

## **CHINA'S STRING OF PEARL STRATEGY: A THREAT TO INDIA'S SECURITY.**

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### **ABSTRACT:**

The 'String of Pearls' refers to a geopolitical theory to the network of Chinese intentions in Indian Ocean Region. It is a network of Chinese military and commercial facilities and relationships along with its sea lines of communication, which extend from the Chinese mainland to Port Sudan. It is a strategy which is used by china to counter India and to isolate her geographically from the rest of the world and to control the vast resources of oil, petroleum and trade routes of all the exports of the world. For this purpose China has invested heavily in physical infrastructure in the continent. So, this paper explores the origin of string of pearls doctrine. The paper tries to elaborate the Indian response to the Chinese strategy. The source of this paper is published literature, newspaper, articles and web information.

**Key Words:** IOR, Strategy, Pearl of String, Strait of Hormuz, South China Sea, CSR.

### **Introduction:**

The 'String of Pearls' is a strategy deployed by China, by building a network of commercial and military bases and ports in many countries. The String of Pearls policy originally coined by the U.S. consulting firm Booz Allen Hamilton and got popularity with publication in Energy Futures in Asia. China has taken various steps like one belt one road, China Pakistan Economic Corridor, Debt Trap Policy and String of Pearls to build a foundation that may implement a plan which helps her to becoming the world's new superpower. China is slowly spreading influence beyond its own border it continues invest foreign infrastructure project, construct upgrade ports, naval base, financial assistances to weaker states. So focus of this paper on the String of Pearls littoral route which give china a safe energy, trade and shipping route, and allows her to security and intelligence stations throughout the Indian Ocean Region. This strategy spread throughout the Indian Ocean Region and finished in Djibouti where the Chinese government began construction of a large base. This policy primarily aimed at connecting the Horn of Africa with Indian Ocean Region and South China Sea. By this strategy china will be able to accomplish a couple of strategic goals in the Indian Ocean like to secure steady flow of energy resources, this route will secure Chinese presence in new market and China will be able to secure supply routes throughout the sea line. Finally string of pearls helps her to spreading soft power across the region.

### **Literature Review**

Cory Gassaway 2011, states that the rise of China and its investments across the sea lines is meant to encircle India under the disguise of a String of Pearls strategy. He defines that China's expansion will lead to the instability and brittleness in the region. So, the USA should use Sri Lankan card to counter China in the Indian Ocean and prevent the encircling of India. He Further, concludes that

China's de facto alliance with Pakistan and her strategy of a String of Pearls is creating a security dilemma and this intends to surround India.

David Brewster 2017, discussed a new dimension that China's Maritime Silk Road and String of Pearls is a grand strategy to connect landlocked Eurasian region by terminating geographical hazards through the establishment of new pathways and corridors.

Happymon Jacob 2017, analyze that India urgently needs to develop a clear vision for a stable regional security order and work out what role India would like to play in that vision and how it influence China, because let China out of the regional security order is not realistic, or dominate China is not desirable so for smart balancing China with strong strategy is needed.

**Objectives:**

- To highlight the issue of Pearl of String on IOR in global platform.
- To assess the Chinese strategy Pearl of String on IOR by which they are trying to dominate Asian region as well as world.
- To identify India's steps to tackle Chinese pearl of string strategy.

**Methodology:** The methodology in this research study is not one dimensional. It is rather host of historical, theoretical and analytical. The data is being collected from primary as well as secondary sources books, journals and magazines available in various libraries will be the main sources. The study would be based on academics writings such as books, journals and online resources. While using such material a great care shall be taken in terms of their credibility. The books to be studied for the paper will be chosen from the research area of International politics and foreign policy. Likewise the online resources shall be used with great care, mostly they shall be taken from trustworthy sources.

According to Indian studies String of pearls views as an attempt to strategically encircle India, it is a geopolitical agenda that reflects the Chinese intention in the Indian Ocean Region by connecting through a system of Chinese military and commercial activities around the sea lines of communication that started from mainland China to the port of Sudan in Africa. The string of pearls will be especially important in the 21st century since china trying to accomplish maritime superiority, thus it challenge the other global superpowers. Every pearl's in this chain represent huge amount of influence and china securing a harbors' and costal towns along the shores of the Indian Ocean. The main point of this policy is the strategic placements of these pearls with one another in order to make a chain of hubs that can serve as both economic, military and intelligence station in the Indian Ocean Region. This strategy covers important chokepoints known as Pearls of sea lines in the Indian Ocean like strait of Mandeb, Strait of Hormuz, Strait of Malacca and Lombok strait. Every Pearls of this policy discussed as follows:

**Djibouti:** Chinese troops have sailed for setting up the country's first ever overseas military base in Djiboti. Djibouti naval base has fuelled worries in India that it's part of China's strategy to encircle the Indian subcontinent.

**Gawdar, Pakistan:** China with the help of military alliances and assets in Bangladesh, Myanmar, and Sri Lanka.China made a naval base in Gwadar, Pakistan, as the part of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) project, Gwadar. This port will help China to tackle India from the west

side during any war-like situation. China selling her fighter jets, submarine to Pakistan and nuclear assistance also given to Pakistan so that it can give a strong reply to the Indian attack.

**Hambantota, Sri Lanka:** China has planned to take over Sri Lanka Hambantota port, to firm up its naval operations in the Indian Ocean. China shall provide financial and technical support for the construction of Hambantota port. China also provided technical and financial assistance to this country so that it can allow its territory to be used against India at the time of requirement.

