

THE INDIAN OCEAN IN CHINA'S MARITIME SILK ROAD (MSR) INITIATIVE: INDIA'S CATCH-22 SITUATION

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The Indian Ocean is hugely important for the health of India's economy as the country is a net energy importer and since ancient days, Indian customs and influence have spread to nations far and wide through the maritime realm. However, of late, China has been trying to wade into what India has traditionally seen as its own backyard. China's Maritime Silk Road (MSR) initiative, which seeks to increase Beijing's influence in the Indian Ocean region, is a step in this direction. This article seeks to analyze how India should respond to the MSR. It will weigh the costs and benefits of New Delhi joining/staying out of the MSR and will lay down what should be India's response.

Keywords: Indian Ocean, China, Maritime Silk Road, Indo-Pacific

The power to protect merchant fleets has been the determining factor in world history

Alfred Thayer Mahan
(The Influence of Sea Power Upon History 1660-1783)

Introduction

In the hoary past, Indian influence and culture spread to distant shores in Southeast Asia, East Asia, East Africa and many other parts of the world through the maritime realm. Even today, the island of Bali in Muslim-majority Indonesia is predominantly Hindu, attesting to the Indian influence in that part of the world. However, once the country became independent in 1947, the focus turned inward and India became more of a continental power. This was partly dictated by geography and partly by necessity, as New Delhi got embroiled in land wars with its western neighbour Pakistan and a short border war with its northern neighbour, China.

However, the end of the Cold War forced India to shed its continental focus and look anew at the maritime realm. The Modi government has set its sights on increasing India's maritime footprint. During his visit to the Indian Ocean island countries of Seychelles, Sri Lanka and Mauritius in March last year, he outlined that "we seek a future for Indian Ocean that lives up to the name of SAGAR - Security and Growth for All in the Region."¹

The Indian Ocean is hugely important for India's economy and its security. More than half of the world's container traffic passes through the Indian Ocean. In addition, close to 70 per cent of total amount of the world's petroleum products pass through the waters of the Indian Ocean.² Besides, a huge number of Indians work in the Gulf Region and sent close to

¹ *The Hindu*, 2015, "Mr. Modi's Ocean View," available at <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/editorial/mr-modis-ocean-view/article7000182.ece> accessed on April 29, 2016.

² Robert Kaplan, "Power Plays in the Indian Ocean," 2010, available at [file:///C:/Users/Acer/Downloads/ch_6_CNAS+Contested+Commons_0-11%20\(2\).pdf](file:///C:/Users/Acer/Downloads/ch_6_CNAS+Contested+Commons_0-11%20(2).pdf) accessed on May 10, 2016.

\$72 billion in remittances last year (the highest in the world),³ which is very important for the health of the Indian economy.

This article will approach the issue of China's Maritime Security Road (MSR) initiative and India's response to the same from a realist perspective. Firstly, it will assess why India needs to approach this offer from China (to be a part of the MSR) with extreme caution and explain China's Indian Ocean strategy. Secondly, it will elucidate India's main interests in its immediate neighbourhood, especially in the maritime domain. Finally, it will set forth how India should respond to China's increasing forays into the Indian Ocean region.

Growing Role of the Indian Navy

In his seminal book, *The Influence of Sea Power Upon History 1660-1783*, the renowned naval historian, Alfred Thayer Mahan, noted that it was the British Navy which stood between Napoleon and his domination of the world. Similarly, as New Delhi aspires to play a bigger role on the global stage by pitching for permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), its Navy will remain an important force multiplier.

The Indian Navy plays a key role in ensuring the safety and security of the country's sea-lanes of communication. This is important since India is a net-energy importer. In addition, the Navy has played a key role in the evacuation of Indian nationals from various zones as could be seen in Yemen recently. It has been taking part in the *Milan* series of naval exercises along with the navies of various nations from Southeast Asia and beyond. Meanwhile, India, Japan and the US have been taking part in the *Malabar* series of naval exercises. Since 2012, Japan and India have been holding the JIMEX naval exercises.⁴ India's Navy is keen to increase its interoperability with navies of many countries. This kind of interoperability is not only restricted to the security domain, but also extends to areas like anti-piracy efforts and disaster relief. India had joined hands with countries like the US, Australia, Japan and Indonesia to provide rescue and recovery efforts in the wake of the Boxing Day tsunami of 2004 while at the same time, the Indian Navy has also been very proactive in anti-piracy efforts in the Indian Ocean region.

