

China's influence in the Indian Ocean

China has been strategically mapping itself to take over as the superpower. In a bid to expand in the Indian Ocean region China has hawkishly seized the opportunities in Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Maldives recently.

In addition to receiving arms and ammunition from China, 50 members of the USDP affiliated with the Junta will start taking a six-month course on Chinese in Kunming.

Moving further down to Sri Lanka, China tenaciously announced that it will support Sri Lanka in defending its sovereignty offering to upgrade the Belt and Road initiative as the two nations observed the 65th anniversary of the Rubber-Rice pact signed in 1952 establishing the diplomatic ties.

According to reports from the International Forum on Human Rights and Security, China has also been attempting to increase its strategic outreach in the

larger Indian Ocean region by eyeing the Maldives. It is aggressively pursuing a strong foothold in the island nations of the Indian Ocean region, because these small reef nations are suffering from a scarcity of funds and require aid for infrastructure development and industrialization. Under the guise of providing these aids and funds, China has exploited these countries by providing technical support and pre-conditional funding. Major projects aided by China in Maldives are the expansion of Velana International Airport, Fahala Island development Project and Olhugiri Island project, Housing projects in Male and Hulhumale and five-star luxury resorts in Kaafu and Gaafu Dhaalu atolls.

As a result, the Maldives has described China as a vital development partner that provides funds, technology, and logistical assistance. Maldives loans from China are growing rapidly and are estimated to amount to USD 1.4 billion in 2020.

<https://www.aninews.in/news/world/asia/chinese-policy-choices-designed-to-seek-advantage-of-instability-in-myanmar20220317003625/>

One Ocean Summit 2022

French President Emmanuel Macron convened the One Ocean Summit from February 9 to 11, 2022, in Brest, France, so that the international community could work together to reduce these detrimental effects on the ocean.

As part of the hybrid summit, the international community is expected to raise its level of ambition around maritime issues and to take concrete actions to

address the Ocean's shared responsibility.

The United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)—the UN agency that promotes the protection and sustainable management of the world's marine and coastal environments—will host two workshops on February 9 during the summit, The Sustainable Tourism in the Blue Economy workshop and the Marine Protected Areas (MPA) workshop.

Henley, J. (2022, February 8). World leaders descend on France for ocean summit as Macron puts spotlight on seas. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2022/feb/08/blue-diplomacy-france-summit-puts-worlds-spotlight-on-oceans>

Global Race for LNG, oil in Middle East

As Europe's top LNG supplier, Qatar and the United States are the world's largest LNG producers. The fuel is transported by sea. Gas from Russia is delivered primarily by pipeline. Gas imports from Russia account for 66% of Germany's total imports.

The German government and the entire European Un-

ion are looking for fast solutions, but that may also put pressure on a tight LNG market, which is dominated by long-term agreements. In order to secure gas from the Middle East, they have to compete with China and other Eastern Asian nations that are used to paying premium prices. Another surge in prices is inevitable.

<https://balkangreenenergynews.com/eus-push-for-persian-gulf-lng-set-to-worsen-energy-price-inflation/>

Crisis stricken Sri Lanka seeks help from India

Sri Lanka is caught in a quagmire of economic difficulties it has witnessed since independence. India has guaranteed to extend financial support and continued cooperation through credit lines to Sri Lanka. As India's 'neighbourhood first' policy comes to its rescue, Sri Lanka has received support totalling over \$1.4 billion of which \$400 million was a currency swap, \$500 million

was loan deferment and \$500 million line of credit for fuel imports. Additional \$1 billion assistance negotiation is underway which is likely to pass by the time Sri Lankan Finance minister, Basil Rajapaksa visits India in the month of April. New credit line will be used to pay for the imports of essential items like rice, wheat flour, pulses, sugar and medicine

<https://www.timesnownews.com/india/2-4-billion-line-of-credit-how-sri-lanka-benefits-from-indias-neighbourhood-first-policy-article-90538706>



Russia-Ukraine War's implications on Energy prices

It is likely that fuel prices will continue to rise as the EU replaces Russian gas with other sources of energy quickly. The Germans are in talks with Qatar about the purchase of LNG, as are Japan and South Korea.

Despite the good news, it will take some time before the European Union can obtain the regular quantities of gas it needs to meet its goals under its recent

U-turn in energy policy, prompted by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. In Germany, for instance, there are no LNG terminals with regasification facilities for getting fossil fuel to households, heat and power plants, and industry. A recent announcement by the Berlin government exemplifies Europe's problems even better: it's urgently building two terminals.

1. Muasher, A. H., Karim Sadjadpour, Aaron David Miller, Frederic Wehrey, Zaha Hassan, Yasmine Farouk, Kheder Khaddour, Sarah Yekes, Alper Coşkun, Maha Yahya, Marwan. (n.d.). *What the Russian War in Ukraine Means for the Middle East*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Retrieved March 29, 2022, from <https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/03/24/what-russian-war-in-ukraine-means-for-middle-east-pub-86711>

2. Qatar exploits tensions in Ukraine, Middle East for gains—Analysis—The Jerusalem Post. (n.d.). <https://www.jpost.com/international/article-702408>

Kenya's Indian Ocean oil dreams fade as test drilling fails

Lamu Basin's Mlima-1 well, which has been touted as the country's first offshore oil discovery, is not commercially viable. According to the findings of Italian energy group Eni, the well failed to reach commercial oil reserves, so it had to be "plugged" and abandoned.

