



India's Red Line for China

OE Watch Commentary: On 28 March the Indian website *First Post* featured the accompanying excerpted article about Indian policy towards China's engagement in the Maldives. According to the article, India will not seek to intervene in the Maldives despite the fact that the country, which is in its neighborhood, is increasing its ties to China. The article notes that any form of intervention in the Maldives to deter China would likely be more costly than doing nothing at all. Rather, the article suggests that subtle persuasion, which is synonymous with diplomacy, is sufficient for India to prevent China from engaging India's neighbors in a way that would threaten its national security interests.

The article notes that even without any action, countries that receive Chinese aid may realize some of its drawbacks. For example, problems related to China's lack of transparency in loans have already surfaced in Maldivian media, according to the article. Another example that the article provides is Myanmar, which decided to democratize and diversify its sources of investment to Western countries rather than rely on Beijing.

While the article urges India to have patience regarding Chinese financial activities, the article argues that a red line for India must be drawn when it comes to China setting up military bases in neighboring countries, including Pakistan. Another potential red line, according to the article, is China building a railway to connect its Tibet region to Kathmandu, Nepal. To address issues that cross India's red lines, the article argues that India needs to use its military as a deterrent, while for issues related to China gaining influence through its loans, aid or investments, India should make neighboring states better offers of its own. **End OE Watch Commentary (Zenn)**

“That red line would be crossed if China were to set up a military base in our neighborhood, including in Pakistan.”

Source: “India telling China it won’t interfere in Maldives not sign of weakness; military must be beefed up, vulnerable states given aid,” *First Post*, 28 March 2018. <https://www.firstpost.com/india/india-telling-china-it-wont-interfere-in-maldives-not-sign-of-weakness-military-must-be-beefed-up-vulnerable-states-given-aid-4409215.html>

With regard to Maldives, there was never at any time a reasonable military option of intervention. An intervention is inevitably open-ended, expensive in multiple ways, and is highly unlikely to deliver the objectives of the operation, which is to ensure a friendly and cooperative Maldives. In fact, the end result would probably be the reverse. The decision not to intervene is not a sign of weakness per se. Recent events point to a possibility that Chinese financing offers are now being rejected...

To the discerning public and certainly to Chinese policy makers, there is one clear red line for India. That red line would be crossed if China were to set up a military base in our neighborhood, including in Pakistan. There are other lines that are not so clearly ‘red’ at first glance, but are developments that hint at definite dangers to India. One such is the proposal by China to link Kathmandu with Lhasa. This needs to be resolutely opposed by New Delhi...



Port of Malé.

Source: Shahee Ilyas, "Port of Malé," https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Port_of_Malé.jpg, (CC-by-4.0).