

# EXPERTS TAKE

## China's connectivity projects in the Gulf and their implications for Japan and India

### An Interview with Dr. Satoru Nagao and Mr. Sanjay Pulipaka



**Dr. Satoru Nagao**

Dr. Satoru Nagao is a fellow (non-resident) at Hudson Institute, based in Tokyo, Japan. Dr. Nagao's primary research area is US-Japan-India security cooperation. He was awarded his PhD by Gakushuin University in 2011 for his thesis, "India's Military Strategy," the first such research thesis on this topic in Japan. Gakushuin University is a premier institution from which members of the Japanese Imperial Family have also graduated. He is now also an associate professor at Tokyo International University.



**Mr. Sanjay Pulipaka**

Mr Sanjay Pulipaka is currently the Chairperson of the Politeia Research Foundation and an expert on Indo-Pacific geopolitics and India's foreign policy, with prior senior roles at leading Indian think tanks and fellowships at the University of Cambridge and under the Fulbright Program. He has published widely on geopolitics, connectivity projects, the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), democracy, federalism, and international relations theory. His latest book is titled "Tiger with Wings: China's BRI and Economic Engagement in South Asia."

## Introduction

By Sevil Khikmatova

*The current crisis in the Strait of Hormuz is restructuring global energy supply and trade routes. It affects Asian countries the most, due to their dependence on the energy supplies from the Gulf countries. Particularly, the crisis exposes the economic vulnerability of China, Japan, and India, as these countries are experiencing immediate disruptions in the energy supply and trade flows.*

*In the long-term, the crisis in the Strait of Hormuz urges China to enhance its influence operations in the Indian Ocean region and diversify its trade routes, considering the importance of stable supply chains for the Chinese economy. This ultimately imposes a security threat to India and Japan, signaling the two nations to boost their maritime security and surveillance on China's operations in the region.*

*Additionally to enhancing maritime security, India and Japan are urged to find alternative energy supplies and trade routes, to avoid the long-term risk of the crisis.*

*This Experts' Take discovers how China's connectivity projects triggered by the crisis in the Strait*

*of Hormuz affect the security of the Indo-Pacific countries, such as India and Japan. Furthermore, it discusses how India and Japan approach energy, economic, and maritime security, especially through forming bilateral ties. Lastly, it discusses the development of Russia-China relations and its implications for Japan and India.*

*This Experts' Take includes insights contributed by two experts - Dr. Satoru Nagao, a Non-resident Fellow at Hudson Institute, and Mr. Sanjay Pulipaka, Chairperson of the Politeia Research Foundation.*

*Dr. Satoru Nagao discusses the implications of the crisis in the Strait of Hormuz on primarily Japan. He also observes the trajectory of China's connectivity projects, the dynamics of China-Russia relations, and the implications of these developments of Japan's security in the long-term.*

*Mr. Sanjay Pulipaka focuses on the implications of the crisis in the Strait of Hormuz on India. He emphasizes how the Chinese connectivity projects in the Indian Ocean may threaten India's security, and what India's long-term objectives are to avoid the risk.*

*Both experts respond to the same set of questions, offering their unique insights on these critical issues.*

Why does the Strait of Hormuz remain strategically indispensable for Japan and India? How are energy security calculations and trade ties with Iran evolving amid growing Chinese influence in the Gulf region?

**Nagao:** About 90 percent of Japan's oil imports pass through the Strait of Hormuz, along with roughly 20 percent of its LNG. If the Strait were blocked, the impact would be significant. However, Japan is not entirely vulnerable. It maintains substantial strategic reserves of around 254 days of oil stock, while LNG storage is more limited at roughly three weeks due to

technical constraints. Importantly, only 6 percent of LNG imports depend on the Strait of Hormuz, and Japan's diversified energy mix, including coal, nuclear, and renewables, provides additional resilience. As a result, while the Strait is highly important, it is not strictly indispensable. Japan's preparedness reflects lessons from the 1970s oil shocks and wartime experience.

