

## Understanding Chinese Style of Geopolitics and Its Impact on India's North East Region

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**ABSTRACT:** *China's rapid military modernization objective is to extend its reach and influence into the Pacific, Southeast Asia, and the Indian Ocean Region. And the influence of China in recent years has raised concern to most of countries in Asian sub-continent. In respect to economy, Chinese is in control over the major industry in eastern Russia, Mongolia, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, etc. and has good economic partnership with most of the Asian countries and Australia. In terms of diplomacy, china has made military agreement with Japan, Korea, Australia, etc. demographically also China has a huge population in South East Asian countries and are regarded dominating population. Another important advantage that China today has is the assemblage of island and ports in Indian Ocean i.e., String of Pearl. An attempt has been made to look into India's Look East Policy and its effect on North East region and Chinese Policy towards Indian policy.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Military diplomacy; Economic /trade relation; String of Pearl strategy; Look East Policy and North East India.*

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Even after 50 years of Indo-China war it is very clear from the policy of our government that North east India is still not prepared for another offensive strike from the rising Red Dragon. When China is making it clear its ambition to overtake Arunachal Pradesh and busy constructing military infrastructure along the McMahon line. In view of the evolving geo-politics of New Delhi, particularly those designed in response to the thriving economies of ASEAN countries and the burgeoning economic-military might of China, the location of Arunachal, Manipur and the entire North East region of India are fast assuming crucial strategic importance. The North East region entirely landlocked, shares just about two per cent of its borders with the rest of India while the remaining long borderline forms international boundaries. On the other hand, the region is connected to the Indian mainland by the 20 Kms wide chicken neck called Siliguri Corridor. In addition to this limited physical connectivity, the region is yet to be fully integrated with the Indian nation economically and socially. The 'Seven Rainbow States' that makes up the North Eastern part of India can best be described as 'Asia in miniature'. India's North East is a part of a great tropical rainforest that stretches from the foot-hills of the Himalayas to the tip of the Malaysian Peninsulas and the mouth of the Mekong River as it flows into the Gulf of Tonkin. The region comprises the so-called north-eastern states (formerly known as Assam and NEFA) and includes the state of Sikkim, which in 1976 was forcibly included in the Indian Union. The North East Region is a place where the Brown and the Yellow people (races) meet and mingle. And the people inhabiting the seven states of this region are all of Mongoloid descent, and are completely different from the Conventional Indian in physical appearance and outlook. Culturally and linguistically, the affinity of the people of this region is more with their brothers and sisters of the South East Asian Region and the rest of Asia. There is nothing Indian about this region and its people except of the fact that is a part of the Republic of India.

History has been a mute witness to the fact that New Delhi doesn't give much heed and importance to the region, as long as it remains a part of the Indian Union – A Buffer state just good enough to keep China – The Dragon at bay. This Step Motherly treatment meted out to 'Our beloved North East' can be ascertained from the fact that even if a dozen are killed in the North East Region, New Delhi is silent, doesn't care and is least bothered. While on the other hand, a single loss of life in Jammu and Kashmir and it makes it to the headlines of the major Newspapers across the Country, and often led to a hue and cry in the Parliament. A truly forgotten and uncared for is our beloved North East!

Northeast for long has suffered what may be termed as an acute policy void—which may be explained in a large measure by its emergence as a completely landlocked region eternally condemned to peripheral status, accordingly 'lost' forever to the policy makers and the attendant realisation that there is very little that could have been done to save the region and bring it at par with the rest of India and in part by New Delhi's persistent dismissal of many of the present conflicts afflicting the region as simple law and order

problems calling for equally simple law and order solutions. When other States are making rapid strides toward progress and development in all spheres of life. The North East Region is still what it was a few decades ago – A Stagnant Pool. The Central Government is not doing enough to develop the region and to bring it on par with the other states of the Indian mainland. Time and again, New Delhi has often cited the presence of 'Many Revolutionary Groups' in the region as one of the main reason for not releasing adequate funds to the region. For instance, The Manipur State Budget is less than the annual budget of one single department under the Andhra Pradesh Government. This glaring fact only goes to show that the Central Government is not at all interested in the development of the region, but it is no doubt interested in the 'genuine exploitation of the Region's Natural Resources. Where is the 'Right to Equality' enshrined in the Constitution of India???

