

Article - II

China's expanding national interests in the broader Red Sea arena

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Abstract

This article seeks to explain the importance of the broader Red Sea arena and what national interests China particularly owns within that specific region. China has been making its presence felt in the region, in the past few years, especially after Beijing decided to establish its very first foreign naval base in Djibouti. This research paper shows that the specific region holds significance in economic, security, and political dimensions. That being said, China's national interests in this study are further classified into geo-economic, geo-security, and geo-political dimensions. Through the theoretical framework of national interest, maritime security, and foreign policy, this study will explain what makes this broader Red Sea arena important and how it is related with China's expanding national interests surrounding the said region. The paper concludes that China's global presence in the broader Red Sea arena can be justified based on the importance that the mentioned region holds as well as China's expanding global interests which already exceed Beijing's national territory itself. In that sense, maritime security has also become an important aspect to identify China's behaviour in the region. The confirmation of such a conclusion is drawn from China's several foreign policy initiatives, executed to protect and secure its own interests.

Keywords: Broader Red Sea arena, China, dimension, expanding national interests

Introduction

Historically speaking, the sea has always been an important vector for economic development for it provides the states a platform for trade and it acts as a stimulus for maritime enterprise. Over the years, states have started to grow dependent on seas as a substantial economic means of transport. As dependence grows, it inevitably invites states to pay greater attention to the safety of the sea lines of communications (SLOCs) from any threat that occurs in between. That being stated, any action or practice which is considered as a threat to the SLOCs also puts security in danger (Sakhuja, 2008, p. 689). Oftentimes, SLOCs are also known as state's economic arteries, considering how crucial they are. The SLOCs also may vary in length and purposes, where the latter mainly depends on the situation. SLOCs are utilized for trade routes during times of peace, whereas it plays as strategic paths during war. For a state's decision maker, the

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geography of SLOCs and its effects play a key role to formulate a certain strategy to maintain the safety of it. (Sakhuja, 2008, p. 690).

The Indian Ocean holds various important SLOCs as well as maritime chokepoints, noticeably the Straits of Malacca, Hormuz, and the Bab el-Mandeb. A huge volume of global long haul cargo, primarily oil, from Africa, Europe, and Persian Gulf passes this ocean each year. (Sakhuja, 2008, p. 690) Oil and gas that travels through the Indian Ocean region is a big deal of the world's economy. The Indian Ocean region holds approximately 55 percent and 40 percent of oil and gas reserves respectively. Arab and Gulf states are home to 21 percent of the world's oil stock, reflecting approximately 43 percent of international exports worth 17,262 million barrels for a size of daily crude exports (Potgieter, 2012, p. 2). Small states such as the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar, as middle powers, in addition with external powers like China are competing for influence, access and market share in the region. As a consequence, it has also blurred the boundary between Middle East and Africa, creating new emerging trans-regional dynamics (Vertin, 2020, p. 4). To simplify the mentioned regions as a part of the Indian Ocean, this article refers to it as the 'broader Red Sea arena,' following the report made by the United States Institute of Peace titled "China's Impact on Conflict Dynamics in the Red Sea Arena".



Figure 1: Broader Red Sea arena includes the Red Sea from the Arabian Peninsula, Egypt, all the way through the Horn of Africa. The strategic waterways include the Red Sea, the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, and Gulf of Aden. (United States Institute of Peace, 2020, p. 4).

As China climbs its way to be the world's second largest economy, a secured supply of energy also becomes essential to maintain the country's economic growth. Imported petroleum mainly from the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa shares an increasing importance of the mentioned supply. As a matter of fact, China relies on maritime transportation through long sea lines of communication. Among other objectives, China itself has also deployed its navy whose mission is to safeguard the SLOC as a maritime- and energy-dependent country (Cole, 2016, p. 7). In the following years, China will also focus on increasing international cooperation, particularly "going out" for Central Asia, Russia, Middle East, Africa, Asian Pacific, and America at the same time establishing land and sea transport. In a bigger picture, it is also related to the Xi's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) plan (Cole, 2016, p. 134). All explained; hence it is also logical and justifiable for China to build its naval base in Djibouti where many of its interests lie around the area.

