

China's Strategic Concept With Belt Road Initiative Attributes Through Control of African And Indo-Pacific Region

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Abstract -- This research discusses about the strategic concept China's Geopolitics with Belt and Road Initiative Attributes. Research methods using qualitative methods with descriptive analysis and quasi- qualitative analysis techniques that look for data and compare it with literary theory and study. Based on the results of the study, Belt Road Initiative China's serves to support the pace of China's rise.. The Belt and Road Initiative is one of the most ambitious foreign and economic policies of the Chinese government. This policy aims to strengthen Beijing's economic influence through a broad and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) still has the potential to become a mutually beneficial economic cooperation framework for countries cooperating with China in the indo-pacific region. Africa plays an important role as a supplier of natural resources to China and then China uses the BRI to facilitate trade with African countries.

Keywords -- Belt Road Initiative, China's Geopolitical Strategy, Expansion of Africa and Indo Pacific

I. INTRODUCTION

The Chinese government led by Xi Jinping is trying to revive the concept of the "Silk Road" in its foreign policy agenda. The Silk Road was later raised as China's new slogan in several international forums. The concept of the Silk Road is not new, but it is an ancient concept in the past to name trade and cultural routes between China and Central Asia and South Asia and Europe and the Middle East, which was established around 200 BC. during the Han Dynasty. According to the current Chinese leadership, the concept of the new Silk Road, also known as "One Belt, One Road", here in after referred to as the "One Belt, One Road Initiative" (BRI), consists of the "New Silk Road Economic Belt Road". (The New Silk Road. Economic belt), which indicates stronger economic ties with Central Asia and a focus on trade.

As the Initiator, the word "history" is the key word used by Xi Jinping when talking about the future of China, including the BRI. In his speech, Xi Jinping emphasized the Marxist notion that "the people are the creators of history". To achieve history as a modern and prosperous country, the Chinese nation must move and struggle. According to Xi Jinping, "nonsense hurts the country while hard work makes it prosperous" At the same time, Xi Jinping also started China's history back in 2000 when they built the Silk Road to connect it with the implementation of the BRI. Interpreting the silk road's past, Xi Jinping said, "Spanning thousands of miles and years, the ancient silk routes embody the spirit of peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit. The Silk Road spirit has become a great heritage of human civilization" From here the idea of the Chinese Dream gave rise to China in the form of the BRI, as the center of foreign policy implementation. (Simonov & Withanage, 2019).

BRI consists of 2 main components, namely the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road. The Silk

Road Economic Belt as a land route aims to connect the lagging western provinces of China with Europe via Central Asia. Meanwhile, the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road as a sea route aims to connect China's rich coastal provinces with Southeast Asia to Africa through ports and railroads. By connecting China with various parts of the world, Xi Jinping dreams of an iron silk road for China and its interests. BRI is a giant project because it crosses 3 continents namely Asia, Europe and Africa and 3/4 energy sources with a target of 4.4 billion population in 67 countries so that it represents 63% of the total global population. China's spending on BRI is expected to reach \$100 billion per year. To finance BRI projects that require huge capital, China then established the New Development Bank (NDB) (2013), Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) (2014), Silk Road Fund (SRF) (2015), and other funding mechanisms, both bilateral and multilateral.