Regarding Iran, Japan has had no trade relations since 2018 due to Iran's nuclear development program and the US-Iran relations. However, China's growing influence through Iran is a rising concern,

particularly since the October 2023 Hamas attacks against Israel, which coincided with a shift in China's regional approach. China has strengthened ties with Middle Eastern countries by using the anti-Israel logic. However, China uses good timing - before the terrorist attacks, China had already been facilitating Iran-Saudi cooperation and making a "Persian World" cooperation against Israel. Earlier, China was investing in cybersecurity capabilities in Israel, but then it changed its focus to expanding its influence in the Middle East through engagement with Islamic states.

Through diplomatic efforts and Belt and Road infrastructure investments, China is increasing its influence in the Middle East. For Japan, the expanding Chinese influence is a bit of concern, as Japan is buying oil from that region.

**Pulipaka:** India has a substantial energy and trade dependence on the Strait of Hormuz. A large share of India's energy imports, including oil, and around 60 percent of LPG, pass through this corridor. Unlike alternative routes such as the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, Hormuz has no viable substitute. Second, the Strait of Hormuz is important for India's trade relations. India has strong trade relations with many Gulf countries. The UAE is India's third-largest trading partner. Around 10 million Indian citizens work in the Gulf countries.

In Iran, India has been developing the Chabahar Port, which provides India with strategic access to

Afghanistan and Central Asia, bypassing Pakistan, and is central to its westward connectivity ambitions.

The Chinese presence in the Gulf region, through connectivity projects such as the Gwadar port in Pakistan, underscores the region's strategic importance. China's connectivity projects risk "hardwiring" regional trade routes, which could give preference to certain countries and sideline Indian interests. In response, India is diversifying connectivity to reduce overreliance on a single route and ensure resilient access to global markets. If initiatives such as the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) were functioning today, the current crisis would not have been as severe.

*What are the immediate and long-term geopolitical and geoeconomic implications of instability in the Strait of Hormuz for Asian powers, particularly when viewed through the lens of China's dependence on Gulf energy flows and its Maritime Silk Road ambitions?*

**Nagao:** In my view, Asian countries are motivated to reduce dependence on the Middle East. Iran's influence will decline as a result of this war. The problem is how to find alternative energy sources.

Relying on Russia is also risky. The US will benefit by becoming an oil exporter, as well as Australia, as an exporter of coal and LNG. The Asian countries are seeking alternative energy sources, which are needed to maintain a fast-developing economy of the Indo-Pacific region. The countries that can provide

**China's connectivity projects risk "hardwiring" regional trade routes, which could give preference to certain countries and sideline Indian interests. In response, India is diversifying connectivity to reduce overreliance on a single route and ensure resilient access to global markets. – Sanjay Pulipaka**

alternative oil or other energy sources will gain the benefit.

There is also growing attention to undersea resource exploration, so the competition for the seabed resources will increase. This will depend on the speed of economic development. The age of security means that the resources are used for military power, but if the economy is not developing fast, the competition for the resources is slowing down.

**Pulipaka:** Japan, South Korea, and Southeast Asian countries depend heavily on Gulf oil transported through the Strait of Hormuz. Oil price movements affect the Asian Tigers more than other regions, simply due to the size of their economies.

China procures around 30 percent of its oil through the Strait of Hormuz. This oil comes either from Iran or other countries. Given the size of the Chinese economy, 30 percent is a substantial amount. Therefore, the outcomes of the crisis in the Strait of Hormuz are of great importance to China.

China has operationalised its energy land routes across Central and Southeast Asia. Yet maritime routes remain critical. China is accelerating diversification: investing in pipelines, expanding sourcing from Africa and Latin America, and deepening strategic ties with Gulf producers.

Geopolitically, prolonged instability may intensify great-power competition, particularly if the United States gains greater influence over regional energy flows. This would constrain China's access to discounted oil (e.g., from Iran), prompting Beijing to recalibrate its energy security strategy and broader connectivity ambitions.