**Chittagong, Bangladesh:** Bangladesh's largest maritime port is Chittagong. It's large reserves of natural gas, China made its presence in this country as well by setting up its naval base at Chittagong Port. Currently, Bangladesh announced to purchase two submarines from China for its own protection.

**Myanmar, Sittwe:** China is increasing its military and economic relations with this Indian neighbor to use its territory against India. The gas pipelines from Myanmar's Western Arakan State to Yunnan Province and Sittwe Harbour are China's major projects in Myanmar.

**Maldives:** This country is situated in the India Ocean near the Lakshdweep island of India. China established its army base in this country also. So that it can take up firmly with India in the Indian Ocean.

**Seychelles:** Another small island country with a presence in the Indian Ocean allowed China to set up its naval base just because of some monetary assistance from China. This country can also be crucial for the naval fight between India and China.

Indian analysts believe that this doctrine along with initiatives like the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor and other parts of China's One Belt and One Road Initiative, and String of Pearls is a threat to India's national security. This system would encircle India and threaten its power projection, trade, and potentially territorial integrity. So, some Impact of String of Pearls discussed below:

**It endangered Indian maritime security:** China is developing more firepower with more submarines, destroyers, vessels, and ships. Their presence will pose a threat to India's security through the water.

**Impact on the Indian economy:** Indian resources will be diverted towards defense and security. Thus, the economy will not reach its potential hampering economic growth. This may further lead to instability in India and the whole east and southeast region.

**The strategic clout of India in the Indian Ocean will be reduced:** China doesn't have any openings in the Indian Ocean, the Strings of pearls will lead to China surrounding India and it will be able to dominate it. Countries that today consider India as a partner in response to China may end up in the lap of China.

**China's support to India's enemy:** China support India's traditional enemy Pakistan and they construct Gwadar Port which is viewed as a threat, compounded by fears that China may develop an

overseas naval military base in Gwadar, which could allow China to conduct expeditionary warfare in the Indian Ocean region. .

India since been making moves of various steps to counter the perceived threat. India is using a multi-pronged strategy to counter the Chinese String of Pearls Strategy. The strategy involves building ports, extensive Coastal Surveillance Radar (CSR) systems to track Chinese Warships and Submarine. India importing surveillance planes which can track down Chinese submarines. It has operating airport in the neighboring country to keep a check on the Port built by China. India developed defense ties with South Asian countries. Some of the important actions that are undertaken by India to counter the Chinese strategy Pearl of String listed below.

**India's Act East Policy:** It was launched 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 which helps India to counter China.

**Building & Accessing Ports:** India is developing Chabahar port in Iran, it will open a new land-sea route to Central Asian countries by-passing Pakistan. It is strategically located close to the Chinese Gwadar Port in Pakistan and is close to the Strait of Hormuz. Chhabahar gives India a strategic position since it overlooks the Gulf of Oman, a very strategic oil supply route. In Indonesia, India is building a deep-sea Port a place named Sabang. It has strategic significance as it is close to the Strait of Malacca and India's Andaman & Nicobar Islands. In Myanmar, India built a deep water port in Sittwe in 2016. In Bangladesh, would help Bangladesh modernize Sea Port in Mongla. India can also use the Chittagong port in Bangladesh. In Oman, India has signed agreements to access strategically located Naval facilities of Oman. This facility is close to the Strait of Hormuz. More than 30% of oil exports pass through the Strait of Hormuz. In Singapore, India has signed an agreement to access Changi, which is strategically located close to the Strait of Malacca.

**Military and Naval relationships:** India has developed a strategic naval relationship with Myanmar which gives India an increased footprint in the area. It has also made agreements for military cooperation in the region with Japan, Australia and the USA. The four countries carry out joint military exercises in the IOR region and are known as the 'Quad'.

**Building Coastal Radar Networks:** In Bangladesh, India has recently signed an agreement to install 20 Coastal Surveillance Radar Systems along the coastline of Bangladesh. This will help India to monitor Chinese Warships which have been frequently visiting the Bay of Bengal. In Maldives, India installed 10 Coastal Radar Systems in the Maldives. These radars will reflect live images, videos, location information of Ships moving in the Indian Ocean Region. In Sri Lanka, 6 Coastal Surveillance Radars (CSR) have been installed. As per some reports, India is planning to set up at least 10 more CSR in Sri Lanka. In Mauritius, 8 Coastal Surveillance Radars have been installed. In Seychelles, 1 Coastal Surveillance Radar (CSR) have been Installed.

**Naval bases and airfields:** India signed an agreement for a new base in the Seychelles and negotiated military access to naval facilities at Oman's port and airfields. A pact allowing deployments bases on the Andaman and Nicobar Islands at the end of the Malacca Strait, India is raising the stakes in the fight over the waters of Southeast Asia.

**Conclusion:**

China-India is the two major states of the 20<sup>th</sup> century from the Asian continent that got independence from their colonial powers. Being the most populous countries in the world both states were economically developing, politically unstable and military backward but Asia's future lies in India and China. Now, China has become an economic major power through peaceful means and with various steps like one belt one road, China Pakistan Economic Corridor, Debt Trap Policy and String of Pearls which helps her to becoming the world's new superpower. She never involved in international political conflicts which will become a great political advantage for her yet it is likely that she will not challenge US supremacy in the region and provide a win-win situation for all stakeholders. The strategy of 'String of Pearls' has open the ways for economic benefits for China and other associated countries but at same time it would also place China political and strategically advantageous position in Indian Ocean Region. So in the few years Indian Ocean Region would experience a new balance of powers.

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