Considering the facts above, this article finds it intriguing that a specific region holds so many different significances for a state, especially given the fact that the state itself is expanding its own national interests as well as global presence accompanied by a rapid economic growth like China. That being said, this study would like to explore those significance and its relation with China's expanding national interests as to determine the meeting point of these two aspects in a dynamic of international relations.

China's National Interests, Foreign Policy and Maritime Security- A Unique Equation

It is argued that national interests still become the preeminent reason for why a state does what it does in the international system. Therefore, it is also argued that foreign policy is a reflection of what a state considers its national interest. In other words, national interest is often incorporated with the making of foreign policy (Manan, 2017, p. 176). From national interest, one may see a representation of a state's aspiration where it can be a base to an actual policy and programme application (Bion, 1963, p. 121). As China faces a significant rise and growth, its national interest has drawn attention where it also becomes a reference to identify Beijing's foreign policy. Back in the 1980s, China followed the saying of "*Keep a low profile and do something*" (韬光养晦, 有所作为) as its principle of foreign policy. However, that principle has changed, to "*Strive for achievement*" (奋发有为), as President Xi Jinping took the office in 2013. It is argued that what China desires is much more than only an accumulation of material capability and a share of its growing gain. He and Feng (2012) elaborated such a notion by arguing that as a state starts to gain power, its interest in security will also expand. It allows China to provide itself with more strategic choices in order to create a space of favourable or secure external surroundings, based on its relative capability, for its expanding national interest (Ye, 2019, pp. 2-5) .

Defining geo-politics, Gray (1996) pointed out that interactions which occur between states as a result from geography, along with its challenges and opportunities, may result in a strategic pattern for foreign policy. Therefore, he further argued that geographic features may contribute as a platform or a stage that influences a flow and states as characters. (Sören Scholvin, 2016, pp. 16-17) Cohen (1991) also shared a similar

view in a sense that geopolitics consist of mutual impact between geography and politics. A policy as an outcome of such interaction may be driven by a particular region's resources or its strategic location (Sören Scholvin, 2016, p. 22). From the perspective of China itself, its effort to upgrade the armed forces as well as establish bases and ports throughout the Indian Ocean region may be seen as a crucial milestone to secure its energy and oil supply. A permanent naval base in Djibouti which leads to an increasing military presence, may elevate China's power projection through its navy, particularly in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region as a whole (Chaziza, 2018, p. 9).

There are various discussions circulating among scholars to define or describe what can be classified as geo-economics. On one side, geo-economics can refer to a strategic interaction between state actors with its related economic players to boost a state's power position in the international system. On the other side, it can be categorized as both strategy and a part of analysis done by a state or business. Two important components of geo-economics involve indirect strategy and soft power which contribute in the pursuit of a state's strategic objectives. A non-direct approach to project power is evident in the case of China's growing influence in different geographic areas, where Africa is included (Csurgai, 2018, pp. 4, 6).

For a state to be the most advanced geo-economic actor, Blackwill and Harris (2016) argued that geo-economic and military means "*tend to be mutually reinforcing*," meaning that military and geo-economics coexist with one another and the way it is used depends on how a state perceives certain challenge. In that sense, Grosse (2014) also shared the same view by suggesting that there is a combination of strategies of power projection between military and economic domains. Grosse (2014) also analysed how China's developing economy-based power may allow Beijing to shape the structure of the global economy in accordance with its desire. In short, many IR scholars see geo-economics (in addition to geopolitics) as how a state focuses on controlling space and flow (Soren Scholvin & Wigell, 2018, pp. 5–6). Apparently, the 2015 Defence White Paper of China is important not only because it laid out the main global responsibility of Chinese armed forces to protect the country's overseas interest, but also pointed out the coordination between military and commercial enterprises to safeguard such interest (Heath, 2018, p. 22).