**Which country stands to lose, or leverage, the most from prolonged disruption in the Strait of Hormuz: China, India, Japan, or the Gulf producers themselves?**

**Nagao:** Who stands to lose or gain the most from a prolonged disruption in the Strait of Hormuz de-

pends heavily on how the broader conflict evolves.

If the United States and Israel succeed in altering Iran's strategic behavior, particularly stopping its nuclear and missile programs and following the U.S. order, then the main beneficiaries would be the United States, Israel, and the members of the Abraham Accords, expanding the Israel-Saudi Arabia relations. This could stabilize the region and establish connectivity projects such as the economic corridor through India, the Middle East, and Europe.

However, if the US and Israel do not succeed, and Iran continues to attack, then the Strait of Hormuz will not be safe. In this case, the situation changes significantly. In that case, Russia gets the benefit by starting to sell its oil to China, India, and Turkey. A recent attack on the oil tanker coming from Russia near Istanbul's Bosphorus Strait happened because the US and Ukraine are focused on Russia's income, which relies on energy exports. Shrinking Russia's income by sanctions or attacks on oil facilities was possible before this war, therefore.

If this war continues, Russia will start exporting much more energy. China will import more oil from Russia if the Strait of Hormuz is blocked. Russia gets a strong diplomatic card with China.

**Pulipaka:** In a prolonged disruption of the Strait of Hormuz, no single country uniformly "wins"; rather, gains and losses are uneven. In the immediate term, Russia stands out as the primary geopolitical and geoeconomic beneficiary. First, global attention shifts away from the Russia-Ukraine War, further benefiting Russia strategically.

Second, Russian oil is no longer sanctioned. This allows Moscow to sell oil at higher market—especially India, are encouraged by the US to buy discounted Russian oil.

In addition to Russia, another country that can benefit from the conflict after it ends is Iran. Of course, this also depends on what kind of regime will be in Iran.

If the post-conflict regime in Iran is open for business with the West, the West will benefit. They will become partners in exporting and refining Iranian oil. However, if the regime maintains its hostility towards the Americans, the Chinese will benefit, as they will again gain access to relatively cheap oil. So these are some of the major players who may benefit from this conflict, but it really depends on the regime that survives in Iran.

Is the Middle East conflict accelerating the emergence of alternative maritime and logistics routes, and how is China positioning itself within these new or rerouted sea corridors as part of a broader recalibration of the Maritime Silk Road? Current rerouting around the Cape of Good Hope and discussions of protected shipping corridors suggest that the issue is no longer only about one chokepoint, but about the restructuring of commercial sea-lane resilience.

**Nagao:** The current Middle East conflict is accelerating the emergence of alternative maritime and logistical routes, but more importantly, it is transforming how states think about the security of global sea lanes. Chinese projects under the Belt and Road Initiative, its energy sources and transport routes serve as a matter of national security.

However, the situation is becoming more complex and costly. Recent conflicts have demonstrated how vulnerable maritime shipping is, particularly with the increase of low-cost technologies such as drones. In the past, attacking tankers required expensive missiles or advanced military assets, which limited such actions. Today, relatively cheap drones can threaten commercial vessels across wide areas, and this capability is spreading not only to states but also to non-state actors.

As a result, maritime security is becoming a central concern. Especially after 2022, the global system shifted from an ‘age of business’ to an ‘age of security.’ This means that the cost of trade will be higher.

For China, which relies heavily on global trade, the higher cost of trade represents a very big challenge. The high cost of trade is not good for the Chinese economic model. China needs to pay more for security. While Beijing is expanding alternative corridors, both maritime rerouting, such as around the Cape of Good Hope, and overland links, these are not cost-free solutions.

**Pulipaka:** Yes, the ongoing instability around the Strait of Hormuz is clearly accelerating the search for alternative maritime and logistics routes.

