

INDIAN OPPOSITION TO CHINESE BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE: RESPONSE, RATIONALE AND ACTION

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Abstract

China's massive initiative of the Belt and Road (BRI) is a gigantic leap that is aiming to connect world's 65% population, 30% of global G.D.P and about sixty eight countries that have signed on to be part of this mega project. The China Development Bank has estimated 900 projects that are worth more than a trillion dollars, underway to accomplish dream of 21st century New Silk Road. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is the flagship project of BRI, heralded as game changer that will bring prosperity to Pakistan and will turn Gwadar into an economic hub between Africa, West-Asia and South Asia. India opposed China's BRI as well as CPEC to neutralize China's regional and global influence. Modi has shifted from India's Look East to Act-East Policy and introduced Mausam and SAGAR projects to counterweight BRI. This paper unfolds reasons of India opposition to BRI as well CPEC by providing readers insights about various Indian foreign policy goals. This paper is an analysis of China's BRI and India's response to contain it. It also highlights the challenges that CPEC is facing due to India intensive diplomatic maneuvers to impede it. The BRI is set to transform China from civilization state to a western style nation state.

Key Words: Belt and Road Initiative, CPEC, Regional Connectivity, Indian Opposition

Theorizing India's Foreign Policy towards China: Debates and Perceptions

India's foreign policy had a great shift after cold war from the member of Non Aligned Movement (NAM) to a proactive Asian balancer against rising China. It also became important for the United States and

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other great powers after assuming nuclear power status and a market economy. Along the “Belt and Road”, India is an important country given its strategic location and potential market value. India’s ambition to dominate Indian Ocean region is deep-rooted and all political parties in India including ruling elite and opposition parties agree on this foreign policy goal.

China’s Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) in Indian Ocean also poses greater challenge to Indian ambition of dominating the region. Therefore, Indian policy makers and strategists favour staying out of BRI despite China’s invitation and safeguard major power status in Indian Ocean region. India also wants to boost its industrialization and infrastructure projects with the assistance from other developed countries. Indian policy makers are also sanguine that they can attract massive investment from Chinese enterprise without involving in BRI. Modi’s government is more proactive and assertive to compete with China for seeking a great power status.¹ Harsh V. Pant states that states respond to their structural conditions and put their utmost efforts to counter the most prominent challenges to their security. He further claims that Indian foreign policy seems to have been unable to make a coherent response to China’s rise because the rise of latter undermines India’s interests in many ways.² According to Hoffman the mainstream perspectives if Indians view China as a potential threat to their security but also hope that effective Indian diplomacy can allay major conflict in future.³ China’s burgeoning strategic ties with India’s neighbouring countries are a subject of concern for India. China’s politico-economic involvement in Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Myanmar and Afghanistan with military dimensions added into interaction, worries India. New Delhi is watchful of China’s increasing interests in Indian Ocean after implementation of the BRI. Some commentators who take a hawkish stance are not convinced with China’s seemingly benign policies in India’s backyard (Indian Ocean). India is also concerned about its competition with China for accessing markets and achieving resources globally.⁴ C. Raja Mohan states that India is on the verge of becoming a great power. World has witnessed when George W. Bush then President of the United States clinched Nuclear Deal with India in July, 2005. He claims that India is emerging as a swing state in the global balance of power paradigm. It will have the potential to shape the outcome of most critical issues of twenty-first

¹ Ye, H. India’s Policy Towards China Under the Mindset of “Assertive Government”. In *Annual Report on the Development of the Indian Ocean Region 2015*. (Springer: Singapore, 2016): 40

² Pant, H. V. “Indian foreign policy and China”. *Strategic Analysis*, 30(4), (2006): 760-780

³ Ibid.

⁴ Madan, T. India’s relations with China: the good, the bad and the (potentially) ugly. *Brookings Institute Series: Brookings East Asia Commentary*, (72), (2013)

century including Asian stability, political modernization of Middle East and effective management of globalization.⁵

There are plenty of scholars who debate about India's foreign policy but the most common point that emerges most of the discussions is that India is determined to give tough time to China in Asian Affairs in particular and world in general. Indian foreign policy is more of Sino-Pakistan centric and therefore any venture by China will be met with fierce resistance from India. This paper highlights India's opposition to China's BRI and its flagship project i.e. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Indian countermeasures to neutralize the influence of BRI and diplomatic maneuvers are aimed at keeping a quasi balance with China. This paper goes along the three concepts of China and India's respective foreign policies i.e. (i) Rational (ii) Response and (iii) Action