Foreign Policy

Padelford and Lincoln (1977) defined foreign policy as a comprehensive result of the process of a state translating its goals and interests into definite actions in the external environment. From that definition, there are two main functions of foreign policy: to achieve a state's objectives and to drive its interests. Gibson (1944) shared the same views with that of Padelford and Lincoln (1977), in terms of how a state connects the dots of its interests to form an overall plan in dealing with the rest of the world. However, one additional contribution which is worth to be noted in this study from Gibson (1944) is how far a state is determined to attain those interests at their disposal. Combined together, there are three important parts to explain what foreign policy is. It consists of the ends, the ways, and the means. The ends refer to a set of vision or desired interests that a state attempts to obtain in dealing with other states. In order to do so,

there are ways in which it refers to the ideas or tactics that a state formulates. The means here involve the kinds of resources that a state owns, be it economic or military (AS, 2018, p. 2).

In a more recent context, China's dimension of foreign policy goes through not only a course of expansion (*kuozhang* 扩张) but also a reconstruction (*chongjian* 重建) in which it is done through various different ways. One of it is through the growing number of actors within the formulation process of China's foreign policy where it involves not only the government, but also non-state actors and individuals. The said reconstruction consequently influences Chinese interests abroad as well as the goals of Chinese foreign policy itself (Lanteigne, 2020, p. 5). Furthermore, ensuring a steady source of global energy and deploying an advanced navy are two of the main elements in formulating China's foreign policy (Cole, 2016, p. 7).

Maritime Security

According to Bueger (2015), there are four important concepts which are linked to maritime security: economic development, marine environment, national security, and human security. Maritime security is associated with economic development as many economic activities occur via the ocean. Not to forget that the majority of trade takes place through the sea lanes. In addition to that, many economic activities have resulted in various industries worth billions of dollars, like shipping, fishery, and coastal tourism industries. Resources in the ocean, such as fossil energy and mining, have also caused the commercial value of the ocean to be re-evaluated for good. It is also pertinent to note that the role of naval forces and their strategies are particularly important in maritime security. It is based on the classical understanding of national security in securing a state's survival and the concept of sea power to determine how far a state should engage outside its territorial maritime domain in order to make its presence noticeable in international waters in general (Bueger, 2015, pp. 160–161).

According to Mahan (1900), a state's interests will thrive with its development in international communication. As a result, the sea command of any maritime power should exceed beyond offshore waters in accordance with the expanding national interests. In other words, as a state's national interests reach a certain space, its sea power with its command of the sea should also be present there. With expanding national interests as a basis for a maritime power, a typical and strategic duty of the navy is to protect and to control crucial locations in sea routes. Once a state is capable of controlling particular spots that consist of multiple important sea lanes, then it is safe to say that a state's sea power is strong enough to have a control over everything (Ju, 2015, pp. 26–27).

Economic, Political, and Security Dimension of the broader Red Sea arena

Djibouti is located strategically in the region where several states compete for various different desired outcomes. Therefore, the Red Sea region is often called as a competitive arena. Djibouti is located in the zone along the coast of Red Sea, where other states have started to cover the area with both commercial and military posts, as well as infrastructure projects. To counter this development, Djibouti and its

neighbours have tried to undertake new investments without giving up their sovereignty or getting pulled into unhealthy rivalries. Not to forget that the region's domestic politics are starting to be flooded with foreign agendas from external powers (Vertin, 2020, pp. 3–4). Tensions that take place between Iran and Saudi Arabia have also contributed to the change of Red Sea's profile, due to the threat ignited by Tehran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps to disturb the trade that transits through Bab el-Mandeb strait and other close waterways. The continuous conflict has also formed the civil war in Yemen which has dragged African territory, fighters, and partners into the complicated loop (Vertin, 2020, p. 4). Thus, regional peace and stability is a complex matter in this region. Foreign or external powers have also added the complexity in this region's politics. While China and the U.S chose Djibouti as home to their naval bases, Russia has also stepped onto the Great Power Competition by including a plan to build its own military base in Eritrea and Sudan, further signalling Moscow's specific overseas interests, economic, and security roles asserted in the region (Wuthnow, 2020, p. 2).

