maritime agreements to gain control over sea and ocean routes.

Around 80 per cent of global trade by volume and over 70 per cent by value are carried by sea ports world wide (Statista, Global Maritime Trade 2021)<sup>5</sup>. According to January 1st 2020 data internationally, around 56,000 merchant ships are using for only trading purpose of which 17,000 ships were general cargo ships. Greece tops the world for ship owning, but China has increased its position in value out of the top 10 in Vessels Value. Every year, the shipping transports nearly 2 billion tons of crude oil, 1 billion tons of iron ore (the raw

material for steel produce) and 350 million tons of grain. These shipments would not be possible by road, rail or air. For an economic region such as the European Union shipping accounts for 80% of total exports and imports by volume and some 50% by value. As of 2019, the total value of the annual world shipping trade had reached more than 14 trillion US Dollars (UNO 2020)<sup>6</sup>.

Rank	Country	Total Deadweight Tons	% of World
1	Greece	364.0 million	17.77
2	Japan	233.1 million	11.38
3	China	228.4 million	11.15
4	Singapore	137.3 million	6.70
5	Hong Kong	101.0.million	4.93
6	Germany	89.4 million	4.37
7	Korea	80.6 million	3.93
8	Norway	63.9 million	3.12
9	Bermuda	60.4 million	2.95
10	United States of America	57.2 million	2.79

Source: Statista Research Department, 2021.

#### **IV. China -world's second-largest ship-owning nation:**

The Shanghai (China) is the world's largest seaport, which handled a staggering 43.3 million TEUs (Twenty-Foot Equivalent Unit-is a measure of volume in units of containers) in 2019. China Ocean Shipping Company (COSCO) is the world's largest shipping company. The country also builds a whopping 96% of the world's shipping containers. China has topped Japan for the first time and is now the second-largest ship-owning nation controlling a fleet of more than 5,600 vessels totalling a capacity of 270 million Deadweight tonnage (DWT)(European 2021)<sup>7</sup>. In early 2019, Greece remains the largest country with a share of 20.4% in terms of dwt, now followed by China (14.5%) and Japan (13.0%). Together these three countries control almost half of the world merchant fleet's tonnage. At the company level, China COSCO Shipping is the largest shipping company in the world. The company was formed by merging of the COSCO Group and the China Shipping Group in 2016 and controls a fleet of over 800 merchant vessels of a combined 74.5 million dwt.

#### **V. China financial assistance to Port City:**

China has only shipping rights over the South China Sea route. It does not have waterways or ports to trade its shipping to European countries across the Indian Ocean. It has established naval routes to enter the Indian Ocean with many countries in the name of "String of Pearls" one belt one road Strait on the African continent and covers various countries like Sri Lanka, Maldives and Pakistan for navigation by sea across the Indian

Ocean, South China and the Arabian Oceans. Sri Lanka is a main island nation in the Indian Ocean to the south of India. It is main hub for international maritime trade on the west coast of Sri Lanka. Ships from Africa, America and West Asia to India via the Colombo Harbour (Port) are anchored here to transport cargo to smaller vessels. This Port gets the highest income from India through the port. China has put Sri Lanka in its guts and launched project in 2014 near Colombo city of Sri Lanka. The Rajapakse government came to power in 2019 and leased the Hambantota harbour to China for a period of 99 years (Dr. Srikanth Kondapalli 2020)<sup>8</sup>. Sri Lanka MPs have opposed Sri Lanka lease to China. Before this project, India felt no disturbance zone on the south coastal of the Indian Ocean. But with this project, China can deploy their navy in an emergency. Another side, the Sri Lankan government has cancelled the East Container Terminal (ECT) Joint venture of India. In February 2021 Sri Lanka Central Bank (CBSL) has returned 40 crores rupees amount which was donated (2020 July) by Indian Government during the Covid-19 Pandemic.

#### **VI. Maldives -Maritime Silk Road (MSR):**

China's president Xi Jinping first visited the Asian country Maldives on September 2014. It indicates the strategic foreign policy of China to control Indian Ocean littorals. Before this incident in October 2013 China put forward with an idea of a maritime silk road (MSR) which connects the China and the Maldives. Xinhua announced on August 15th 2014 that China-Maldives Maritime Silk Road via Ihavandhippolhu (I Haven) integrated development project in the northern island of Maldives. It is a strategy of China to capitalize on the Maldives to grab the opportunity to use the seven degree channel through East West shipping routes, which connects Southeast Asia, Europe and China to the Maldives.

In August 2014 the Maldives president Abdulla Yameen visited China to attend the second summer youth Olympic Games which were held from 16-28 August at Nanjing. China gave \$ 16 million grant in aid to Maldives for various projects like Male- Hulhule Bridge, energy, tourism, telecommunication and 1000 housing units' projects etc. China is co-operating with Maldives on developing SEZ (Special Economic Zones) construction of harbours.