Distinct from the Southeast Region is the Indian Northeast, which is also contiguous to the south western regions of China. China's interests and strategies differ here on many issues, but fundamentally, sovereignty clashes over Arunachal Pradesh, national security concerns over indigenous peoples living in contiguous territories, etc remain similar. China's interests in this region are broadly related to expanding physical connectivity, gaining access to the Indian Ocean, mitigating energy contingencies, and evolving interdependencies for stabilising remote regions in the absence of progress in border talks with India. As a relatively more developed region, South-western portions of China could then have attained commanding position in this area. China had been assiduously expanding bilateral and multilateral interactions in the region towards these objectives.

An estimated 63,000 MW or 43 per cent of total identified hydro potential of the country is concentrated in the north eastern (NE) states including Arunachal Pradesh, which has come to be known as the 'future powerhouse of the country'. Despite internal impediments like lack of infrastructure, remote location and environmental concerns, the region has seen increasing interest in development of this potential. However, China's intentions of utilizing these water resources from upstream Brahmaputra, can significantly scuttle the plans for this development.

India's power generation capacity is estimated to grow from 190 GW in 2012 to more than 300 GW by 2020. The north east region accounts for an estimated 43 per cent (63,257 MW) of the total identified potential of the country. This is due to large water flows through the Brahmaputra basin and the unique topography. The Brahmaputra drainage area is spread across Arunachal Pradesh (42 percent), Assam (33 per cent), Meghalaya (6 per cent), Nagaland (6 per cent) and Arunachal Pradesh, which gets the upstream drainage area, accounts for almost 50,000 MW of identified capacity (80 per cent of the north east region's potential capacity). But, in terms of real development, only 2 per cent (1158 MW) of total identified potential in the north east region has been developed as against 46 per cent (37690 MW) in the remaining part of the country. Ranganadi (405 MW) is the only large hydropower plant operational as of now in Arunachal Pradesh. Apart from the existing domestic bottlenecks, a major threat going forward for successful large scale development of hydropower in the region and specifically in Arunachal Pradesh, is India's long standing dispute with China over matters relating to water sharing and territorial rights. This threat from China has specifically come into prominence in the last few years due to China's aggressive plans of ramping up its hydropower and utilizing the fresh water resource from upstream Brahmaputra, thereby posing serious concerns over India's hydro plans in the region.

### **Geopolitics:**

The study of geographic influences on power relationships in international politics. Geopolitical theorists have sought to demonstrate the importance in the determination of foreign policies of considerations such as the acquisition of natural boundaries, access to important sea routes, and the control of strategically important land areas. The term was first employed in the early 20th century by the Swedish political scientist Rudolph Kjellén (1864–1922).

Current forecasts are for continued increases in global energy demand and changes in the pattern of energy flows, with a decided shift eastward on the "world energy map" due to higher demand in Asia. Continued world population growth will lead to rapid increases in demand for food, housing, and other products and services that invariably require energy to produce and deliver. In addition, over a billion of the world's inhabitants currently have little or no access to the most basic forms of energy, an unsustainable predicament with potentially ominous consequences to the welfare of that population. Geopolitics is based on geography and politics. Politics is built on two foundations: military and economic. The two interact and support each other but are ultimately distinct. For China, securing its buffer regions generally eliminates military problems. The very concept of Geopolitics is dynamic and in recent years the concept had engulfed many new areas which were

traditionally not inclusive. The concept of ‘Rimland’ is now coming to a new dimension and never in the modern history of the world the world pay attention to the growing giants of Asia.

### **China’s Backward Regions and Development Strategies**

Historically, Chinese economy has been characterized by uneven development. If we divide China into the coastal, central and western regions, we find that the coastal region has been far more developed industrially than the central region, which in turn is superior to the western region in terms of development. The coastal regions are also more heavily populated. Though the coastal area consists of only 14 percent of the total area in the country, 41 percent of the country’s population are crowded in the region. On the other hand, 23 percent of the Chinese population live in the western region spread across 57 percent of the area. In 1950, 70 percent of the country’s industrial assets and output were concentrated in the coastal area with bulk of the output concentrated in eight coastal cities. When China launched its planning and development strategy in the 1950s, it regarded the coast-interior imbalance as irrational and outcome of foreign intervention that extracted concessions from weak Chinese state. Because of this historical development the industrial production in the coastal areas was very far away from the raw material sources of the interior market; this was a major strain on the poor transport system. Secondly, as the war in Korea and Vietnam expanded western presence in its neighbourhood, the coast was exposed to foreign military intervention, and posed a national security risk. From the very first Five Year Plan, China directed fresh industrial investment (including Soviet-aided projects) towards the interior regions. The emphasis on this area continued to increase in the late 1950s during the Great Leap Forward. Also in the 1970s, the increasing tension with the Soviet Union and the intervention by the United States in Vietnam led to the defence- oriented industries being set up in the interior provinces. Due to all these, by 1970 the share of the interior regions in the total national investments in fixed assets rose to over 70 percent. On the other hand, by 1983, the value of fixed assets in the coastal regions had fallen to 43 percent from a high of 72 percent in 1950 (Yang, D.; 1990).