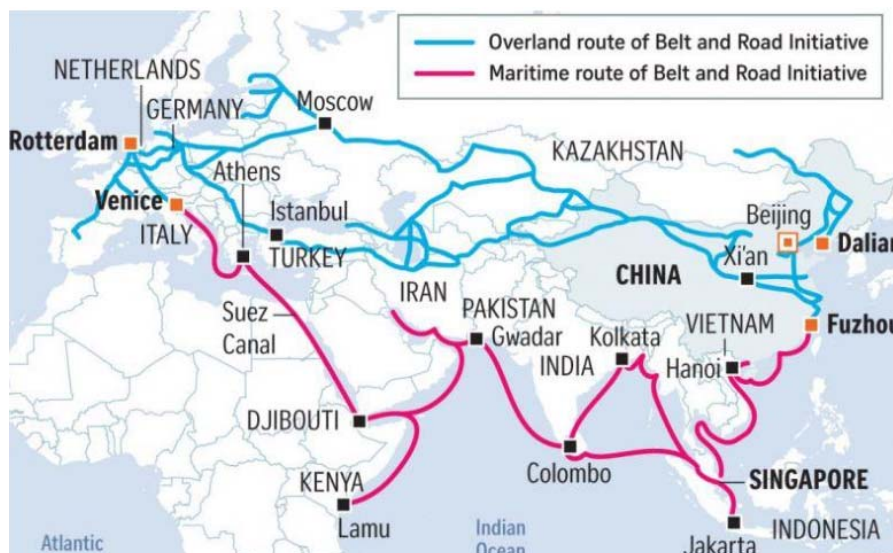


Figure. 1. Map of China's Belt Road Initiative

Source : Asiagreen.com

Tatar (2013) Added that The concept of China's New Silk Road was first announced in President Xi Jinping's speech during his visit to Kazakhstan and reaffirmed at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in 2013. This is the first time a Chinese leader has outlined its strategic strategy. Xi Jinping presented a proposal consisting of 5 (five) main points to build together the "New Silk Road Economic Belt" (The New Silk Road Economic Belt). This proposal is aimed at strengthening relations between China, Central Asia and Europe. These five points include:

- [1] Strengthening policy communications that can help 'give the green light' for economic cooperation;
- [2] Strengthening road or infrastructure connections, with the idea of forming a large transportation corridor from the Pacific to the Baltic Sea, and from Central Asia to the Indian Ocean, then gradually building a network of transport connections between East Asia, West Asia, and South Asia;
- [3] Strengthening trade facilities, focusing on eliminating trade barriers and taking steps to reduce trade and investment costs;
- [4] Strengthen financial cooperation, with particular attention to currency settlements that can reduce transaction costs and mitigate financial risks while enhancing a competitive economy; and
- [5] Strengthening people-to-people relations

Related Studies

The study of the China's "Asia Dream": The Belt Road Initiative and the new regional order discussed about constructivism to take seriously the role of Belt Road Initiative ideas and domestic politics in foreign policy-making. Through an analysis of official and unofficial sources, it traces linkages between ideas, institutions, and behavior in Chinese foreign policy. The results of this study show the The various documents that outline China's diplomatic ideas, goals, strategies, institutions, and projects over the

next 5–10 years are quite repetitive. With each repetition, the key phrases gain new meaning, often signifying shifts in Chinese foreign policy strategy. For example, the documents make it pretty clear that Xi's 'pro-active' foreign policy to 'strive for achievement' is a significant shift from Deng's reactive 'bide and hide' diplomacy. Even so, there are various risks with Xi's grand strategy to forge a 'community of shared destiny' in Eurasia (and the world). Economically, China has a mixed track record of investments in developing countries, Politically, most participants in BRI are still hedging against Beijing (and with the US) for security matters. the purely economic gains for China still could be considerable, which then would build up a reservoir of goodwill that Beijing could use as political capital on the world stage. Analysts thus need to take more seriously China's emerging grand strategy as a rule-maker, rather than just a rule-taker—or a rule-breaker (Callahan, 2016).

About research Schulhof (2022) on "The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI): What Will it Look Like in the Future?", discuss also conceptualise the Belt Road Initiative alongside its degree of economic globalisation and multilateralism, which are both impacted by the global pandemic response and arrive at the four scenarios : Asian, Vibrant, Irrelevant, and International BRI. These scenarios show that different development are possible with the BRI's geographical scope, the investment volumes and sectors, the funding structure, and also the orientation towards sustainability. These post-pandemic pathways of the BRI might help decision-makers in business and politics to prepare their responses and strategies. The results show that China is more influential in scenario 3 due to the absence of other contesting big initiatives or a binding global world order. The 'cold war scenario' with Asian BRI (1) comes second in regard to China's influence. The respective importance of BRI can be very different. It is most relevant for China itself in the first scenario (Asian), where it secures China's national interests in an uncertain world, and most globally influential in scenario 3 (Vibrant).