Consequently, Kenya's aspirations to become an offshore oil producer have been dashed. Kenyans had hoped to exploit what they believe to be huge offshore oil and gas deposits in the near future. However, the latest results

<https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/business/financial-standard/article/2001428597/kenyas-oil-dream-its-now-or-never>

have put an end to those hopes for now.

The potential positive outcome of striking the well in Lamu Basin could have aggravated Kenya's row with Somalia over its maritime borders. The basin lies within the disputed territory.

Tullow has been under pressure from Kenya to develop the Turkana oil wells that it expects to produce up to 120,000 barrels per day once production starts.

The Colombo Security Conclave

Since the complexities of the regional equations, India had kept bilateral strategic and security relations with its Indian Ocean neighbours (IOR). SAARC's inability to exclude bilateral disputes as promised in the Charter had made Delhi especially wary about multilateral arrangements centred on South Asia, but post-Cold War geopolitical and geostrategic realities have determined otherwise. The same applies to every other Conclave member and observer.

1. <https://www.news18.com/news/opinion/strengthening-indian-ocean-maritime-security-through-the-colombo-security-conclave-4867322.html>

2. <https://thediplomat.com/2022/03/how-the-colombo-security-conclave-can-avoid-saarcs-fate/>

Five broad areas of cooperation were identified at the fifth meeting of CSC national security advisers in the Maldives. Safety and security in maritime transportation, countering terrorism and radicalization, fighting trafficking and transnational organized crime, cybersecurity, protecting critical infrastructure, and disaster relief and humanitarian assistance are the five pillars of cooperation.

Catastrophic weather conditions in Africa

A severe drought gripping the eastern Horn of Africa has caused extreme hardship and food shortages for up to 20 million people living in four African countries. The rainy season failed to materialise for the third year in a row. Currently, scientists and relief agencies are afraid that the next forecast one-expected to arrive this month in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Somalia will follow suit. It will be the worst drought the region has seen in four decades thanks to climate change bringing a succession of extreme weather events to a part of the world unprepared to handle them. East Africa is on the "brink of catastrophe" due to the climatic phenom-

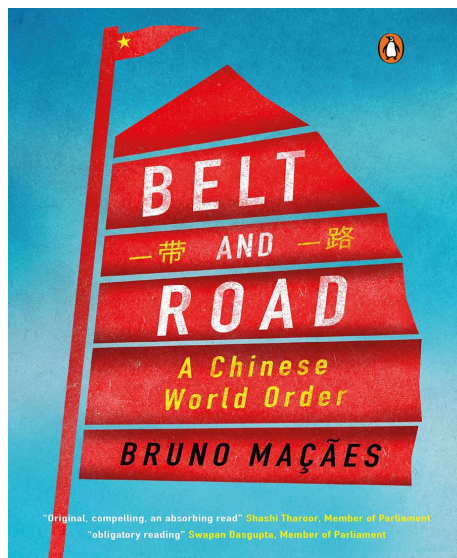
enon La Niña, which has prevented nourishing rains for the fourth consecutive season.

On the other hand, thousands of people in southern Africa, particularly Madagascar, Malawi, and Mozambique, have been affected by a series of tropical storms that have hit the region since January. According to the nongovernmental organisation Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre, the storms have also affected South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Mauritius, killing hundreds of people and displacing more than 600,000. Tropical Cyclone Gombe, the latest to hit mid-March, displaced 131,000 people in Mozambique and Malawi.

1. <https://www.nationalgeographic.com/environment/article/historic-drought-looms-for-20-million-living-in-horn-of-africa>

2. <https://global.chinadaily.com.cn/a/202203/31/WS6245030ba310fd2b29e544e4.html>



BOOK REVIEW**‘Belt and Road – A Chinese World Order’**

The nuts and bolts of China’s mammoth infrastructure project that straddles many continents

The western political and economic model has dominated the world since the early 1800s. The domain went through many ups and downs, like the world wars and the Holocaust and end of the colonial system, but endured. The arrival of a new domain, known as the ‘Belt and Road Initiative’, is thus of great historic significance. First of all such a daring initiative is possible only when the core is confident of providing an epoch-shaping leadership for the process. However, a domain study cannot be conducted unless undertaken from a broader point of view. Bruno Maçães has perhaps carried out one of the best analysis of the initiative in *Belt and Road: A Chinese World Order*.

It explains that BRI is not just a name and a way to assert China’s overwhelming economic and political might. It argues, through a lucid presentation of all segments of the project, that it is in fact a future map of the world or a map that the Chinese leadership wants the world to adopt. Maçães is careful in not presenting the project as a sign of the newly assertive China and reminds readers that both Mao and Deng had similar visions of a new world order and a network of production chains that are based on the Confucian virtues of ‘sincerity, honesty and amity’. He points out that the

Chinese world view, which rejects the western version of power politics that grows from Greek and Roman political thought, is fundamentally different.

The best part of the book is its detailed presentation of the nuts and bolts and the ideas behind this landmark Chinese project. Though China’s territorial disputes with several key neighbours like India and the dispute in the South China Sea are being closely observed, the author makes it amply clear that the philosophical foundation of BRI is peaceful. However, he also hints at the complexity ahead as China’s ‘Tianxia’ will finally dismantle the western model by taking away the building blocks of Western enlightenment.

The presentation of BRI covering its footprints from the shores of Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Southeast Asia and African continent was attempted before but this is the first objective study by a writer from the West. The book stands out as it presents the Chinese plan and its pitfalls without succumbing to an alarmist viewpoint.

<https://www.thehindu.com/books/books-reviews/belt-and-road-a-chinese-world-order-review-beijings-map-of-the-world/article26745024.ece>

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