All said and done, the Indian Navy will play an increasingly proactive role in the coming years and months in the Indo-Pacific waters. India's Indian Maritime Security Strategy (IMSS-2015) "acknowledges the hybrid nature of maritime challenges – the blurring of lines between traditional and non-traditional threats."⁵ As in the past, who commands the waves will be one of the key determinants of who calls the shots on the high table of international geopolitics.

Major Challenges for India in the Maritime Arena

However, India faces significant challenges in the maritime domain. Its submarine fleet has suffered a string of mishaps in the last couple of years. As far as the Indian Navy's share of the defence budget is concerned, it stood at a dismal 16 per cent of the total defence budget

³ NDTV Profit, 2015, "India Largest Remittances Receiving Country in 2015: World Bank," available at <http://profit.ndtv.com/news/economy/article-india-largest-remittances-receiving-country-in-2015-world-bank-1256720> accessed on May 21, 2016.

⁴ Press Information Bureau, "First Japan-India Maritime Exercise (JIMEX) in Indian Waters," 19-22 December, 2013, available at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=101825> accessed on April 25, 2016.

⁵ Abhijit Singh, "India's New Maritime Security Strategy: 'Brand-building' in an Era of Geopolitical Discord," 2015, available at http://www.idsa.in/idsacomments/indias-new-maritime-security-strategy_asingh_211215 accessed on May 20, 2016.

for 2015-16, while the Army got 53%.⁶ New Delhi would also have to step up the indigenisation process of its defence hardware, especially of its Navy.

Non-traditional security threats like terrorism, piracy, people-trafficking etc. also present significant challenges for India in the maritime arena. New Delhi has borne the brunt of terrorist attacks through the sea as seen in the horrendous Mumbai 2008 attacks. However, coastal security still remains a concern especially as India has a huge coastline of around 7516.6km⁷.

What is China's Indian Ocean Strategy?

China's Maritime Silk Road (MSR) initiative is part of its overall "One Belt One Road" (OBOR) initiative that has been initiated by President Xi Jinping who has often talked about the so-called *Chinese Dream*. The OBOR is in many ways a reinvention of the ancient Chinese Silk Roads which ran from China to Europe and branched off to various countries including India. The other part of the "One Belt One Road" is the "Silk Road Economic Belt,"⁸ through which China is trying to build land connectivity through the Central Asian countries to Europe.

China is a net energy importer and one of the fastest growing economies in the world. Its gargantuan appetite for energy has seen it import energy resources from various parts of the world. Beijing has slowly, but steadily been trying to assert its presence in the Indian Ocean and beyond. It declared a new ADIZ (Air Defence Identification Zone) over the East China Sea which was promptly rejected by Japan, US and countries like South Korea. It has also been involved in a tense standoff over the Scarborough Shoal with the Philippines and has proceeded with the installation of missile batteries in the Woody Island in the Paracel group of islands in the South China Sea.

Various observers have doubted China's real intentions in the South China Sea region. They are fearful that China may go ahead and declare an Air Defence Identification Zone in the region. The commander of the US Pacific Fleet Admiral Harry B Harris has cautioned that China was building "a great wall of sand"⁹ in the South China Sea. At a speech at the Raisina Dialogue in India in March this year, he noted that "expanded cooperation with India will not only be the defining partnership for the Rebalance, it will arguably be the defining partnership for America in the 21st century."¹⁰ Meanwhile, it is worthwhile to remember that in the past, Australia, India, Japan and the US had come together for the Quadrilateral Initiative, which however, had to be rescinded in the light of protestations from Beijing.

In addition, China has been trying to woo the new government in Myanmar especially after the exit of the military junta in Myanmar made Beijing jittery as to its long-

⁶ Laxman K Behera, "India's Defence Budget 2015-16," 2015, available at http://www.idsa.in/issuebrief/IndiasDefenceBudget2015-16_lkbehera_020315 accessed on May 10, 2016

⁷ Database on coastal states of India available at <http://iomennis.nic.in/index2.aspx?slid=758&sublinkid=119&langid=1&mid=1> accessed on May 17, 2016

⁸ *Xinhua News*, Chronology of China's Belt and Road Initiative, 2015, available at

http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2015-03/28/c_134105435.htm accessed on March 22, 2016.

