

Abstract

In the Indian Ocean Region, China's economic and strategic interests are converging as many of its investments lie along the vital ocean routes needed to literally and figuratively fuel its growing economy. The rollout of Xi Jinping's Belt and Road Initiative, against the backdrop of, and in line with this convergence, has raised concerns about the military-strategic utility of various infrastructure projects. The increased economic connectivity that drives the Belt and Road has inherent strategic consequences, but the degree to which geostrategic factors drive investments divides analysts. Some believe that certain ports have been purposefully selected as future bases for China's navy. To address the difficulty of comprehending China's foreign policy decisions, this thesis draws on a neoclassical realist interpretation of international relations, and uses geographical location, collective memory, strategic culture, and domestic politics to develop a better understanding of Chinese policymakers' perceptions of their international security environment. This study develops methodology to evaluate the strategic value of a site in context to different basing strategies. The work sheds light on how China views its future position in the world by deciphering intentions behind Chinese investments in ports in the Indian Ocean Region.