Recent Chinese scholars argue that though investments in backward regions may have provided more balanced industrial distribution, it reduced economic efficiency and lowered the rates of growth. The improvement in equity, scholars argued, came at the expense of efficiency. This is because in the interior regions, the infrastructure is more backward, education level low and the industrial culture poor. Hence during the Deng Era, Mao’s regional development strategy came under sharp attack and was regarded as being responsible for inefficiency retarding China’s technological progress. In the post Mao period a host of reforms were implemented. Among them in the countryside it led to dismantling of the commune system and price reforms resulting in an initial surge in rural income. This narrowed income inequalities between the rural-urban areas as well as between the agricultural interior and the more industrialised coastal region.

But soon there was a shift to export-oriented industrialisation and China’s development strategy became largely coast oriented. Chinese planners began to encourage the notion of comparative advantage between regions. Thus the coastal areas were seen to be better endowed with infrastructure for foreign trade and had a long legacy of industrial production, better education and more innovative culture. The Central Government now encouraged the coastal regions to surge ahead and become internationally competitive. Preferential policies and tax concessions and setting up of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) made the coastal region attractive for foreign investment. For the development of the backward interior region, the government appears to have put its faith in the trickle down policies. It hoped that the rapid growth and example of innovation and technical development will be imbibed by the interior parts of the country.

### **Chinese Style of Geopolitics**

China is one of the world’s oldest continuous civilizations. Today after about six decade of the founding of the People’s Republic of China most of the development figures are striking, and it illustrate how rapid and staggering the changes have been in China in just six decades. China is a huge continental-sized landmass situated in central, south, and East Asia. The shift in global economic power from West to East has seen no shortage of popular prediction and punditry on the likely shape of Asian geopolitics in the twenty-first century. China’s rise in twenty-first century Asia is analogous to that of nineteenth century Imperial Germany in Europe with Beijing emerging as an inevitable strategic competitor of the U.S. Geographically, it is the fourth largest country in the world. It is bordered by Mongolia and Russia to the north; North Korea to the northeast; Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand to the south; and Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Nepal, India, Burma, Afghanistan, and Pakistan to the west and southwest. To the east, it accesses the Pacific Ocean via the Sea of Japan, Korea Bay, the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea and South China Sea. Its coastline extends more than 14,000 kms.

China and the lands adjacent to it occupy the area of the globe that Nicholas Spykman called the Asian Rimland. Spykman, toward the end of the Second World War, wrote that China would become the strongest power in the Far East, and he warned that, as with Western Europe, the United States needed to ensure that no adversary power or alliance of powers harboured an overwhelmingly dominant command of that region. Z. Brzezinski has expressed this same outlook in different terms: the United States, he wrote, must ensure the “geopolitical pluralism” of the Far East. China currently is effectively contained on land by the other regional powers: Russia in the north; India in the West; the Indochinese countries to the south. The south is the weakest land barrier to Chinese expansion.

China's geographic location, its potential, its development dynamics and the challenges it faces now and will encounter in the future are the key factors shaping its geopolitics. Chinese policy is primarily focused on the post-Soviet space, South Asia and Southeast Asia. China's policy in the post-Soviet space is roughly concentrated on two areas: the west (Central Asia) and the north (Russia). China's policy imperative in these areas will be to transform dependence into interdependence and vulnerability into mutual vulnerability. Its policies there will primarily be preventive and defensive in nature. Its geopolitics with regard to South and Southeast Asia are considered separately from India and Indochina.

China's geopolitical activities in Southeast and Central Asia, the Far East and Oceania are quite impressive. China's geopolitics is versatile and well thought out. There is no unnecessary emotionalism and bravado. The Celestial Empire works boldly and patiently to strengthen its positions in areas that are strategically important to it. China's approach has yielded substantial geopolitical dividends in those areas.