⁹ *Voice of America*, US Admiral: China 'Creating a Great Wall of Sand' in Sea, 2015, available at

<http://www.voanews.com/content/us-adminral-china-creating-a-great-wall-of-sand-in-sea/2700920.html> accessed on May 15, 2016.

¹⁰ Admiral Harry B Harris, "Raising Dialogue Remarks - "Let's Be Ambitious Together," 2016, available at <http://www.pacom.mil/Media/SpeechesTestimony/tabid/6706/Article/683842/raisina-dialogue-remarks-lets-be-ambitious-together.aspx> accessed on April 23, 2016.

term interests in the country. In addition, for the first time, China is setting up a military base in Djibouti which will help China establish a foothold in a very strategic location. There are also some reports which say that China is planning to build a canal across the Isthmus of Kra in Thailand, which could be a potential game-changer for the geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific region.

Indian and Chinese Interests in the Indian Ocean Region

Firstly, India has always been the resident power in the Indian Ocean region with the sole exception of the United States. Its Navy has a commanding presence in the region between the Strait of Hormuz and the Strait of Malacca while its Andaman and Nicobar chain of islands lies at the entrance of the Strait of Malacca, which has been termed by many observers as China's Achilles Heel. The setting up of a tri-services command by India in the Andaman and Nicobar islands gives it an unmatched reach in the region.

Zhang Ming, an influential Chinese naval analyst has flagged that "the 244 islands which are a part of the India's Andaman and Nicobar chain of islands could be used as a "metal chain" to block the western entrance to the Strait of Malacca" Though this is not an official position of Beijing, it means that surely there are people in China who think in that manner. However, in the hoary past too, China had tried to carve its influence in the maritime arena in India's neighbourhood with people like Admiral Zheng He spreading Chinese influence far and wide. Aeons ago, the state (province) of Kerala in India's southern coast grew accustomed to Chinese fishing nets.¹¹

Secondly, in many cases, India's interests in the neighbourhood are at odds with those of Beijing. For example, New Delhi has always had close ties with the island nations in the region like Sri Lanka, Maldives and Seychelles. However, of late, once again, Beijing has been rapidly trying to make inroads into what New Delhi has traditionally seen as its own "backyard". China's so-called "string of pearls" strategy of helping set up bases in Gwadar(Pakistan), Hambantota(Sri Lanka), Kyaukpyu (Myanmar) and Chittagong(Bangladesh) has worried many observers in India that Beijing's main intention is to keep India tied down in its immediate neighbourhood.

Thirdly, a clear pattern emerges from China's diplomatic forays into India's maritime neighbourhood. During the visit of the Chinese President Xi Jinping to Sri Lanka in 2014, an MoU was signed for the Colombo Port city project, but was suspended later following the election of a new President, Maithripala Sirisena, who took over from the previous President, Mahinda Rajapaksa, who was seen as being more close to China. The stalled project has now been revived. Earlier, Chinese submarines had also made calls at Sri Lankan ports, much to the chagrin of New Delhi.

Sri Lanka's importance for India also lies in the fact that there is a sizeable minority of Tamils of Indian origin in Sri Lanka and India had sent the IPKF(Indian Peace Keeping Force)to Sri Lanka to take on the feared LTTE(the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Ealam). Another country in India's neighbourhood, Maldives, had cancelled the contract given to an Indian infrastructure major GMR for the expansion of the international airport in its capital, Male. The contract was later given to a Chinese firm which clearly shows Beijing's growing influence in the region.

During the visit of the Chinese President Xi Jinping to Pakistan in April last year, an announcement was made for a China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)¹² which will run from Kashgar in Western China to Gwadar in Pakistan on the Arabian Sea front allowing

¹¹ Shashi Tharoor, *Pax Indica, India and the World of the 21st Century*, Allen Lane, New Delhi, 2012.

¹² *BBC News*, 2015, available at <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-32377088> accessed on May 2, 2016.