One such initiative could be the IMEC. Perhaps it is time to consider alternative routes and pay closer

**If the United States and Israel succeed in altering Iran’s strategic behavior, particularly stopping its nuclear and missile programs and following the U.S. order, then the main beneficiaries would be the United States, Israel, and the members of the Abraham Accords, expanding the Israel–Saudi Arabia relations. This could stabilize the region and establish connectivity projects such as the economic corridor through India, the Middle East, and Europe. – Satoru Nagao**

attention to the Arabian Peninsula.

The Arab countries will accelerate diversification to ensure there is an alternative route for their oil exports, not only through the Strait of Hormuz. In addition, they will diversify their economies to ensure they do not depend solely on a single resource. They are already using oil revenues to enhance other sectors of their economies.

India will try to diversify its energy sources and scale up alternative ways of using its natural gas through pipelines. Transporting gas in containers is beset with challenges, therefore, there will be more pipelines from refining facilities to consumers and also to industries. A lot of exploration will be conducted within India and in its exclusive economic zone in the maritime domain.

China was able to procure Iran's relatively cheap oil and was also investing in the Arab countries. China seeks to balance its relations with the Arab countries and with Iran. Now, if the current regime in Iran fails, China will lose access to relatively low-priced oil. If China fully supports Iran, it will not go down well with the Arab countries. Therefore, Arab countries and Iran will closely monitor China's policy of protecting and promoting its interests amid the ongoing conflict.

**What kind of strategic chemistry is now emerging between China and Russia over the Strait of Hormuz crisis: tactical diplomatic coordination, energy opportunism, anti-Western positioning, or a deeper convergence over control of Eurasian maritime insecurity?**

**Nagao:** Much depends on how the conflict involving Iran evolves. If the US does not succeed in stopping the nuclear development programs in Iran, even after the ceasefire, the military operations in the region will start again in the future.

If instability persists, Russia stands to gain economically and diplomatically as China becomes more

dependent on Russian energy supplies. This could elevate Russia's leverage and make the relationship more balanced.

However, a more equal relationship does not necessarily mean stronger alignment; in fact, it may introduce greater competition between them. Historically, the relationship has been stable because China has been the dominant partner. If that hierarchy shifts, underlying rivalry could re-emerge.

In the long run, China-Russia relations will affect the relations between Russia and Europe, Russia and the US, and Russia and Japan. It will affect the counter-China strategy as well. There is a high possibility that it is in Russia's interests that the war in Iran continues in the long term. If the war continues, China will rely on Russia more, and Russia will also benefit by providing drones to Iran, as Iran was supporting Russia in the Russia-Ukraine war.

So in this scenario, on one hand, Europe will face a tougher enemy like Russia, but on the other hand, dealing with China will be easier for the EU.

**Pulipaka:** On the one hand, the partnership has strengthened in recent years, particularly since the Russia-Ukraine War, which has pushed Russia closer to China. Moscow has become more dependent on Beijing for revenues from oil, gas, and other resource exports.

However, the current crisis also creates new possibilities for divergence. The conflict has opened up space for Russia to move away from China - it can now sell its oil to many countries, and if the Ukrainian conflict is resolved, the Russia-China collaborative dynamic may get diluted.

As a result of this "shift" from China, the possibility of consolidating relations with others - such as Russia and the USA, or Russia and Japan - may emerge. Instead of accessing Russian oil at low prices, China will have to compete with other countries to get Russian resources.

Can China's overland and port-linked corridors, especially the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and Gwadar, realistically reduce Beijing's dependence on the Strait of Hormuz, or are they better understood as partial hedging instruments rather than true substitutes for Gulf sea-borne energy routes?

**Nagao:** First, it is important to understand how critical the Strait of Hormuz is for China. Roughly 38 percent of oil shipments passing through the Strait are destined for China - far exceeding other major importers such as India 15 percent, South Korea 12 percent, Japan 11 percent, the rest of Asia 14 percent, and Europe, only 3 percent. This makes China the single largest user of this route. Diversifying this route is very important for China.