Rationale of the BRI

History of Silk Road dates back to Han dynasty about 130 B.C. Trading posts along the loose skein of thoroughfares from the Greco-Roman metropolis across Syrian Desert, modern-day Iraq and Iran to the former Chinese capital of Xian. China's Silk Road streamlined transportation of grain, livestock, medicine and science. To reincarnate China's leading role in contemporary times, Dean of Peking University's School of International Studies proposed China's pivot to westward into Eurasian landmass which later on became state policy in 2013.⁶

To rejuvenate the very concept of Silk Road, China's President Xj Jinping in 2013 announced that old Silk Road would get another birth in the form of Belt and Road Initiative.⁷ What makes difference is the ultimate outcome of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Rationale of China's leadership behind the most ambitious infrastructure project worth more than a trillion dollars, is to connect China with world's sixty five per cent population and thirty per cent of global G.D.P. To reap the fruits of this venture sixty-eight countries have signed on and more are likely to add up.

Indian Ocean links Asian and European strategic space and is also vital as Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC) pass through and about 80 % of world's seaborne trade passes through choke points in Indian Ocean. Therefore, major regional and extra-regional powers maintain their naval

⁵ Mohan, C. R. "India and the Balance of Power." *Foreign Affairs*. (2006).

⁶ Lim, Alvin Cheng-Hin. "The Moving Border of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor." *Geopolitics* (2017): 4-5

⁷ Monteleone Davide. "A New Silk Road". *The New Yorker*, (18/12/2018). Retrieved from <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2018/01/08/a-new-silk-road>

presence in this region. The United States has stationed fifth fleet in these waters couple with other allied strategic bases in the region. Other former colonial power including Britain and France also maintained their presence in the region beyond colonial era and NATO countries reached cooperative agreements with West Asian countries to leverage in naval power.⁸

The Belt and Road Initiative runs through the continents of Asia, Africa and Europe which also connects vibrant economies of East Asia and developed European economies on the other end. After completion of this trillion dollars project, China may come into extensive trade linkage with Central Asia, Russia, Europe, Persian Gulf, West Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia and Mediterranean Sea.⁹ Such an immensely rich economic corridor is going to turn the table on China's might and it may establish a network of natural allies and trade partners which may avert and menace to China's rise to global centre-stage.

Apart from economic triumph this diplomatic maneuver of China is going to make difference in China's diplomatic power. China's foreign policy's already crafted five principles of peaceful co-existence would push this strategically-economic venture into right direction. By reincarnating those principles of co-existence China may develop an environ of mutual respect for each other's sovereignty, territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression and mutual non-interference in each other's affairs, equality and mutual benefit to generate peaceful co-existence with partner and non-partner state of the BRI.¹⁰ History reveals that international politics has brutal to even benign plans.

India and China are considered contenders for regional and global influence as India is vying to catch up with China in international arena. History of Sino-Indian ties has been full of tensions and turbulence but before 1962, relations between both of the neighbours were fairly warm because of the post-colonial bonhomie and concept of Asian Solidarity. Famous Hindi phrase during the time of first Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, "*Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai*" (Indian and Chinese are brothers) envisioned a new socialist Asia. China and India were locked into fierce dispute over Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh (South Tibet) along their shared border. China administered Aksai Chin, through which ran the main route between Xinjiang and Tibet has undoubtedly been of enormous strategic significance

⁸ Srivastava, N. "Prospects for Russia-India Relations in the Indian Ocean Region". *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India*, 13(1), (2017): 82

⁹ Swaine, M. D. Chinese views and commentary on the 'One Belt, One Road' initiative. *China Leadership Monitor*, 47(2), (2015): 3

¹⁰ Ibid.3

to China. Therefore, China was not flexible over territorial integrity of China. As both the players made strands in international politics, they adhered to more rational approach of focusing on the convergence of strategic and economic interests and avoid any escalation that can endanger regional stability on one hand and may seriously impede bilateral ties.