Beijing to bypass the strategic Strait of Malacca and avoid what has been euphemistically dubbed as the “Malacca Dilemma”. In addition, it has teamed up with Pakistan to block India’s bid for membership of the Nuclear Suppliers’ Group (NSG).

Fourthly, India was also recently taken aback when China put a technical hold on its attempts to have Pakistan-based terror outfit Jaish-e-Mohammad’s chief Maulana Mohammed Azhar designated as a terrorist at the United Nations. This clearly shows that China has double standards when it comes to dealing with terrorists. While it considers Uyghur separatists as terrorists, they have applied a different standard when it comes to Pakistan-based terrorists.

India has always aspired for a benign security environment in its neighbourhood which will help it to take care of its own needs of domestic development. However, it has been at the receiving end of terrorism emanating from Pakistan as evidenced by major incidents like the attack on the Indian Parliament (in December 2001), the Mumbai terror attacks of November 2008 and the more recent Pathankot terror attack of January this year. Hence China’s “all-weather friendship” with Pakistan is worrisome for India, especially given the fact that Beijing has been alleged to supply nuclear and missile know-how to Pakistan.

India needs to give up on ad hoc measures with regards to its foreign policy and needs to think on a bigger scale. Former Indian PM, Dr Manmohan Singh had termed that Asia is big enough for both India and China to grow. However, in spite of the visit of PM Modi to China, things have not improved drastically between the two neighbours. Chinese President Xi Jinping is taking a hardline position on the foreign policy front so as to shore up his domestic credentials.

Role of Other Major Powers: The United States and Japan

Under US President Barack Obama, the US has signalled its resolve to maintain its presence in the Asia-Pacific with the so-called “pivot” or “rebalance” to the Asia-Pacific under which it has been reaching out to various countries in the Asia-Pacific. It has strengthened its ties to its treaty allies like Japan and the Philippines, especially as the latter has been at the receiving end of China’s aggressive actions in the South China Sea region. The US has conducted repeated Freedom of Navigation Operations¹³ and fly-over of territory claimed by China in the region.

Although India’s relations with the US suffered as a result of its nuclear tests of 1998, the two sides quickly made up, especially after the visit of the then US President Bill Clinton to India in March 2000. During the visit of US President Barack Obama to India in January 2015, the two sides signed the U.S.-India Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region wherein the two countries affirmed “the importance of safeguarding maritime security and ensuring freedom of navigation and over flight throughout the region, especially in the South China Sea.” This marked a big step forward for New Delhi as previously India had been loath to directly mention about the South China Sea in joint statements or otherwise. President Barack Obama also became the first US President to visit India twice during his Presidency.

Meanwhile, under Japanese PM Shinzo Abe, Tokyo has adopted a pro-active stance when it comes to its foreign policy. In a meeting at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington D.C, soon after his inauguration in December 2012, PM Abe proudly

¹³ Idress Ali, U.S. to Boost South China Sea Freedom of Navigation Moves, Admiral says, 2016 available at <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-southchinasea-usa-idUSKCN0VX22B> accessed on May 16, 2016.

announced that “Japan is back”.¹⁴ Early into his term, he paid a visit to the controversial Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, which riled Japan’s immediate neighbours, China and South Korea. Under his watch, in September last year, Japan’s constitution has been revised allowing for the deployment of Japanese troops outside the country even when Japan is not directly under attack. PM Abe had mentioned about an Asian Democratic Security Diamond which would include India, Japan, Australia and the US state of Hawaii, though it is not any closer to realisation. During the current term of Japanese PM Shinzo Abe, US-Japan relations have been further strengthened and it is no longer what Yoichi Funabashi termed as “Alliance Adrift”.¹⁵

At the same time, India’s relations with Japan have been undergoing a steady improvement. The Japanese PM was the Chief Guest at India’s Republic Day celebrations in January 2014. In addition, India and Japan have also been holding a maritime affairs dialogue between them.