#### **Chinese Co-prosperitysphere:**

The year 1949 appears at first to be a great divide in Chinese history. The government is radically different after 1949, and even more dramatic is the growth performance. Before 1949, China never launched into rapid, modern economic growth. Since 1949, China's economy has grown rapidly, despite sometimes disastrous policies imposed during Maoist times. For more than a century from the early 19th to the middle of the 20th century China's economic performance was mediocre at best. After the People's Republic of China (PRC) was established in October 1949, the Chinese economy was wrenched out of its traditional framework and completely reoriented. China's new leaders turned their backs on China's traditional household based economy, and set out to develop a massive socialist industrial complex through direct government control. Planners neglected labor intensive sectors suitable to China's vast population, and instead poured resources into capital intensive factories producing metals, machinery, and chemicals. The early achievements of coastal enclave industrialization oriented to the Pacific were discarded, and a new inward directed strategy was adopted. China turned to the Soviet Union as its primary model, as well as its chief trading partner and source of technology. For 30 years, China pursued this vision of socialism and this development strategy shaped virtually every aspect of the Chinese economy.

There were major shortcomings associated with the socialist development strategy. First, the single minded pursuit of industrial development meant that consumption was neglected. Second, employment creation was relatively slow. Because most industry was capital intensive and services were neglected, new labor requirements were modest. Third, much of the industrial investment was not only capital intensive, but also relatively demanding technologically.

According to official data, the average annual gross domestic product (GDP) growth accelerated from 6 percent in the pre 1978 period to 9.6 percent in the 1978–2006 periods. At the same time, population growth decelerated from 1.9 percent per year before 1978 to only 1.1 percent after 1978. As a result, per capita GDP growth more than doubled, jumping from 4.1 percent to 8.5 percent annually. China's post 1978 growth experience has been extraordinary by any standard. The comparison of GDP between Chinese and other major economies in Asia and the rest of the world shows that China has maintained its GDP growth at the average of 8 percent since 2000, which is higher than Asia and much higher than the United Kingdom and the United States. China has transformed into a global trade power. In 2005, China was the third largest trading nation in the world (after the United States and Germany), and its trade is growing far more rapidly than that of any other large economy. China has now achieved a degree of openness that is exceptional for a large, continental economy. In 2005 China's total goods trade (exports plus imports) amounted to 64 percent of GDP, far more than other large, continental economies such as the United States, Japan, India, and Brazil which have trade/GDP ratios around 20 percent, the highest being Brazil's 25 percent. Trade liberalization has been an integral part of China's economic reform process since its beginning.

The most recent phase of trade policy reform began with China's formal entry into the World Trade Organization (WTO), on December 11, 2001, which started the clock running on a series of liberalization commitments kicking in between 2001 and 2007. Besides marking a new phase of policy reform, WTO membership symbolizes China's coming of age as a participant in the global economic community.

Investment and trade are closely linked in China and the global economy. For more than a decade China has been one of the world's most important destinations for foreign direct investment (FDI). Investment began to pour into China after 1992, and annual inflows have been over \$40 billion since 1996. Trending steadily upward, FDI inflows were at \$63 billion in both 2004 and 2005. These inflows are by far the highest of any developing country and have remained remarkably stable and robust despite substantial fluctuations in the Asian and global economies. China has accounted for about one third of total developing country FDI inflows in recent years. There is no doubt that the global manufacturing networks created by FDI in China will continue to play a critical role in the world economy.

Today Chinese population around the Asia is one of the most dominating populations, as they hold most of the economic empires. Starting from Mongolia, where Chinese farms occupies most of the coal, copper, silver and gold mines. China is not conquering Mongolia but leasing it. Moreover, the Eastern part of Russia is also under most of Chinese farm, starting from what we regard Siberia, a cold desolate desert. Every year about 600 thousand million Chinese populations are moving towards east Russia and taking control over the timber, shipping industry.