The author of “*When China Rules the World: The End of Western World and Birth of a New Global Order*” Jacques Martin pens that China’s strategic designs are not to run the global system because it already believes itself as centre of the world. China views itself as playing natural role in world affairs. Jacques differentiates between China as a ‘civilization state’ and western styled nation-state. He opines about China’s natural stimulating comparison with India because both being world’s leading populations have resulted in underlying lack of empathy and understanding. World perceived China’s military buildup as a potential threat to regional and global competitors whereas it is aimed at averting any possible Taiwanese move towards independence rather than achieving global domination. If China really aspires to seek global hegemony then the relative technological level should drastically rise whereas it remains relatively low.¹¹

India in recent times provoked China by using rhetoric to curtail China’s influence in South Asia and global affairs. China’s rise to global centre-stage is mainly because of Chinese enterprise and its understanding towards worth of trade and commerce. China’s commercial venture by establishing facilities and ports along sea lines of communication in Indian Ocean is better known as ‘Strings of Pearl’. The term ‘String of Pearls’ was first used in a report “*Energy Futures in Asia*” published by the U.S. consultancy Booz Allen Hamilton that predicted that China would expand its presence throughout the Indian Ocean by investing extensively in building massive civilian infrastructure in friendly states. China’s that strategy was dubbed as String of Pearls and there have been a number of speculations and debates about China’s intentions in building such facilities.¹²

This strategy is being termed as more military one than economic because sea lines run through several major choke points like Strait of Mallaca, Strait of Mandeb, Strait of Hormuz and Lombok Strait. Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives and Somalia are strategic maritime centers built for conducting trade and commerce with China but Indian media hypothetically declares it as countering India’s influence through neighbours. China’s String of Pearls strategy dreads India that former may use them for military purpose.

¹¹ Rank, M. “How The West Was Lost”. *The Guardian*. (27/06/2018). Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/books/2009/jun/27/china-rules-world-martin-jacques>

¹² Baker, B. D. “Where is the ‘String of Pearls’ in 2015?”. *The Diplomat*, (2015): 5

Docking of Chinese submarines at China-constructed port in Sri Lanka is seen as militarization of BRI investments in India's neighbourhood. India's 90% international trade depends upon sea transport therefore it seeks to increase security by cooperating with Japan and the United States. India has reached a bilateral logistics exchange memorandum of agreement (LEMOA) with the U.S. in 2016. India has significantly increased security cooperation with Japan by selecting the latter as a permanent participant in U.S.-India Malabar security drills in 2015. India at the same time is struggling to address security deficits with China by keeping U.S and Japan engaged in the region.¹³ Some of the empirical researches uncovered a positive correlation between alliances and conflict because states might constitute alliances in anticipation of conflict.¹⁴ India may not ignore China's rise through diplomacy of development because it is likely to bring potential allies in China's orbit of influence. India employed traditional approach of counterbalancing through strategic relations with U.S. Japan and Israel. Such alliances are aimed at showcasing Indian might but helps averting direct armed-clash with China.

The China Development Bank has estimated that under the BRI, almost 900 projects worth \$890 billion are currently underway and the major share of funding comes from China's leading financial institutions including Asian Infrastructural Bank (AIIB), China's Export-Import Bank, the Silk Road Fund and China Development Bank in partnership with other Chinese banks.¹⁵ Because of the new heights in China-Pakistan relations after implementation of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), China is set to sell 8 export-variant Yuan-class diesel submarines to Pakistan. India is uneasy with CPEC and made diplomatic efforts to halt this multi-billion mega project that would be connecting China's western province of Xinjiang with Pakistani ports of Gwadar and Karachi. This project will help prospering Xinjiang and Pakistan's Baluchistan province. India campaigns internationally that China is strategizing to encircle India through contrived

¹³ Hays, J, Mitchel. "China's Belt and Road Initiative is Stoking Tensions with India". *The National Interest*. (16/11/207). Retrieved from <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/chinas-belt-road-initiative-stoking-tensions-india-23234?page=4>

¹⁴ Kimball, Anessa L, "Alliance formation and conflict initiation: The missing link." *Journal of Peace Research* 43, no. 4 (2006): 372

¹⁵ Prakash Panneerselvam, "Maritime Component of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): India-China Competition in the Arabian Sea", *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India*,13(2) (2018):38

naval strategy. Because of India's animosity with China, no facility has been proposed in India.¹⁶

Response

The common question that needs clarity of answer that why does China want to spend trillion dollars for achieving mere connectivity of countries through massive infrastructural plan? China is set to spend about trillion dollars for the future of Afro-Eurasia, commonly known as Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). China's rise may face challenge from Southern and Western periphery therefore according to Chinese analysts Eurasian integration would create a more stable security environment around China's western and southern periphery by addressing sources of violence and strengthening mutual trust. As the demand for energy surges in future, China may add much to energy security by benefiting from diversifying energy supply routes.

According to a research publication entitled "Chinese Perspectives on the Belt Road Initiative: Strategic Rationales, Risks, and Implications" by *Center for the Study of Chinese Military Affairs Institute for National Strategic Studies*, Joel Wuthnow describes that China sees BRI as a way to achieve two following geopolitical objectives¹⁷

- i. Seeking influence in the heartland of Eurasia
- ii. Avoiding direct confrontation with the United States by exercising a restrained response to Obama's crafted rebalance to Asia policy.