"The Belt and Road Initiative: Exploring Beijing's Motivations and Challenges for its New Silk Road" that argues that Beijing's ambitious 'Belt and Road Initiative' (BRI) is driven by the convergence of Innenpolitik and Aussenpolitik motivations including a desire, Due to challenges posed by Xinjiang and China's geopolitically 'hybridity', the most likely effect of the BRI will be the division of the Indo-Pacific into a sphere of Chinese predominance in its Eurasian continental setting and the maintenance of American predominance in its maritime setting. The results provide insight to There are two major immediate implications of the BRI for China and its role in the Indo-Pacific. The first concerns the apparent rise in the threat posed to Chinese security and the second broader implication is whether the BRI can in fact mitigate China's geopolitical hybridity (Clarke, 2018).

II. METHODOLOGY

This study uses descriptive qualitative research methods by providing systematic, realistic and accurate descriptions, schemes and research on strategic concepts with a global perspective to dominate the world with BRI attributes. What are the strategic concepts that President Xi Jinping wants to achieve in order to dominate the world through controlling Africa and controlling 11 countries in the Indo Pacific. Furthermore, data analysis will be applied using quasi-qualitative techniques that prioritize congruent methods. According to George & Bennet (2005), the congruent method is a method that analyzes evidence that researchers can solve or predict the outcome of this case in theory. The author understands case independent variables and case dependent variables based on the theory used. The author then looks for case data and the theory used is causal to the case if it can prove the results in the field. In addition, the method used in this research is literature study, in which the author seeks sources from various literatures and interprets them using a scientific approach and qualitative or naturalistic descriptive methods because they are carried out in natural conditions.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. The Rationale of the Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI): Regional and International Factors

After the death of Mao Zedong, China's foreign policy is heavily influenced by domestic factors, including the attributes of the Belt Road Initiative. One of the driving factors driving this policy is the economic situation that could endanger China. The global economic crisis and domestic social problems have created inefficiencies in the export- and foreign direct investment (FDI)-based economic model, which China needs to overcome in order to find new export markets or retain existing ones, narrowing the development gap between coastal areas. This is the main reason that China's leaders promote the idea of the Belt Road Initiative (Tatar, 2013).

One of the areas approached by China to promote the New Silk Road policy is Central Asia with the main priority on efforts to

ensure economic development and political stability. Central Asian countries such as Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan border the autonomous province of Xinjiang (which often experiences political turmoil), where Xinjiang ranks as the 25th poorest province out of 29 provinces in China according to 2012 statistical data. The majority of the population of Xinjiang are Uyghur Muslims which is a minority group that has long demanded territorial independence. In recent years, there has been an increase in terrorist attacks in the region where the Chinese Government has pinned terrorist attributes on the Uyghur minority group. In order to maintain its territorial integrity, the Government of China has fought against a series of acts of separatism and terrorism in the Xinjiang region. To reduce the domestic turmoil, Beijing began to abandon the "political stability above all" policy implemented in Xinjiang province until 2010, becoming a regional economic development strategy (Brugier, 2014).

Another regional factor driving China's New Silk Road policy is energy security. China's economy grew by an average of 10% between 1989 and 2011, and its energy needs have also increased. Beijing shed its energy independence in the 1980s and became a nation dependent on external sources for half of its domestic consumption. In the early 2000s, China doubled its energy imports from Russia to reduce its dependence on countries in the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa. Brugier also Added this happens for two reasons: First, energy transport from both regions relies on sea lanes, which are frequently the target of pirate attacks or administrative delays in energy delivery. Second, there is political instability in these two regions which can lead to energy shortages.

In addition to the energy security factor, the regional problem behind the implementation of China's New Silk Road policy is Beijing's desire to guarantee its export market and diversify its transportation network, which was raised by Xi Jinping during his visit to Central Asia, specifically related to instability. waters of South and Southeast Asia One of China's complex problems is the Malacca Strait, where pirate attacks, illegal trade and unresolved maritime issues have increased. Nearly 85% of China's imports are transported via this route, including 80% of China's imports from China (Umana, 2012).

In terms of international factors, US policy is the dominant factor influencing China's policy given the rivalry between the two countries in the economic and military fields. The United States factor is seen as more significant when compared to other countries in the East Asia region and countries in the Southeast Asia region. For the United States, China's intensifying presence in the Asian region indicates Beijing's obsession with global power. However, if analyzed, actually China's growing influence in Asia is a response to the United States' "Pivot to Asia-Pacific" policy. President Barack Obama announced the policy in 2011 which is also known as the "Rebalance Toward Asia" policy. The policy pivot covers security and the economy, by reorganizing 60% of the United States' air and sea power to Asia by 2020, encircling China, and negotiating with allied countries regarding the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement, without involving China. The effect of this containment policy is to prevent China from expanding its influence to the East and South of China (Cheng, 2015).