Even though security may be the main impulse on how several states insert their presence and deploy their military forces to this region, this trend has been bolstered by the rise of new economic and commercial opportunities provided in the region (Melvin, 2019, p. 13). Economically speaking, the 1,400-mile Red Sea that connects the Mediterranean and Arabian seas through the Suez Canal and the Bab el-Mandeb, is central for Europe-Asia annual trade which is worth USD 700 billion. It also involves 6.2 million oil barrels a day which is counted for (approximately) 9 percent of the world's total consumption. Moreover, this region is also a specific spot where major oil-producing countries are located, such as Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Oman. Sudan and South Sudan also produce oil, although in smaller quantities. Nonetheless, both are also home to natural resources, such as chromium and copper (Wuthnow, 2020, p. 2).

More importantly, China's economic development has significantly raised the emphasis of the global commerce that takes place in the East-West trade corridor which travels through the Red Sea. The importance of this sea route itself has been intensified by China's BRI project with the objective of establishing the Chinese dependent economies throughout the region. In that context, the Arabian Peninsula countries and China have attempted to position themselves commercially in the region through the development of ports and infrastructure projects which are capable of connecting crucial market points (Melvin, 2019, p. 13). These ports which are located on the African side of the Red Sea allow foreign exporters to access Africa's flourishing consumer markets (Wuthnow, 2020, p. 2). The Gulf of Aden (and Indian Ocean in general) are critical sea lanes for international trade. It is represented by the profound maritime trade that occurs throughout the region. The East-West route which passes Suez Canal and links Africa and Asia to the market in Europe crosses through the Gulf of Aden. In fact, most of the ships that pass the Suez Canal inevitably pass by this gulf (Hamza & Priotti, 2018, p. 10) and eventually Bab el-Mandeb. In that sense, these sea lanes are also central for the global energy security (U.S Energy Information Administration, 2019). It's significance becomes even more substantial if one takes into account the globalization of the energy market and its unequal distribution between different countries and continents, further encouraging trade between producing and consuming regions. Thus, such a market is

sensitive to the changes that might occur in these sea lanes caused by security threats (Hamza & Priotti, 2018, p. 10) .

Geo-economics is a phenomenon where commercial schemes and strategic interests converge. Therefore, commerce and security also have long been correlated with one another. Naval forces that involve several states have had varied success in guarding crucial sea lines of commerce (Pandya et al., 2011, p. 2,5). As it has been previously mentioned, Indian Ocean in general holds some of the world's most vital SLOCs. It is further accompanied with ports and bases developed by several states. With such a significance, ports and bases have ignited competition among states as well. Furthermore, it has also led to the securitization of such routes for the said ports and bases (Melvin, 2019, p. 13). It is visible by the expansion of military presence by states throughout the Indian Ocean, elevating their power projection capabilities to secure the SLOCs on which they rely. It is also the other forms of security threats, such as trafficking of people, weapons, drugs, armed robbery and piracy, which raise security concerns in the maritime domain. (Pandya et al., 2011, p. 99)

China's expanding national interests towards the broader Red Sea Arena

As China strives to be the “*great global power*” that possesses “*the geopolitical centrality and respect*,” it is deemed as something important for China to be able to project its power overseas. In regards to the MENA region, Beijing's naval base in Djibouti plays a considerable role in fulfilling such interest, as a vector for the People's Republic of China Navy (PLAN) to discover its potential and to provide the Navy with immediate capabilities. (Chaziza, 2018, p. 10) First, UN peacekeeping operations and anti-piracy patrols. Not only is it executed to protect China's economic interests with regards to safeguarding flow of resources, but these efforts are crucial in the maintenance of international security where China can ensure the political and security interests (Wuthnow, 2020, pp. 3-4). People's Liberation Army (PLA) peacekeepers have indirectly contributed to China's promotion of “soft power” as they provided medical services and assistance in infrastructure, like in Sudan and South Sudan. Meanwhile in Djibouti, China has also provided the country with “*over 600 teaching aids to local schools*” as reported from China's 2019 Defence White Paper. These kinds of activities are aimed at countering negative impressions of China in the region and also enhance Chinese presence on the international stage in a way that reduces fears of its rising power amongst partners (Wuthnow, 2020, p. 6). In addition to that, cooperative activity that China carries out also extends to military diplomacy. China's PLA has conducted around 178 activities with 10 Red Sea nations from 2002 to 2018 alone, reported from the database of the U.S National Defence University (NDU). These include meetings of senior officials (both in China and the region), port calls of Escort Task Forces (ETFs) particularly from the Gulf of Aden, and involvement in both bilateral and multilateral exercises. Maintaining military diplomacy in the region is also principal to China's arms transfers with most of the countries in the region for the past 15 years. Chinese military weapons which have been purchased vary from rocket launchers, missiles, personnel carriers with armours, helicopters, and other assets.