China's massive military buildup and the sources of naval expeditionary capabilities are means to protect its overseas equities. To mitigate threats to China's overseas interests, a strong risk assessment couple with non-traditional security cooperation is highly essential. The utmost priority is to step up cooperation in the areas of counterterrorism that poses major threat to regional peace and stability. India and Pakistan have been close to escalation because of the cross-border terrorism. China's diplomatic maneuvers help it averting clash with regional and global players as it prefers to settle conflict on negotiating table. Chinese archaic strategic writings suggest that strategic competition can be avoided by co-opting with other major players which means that China may consider inclusion of the U.S. Russia, UK and other major powers in the development of BRI. Another smart move is to avoid encroaching upon others' sphere of influence.¹⁸

¹⁶ Pillalamarri, Akhilesh. "What India Gets Wrong About China." *The Diplomat*. (7/6/2017). Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2014/06/what-india-gets-wrong-about-china/>

¹⁷ Wuthnow, J. *Chinese Perspectives on the Belt and Road Initiative: Strategic Rationales, Risks, and Implications*. (National Defense University Press, 2017)

¹⁸ Ibid.

The U.S. is sensing out that if China establishes a Sino-centric order in Eurasia that is likely to undermine former's strategic interests. If China maintains non-confrontational relations with the United States, it may establish a sphere of influence in Eurasia. An overreliance of BRI partners on China's economic largesse worries Washington even more because once in Chinese orbit of influence, they may not serve U.S. interests in a better way. China faces two tough competitors, one at regional level and the other at global level. India competes with China concerning regional influence on small neighbours whereas the United States perceive China as a global competitor. Even a larger challenge for China's peaceful rise is to face and deal with Indo-US strategic partnership that is a stumbling stone in its way.

Curtailing China's Regional Influence

On the other hand China is a focal point of India's foreign policy. Indian defeat in 1962 war alarms even more as China continues flexing its economic muscle in recent times. India concerns that China may transform economic strength into politico-strategic to put India into a state of serious security dilemma. What baffles more to people is that India and China are also largest trading partners in the region and also the members to several regional and international organizations. India and China are members of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and Group of twenty (G-20).

India is a potential candidate for membership of Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and United Nations Security Council (UNSC). India's entry into NSG and UNSC will put India at a place where United State can counterbalance China through India only without mobilizing other allies. Panos Mourdoukoutas in his piece "The Real Reason China Won't Let India Join NSG" published in *Forbes* that China has a loud and clear message for India that there no place for India in Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG). China legally objects India's entry into NSG because India is not a member of Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) regime. There is a prerequisite that to be member of NSG a state ought to be a signatory of NPT. China attaches much value to NPT as Wang Qun, Director General of the Department of Arms Control of the Chinese Foreign Ministry stated "In the absence of NPT as the political and legal basis, how could the nuclear issue on the Korean Peninsula be resolved?"¹⁹

Ashley Tellis in his *structuralist approach* argues that India and China being rising powers remain natural competitors to expand their area of influence

¹⁹ The real reason China Won't Let India Join NSG (2016,June30), *Forbes*. Retrieved from <https://www.forbes.com/sites/panosmourdoukoutas/2016/06/30/the-real-reason-china-wont-let-india-join-nsg/#22b9a8f15ae5>

beyond South Asia. He also predicts about burgeoning military might of India and China that if both competitors continue to grow militarily and economically at current rapid pace then chances of dyadic rivalry are more vivid.²⁰ The BRI presents an opportunity to demonstrate Chinese leadership for reaping fruits of economic and diplomatic power at world stage. China's connectivity with less developed neighbours could enable China to outsource low income jobs and move up the value chain. Such measures will help China to counter "middle-income trap".

India is trying to catch up with China's pace of economic development. In global competitive Index ranking (2017-2018) which is based on institutions and policies that basically determine the factor of productivity, China was ranked 27th and India 40th whereas Pakistan's ranking stood at 115th number out of 137 countries in the world.²¹ According to estimates after the completion of BRI, China's annual trade volume would dramatically rise to US \$2.5 within ten years.²²

China's secret to peaceful rise lies with the fact to avoid any confrontation with India as well as in South China Sea where it has contentious issues with Japan, Philippines, Vietnam, Malaysia and Brunei have competing claims over Spratly Islands, Paracels Islands and Scarborough Shoal. Based on Chinese history as a big brother of South East Asian states during Tributary system times, China claims the larger part of these islands. That area is defined by "nine-dash line" that stretches hundreds of miles from its Southern province of Hainan.²³ India is sanguine of China's troubles if China fails to manage conflict in South China Sea with these neighbours. India has leveled more reinvigorated strategic ties with Japan to pose future challenges to China. China is likely to calibrate its policy towards India as the future of Sino-Indian bilateral relations would be shaped by geostrategic consequences and India's relationship with major players like Russia, U.S., EU and Japan.