3.2. Belt Road Initiatives Policy as China's Geopolitical Strategy

China's geopolitical strategy through BRI does not just appear. Since the beginning of the administration of Chinese President Xi Jinping, the revival of the Chinese nation has become a phrase that keeps popping up at every opportunity. Xi Jinping refined it into a global BRI project that represents China's greatness. China, which so far has depended on the legitimacy of the ideology of Marxism-Leninism and Maoism to maintain order and stability, feels the need to have another legitimacy outcome. With BRI, China is increasingly strengthening economic cooperation with Asia, the Middle East and Europe because these countries are a potential market share. In October 2013, in order to strengthen China's strategic vision, President Xi Jinping also put forward a proposal to build close ties between China and the ASEAN community, and put forward the idea of building the 21st century maritime Silk Road to promote maritime cooperation. . In his address to the Indonesian parliament, Xi also proposed establishing an Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to finance infrastructure development and promote regional connectivity and economic integration.

The aim of the Maritime Silk Road is to strengthen ties with South and Southeast Asia while emphasizing the security of maritime trade. The plan aims to realize the ancient Silk Road with a modern network of high-speed rail, roads, ports and pipelines spanning Asia. The Beijing Economic Highway consists of three routes: the first route stretches from China to Central Asia and the Middle East; the second way, namely H. Seaway extends from the south coast; and a third route extends from Yunnan and Guang Xi to Southeast Asia. The idea of the New Silk Road emerged from structural changes to China's budget, reflecting the "new normal" of the economic slowdown, which had a major impact on the Asian region's economy. More importantly, it is a signal of a shift in China's foreign strategy and policy, in which relations with neighbors are a priority. In

addition, this idea is also in accordance with the ASEAN Connectivity Master Plan and the new maritime world axis vision led by Indonesian Prime Minister Joko Widodo with a focus on sea power (Hong, 2015).

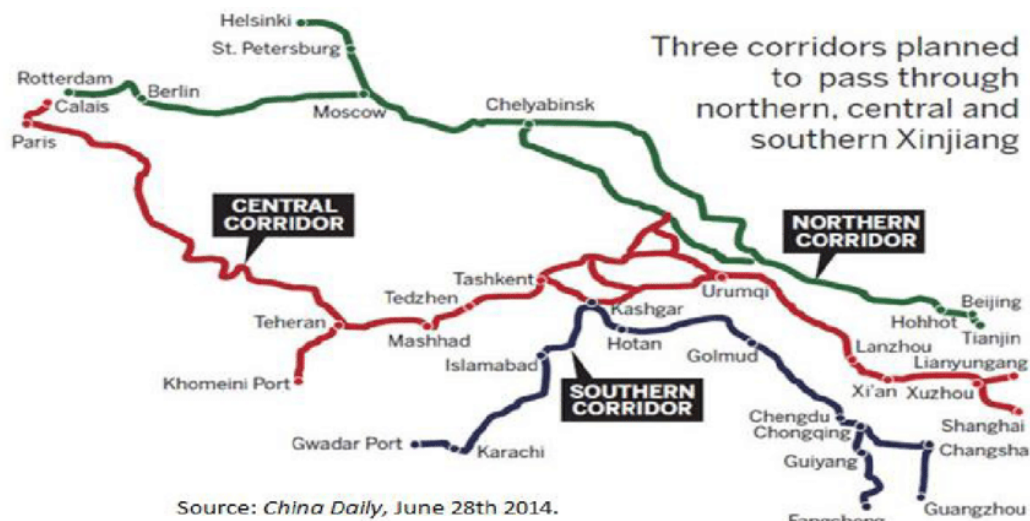


Figure. 2. Xinjiang Railway Corridor Line Plan

Source : China Daily (2014)

China's move certainly attracted the attention of the international community, including big countries like the United States, which are not included in China's New Silk Road policy. Although the Obama administration did not provide an official response to China's policies at the time, the global economic network certainly presented challenges and opportunities for the United States to respond constructively to Chinese policies.