When we speak of the global hubs, today East Asia has the highest numbers or centers, which include Tokyo, Seoul, Hong Kong, Singapore, Shanghai, Taipei etc. and Chinese population are the main player here too. Where every year trillions of billion dollars are invested and most of them goes to china. Moreover, in other parts of south east Asia too Chinese farms are taking the leading role in the economic sector like Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, etc... China's historical involvement in Southeast Asia, as well as cultural affinity for China in many Southeast Asian states, will likely influence how China is viewed by regional states. Historically, China has exerted much influence in Southeast Asia. This can be seen in China's past cultural influence in, and past dominance of, Vietnam as well as today through its increasing presence in Burma. While Chinese influence has extended through its contiguous borders with continental Southeast Asia, there was a brief period from 1405 to 1433 when China sent vast fleets under the command of Zheng He through Southeast Asia and into the Indian Ocean littoral to exact tribute for the Ming Dynasty. The Chinese diaspora has also led to significant ethnic Chinese minority populations in Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Indonesia. Vietnam's relationship with China differs from other ASEAN states. Unlike other Southeast Asian states, Vietnam was ruled by China for a lengthy period of its history.

Currently, between 30 and 40 million ethnic Chinese reside in Southeast Asia. The degree to which ethnic Chinese have been integrated into Southeast Asian societies has varied greatly across the region with Chinese being relatively better integrated in non-Muslim states than Muslim majority states. While ethnic Chinese have been subject to past abuses and discrimination, the trend line for earlier waves of Chinese immigration has been towards greater levels of integration into their respective new homelands. Most of the Chinese of Southeast Asia come from Guangdong and Fujian Province. The over two million ethnic Chinese in Singapore make up approximately eighty percent of Singapore's population and make it the only country in Southeast Asia with an ethnic Chinese majority. Ethnic Chinese are largely assimilated in Thailand, a predominantly Buddhist country whose ethnic Chinese population of over five million constitutes over 10% of the population.

#### **Chinese Diplomacy:**

Chinese diplomacy is playing an important role in present day context starting from Political, Economic and Military diplomacy policy. In terms of economic, today china is seen as a country which can rebound the global economy. Potentially much more stronger the US economy which is engulf by rescission, as the Asian free trade zone has greater volume in terms of economy than across the Pacific trade. China's economic growth is dramatically changing its economic and political relations with the world, including Southeast Asia and Australia. Many analysts expect that China's history and culture will play a key role in shaping China's external relations. In this view, China is engaged in a drive to regain its "rightful place." This drive has two key components. The first is the drive for unity, which involves the control of Taiwan, Tibet, and Xinjiang. The second drive is to restore China's traditional influence among its neighbours. China appears to view Southeast Asia as "potentially the most fruitful and receptive region for the projection of Chinese influence."

This drive could potentially, but not necessarily, bring American and Chinese interests into competition and/or conflict in Southeast Asia. China's relations with Southeast Asia have been described by some analysts as either part of a traditional "Confucian tribute system" or, more recently, as part of a more Western concept of a "sphere of influence." China's embrace of market-led economic development may mitigate against past assertive postures in the region and lead to more multilateral and cooperative approaches. China's increasingly active diplomacy towards Southeast Asia can be viewed as a benign outgrowth of its efforts to achieve economic development for the betterment of its people or as part of an assertive foreign policy. China's embrace of multilateral initiatives, such as the 2003 Treaty of Amity and Cooperation with ASEAN, the East Asia Summit, and efforts to forge a China-ASEAN Free Trade Area, are variously viewed as evidence of a non-threatening trade-focused China or as part of an evolving grand strategy that will rely on "formal and informal mechanisms (strengthened multilateral institutions and strong economic ties, respectively) of interdependence as a de facto strategy for restraining the United States."

In terms of economy or Trade, Few major international relationships have changed as much or as quickly in recent years as has the relationship between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN). China has strong trade relation with almost all the countries of South East Asia, especially with Japan, Korea and Australia which were once more inclined towards US in the past. For example today, Australia has to depend heavily on china for the importing of iron ore, gas, coal etc. for develop economy like Korea and Japan, China work differently than the lesser develop or developing countries like Laos and Cambodia where China is reducing its tariff on import and export, so that these country stay with china.

#### **Chinese Population (Demography)**

China's developing relationship with Southeast Asia is undergoing a significant shift. China has been evolving its external engagement with its neighbours, particularly in Southeast Asia. In the 1990s, China was perceived as a threat to its Southeast Asian neighbours in part due to its conflicting territorial claims over the South China Sea and past support of communist insurgency. This perception began to change in the wake of the Asian financial crisis of 1997/98 when China resisted pressure to devalue its currency while the currencies of its neighbors were in free fall. Today, China's "charm offensive" has downplayed territorial disputes while focusing on trade relations with Southeast Asia which are viewed by some as the catalyst for expanding political and security linkages. In November 2004, China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) includes Brunei, Burma, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam) agreed to gradually remove tariffs and create the world's largest free trade area by 2010. China is also beginning to develop bilateral and multilateral security relationships with Southeast Asian states.