²⁰ Ashley J. Tell is, "China and India in Asia," in Francine R. Frankel and Harry, In Harding (ed.), *The India-China Relationship: What the United States Needs to Know*, (Columbia University Press, New York, 2004): 134-177

²¹ Schwab, Klaus, The Global Competitiveness Report. *World Economic Forum*, (2017-2018). Retrieved from <http://www3.weforum.org/docs/GCR2017-2018/05FullReport/TheGlobalCompetitivenessReport2017%E2%80%932018.pdf>

²² Panneerselvam, Prakash, "Maritime Component of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): India-China Competition in the Arabian Sea." *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India*, (2018): 38

²³ "Why is South China Sea Continuous?" . *BBC News*. 12/07/2016. Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-13748349>

Action through the Corridor of Opportunities

Though Pakistan and China are close friends and neighbours but bilateral trade has not been much impressive. Pakistan-China trade volume was \$4 billion in 2006-07 but in 2015-16 it has reached 13.77 billion and Pakistan's exports jumped to 1.69 billion.²⁴ Pakistan's Parliamentary Secretary for Commerce Najeebuddin Awaisi told National Assembly that China's exports to Pakistan increased to \$12.1 billion in 2015-16 from \$3.5 billion in 2006-07. He also added that Pakistan's ministry is taking measures to attain balance of trade with China.²⁵ The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) provides both the nations a platform to promote regional trade activity. The CPEC is also dubbed as corridor of opportunity because it connects Pakistan's potential Gwadar port with China's Western province Xinjiang. It would provide an open access to South Asia and Indian Ocean. China's interest in the Makran coast raises suspicions among analysts that why China is much interested in the Makran coast. The Makran coast being close to Persian Gulf provides China an opportunity to maximize economic benefits in Persian Gulf. Indian analysts are apprehensive of navigation of China's naval ships and submarines at Pakistan's port and forecast that Sino-Indian security tension may heighten. India's massive labour are serving in United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain which India is worried about that after the CPEC project it may challenge India's growing interests in Persian Gulf on one hand and undermine its role as a regional maritime power.²⁶

After commencement of CPEC, Gwadar has emerged as a major commercial hub in the region because massive Chinese trade will be passing through this port. Pakistan navy has to safeguard Gwadar facility for which Pakistan Navy constituted "Task Force-88". The Task Force-88(TF-88) is responsible for securing Gwadar port and adjunct sea-lanes. Second layer of security is of Jinnah Naval Base at Ormara in Baluchistan province. Other ports including Pasni and Jewani have also been expanded as part of CPEC project. Jinnah Naval Base advantages tactically to Pakistan Navy as in case of emergency the reaction time will be reduced by 6 to 8 hours. Jinnah Naval Base has recently been upgraded with a workshop to overhaul naval ships of different sizes and submarines as well. Major benefit of this naval infrastructure is that it can provide security to international shipping lane (ISL) between Persian Gulf and Gwadar Port. Pakistan's naval infrastructure

²⁴ Saeed, Aamir. "Pakistan-China Trade Volume Reaches \$13.7 Billion in 2015-2016 NA Informed". *Business Recorder*, (14/03/2017). Retrieved from <https://fp.brecorder.com/2017/03/20170314153866/>

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Panneerselvam, Prakash, "Maritime Component of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): India-China Competition in the Arabian Sea." *Maritime Affairs*. (National Maritime Foundation of India, 2018): 37

including listening posts and maritime surveillance capability enables Pakistan to track any movement at the mouth of Persian Gulf. Pakistan's Defence Minister Khawaja Muhammad Asif stated during the gathering of Jinnah Naval Base that "the success of the CPEC and Gwadar Port project depends upon secure maritime environment in the Indian Ocean region and in particular Arabian Sea for which Pakistan navy was fully prepared"²⁷

China's planned investment in other South Asian nations is also part of the BRI. China has invested \$14 billion for infrastructural projects in Sri Lanka from 2005 to 2015. China pledged \$38 billion to Bangladesh and \$8 billion to Nepal as planned investments. India's influence in the region is dwindling down with increased Chinese economic penetration. Another Indian fear that China's String of Pearls may encircle India and check latter's naval interests. After Gwadar Port and Hambantota (Sri Lanka), Indian foreign policy is strategizing to respond to Chinese naval strategy and maritime projects.