3.3. Implications of the Belt and Road Initiatives for United States (US) Hegemony

For 25 years, US policy towards China has been a combination of "engaging" and "hedging" approaches. This approach strikes a balance between cooperation and tension aimed at controlling China's rise. According to the Deputy Secretary of State, Robert Zoellick, in 2005, the purpose of "engaging" was to make China a "responsible stake holder" and willing to comply with the rules of the game set by the Western world order that took effect after World War II. Simultaneously, the United States developed a "hedging" policy aimed at consolidating the United States' position in the Western Pacific through a network of alliances and partnerships, with the expectation that China's declared rise to peace would pose a challenge to US dominance in East Asia. Changes in US policy towards China are not a new phenomenon. This began when China's economic and political power began to transcend the boundaries of China and its neighboring countries. After the Cold War, the maintenance of the US military alliance network in the North Pacific was the first indication that US attention would return to East Asia and after the 1989 Tiananmen incident, US foreign policy is focused on China rather than the countries of the former Soviet Union (Guidetti, 2015).

Since then, the United States has found that China's rise is not as peaceful and stable as China's declaration. This is shown by the dispute in the South China Sea which started from an old maritime border dispute and expanded into a territorial dispute between China and Japan (the Senkaku/Diaoyutai island dispute in the East China Sea), Vietnam, the Philippines and other Southeast Asia. country. (in the South China Sea). This territorial dispute illustrates the emergence of regional tensions arising from maritime sovereignty claims. If examined more deeply, this issue is not just a dispute over island ownership, underlying natural resources and artificial islands built by China, Vietnam and the Philippines in the South China Sea, as well as military and civilian installations. But more than that, this problem is China's attempt to control the sea area closest to it, the Maritime East Asia and the West Pacific (Lumbantobing, 2020).

Washington's concern about China's rise is well-founded. This can be traced through the 2015 China Defense White Paper, in which, for the first time, China acknowledged its ambitions over the open ocean. According to Chinese military officials, this reflects the fact that "China has made it a strategic goal to become a maritime power, therefore, we need to build a

strong navy (...) Offshore-waters defense alone can no longer provide effective defense of the country's maritime interests" (Denyer, 2015).

China's move to consolidate its territorial claims in its "nearby seas" and ignore US demands to stop its construction activities is a signal that US supremacy is not as strong as it used to be. However, during his visit to East Asia, the United States Secretary of Defense, Ashton Carter, gave a warning to Beijing and assured his allies and partners that the United States would not give up its supremacy: "There should be no mistake: the United States will fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows, as we do all around the world (...) The US will remain the principal security power in the Asia-Pacific for decades to come" (Whitlock, 2015).

Berke (2015) argues that the view of the New Silk Road is the first battle in the competition for dominance in Eurasia between Washington and Beijing. Even further, George Soros warned of the potential for a nuclear war between the two major countries. If China succeeds in linking its growing industry with the vast natural resources of its Eurasian heartland, it could happen just as the geopolitical scientist Sir Halford Mackinder predicted, in 1904, "Who rules the Heartland commands the World Island. Who rules the World Island commands the World". This possibility, of course, was not wanted by Washington. Washington sees that the New Silk Road policy, including its financial institutions (AIIB) as a potential threat to the international order, is based on three reasons: first, the institution will duplicate the existing network of financial institutions, namely The World Bank and The Asian Development Bank, as well as weaken these institutions by lowering international governance standards. Second, this institution can weaken the dollar-based international system by strengthening the Chinese currency, Renminbi, as a global trading asset. Third, this institution will create a counter-financial system that can marginalize the international order from global governance.

So it is not surprising that Washington is dissatisfied with the existence of the New Silk Road policy and the existence of the AIIB which aims to promote China's economic and political centrality from East Asia to the Middle East and Europe. According to Washington, increasing tensions in the China Sea (South and East) and China's economic growth, including China's New Silk Road policy, are seen as a challenge to US dominance in East Asia. This led to calls in Washington to change US policy towards China. This call appears in a Council on Foreign Relations (CFR) report calling for a new "grand strategy" against China focused on countering China's rise rather than helping to increase its strength.