This is also particularly due to Beijing's focus on this market as other UCAVS-producing countries are restricted to export the assets under the Missile Technology Control

Regime and the Wassenaar Agreement. (Wuthnow, 2020, pp. 4–6) With all such initiatives in this region and others, China has attempted to label itself as “new type of major power”. President Xi has also emphasized it in his speech at the 19th Communist Party of China (CPC) National Congress that (United States Institute of Peace, 2020, p. 14):

“It makes clear that major country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics aims to foster a new type of international relations and build a community with a shared future for mankind.” (China.org, 2017)

And that China has made further progress on all fronts benefitting China’s diplomatic agenda, which is also essential to generate a China-friendly environment for its rise (United States Institute of Peace, 2020, p. 14). That being said, it also affects China’s international influence and power projection to shape the global environment.

“We have made all-round efforts in the pursuit of major country diplomacy with Chinese characteristics, thus advancing China's diplomatic agenda in a comprehensive, multilevel, multifaceted way and creating a favourable external environment for China's development....China champions the development of a community with a shared future for mankind, and has encouraged the evolution of the global governance system. With this we have seen a further rise in China's international influence, ability to inspire, and power to shape; and China has made great new contributions to global peace and development. (China.org, 2017)

In general, China’s overseas interests are deeply rooted on an economic basis. In a bigger context, the Indian Ocean region is significantly important for China’s BRI where Beijing attempts to connect its mainland with neighbouring countries through belt and maritime routes as shown by the figure below.

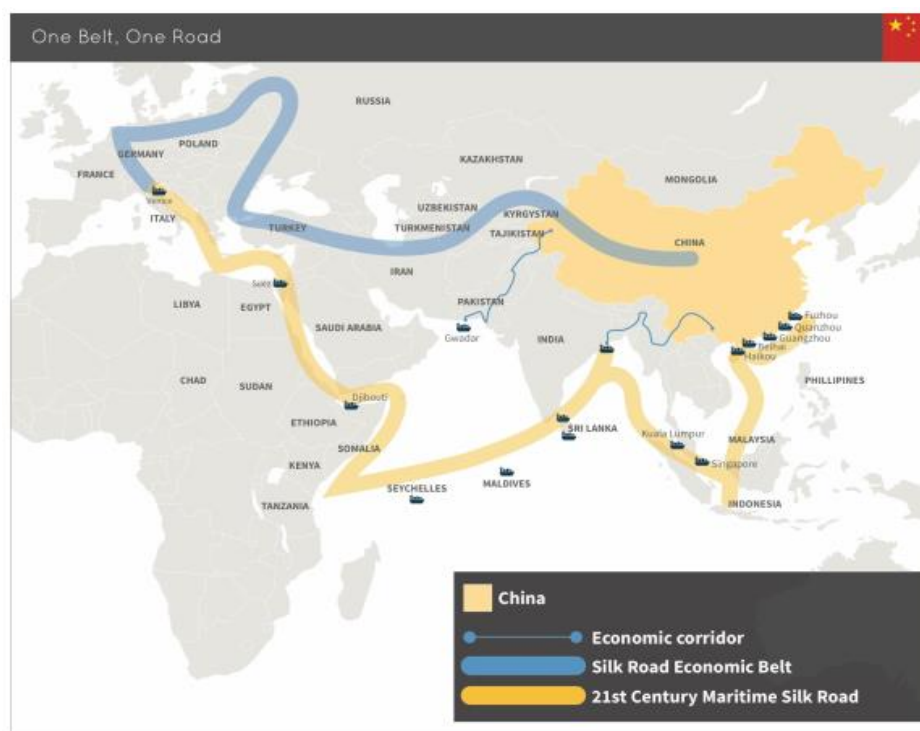


Figure 2: China’s BRI routes (Cai, 2017, p. 2).