India has leverage in terms of economic growth in South Asia because it is a member of G-20 which is world's largest and advanced economies representing world's two-third population also 85 % of global gross domestic product and over 75 % of global trade.²⁸ India is the only country from South Asia having membership to world's leading economic forum (G-20). Its membership of G-20 counts it in the leading economies like Australia, Brazil, Canada, Argentina, France, Germany , China, Italy, Indonesia, Japan, Republic of Korea, South Africa, Saudi Arabia, Russia, Turkey, The United Kingdom, The United States and the European Union. Pakistan's economy is going to experience a stark boost in the next five years because of CEPC and it would uplift Pakistan's economic stature. As CPEC projects are under way and other developed countries are interested to invest money or be partners in several projects, Pakistan in February, 2018 has turned down an offer of loan from Japan for infrastructural projects arguing that country's loan portfolio is already up and it doesn't need any other loan.²⁹

To empower people of Baluchistan through education, CPEC is aiming to build an educational city. The Higher Education Commission unit of CPEC is in the process of reviewing government-university and educational city projects in Gwadar. Technical Review Committee comprising of vice-

²⁷ "Is China's Silk Road Game Changer?". *BBC News*. (April 2015). Retrieved from <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-32400091> & Ahimullah Yousafzai and T. Mehdi. "The Way of Sufi." *NEWSLINE*. (November 1994).

²⁸ *Turkey G-20* (2015). Retrieved from <http://g20.org.tr/about-g20/g20-members/>

²⁹ Bhutta,Zafar. "Pakistan Turn Down Cheaper Loan Offer from Japan". *The Express Tribune*. (02/2018). Retrieved from <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1637886/2-pakistan-turns-cheaper-loan-offer-japan/>

chancellors of famous university and government officials are exploring opportunities to provide employment to people of Baluchistan and also enable them to get better jobs in competitive job market by imparting them technical training.³⁰

According to that report Pakistan is spending more than one billion dollars on improving quality of the roads which has ultimate impact on per capita income of the people. It is likely to increase per capita income of people by Rs. 371 on permanent basis. It will also help people driving them out of absolute poverty as it provides sustainable solution to alleviate poverty than mere spending subsidies.³¹ India's old strategic partner Russia has developed better ties with Pakistan and is aspiring to join CPEC too. Pakistan has also approved Russia request to use Gwadar Port for Russian exports of goods to West Asia, Africa and Latin America.³² After the disintegration of USSR, Russia lost its presence in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). China's BRI provides Russia an opportunity to regain foothold in Indian Ocean. Russia's engagement with the BRI helps it to resurge in IOR, another development that presents Indo-US strategic partnership a gigantic challenge is China-Russia-Pakistan triad that is shaping up under the umbrella of CPEC. India being potential regional player would never want to face such strategic challenge in the region.³³ Russia's closeness with Pakistan will add much value to latter's strategic power in world affairs.

India's Neighbourhood First Policy: Neutralizing China's Regional Influence

After China's increased influence among small South Asian neighbours, Indian Prime Minister Narenra Modi ramps up an effort to keep South Asian neighbours in sphere of influence. He initiated "Neighbourhood First" Policy in May, 2014 during South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). India's neighbourhood first policy is a strategic necessity whose striking feature is that if India does not resolve issues with neighbor, China may capitalize the situation to exert regional influence. Modi's this diplomatic approach earned him popularity at home among Hindu nationalists. Such regional diplomatic maneuver is supplemented by

³⁰ "CPEC's HEC Building Education City in Gawadar", (02/02/2018). Retrieved from <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1624418/1-cpecs-hec-building-education-city-gwadar/>

³¹ Mehar, A ,” Infrastructure development, CPEC and FDI in Pakistan: is there any connection?”. *Transnational Corporations Review*, 9(3), (2017): 232

³² "Pakistan Allows Russia Use Gawadar Under China Pakistan Economic Corridor." *Hindustan Times*. (26/11/2016). Retrieved from <https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/pakistan-allows-russia-use-of-gwadar-port-under-china-pak-economic-corridor/story-8YuUCrYTU2Kj7mQIIvpNzO.html>

³³ Srivastava, N. "Prospects for Russia-India Relations in the Indian Ocean Region". *Maritime Affairs: Journal of the National Maritime Foundation of India*, 13(1), (2017): 88

India's strategic position, economic complementary and shared cultural heritage.³⁴ Though India had diminutive success but was not an adequate response to China's investment in Bangladesh. India is among those few states who are not taking part in China's Belt and Road Initiative. The only option India had was to bandwagon United States to join U.S. led ventures of development in Asia.

