Chinese maritime expansionism

Why in news?

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Beijing has sent two Chinese Navy warships with Chinese military personnel to Djibouti, its first military base overseas.

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What could China's motives be?

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- Djibouti has marked the formal return of Chinese maritime expansionism after centuries.
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- It opens the door for more military bases in the region.
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- Economic and strategic importance of the new facility at the mouth of the Red Sea gives wider access in the region.
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- However China claims that the aim is to support Chinese warships on anti-piracy and humanitarian missions and not for military expansion.
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What concerns has this raised among nations?

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- China is now being portrayed as exhibiting influence both in land and sea.
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- It gives the benefit of watch over other US bases in the region e.g Camp Lemonnier is the only permanent US base in Africa since 2002.
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- It suggests a fundamental shift in Beijing’s stated policy of no “forward

deployment”.
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- It also raises the possibility of “forward deployment” at India’s doorstep. Pakistan’s Gwadar port is only a few miles away from Djibouti.
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- Other port development projects in the region by China, like those in Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Pakistan, also raise the fear of being converted into military bases.
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What is expected of India?

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- China has stepped up activity in the Indian Ocean, which is a cause of concern for India.
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- The appropriate Indian response would be to build stronger naval capabilities and alliances.
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- Encouraging investments to develop India’s maritime infrastructure.
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Source : The Indian Express

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