3.4. The Strategic Concept of China's Mastery of Africa

The development of the world economy in the 21st century demands the implementation of more open trade for every country in the world, and both developed and developing countries are taking this step to maintain and increase their country's income. This condition shows that countries in the world prefer to work together rather than fight to achieve development and create a dynamic economy in various models of international cooperation. The China-Africa Cooperation Forum (FOCAC) is a form of relations between countries in the world and one of the steps taken by several countries to realize the vision of a free trade area in the African region. FOCAC basically aims to enhance investment and trade cooperation between China and Africa (China Africa Advisory, 2021).

China's main motive for further strengthening its business relations with Africa is the need to obtain a very urgent source of energy to support the development of China's industrial sector, whose products are currently almost flooding foreign markets throughout the world, and this is what makes China a competitor. The United States has long dominated world trade. In addition, China intends to strive to gain broad access, especially regarding energy resource mining commodities from Africa. China, which now no longer adheres purely to communist ideology, but rather to a pragmatic national ideology, namely establishing cooperation with anyone who benefits them, thus making it difficult for America and Russia to play in a unipolar system to attract China to become part of its axis, because with an increasing economy China where this reinforces the prediction that China will become a giant in the world economy (Hingis, 2020).

China officially opens its first military base in Africa, in Djibouti to be precise. This was reported by the Xinhua News Agency on Tuesday, August 1, 2017. Soldiers, officers and invited guests attended the hoisting ceremony and military parade that marked this historic event. The inauguration of the military base in Djibouti coincides with the 90th anniversary of the People's Liberation Army (PLA). Based on the statement of the Chinese Ministry of Defense, this logistics base will be the first to be used by Beijing to support sea escort in Africa and southwest Asia, maintain peace, and for humanitarian assistance (Hardoko, 2017).

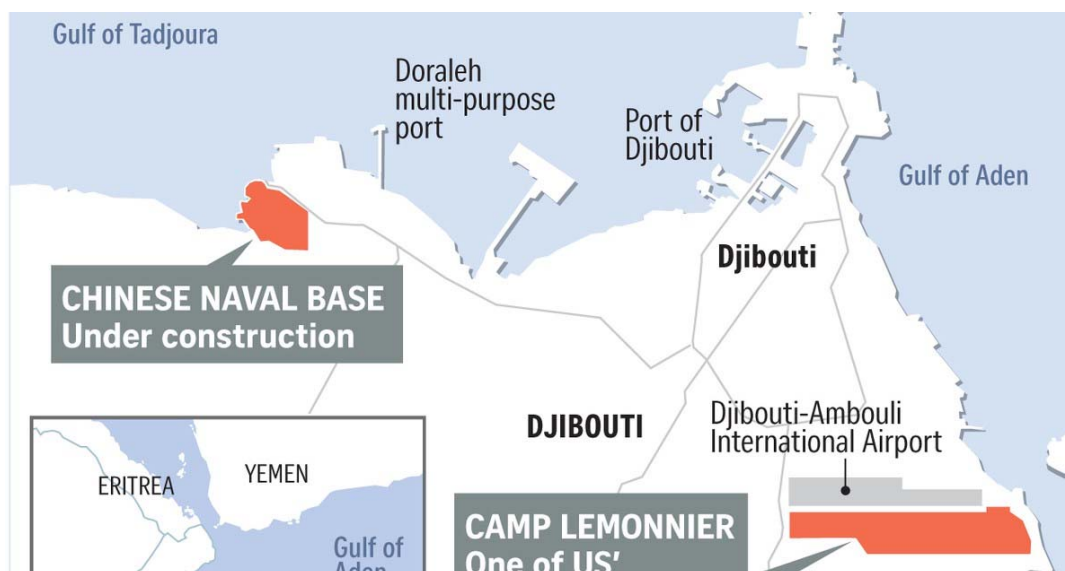


Figure. 3. Location of Chinese Military Base in Djibouti

Source : The Strait Times

Based on Debora research (2017), The presence of China's first overseas military base certainly raises speculation about China's military expansion plans. However, according to media reports owned by the People's Liberation Army in China, they denied that the construction of the base in Djibouti was a form of Chinese military expansion or involved in arms competition. According to the report, the aim of building the base is to participate in enhancing global peace. China also does not call it a military base or military base but a support base. China's use of the name support base according to an expert on China studies, Bernt Berger, that Beijing only wants to avoid a strategic connotation that would imply all forms of projection related to military strength in the region.