However, China's traditional concern has not been the Strait of Hormuz. It was about the Strait of Malacca because the Strait of Malacca is controlled by the United States and India, as geographically, the Indian Andaman and Nicobar Islands are located just in front of the Strait of Malacca. Therefore, the Strait of Malacca is the primary security concern for China. As a result, many Belt and Road Initiative projects, including the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and Gwadar Port, were originally designed to mitigate the 'Malacca dilemma' by diversifying transport routes.

With a focus on the Strait of Malacca, China

was not very concerned about the Strait of Hormuz in the past. However, the alternative routes do not fundamentally reduce dependence on the Strait of Hormuz. Even overland and port-linked corridors from Pakistan or Myanmar still rely on energy supplies originating in the Gulf, meaning shipments must pass through Hormuz before reaching these alternative routes. They do reduce dependence on the Strait of Malacca, which was the main goal, but all of them are crossing the Strait of Hormuz. The Indian Ocean is now the most risky area for China. China is importing oil from Iran, which makes China worried about its energy security.

China was not prepared enough for this situation. This is not the Strait of Malacca - this is the Strait of Hormuz.

**Pulipaka:** China's overland and port-linked corridors, such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and Gwadar Port, do not really substitute for the Strait of Hormuz.

Early CPEC proposals did envisage pipelines from Gwadar to Xinjiang. However, a fundamental limitation remains: any oil arriving at Gwadar must still pass through Hormuz. This means Gwadar does not eliminate the chokepoint vulnerability; it merely shifts the route beyond the bottleneck.

Geography further complicates the viability of

**The current crisis also creates new possibilities for divergence. The conflict has opened up space for Russia to move away from China - it can now sell its oil to many countries, and if the Ukrainian conflict is resolved, the Russia-China collaborative dynamic may get diluted. Instead of accessing Russian oil at low prices, China will have to compete with other countries to get Russian resources.**

– Sanjay Pulipaka

CPEC as an energy corridor. Transporting oil overland through Pakistan into China requires crossing the Karakoram and the broader Himalayan terrain, posing severe challenges due to altitude, gradients, and infrastructure costs. As a result, such routes are far less efficient than maritime transport.

Alternative overland options, such as pipelines from Iran through Central Asia into China, are more feasible but remain constrained by distance and cost. More broadly, land-based transport remains inherently more expensive than large-scale sea-borne energy flows.

China will continue to explore diversification through corridors and alternative energy, but these initiatives complement rather than replace its dependence on maritime routes via Hormuz.

**How might the current Hormuz crisis reshape the future of China's Maritime Silk Road in the western Indian Ocean: toward heavier reliance on port access, naval logistics, insurance-backed shipping resilience, and corridor diversification across Pakistan, the Gulf, and East Africa?**

**Nagao:** Yes, China will enhance the Maritime Silk Road. One solution will be to diversify its routes so that, in case of a disruption, it can shift flows rather than rely on a single pathway.

However, diversification alone is not sufficient. China will also need to place greater emphasis on security. This includes expanding port access, deepening relations with local governments, and potentially increasing its naval presence to protect sea lanes and critical infrastructure. The Maritime Silk Road is evolving from a primarily economic initiative into a more security-driven strategy. The age of security is coming.

**Pulipaka:** The Western Indian Ocean is a vast region. It includes the East African coast, which is of great importance to China because it needs to access the

African continent for natural resources.

For China, it is also about exporting its domestic products to new markets. Therefore, Chinese activities in terms of infrastructure projects will continue. They will try to diversify the routes in a way that dependence on critical resources is reduced; however, the main goal is to access bigger markets. When the situation in the region stabilises, China will engage with these regions in a big way.

**Does the Strait of Hormuz crisis strengthen China's long-term argument for building parallel connectivity architectures—ports, pipelines, industrial zones, and dual-use maritime infrastructure—or does it instead expose the enduring limits of the Maritime Silk Road in bypassing hard geopolitical chokepoints?**

**Nagao:** What China can do in this situation is support Iran indirectly. For example, China has already deployed an intelligence-gathering vessel to the Strait of Hormuz, reportedly escorted by destroyers. This raises the possibility that China could be sharing intelligence related to United States operations with Iran.