The predominantly Chinese population in Southeast Asia is that of Singapore, where an estimated 2 million Chinese form 76 percent of a population of 3 million. In Malaysia, the Chinese form a large minority, currently estimated at 34 percent of a population of 18 million. In Indonesia, where the Chinese are only 3 percent of the total population of 195 million, there are 5 to 6 million Chinese; in Thailand, the Chinese population has been recently estimated as 5 to 6 million or more in a total population of 57 million; in the Philippines there are 600,000 in a population of 62 million; in Cambodia, 300,000 in a population of 8.5 million; in Laos, 25,000 in a population of 4 million



Map of South East Asia (Flow of Chinese Population)

**Chinese Dam Diplomacy:**

In countries that border China, dam construction can take on an added strategic and geopolitical dimension. Firstly, hydropower deals will often lead to energy import options for China. In Burma, for example, the state-owned China Power Investment Corporation has partnered with the Burmese military junta to build the Myitsone Dam. The project, to be built on the Irrawaddy just below the confluence of its two source rivers, will flood a large area of forest rich in biodiversity and force the relocation of 45-60 villages. The 3,600MW of anticipated annual electricity production at Myitsone will be sold back to Yunnan, lining the pockets of the junta with an estimated US\$500m a year. The deal has provoked harsh criticism from international NGOs and representative bodies for the Kachin people, who populate the affected villages.

Secondly, Chinese dam construction in continental Asia may trigger tensions as transboundary river systems are altered in unpredictable ways. For example, the proliferation of large dams across Southeast Asia, where many long rivers cut across numerous international borders, could lead to serious concerns over water resource management. Chinese leadership will be critical in managing those concerns: 1) the headwaters of rivers such as the Mekong and Salween are located in China; 2) China is the political heavyweight within the region; 3) many of the dams are Chinese-built or funded; and 4) China possesses the greatest quantum of knowledge and experience in relation to large dam construction and management. Managing the potential implications flowing from aggressive Chinese pursuit of construction deals and energy sources on its neighbours' major waterways will present a challenge to the governments concerned. This challenge can only become more significant as water politics emerges as a critical pressure point across Asia.



**Military diplomacy:**

China's rise also creates concern about how Beijing will use its growing economic and military power. Militarily, China is the dominant regional power in Asia and one of the world's emerging great powers. Some analysts view the emergence of a new great power onto the world stage as causing likely disruption to the existing balance of power which could lead to conflict. Others see the potential to manage such a shift in the balance of power in a peaceful manner. There are some recent signs that China may seek to expand its economic and political influence in Southeast Asia into the security realm as well. While Chinese efforts to expand its economic and political influence are regarded as benign by many, views of China's overall posture in the region may change if it seeks to develop new military-to-military relations with Southeast Asian states. Some analysts feel that such an expansion of influence would likely raise broader concerns in defence policy circles and could be viewed as a challenge to America's posture in the region.

Historically, the interaction of geopolitical change with growth in military capabilities—the interplay between the “dynamic of technological change and military competitiveness”—usually destabilizes any given balance of power. In particular, the development of significant force projection capabilities may challenge geopolitical stability because such arms suggest potential transformations in the configuration of any established geographic system of maritime and continental power. The prevailing “geography of the peace” in East Asia will be no exception to this rule.

At the moment, concerns over China's aims are clearly responsible for military modernization throughout all of the sub-regions of Asia. In overall terms, between 1994 and 2004, Asian military expenditure grew by 27 percent; India's defence budget doubled; while Chinese military expenditure, insofar as it is possible to identify figures, increased by an estimated 140 per cent between 1997 and 2007. In other words, China, Japan, and India are key to understanding the relationship between geopolitics, military modernization for force projection, and the future Asian balance of power.

There can be little doubt that China's military strength is growing but whether this growth will challenge the East Asian strategic balance is unclear. As part of this doctrine, China's military has sought a range of asymmetric capabilities in the form of an “assassin's mace” of deterrent, compellent and attack capabilities for immediate regional requirements to offset U.S. offshore maritime superiority.