China's billions of dollars investment for new infrastructural projects in Sri Lanka put India in comfortless position as Sri Lanka has long been in India's geopolitical orbit. The impact of Chinese massive investment in Sri Lanka had contesting response from India. Sri Lanka's President Maithripala Sirisena paid first visit to India in February, 2015 and was reciprocated by Modi's visit to Colombo in March, 2015. It was first stand-alone PM visit in 28 years and he also addressed Sri Lankan Parliament. India exercised humanitarian diplomacy by constructing a hospital there. After China's BRI, Sri Lanka enjoyed special significance in China's foreign policy. Under the lease agreement between China and Sri Lanka, strategic port of Hambantota was handed over to China for 99-years lease. But Sri Lanka sought assurance that Hambantota port will not be used for military purposes. To monitor Chinese activities at the port India has invested in Hambantota district airport which is merely 30 kilometers away from the port.³⁵

Another South Asian small but strategically important state Maldives has long been neglected by India but with the advent of Chinese investment, India also moved to reach for cooperation with Maldives in the areas of defence and tourism. Maldivian President Abdullah Yameen during his visit to India in April, 2016 signed agreements of cooperation in the field of taxation, space research, tourism and defence. Such diplomatic move of India was aimed at countering growing Chinese influence in the Island state. Other countries operated through their embassies either in Delhi or Colombo but China was opened up an embassy in Male. An important landmark in China-Maldives relations is the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) reached in December, 2017, making Maldives the first ever FTA with any other country and China's second FTA with any South Asia country. China already has an FTA with Pakistan based on China Pakistan's exemplary relationship. As a result of China's massive support for Maldives, President Yameen pledged his full support to China's Maritime Silk Road (MDR). India's foreign ministry issued a statement that "expectation that as a close and friendly

³⁴ Kaura, V. "Grading India's Neighbourhood Diplomacy". *The Diplomat*. (01/01/2018). Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2017/12/grading-indias-neighborhood-diplomacy/>

³⁵ PTI. "Lanka Formally hands Over Hambantota Port to China". *Times of India*. (09/12/2017). Retrieved from <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/south-asia/sri-lanka-formally-hands-over-hambantota-port-to-china/articleshow/61997671.cms>

neighbour, Maldives will be sensitive to our concerns, in keeping with its 'India First' policy."³⁶

Nepal matters to India because it is a landlocked country and depends mostly on India concerning transportation of goods and access to sea. Nepal mainly imports goods from China because of being a developed country and in neighbourhood. Nepal's earthquake of 2015 wreaked havoc and India carried out extensive rescue operations couple with financial support for reconstruction projects. But India's hegemonic behavior with Nepal dragged it closer to China. Kathmandu has already reached agreement of BRI plan. Under the proposed plan both countries will cement their communication links and China would initiate number of development projects in Nepal. The BRI is seriously undermining Modi's neighbourhood first policy. On the other hand Nepal is set to prefer China's model of development over India's 'neighbourhood first' policy. The BRI has smartly hijacked Indian hegemonic ambitions in the region by brining all neighbours into Chinese orbit of influence.

The real success story of India's heighbourhood policy is in Afghanistan only. Modi, during his visit to Afghanistan in December, 2015 inaugurated the Afghan Parliament building which was constructed with India's financial assistance. In another trip to Afghanistan in June, 2016, Indian PM inaugurated Salma Dam in Herat. That is the almost the same strategy that China employed in other South Asian States through diplomacy of economic assistance. India's investment in Afghanistan for reconstruction and development stands at \$2billion which makes it the biggest donor among other regional states. India even was seeking transit trade with Afghanistan via Wagah-Attari border and threatened to block Pakistan's access to Central Asian states if the demand was not met. New Delhi-Kabul got an alternate route to enhance connectivity through Iran's strategic port of Chabahar. India is aiming to reach out to Central Asia to neutralize Chinese influence in the region and turning Pakistan's western border (Afghanistan) another security challenge for Pakistan. Some analysts view Chabahar as a counterweight of Gwadar in the region which India may use in future to maintain naval supremacy.