#### **VII. Antagonist Attitude of China:**

In 1965 Johnson, a British surveyor conducted a survey and designated that Aksai Chin was in the part of Kashmir. In the year 1893 the Macaulay has also recognised the Aksai Chin is part of Kashmir and the border point between India and China. In 1925 the area was shown in the Taking University Atlas and 1933 in the Postal Atlas of China in British India. However, in 1957 China have built the 1200 km long Linji (Tibet) - Shingiyang (China) highway (NH-219) that passed through the Aksai Chin region. India was identified it

in 1958. During 2019 August the Union Home Minister has announced that, the Government of India will occupy aksai chin soon along with repealing Article 300 in Kashmir on August 5th 2019. With this, China set up military training centres in the Shingiyang Autonomous Region of china near the Daram Basin to fight against the Indian army.

### **VIII. Indo-China Peace Agreements:**

China has focused mainly on the development of its country since independence. Many incidents have taken place after the 1962 Indo-Chinese War with India. China wants to become the most powerful country in Asia have signed in the 1993 peace and tranquillity agreement. In the year 1996 China has come forward with Confidence Building Measurement (CBMs) with India and in 2005 protocol on not carrying arms, 2013 Border defence cooperation agreement. After Galwana incident High level meeting was held with India-china military commanders on June 6th 2020 and June 22nd 2020. They decided to implement procedure for disengagement and de-escalation between the two armed forces. July 5th 2020 talks between two special representatives and decided to implement earliest complete disengagement troops on the western sector (Dr. Srikanth Kondapalli 2020)9.

### **IX. India's counter strategy:**

As part of strategy, Indian government have made proposals for the construction of six submarines at a cost of Rs 43,000 crore. This is the first time plans have been drawn up for new submarines since the 1999 Kargil war. The proposal was passed by Parliament on the second week of June. Now India is ready to face the China and Pakistan war at the same time. In the past INS Vikrant has played a major role in the Indian War in 1971. Now INS Vikramaditya has entered in 2013 as a India aircraft carrier. By 2030 INS Vishad planned to enter into the Indian Navy.

Under the "Sagarmala" program the Government of India planned to invest around 47 billion U.S. dollars for the financial year 2020-2025 for port-related industries. 14 coastal economic zones across India were planned along with 35 other potential clusters being identified. Additionally 10 billion U.S. dollars were allocated to improve the operational efficiency of India's ports (Statista, Estimated capital for improving ports India FY 2020-2025 2021)10. In 2021 India and Japan jointly organised a naval treaty, it reflects our "Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)". This treaty is a free and open indo-pacific strategy. India was developing rapid responses to China expansionism. India - Japan naval treaty is also mainly for securing the trade routes, oil supplies and control Chinese incursion into the territory of India and Japan. Japan Prime Minister Shinzo Abe government introduced the guidelines for US- Japan defence co-operation in 2015 and they have amended the

Japan constitution article 9, which have been restraint the Japan's military capability. Japan have passed legislation act in 2016 for peace and security, geographic and coastal areas, expand the force for self-defence. In this endeavour India-Japan naval treaty helps to protect the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and Indo Pacific Region (IPR) against Chinese expansionism. After security concerns, Japanese investigative groups have been detected that, Chinese have approximately 700 investors that have purchased and acquiring land around military bases in Japan. One of the buyers purchased a plot closest to the U.S. military base in Kanagawa prefecture was suspected to be related to the Beijing government (Mukerji 2018)11.

#### **X. Indo-US tri-services:**

Indian and United States (US) Armed Forces launched the inaugural joint tri-services exercise Tiger Triumph, which stands for tri-services India US Amphibious Exercise was held from November 13 to 21, 2020 at Visakhapatnam and Kakinada Andhra Pradesh state of India. It is a Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) exercise. More than 500 US marines and sailors and 1,200 Indian soldiers, sailors and airmen have participated in the nine-day joint exercise. US Ambassador to India Kenneth Just here xpressed that, Military collaboration between India and the US is a result of growing high-level trust and consistent effort to broaden the ways in which both the states can work together. India has become a hub of U.S.-Indian defence manufacturing and joint innovation. It will enhance Indo-US military-to-military relations and improve individual and small-unit skills in humanitarian assistance and disaster response (Peri 2021)12.

#### **XI. Conclusion:**

In the past, Pakistan is only threat to India. But today, as tensions between India and China escalate our national security is likely to increase. The Government of India observing present situation between India and china has tried to protect the county from china aggression in to Indian Territory. China retains the sovereignty of Sri Lanka and Maldives on the name of harbours and various naval agreements. The Chinese navy is in danger of wreaking havoc there during emergencies led by Chinese companies in Port City in the name of trade. The Government of India have planned to tackle it with all these dangerous consequences for Indian security. To summarise -India and China territories have witnessed an animated increase in the number of incidents that have been taken place since 1960 to till now. This is the time to call for resolving the territorial security issue between India-China the two powerful Asian States for peace and stability in the Asian continent.

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