Bilateral cooperation between Japan and India in all fields has been increasing ever since the Cold War ended. Although India’s nuclear tests of 1998 dampened the burgeoning ties, they improved dramatically in the period after August 2000 when the then Japanese PM Yoshiro Mori paid a visit to India. This burgeoning relationship has been characterised by none other than the Japanese PM, Shinzo Abe, as the relationship with “the greatest potential of any bilateral relationship in the world”.¹⁶

There are a host of factors which are drawing Japan and India ever closer. Firstly, both Japan and India in recent times have been faced with multiple security challenges. Among them is the growing belligerence exhibited by China, as exemplified in the recent deployment of advanced surface-to-air missiles in the Woody Island (referred to as *Yongxing Dao* by China) in the Paracel Islands in the South China Sea. China’s land-reclamation in the South China Sea is a big cause of concern and some experts have expressed the fear that in case China is able to establish a foothold in the Indian Ocean region, it may do the same.

Secondly, India’s improving ties with the US have helped to bring India and Japan closer. Japan has been a strong ally of the United States while India has been inching closer to the United States especially after the end of the Cold War. India and the US have been conducting joint military exercises while New Delhi is also buying different kinds of military hardware from the United States, something which was almost unthinkable in the Cold War days. India, Japan and the US have also been conducting a trilateral dialogue amongst themselves since December 2011. New Delhi now buys naval hardware from a host of countries as opposed to earlier times. India has bought P-8 I maritime patrol aircraft from the US and is negotiating to buy Japanese-made US-2 maritime reconnaissance aircraft.

Thirdly, Japan and India are cooperating in a wide variety of areas. They are bidding to be permanent members of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and have pooled their efforts along with countries like Germany and Brazil. They are also cooperating in countries like Afghanistan since Japan and India are two of the biggest international donors in Afghanistan.

Fourthly, the Indian Navy is crucial for the protection of Japan’s sea lanes of communication, more so since Japan is an energy deficient country. Japan’s energy imports have increased after the disastrous Great East Japan Earthquake of December 2011. In the

¹⁴ Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Japan, 2013, “Japan is Back, Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan,” available at http://www.mofa.go.jp/announce/pm/abe/us_20130222en.html accessed on May 10, 2016.

¹⁵ Yoichi Funabashi, “Alliance Adrift,” New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1999.

¹⁶ *The Hindu*, 2015, “India-Japan Bilateral Relationship has Greatest Potential: Abe,” available at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/international/indiajapan-bilateral-relationship-has-greatest-potential-abe/article7904075.ece> accessed on April 10, 2016.

past, the Indian Navy and the Indian Coast Guard rescued a Japanese-flagged vessel MV *Alondra Rainbow* from pirates in 1999.

Fifthly, New Delhi and Tokyo have in principle agreed to conclude an agreement for “Cooperation in the Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy”, even though the technical details are yet to be finalised. This is all the more noteworthy since New Delhi has not signed either the CTBT (Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty) nor the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). India could also emerge as a big market for Japanese defence exports in the future. Prime Minister Shinzo Abe came to power in December 2012 promising to lift the Japanese economy out of its sluggishness and for the success of his so-called “Abenomics”, India is of prime importance. In India too, PM Modi came to power riding on the disaffection among Indian voters with the sluggish growth of the Indian economy under the previous United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government.

Due to political tensions between Japan and China, Japanese companies have found the going tough in the Chinese market and these tensions have spilled over to the economic realm as seen in anti-Japanese protests following the dispute over the Senkaku islands (which are claimed as Diaoyu by China). These protests have also been fanned by the Chinese government as a ploy to divert public opinion which has been increasingly worried over the sluggish economic growth in China.

Sixthly, Japan and India have concluded a CEPA (Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement) back in 2011. Although bilateral trade is still miniscule when compared to say India’s trade with China or Japan’s trade with China, there is a lot of potential for Japan-India trade levels to increase. Total bilateral trade stood at a modest US\$ 12.11 billion during the period between April-December 2014.¹⁷ India is also an attractive destination for Japanese investment. New Delhi has recently approved a proposal for the introduction of Japanese-Shinkansen trains on the Mumbai-Ahmedabad sector in India. Japan had earlier lost out to China for the introduction of a similar high-speed railway system between Jakarta and Bandung in Indonesia.

India was the first recipient of Japanese ODA (Official Development Assistance) way back in 1958, which has played a very instrumental role in ensuring India’s infrastructural development. Many major infrastructure development projects in India like the Delhi Metro, the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC) and the Chennai-Bengaluru Industrial Corridor have benefitted to a huge extent from Japanese ODA.