If China considers that prolonging the conflict serves its strategic interests, its support could deepen. Rather than supplying weapons directly, China might provide components, materials, or technical assistance, particularly for drone production. This could involve establishing production facilities in neighboring regions, maybe in Afghanistan, allowing Iran to sustain its capabilities without China depleting its own military stockpiles. A similar approach has been discussed in relation to Belarus and Russia, where China established a factory in Belarus to indirectly support Russia in the war.

The strategic logic is consistent: by prolonging conflicts such as the war in Ukraine, the United States remains less concentrated on China, particularly in the context of tensions over Taiwan. The same reasoning could apply to Iran - if the US is heavily en-

gaged in the Middle East, it becomes less focused on China.

However, such actions would likely remain covert and difficult to verify. Much depends on the duration and intensity of the conflict. If the war is prolonged, China's role - both during and after the conflict - could expand significantly, especially through reconstruction and broader regional influence.

**Pulipaka:** An important objective of China's connectivity project is to export domestic industrial surpluses. China is also interested in addressing the challenge of chokepoints. However, you cannot fully overcome them.

There is the Strait of Malacca chokepoint and the first island chain along China's eastern coast, dominated by countries allied with the United States. Therefore, continental routes through Central Asia will continue to be important for China. Furthermore, after learning from the current crisis in the Strait of Hormuz, China will seek to overcome the first island chain's chokepoint and any potential threats in the future. Of course, Beijing will also factor in the access-denial strategies in the maritime domain that other relatively smaller countries may deploy against China.

China will also consider the alternative routes. These routes may pass through the Arctic Circle, and therefore China may play an important role in that region.

Regarding the current crisis in the Middle East, there are reports that Beijing may have leaned on Iran to sit at the negotiation table. There are also reports that it may be considering providing advanced weapon systems to Iran, which elicited a sharp response from the US. Overall, China has not taken a overt significant diplomatic initiatives to address the conflict.

While China maintains good relations with Iran, many Gulf countries have substantial sovereign wealth funds that can be deployed to strengthen connectivity projects worldwide. Therefore, China may also seek to collaborate with Gulf countries to consolidate its connectivity initiatives.

*Question: For India and Japan, is the real challenge now simply energy dependence on Hormuz, or the wider risk that China could turn repeated Gulf disruptions into a strategic advantage through maritime adaptation, commercial rerouting, and deeper political entrenchment across the northern Indian Ocean?*

**One solution will be to diversify its routes so that, in case of a disruption, it can shift flows rather than rely on a single pathway. However, diversification alone is not sufficient. China will also need to place greater emphasis on security. This includes expanding port access, deepening relations with local governments, and potentially increasing its naval presence to protect sea lanes and critical infrastructure. The Maritime Silk Road is evolving from a primarily economic initiative into a more security-driven strategy.**

– Satoru Nagao

**Nagao:** Maritime security is very important, and in this case, Japan alone cannot safeguard the sea lane communication in the Indian Ocean, from the Middle East to the Strait of Malacca. That's why promoting the Maritime Security Cooperation is very important. The Quad is the foundation of this security cooperation, as the Quad members actually have influence in that region.

Among the Quad partners, India plays a particularly critical role. India is the only country that has enough naval forces to secure the sea-lane communications in the Indian Ocean, including the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal. From now on, India will become the main security provider in the Indian Ocean. Many countries rely on India's role in that region, including Japan, Indonesia, Australia, and the US.

For Japan, strengthening strategic ties with India is therefore vital. Shinzo Abe was right by saying in 2007 that "strong India is in the best interest for Japan, and strong Japan is in the best interest for India." He said that because already at that time Japan was focusing on India's role in the Indian Ocean. India has already demonstrated the effective use of its naval forces, particularly in securing maritime routes. Ships transiting the Strait of Hormuz can be escorted at a rapid pace because India has pre-positioned naval assets in the region. This readiness is supported by prior logistical arrangements, including access to facilities at Duqm Port in Oman, agreed upon several years ago. India is not reacting from scratch but operating from a position of preparation.