BRI was launched by Xi at a time when China's foreign policy had started to become more assertive compared to other previous periods. That being said, it is not rare for BRI to be interpreted as a geopolitical tool instead of a mere geo-economic one. In that end, opinions and perspectives are varied. However, one thing is for sure: BRI surely possesses geo-economic drivers in its execution. Through BRI, Xi admitted that China's neighbours owned "*extremely significant strategic value*" for China. In his speech at the Peripheral Diplomacy Work Conference, he also further stated that China:

"...must encourage and participate in the process of regional economic integration, speed up the process of building up infrastructure and connectivity. We must build the Silk Road Economic Belt and 21st Century Maritime Silk Road, creating a new regional economic order."

In that sense, Xi generally perceives China's economic resources as a primary tool to preserve regional stability and affirm China's leadership within its neighbourhood. The two geo-economic interests and goals of BRI have two aspects: maintain China's regional leadership through an extensive program of economic integration and to generate a regional production chain in which China is the key player of leading innovation and manufacturing, apart from being a standard setter (Cai, 2017, pp. 3–5). Particularly in Djibouti, the country's geostrategic location makes it an important hub for China's geo-economic interest. Located at the choke point of one of the busiest shipping lanes in the world, China's presence there signals an interest to keep an ideal transshipment hub of cargo in and out of the MENA region, safe, as it also discovers a potential long-term economic growth and opportunity (Chaziza, 2018, p. 8). In other words, China sees Djibouti as a key to unlock the economies in the Horn of Africa and especially, to unleash the potential of Ethiopia's attractive and growing market, a landlocked country.

China has invested around USD 15 billion in total to develop several ports in Djibouti, making Beijing the biggest foreign commercial player. The ports in Djibouti are decently situated to supply a commercial access to Ethiopia, acting as a transshipment hub for cargo that transits from the Indian Ocean to other markets in East and South Asia and from the Suez Canal and the Red Sea in North Africa and Europe. China's geo-economic interests in Djibouti is due to its investments in some of the most crucial ports in the country. These ports are also located near the naval base that China built, causing Chinese firms to further root their development in a port- and military base-dependant country like Djibouti (Dutton et al., 2020, pp. 9–10).

China has grown to be one of the most dominating investors globally, with expanding overseas investments and several Chinese nationals working abroad. This is particularly due to China's development policy- the Going Out Policy, since 2000. In the past, China relied on the host countries' capability in protecting their investments and workers, assuming that these countries had the ability to execute such a task. However, as the host countries seemed unable to fulfil such a task from the Chinese perspective, it eventually chose to utilize its PLA to help the local governments in protecting Chinese assets.

The reason behind China sending its personnel as well as capital, to host countries with serious security problems is to secure its access to various energy and mineral resources that fulfil its geo-security interests. In addition to that, not protecting its working nationals abroad is perceived to be equivalent to *constraining the development strategy of 'going global.'* Moreover, China has also come to the realization that these investments and nationals abroad are significant to China's economic growth (Tanner & Mackenzie, 2015, pp. 27–28, 33).

Like any other maritime power in general, China also considers globalization as well as scientific and technological development to play a role in expanding its maritime security interests, or “zone of security interests,” which is also consequently important for China's economic development. According to Zhang Wei, as a Senior Captain in the PLAN's Naval Research Institute (NRI), China's maritime security interests will eventually generate a “*vibrant, outward, and expansive quality*” which will also mirror the “*expansion of China's zone of security concerns, and an expansion of its defensive depth.*” The first dimension of maritime interest which becomes increasingly important for China's security is the correlation between maritime resources and sustained economic development.