China's foreign policy includes two regional goals in direct opposition to US interests. First, China intends to replace the United States as the chief power broker in East Asia. Second, China seeks to “regain” territories that Beijing feels falls within its sovereignty, to include Taiwan and numerous islands in the South China Sea. In support of these aims, China has established strategic relationships and built bases along the sea lanes from the Middle East to the Chinese coast—a “String of Pearls” to support regional power projection. China has adopted a “String of Pearls” strategy not only to protect Chinese oil imports, but also to serve broader security objectives. China's “String of Pearls” strategy increasingly allows it to challenge US naval hegemony in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean, to deny the United States access to the region, to negate US influence, and to intimidate neighbors into political accommodation.

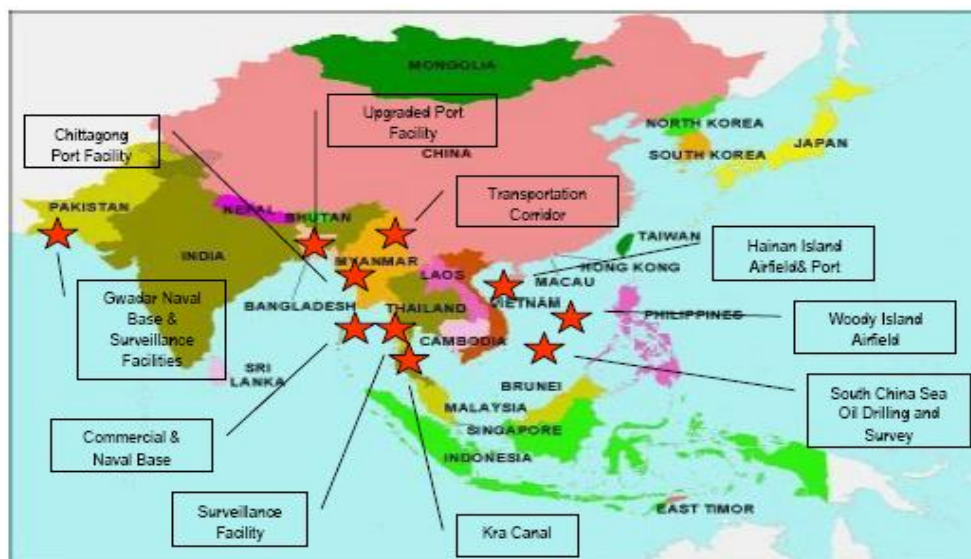
A string of pearls strategy is a strategic move which involves establishing a series of nodes of military and economic power throughout a region. Each node is a “pearl” in the string, enhancing the overall power of the parent nation. This strategic relations move is an excellent way to enfold a greater area of territory, thereby gaining more influence on the global stage, but it often evokes comment from other nations, who may be concerned that the string of pearls strategy is the first step in a serious takeover or military threat. Several things are included in a string of pearls strategy. The first is increased access to airfields and ports. This may be accomplished by building new facilities or through establishing cordial relations with other nations to ensure access to their ports. In some cases, the strategy involves heavily subsidizing construction of new port and airfield facilities in other countries, with the understanding that these facilities will be made readily available as needed.





Each “pearl” in the “String of Pearls” is a nexus of Chinese geopolitical influence or military presence.

- [1] Hainan Island, with recently upgraded military facilities, is a “pearl.” An upgraded airstrip on Woody Island, located in the Paracel archipelago 300 nautical miles east of Vietnam, is a “pearl.” A container shipping facility in Chittagong, Bangladesh, is a “pearl.” Construction of a deep water port in Sittwe, Myanmar, is a “pearl,” as is the construction of a navy base in Gwadar, Pakistan.
- [2] Port and airfield construction projects, diplomatic ties, and force modernization form the essence of China’s “String of Pearls.” The “pearls” extend from the coast of mainland China through the littorals of the South China Sea, the Strait of Malacca, across the Indian Ocean, and on to the littorals of the Arabian Sea and Persian Gulf. China is building strategic relationships and developing a capability to establish a forward presence along the sea lines of communication (SLOCs) that connect China to the Middle East. The Nature of the Pearls. China’s development of these strategic geopolitical “pearls” has been non confrontational, with no evidence of imperial or neocolonial ambition. The development of the “String of Pearls” may not, in fact, be a strategy explicitly guided by China’s central government. The port facility at Gwadar, for example, is a win-win prospect for both China and Pakistan. The port at Karachi currently handles 90 percent of Pakistan’s sea-borne trade, but because of its proximity to India, it is extremely vulnerable to blockade. This happened during the India-Pakistan War of 1971 and was threatened again during the Kargil conflict of 1999.