Another important factor is how the war ultimately ends. Iran is likely to see a decline in regional influence as a result of the conflict. However, the post-war phase could open new opportunities for reconstruction, and this is where China may seek to expand its role through economic investment and infrastructure development.

If negotiations fail and the United States and Israel decide to expand their attacks to include criti-

cal infrastructure in Iran, the situation would change significantly. Strikes on infrastructure such as power plants would escalate the conflict beyond primarily military targets, causing widespread disruption and long-term damage to the country's basic systems.

In the aftermath of such destruction, reconstruction would become a central issue. This creates an opening for external actors, particularly China, to step in with investment and rebuilding efforts. As a result, China's influence in Iran could expand even if Iran emerges weakened from the war.

**Pulipaka:** There are two points: the importance of India's response to China's strategies, and the importance of Pakistan in this situation.

The Iran war demonstrated the importance of maritime capabilities. Iranian Naval Ship IRIS Dena was sunk by an American submarine in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Many littoral countries in the IOR took note of the incident, although the incident happened in international waters.

Recent developments in the IOR in India's vicinity will prompt Delhi to further enhance its maritime domain awareness. India will keep a closer watch on all vessels, including Chinese vessels, in the IOR, whether commercial, research, or military. India will dedicate more resources to the surveillance of the Chinese naval activities.

India will also monitor China's ports and other connectivity facilities in Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Pakistan more closely. The growing Chinese presence in the Indian Ocean poses a significant threat to India's trade and energy security. Therefore, India will closely monitor China's activities at the Gwadar port as Indian vessels pass nearby.

Finally, in the next 2-5 years, India will reconceptualise its energy strategy. India will consider how to reduce dependence on external energy sources by exploring its continental domain and exclusive economic zones more intensively. In addition, India will seek to diversify how energy is produced and used.

## Afterword

By Sevil Khikmatova

*The insights from Dr. Nagao and Mr. Pulipaka provide a critical examination of the immediate and long-term implications of the crisis in the Strait of Hormuz for Japan's and India's security. As an immediate implication of the crisis, both respondents emphasized their concerns regarding energy and economic security. To reduce this vulnerability, both respondents expressed the necessity to diversify energy supply and trade routes.*

*The respondents gave an example of China's connectivity operation in the Indian Ocean, aimed at reducing its dependency on other chokepoints, such as the Strait of Malacca. However, despite China's influence operations in the Indian Ocean, there is no alternative route to the Strait of Hormuz. Considering China's enormous dependency on energy supplies from Iran and its trade relations with the Gulf countries, the crisis hits the Chinese economy the most.*

*Respondents emphasized the crisis triggers China to rethink its connectivity projects in the Indian Ocean, which in turn, will raise security concerns for both India and Japan.*

*Nagao emphasized the emerging "era of security", caused by the increase of China's connectivity operations in the Indian Ocean. In this context, India's role as a power capable of opposing China was particularly emphasized, especially due to India's strength in naval defense. Nagao also pointed out the development of Japan-India ties, particularly in security and defense.*

*Pulipaka expressed India's enhanced maritime domain awareness, highlighting India's objective to keep a closer surveillance on China's naval operations and China's connectivity projects in the Indian Ocean. In addition to an enhanced maritime security, Pulipaka discussed India's aim to diversify energy supply routes through building connectivity projects such as the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC).*

*Looking ahead, the crisis triggers not only the necessity to diversify routes for energy and trade supplies, but also, and more importantly, it makes the Asian powers rethink their approach to security. With China looking for alternative trade routes and enhancing its influence operations in the Indian Ocean, India and Japan are required to take a more proactive role in ensuring national and regional stability.*

*This interview is a part of the ISDP SCSA-IPA research project, "The Silk Noose: China's Power Architecture in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region".*