Curtailing China’s Expansionist Forays

What is the issue?

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- The spectacular rise of China over the past two decades has changed the geopolitical scene across India’s maritime frontiers.
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- While countering Chinese foray into the Indian Ocean, India needs to embrace a multi-dimensional approach.
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How has China deployed its expansionist attitudes?

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- Beijing’s readiness to deploy its navy coercively to enforce its erratic claims has shaken its entire maritime neighbourhood.
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- **Neighbourhood Issues -** Its claims across the South China Sea are spelt out in its unilaterally drawn “Nine Dotted Line”.
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- This has resulted in tensions with virtually all its neighbours - South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Brunei, Malaysia and Indonesia.
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- What is worse is that China is even building air bases on artificially constructed islands across the South China Sea to assert itself.
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- Notably, the very basis of China’s claims have been rejected by a UN tribunal in a judgment on a complaint filed by the Philippines.
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- **Indian Ocean Foray -** This Chinese “assertiveness” across the South China Sea is accompanied by its growing naval presence.
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- It has deployed its Nuclear submarines, across the sea-lanes of the Indian

Ocean - from its naval base in Djibouti to across the Malacca Stait.
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- Noitably, the Indian Ocean Region accounts for 40% of the world's oil production and 57% of the world's oil trade.
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What are the implications of China's BRI?

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- 'Belt and Road Initiative' is being recognized as Beijing's strategy to dominate the major sea lanes of the Indo-Pacific.
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- BRI projects are increasingly seen as unsustainable due to its massive demanding investments that will be funded by Chinese credit.
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- As most projects are said to be economically unviable, this might result in an eventual distress sale to China.
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- This would increasingly compromise the sovereignty of the hosts and hand over control of infrastructure to the Chinese.
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- Srilanka has already started to feel the heat in its Hambantota venture with China.
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- Pakistani & Myanmari economists have also started questioning the rationale of Chinese investments.
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What are the direct challenges to India?

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- Beijing now claims the entire of Arunachal Pradesh and also large tracts of Ladakh.
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- Also, China has built a navel monitoring facility and port on Myanmar's Cocos Islands which is near the Andaman Islands.
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- China now has a full-fledged military base in Djibouti, and full access to port facilities at Gwadar, in Baluchistan.
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- It is set to significantly strengthen Pakistan’s navy, providing it 4 frigates and 8 submarines.
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How is India’s Maritime policy contrasted with China’s?

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- India has settled its maritime boundaries with most neighbours - Bangladesh, Myanmar, Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia, Sri Lanka and Maldives.
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- Moreover, India has no maritime boundary tensions with Pakistan, though demarcation is possible only after the land boundary is agreed upon.
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- Notably, India also works closely with the littoral states through the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC).
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- It is for this reason that India’s maritime behaviour, unlike that of China, has won international praise.
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How has India’s Alliances took shape?

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- India is partnering Japan for economic cooperation and connectivity across its shores to Africa.
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- During his visits to Seychelles and Mauritius in 2015, Prime Minister Narendra Modi signed a number of maritime agreements.
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- These included infrastructure and security partnerships and credit assistance for upgrading their navel capacities.
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- India’s coastal lines of communication across the Indian Ocean are hence being closely monitored now and anti-piracy operations have also intesnified.
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- A naval conclave was orgainsed in Goa recently, which was attended by senior naval officials of many countires in the region.
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- Notably, India had offered to provide them with better intelligence on maritime movements across the Indian Ocean.

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- Adding to these is the various maritime exercises like Malabar (US, Japan & India) and IndRa (India & Russia).
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Source: Business Line

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