Source: Adapted from Juli MacDonald, Amy Donahue, and Bethany Danyluk, *Energy Futures in Asia*, Booz Allen Hamilton report sponsored by the Director of Net Assessment, November 2004, 17.

- [1] Gwadar, a small fishing village which Pakistan identified as a potential port location in 1964 but lacked the means to develop, is 450 miles west of Karachi.
- [2] A modern port at Gwadar would enhance Pakistan's strategic depth along its coastline with respect to India. For China, the strategic value of Gwadar is its 240-mile distance from the Strait of Hormuz. China is facilitating development of Gwadar and paving the way for future access by funding a majority of the \$1.2 billion project and providing the technical expertise of hundreds of engineers.
- [3] Since construction began in 2002, China has invested four times more than Pakistan and contributed an additional \$200 million towards the building of a highway to connect Gwadar with Karachi. In August 2005, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visited Pakistan to commemorate completion of the first phase of the Gwadar project and the opening of the first 3 of 12 multiship berths.
- [4] The Gwadar project has enhanced the strategic, diplomatic, and economic ties between Pakistan and China. Other countries are benefiting from China's new strategy, as well. In November 2003, China signed an agreement with Cambodia to provide military equipment and training in exchange for the right of way to build a rail line from southern China to the Gulf of Thailand.
- [5] China also has an ambitious \$20 billion proposal to build a canal across Thailand's Kra Isthmus which would enable ships to bypass the chokepoint at the Strait of Malacca.
- [6] Although this plan is stalled due to Thailand's noncommittal position and political opposition in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Singapore, it reveals the scope and scale of Chinese ambition for the "String of Pearls."

## II. CONCLUSION

It is obvious that the ever rising Chinese influence among ASEAN countries and the decades old insurgency movement in North East region, the basic goal of which is restoration of sovereignty to the erstwhile independent kingdoms. Under such scenario, India cannot afford any strain bilateral relations with Bangladesh, Myanmar or any of its little neighbours. New Delhi's generous investment in road and power projects in Myanmar. What is central to the geopolitics of India towards its eastern neighbours is the strategic importance of its North East region. The Look East Policy envisaged and conceptualised through the region is a testimony of its strategic importance both in military and economic terms. Strategic importance of the region in military sense was confirmed during the World War II when Japanese and British forces fought long drawn bloody battles at Imphal and Kohima to wrest control of the region.

The geopolitical significance of Arunachal and Manipur has not diminished a bit in the post Cold War period, rather it is assuming greater proportions. As for the people of Manipur, this is no reason to cheer about. Already, the tiny State has been heavily militarised. This is more on account of the strategic location of the North East region than the insurgency movement. Tight restrictions on cross-border movement of people for commercial purposes and otherwise are a by-product of the region's strategic importance which is hardened by New Delhi's nagging suspicion of its eastern neighbours. Here, the Look East Policy sound like a paradox. Any keen observer cannot miss the contradictions thrown up by the LEP and the policy of isolation being pursued by New Delhi vis-a-vis the North East region. This policy of isolation which originated during the period of British imperialism is driven by the geo-strategic location of the region. The tragedy is, the Chicken Neck cannot connect the region to the economy of mainland India when, on the other hand, the region is closed to all its neighbours. The predicament is felt more profoundly in Manipur, located in the extreme corner of the periphery and connected to other parts of India with the most sub-standard highways which are again often choked by prolonged blockades. Time will tell us how the LEP is comprehended in the geopolitics of India and we are more than certain India will never compromise its chosen geopolitics for the sake of LEP. This is the predicament being endured by the region since the heydays of imperialism.

The ink on *Panchsheel* had hardly dried when China stirred squabble over the McMahon Line claiming that Chinese territories were illegally occupied by the British Indian rulers and India should revert these to Beijing now. She laid claim to entire Arunachal Pradesh comprising 90,000 square kilometres in area in the north-east of India. China justified its Indian aggression of 1962 by arguing that entire Arunachal was illegally occupied by the British, and since they had left it should be reverted to China. China threw into dustbin her Bandung cacophony. With Chinese economy growing rapidly in recent years, and she gaining status in global economic structure, Beijing has adopted more intimidating posture against India in the north-eastern as well as north-western sectors of Indian northern frontier watershed. It is high time for us to understand the future to come and act seriously for the north eastern states as the future lies on how we deal with this part of India or it will be the same story 50 years back.

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