Finally, soon after PM Narendra Modi took over in India in May 2014, the first country that he visited outside the immediate neighbourhood was Japan. PM Abe’s grandfather, Nobusuke Kishi had visited India way back in 1957 and he had always held India in high esteem. In a major gesture from Japan, the Japanese Emperor and Empress had visited India in late 2013. This shows that the commitment to the ties exists at the highest levels in both India and Japan. PM Modi had visited Japan while he was the Chief Minister of the Indian province of Gujarat and has a long contact with Japan.

Conclusion

As is clear from the points elucidated earlier, India should be wary of getting entangled in China’s Maritime Silk Road since it could be a smokescreen for China to reach out to countries in India’s immediate neighbourhood. Beijing’s growing economy is ravenous for

¹⁷Ministry of External Affairs, 2015, “India-Japan Relations,” available at http://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Japan_2015_07_23.pdf accessed on April 20, 2016.

energy resources especially from the Middle East and Africa and the Maritime Silk Road could be yet another initiative for China to make these countries, especially the ones in Africa even more dependent on imports from China.

Instead, New Delhi should think of its own initiative similar to the Maritime Silk Road initiative as traditionally Indian influence has spread by the sea. India's "Act-East" policy gels well with the US' pivot to the Asia-Pacific. India has recently agreed "in principle" to sign a "logistics support agreement" (or LEMOA ¹⁸ in technical terms) which will allow the militaries of the two countries to use each others' bases for refuelling and logistics. This is a big leap forward from the days when India and the United States were on the opposite sides of the Cold War divide which meant that India was closer to the erstwhile Soviet Union.

In case India joins the MSR, it will lose another card up its sleeve. China claims the entire Indian province of Arunachal Pradesh and has in the past refused to issue visas to high-level officials from Arunachal Pradesh. Beijing has also been issuing stapled visas to citizens from the border Indian province of Jammu and Kashmir. Once it joins the MSR, it will also be difficult to opt out of the same without upsetting other nations. Just in case, India were to join the MSR, there should be some kind of a quid pro quo with China supporting India's case for permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council(UNSC).

India is also a net-energy importer and the continued growth of its economy depends on keeping the sea-lanes of communication in its neighbourhood open. Hence, India should keep its options open instead of jumping on to the Chinese bandwagon. Under the Modi government, India has been reaching out to countries like Vietnam and also to countries in China's backyard, like Mongolia for instance. New Delhi has always had close historical ties with countries like Indonesia too and all these ties are likely to be impacted in case China gets a stronger foothold in the Indian Ocean region. In addition, in case China were to reclaim land in the Indian Ocean region, it would be difficult for India to push it away, especially as China is a permanent veto-wielding member of the United Nations Security Council.

The Indian Ocean is also home to tremendous natural resources, many of which are unexplored as yet. In case Beijing were to lay claims over them, it would make the case very complicated. India's trade with countries like Australia is also increasing steadily, especially as New Delhi imports a huge amount of natural resources from energy-rich Australia. All these supplies would be prone to disruption in case of increasing Chinese foothold in the region.

If we analyse China's behaviour with regards to its territorial claims in the South China Sea, it is very clear that it is in no mood to relent on its territorial claims. Even during the visit of the Chinese President Xi Jinping to India in September 2014, Chinese troops intruded into Indian territory. Given the chain of command in China, it is highly unlikely that this would have taken place without the tacit approval of the Chinese President, Xi Jinping.

However, this is not to suggest there are only differences between India and China. India has joined the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and is also a part of the BRICS. Besides, it will be heading the New Development Bank (NDB) for the first year. However, economics and politics should be kept on two different tracks. While there is no harm in cooperating with Beijing on the economic front, New Delhi has to be wary on the security front as regards cooperation with Beijing.

Deng Xiaoping had said that "hide your time and bide your strength". The present Chinese leadership seems to have discarded this dictum given by Deng Xiaoping and has now

¹⁸ *The Hindu*, 2016, available at <http://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-us-agree-on-logistics-agreement-to-be-signed-in-a-month/article8466689.ece>.

adopted an openly belligerent posture. India needs to proceed with extreme caution and not be caught unawares as in 1962 when Chinese forces took India by surprise by staging a sudden attack across the Himalayas. New Delhi would therefore do well to remember that “whoever is the lord of Malacca has his hand on the throat of Venice”.