Chinese maritime officials and analysts have collectively agreed that maritime interests seize an irreplaceable role in the continuation of China's economic transformation. Reassuring China's rapid economic growth calls for increasing access to energy and other critical resources, maintaining proper protection specifically for the security of maritime trade and transit lanes, China's developing investments overseas and nationals abroad, and assisting more maritime industries to flourish. As China's maritime interests are scattered around the globe and grow at the same pace as its economy grows, it becomes compulsory for China to take its maritime rights into account and to review its sea power, which includes rights to open waters and right to exploitation of international seabed regions like Indian Ocean. Other than that, seaborne exports and imports are expected to be the key drivers of China's economic growth. Therefore, it is also in China's geo-security interest to protect its lines of energy supply (Tanner & Mackenzie, 2015, pp. 51–54). The second dimension is China's maritime strategic depth, access, as well as its power projection capability. To reach that end, there is a necessity for PLAN to maximize its maritime access and the range of its operations to boost China's strategic depth itself (Tanner & Mackenzie, 2015, p. 48). Zhang Huachen, as the East Sea Fleet's deputy commander, told Xinhua in an interview way back in 2010:

“With our naval strategy changing now, we are going from coastal defence to far sea defence. With the expansion of the country's economic interests, the navy wants to better protect the country's transportation routes and the safety of our major sea lanes.”

In addition to that, Yin Zhuo as former PLAN rear admiral, in another interview with People's Daily Online in the same year that PLAN has been ordered with two major missions which are the protection of China's maritime security and safeguarding its burgeoning economic interests. (Lin, 2013, p. 11) The second China's geo-security interests fall on how China attempts to deepen its energy and resource security.

China's main national interest, which is its own economic development, cannot be maintained without a dependable and stable access to imported energy resources. This goes back to China's dependence on imported oil and the geographic 'weaknesses' of China's routes of imported oil. China's current security strategy has also been focusing on how to reduce, if not tackle, the vulnerability of a possible disruption. In general, China's expanding economic interest particularly in maritime regions goes to show that China needs to secure its new resources of oil and energy. The most pressing energy security that China encounters is not about keeping overall energy supply enough, but it is its dependence on imported oil whereas its domestic supply has no longer been able to meet up with the growing sources of demands. It is triggered by China's personal consumption, striking changes in demographic patterns, and industrial activities such as manufacturing and exports. (Tanner & Mackenzie, 2015, pp. 38–39)

Conclusions

This study shows that the broader Red Sea arena holds various significance which can be further classified into three dimensions. Politics dimension mainly falls on power (regional instability, balancing foreign powers), while economic dimension falls on commercial activities (infrastructure and investment projects) and energy security. The security dimension falls on security threats that take place in each region. From the perspective of China, Djibouti is considered strategic to tackle these threats. For that reason, Djibouti has also become a "playground" for foreign powers with different interests in the region and China is not an exception either, coming from the need to fulfil its expanding national interests.

In further details of China's expanding national interests, it can also be classified into geopolitical interests which focus on the interest on becoming global power, promotion of soft power in the execution of humanitarian acts, military diplomacy and arms transfer. Geo-economics with the focus on BRI, China's infrastructure and investment projects in Djibouti and Africa at large, safeguarding China's assets abroad, as well as geo-security interests with emphasis on maritime, energy, and resource security.

With those national expanding interests, China has been increasing its global presence around the region. In the past decade, China's national interests have gone through an expansion in a way that it both complicates and complements its own chasing of more developed security concerns. This formulation of expanding national interests particularly evolves around China's best pursuit to fulfil its interests in economic development. Despite the fact that Beijing has attempted to be strategic in selecting these interests, it has also been pushed to adapt strategically the same due to security challenge that arises from an outcome of global forces out of China's control or a result of its own past policies decisions.

From that point, those interests are further translated into various distinct foreign policies which are capable in securing China's interests globally through political, economic, and security means where China's armed forces in PLA and its navy play a significant role as a support system. That being said, maritime security has also become an increasingly substantial matter in China's behaviour around the broader Red Sea arena or Indian Ocean as a whole.

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