Although China has tried to avoid the connotation of "military expansion", China's military presence in the Horn of Africa country still raises concerns for some countries. One of them is India. The position of Djibouti, which is located on the northwestern edge of the Indian Ocean, can make China's influence in the Indian Ocean even stronger. Indian army Brigadier Mandio Singh said that China's presence was a threat to the Indian navy. Djibouti also allows China to serve as an air force base and this is capable of conducting surveillance over the Arabian Sea as well as Indian island territories off the West coast. Djibouti will also become China's "string of pearls" in the Indian Ocean besides Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Geopolitically, India's position flanked by China's allies can reduce India's "movement" and India's influence in the region (Christsastuti, 2017).

3.5. China's Cooperation Expansion Plans to the Indo Pacific

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi held a meeting with Foreign Ministers of 10 Pacific island countries in Fiji on Monday, July 30, 2022. This meeting was held in the midst of Wang's diplomatic tour to enhance security relations with Pacific Island countries. Pacific island countries that have diplomatic relations with China attended the meeting. China sent draft communiqués and five-year action plans to countries invited to the meeting, including Samoa, Tonga, Kiribati, Papua New Guinea, Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Niue and Vanuatu (Jaramaya and Maharani, 2022). Wang Yi is said to have brought multi-million dollar development aid packages to the 10 South Pacific countries. In addition, China also offers free trade agreements and reduced import tariffs. Instead, China proposed a five-year cooperation plan aimed at increasing Beijing's influence in the region. In leaked documents reviewed by AFP, China provides police training services, helps build cybersecurity infrastructure, conducts seafloor mapping and improves access to natural resources.

China is currently seeking agreements with island nations in the Pacific region. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said the cooperation would cover policing, security, and data and communications cooperation. The Chinese authorities have also sent a draft document on the Joint Development Vision of the China-Pacific Island States, as well as a five-year action plan to 21 leaders

in the Pacific region. The draft communique has been circulated by Beijing ahead of the meeting in Fiji. It said China and the Pacific Islanders would "strengthen exchanges and cooperation in traditional and non-traditional security fields. China will conduct mid- and high-level police training for Pacific Island countries through bilateral and multilateral ways."

In a statement quoted by The Straits Times, Xi Jinping called for deeper and non-discriminatory cooperation between countries in the region. He also called for more relations between countries. A statement at the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Summit in Bangkok on November 18, 2022 said: "Asia-Pacific is not anyone's backyard and must not become an arena of great power competition. Any attempt to foment a new cold war will not be allowed or people or our time." China is actively strengthening the complementarity between the Belt and Road Initiative and other parties' development strategies to jointly build a high-quality Asia-Pacific connectivity network. The Asia-Pacific region is witnessing growing economic and political disputes between Beijing and Washington. Recently, the two heated up after Washington passed new regulations on the export of wood chips to China.

IV. CONCLUSION

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is a diversified economic, diplomatic and geopolitical activity that was previously named "New Silk Road" and later changed to "One Belt One Road". The Belt and Road Initiative is one of the most ambitious foreign and economic policies of the Chinese government. This policy aims to strengthen Beijing's economic influence through a broad and comprehensive program of infrastructure development in all countries through which the line passes.

Based on the analysis outlined above, the authors concluded that first, Africa plays an important role as a supplier of natural resources to China, especially oil, natural gas and metals, including precious metals. In this case, China uses the BRI to facilitate trade with African countries. This is done by creating channels of connectivity to share resources and using government debt as a tool to control the trading price of oil. secondly, according to the author's analysis, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) still has the potential to become a mutually beneficial economic cooperation framework for countries cooperating with China in the Indo-Pacific region. and thirdly, China's rise is also seen in its hegemonic fight with the United States (US) in the Indo-Pacific region. Belt Road Initiative China's not only serves to support the pace of China's rise, but can also indirectly challenge US supremacy in the Indo-Pacific region.

V. DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest concerning the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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