Bangladesh provided a strategically good opportunity to India under India's neighbourhood first policy. India-and Bangladesh in July 2014, accepted the judgment of International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea and subsequently settled a long-festering maritime dispute. The Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-

³⁶ IANS . "Maldives-China FTA:India Breaks Silence". *The Economic Times*. (14/12/2017). Retrieved from <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/maldives-china-fta-india-breaks-its-silence/articleshow/62072220.cms>

Nepal (BBIN) initiative and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) showcases that India's neighbourhood first policy succeeded only in Bangladesh. India's former Foreign Secretary S. Jaishankar stated that "If there is one example where the neighborhood first policy has yielded good result, it is in case of Bangladesh."³⁷

Pakistan's relations with Afghanistan have not been smooth since Karzai's government in Kabul. India developed strategic ties with Karzai government and tried to malign Pakistan in international community as a supporter of Taliban and terrorist networks whereas Pakistan is waging war against Al-Qaeda, Taliban and other terrorist networks since 2001. The United States supports activities of Indian women organization Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) through the funding of United States Agency for International Development (USAID). New Delhi's strategy of pulling Kabul into its sphere of influence is based on developmental projects. One of the tangible strategic project is the construction of Zarjan Delaram (218km) road that will be connecting landlocked Afghanistan to Iranian port Chabahar. India wants access to energy rich central Asian states via that alternate route.³⁸

Taliban, after the U.S. attack on Afghanistan are putting up fierce insurgency to the U.S. and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), India being U.S. ally also came under Taliban attacks in Afghanistan multiple times. The United States unwavering support for Indian presence into Afghanistan clarifies Indian strategic interests. General McChrystal then NATO commander in Afghanistan opined:

"Indian political and economic influence is increasing in Afghanistan, including significant development efforts and financial investment. In addition, the current Afghan government is perceived by Islamabad to be pro-Indian. While Indian activities largely benefit the Afghan people, increasing Indian influence in Afghanistan is likely to exacerbate regional tensions and encourage Pakistani countermeasures in Afghanistan or India".³⁹

Indian strategic ambitions either in Afghanistan or some other South Asian are largely based on projecting Indian interest and undermining Pakistan and

³⁷ Kaura, V. "Grading India's Neighbourhood Diplomacy". *The Diplomat*. (01/01/2018). Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2017/12/grading-indias-neighborhood-diplomacy/>

³⁸ Souza, Shantie M. et al. "Securing India's Interests in Afghanistan". *The Hindu*. (17/12/2016). Retrieved from <http://www.thehindu.com/opinion/lead/Securing-Indias-quos-interests-in-Afghanistan/article16888279.ece>

³⁹ Fair, C. Christian. "India in Afghanistan, Strategic Interests, Regional Concerns." *Foreign Policy*, (26/10/2010). Retrieved from <http://foreignpolicy.com/2010/10/26/india-in-afghanistan-part-i-strategic-interests-regional-concerns/>

China's interests in the region especially after the initiation of the BRI. Another factor that attracts India into Afghanistan is tapping mineral resources worth \$ 1 trillion that may give leverage to India over Pakistan and China in Afghanistan. Not only India eyes on mineral resources but the United States too. A recent study claims that mineral resources in Afghanistan are worth \$3 trillion and Trump administration is trying to recoup \$700 billion that the U.S. spent in war against terrorism on Afghanistan.⁴⁰ An unexpected rejuvenation of TAPI (Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India) gas-pipeline which was halted because of disagreement between New Delhi-Islamabad and New Delhi-Kabul over transit fee, is the glaring evidence that India is willing to pay more but does not want to lose influence in Afghanistan at any cost. The TAPI gas-pipeline 1,800-kilometer long has an estimate price of \$10 billion and will be bringing 33 billion cubic metres of Turkmenistan gas to energy-deficient South Asia for about 30 years.⁴¹ A strange thing in the construction of pipeline is that Taliban posed serious threats to destroy this pipeline earlier but now after the inauguration they vowed to secure the pipeline.⁴² India's contemporary approach of dealing with neighbours still contains elements of 'Indira Doctrine', which was named after former Indian Prime Minister. According to Indira doctrine, domestic political conflicts in neighbourhood should be resolved through India's help.

India's reincarnation of 1990s "Look East" after Modi's strategy is turning into "Act East" policy. Act East policy would promote foreign trade in competition to China and Pakistan. India after assessing failure of SAARC as a regional economic cooperation is giving serious try to ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) countries for enhancing economic, political and military ties that underpins Indian influence and undermine China's sphere of influence. Its objective is to intensify economic, political and military relations with Japan and member states of the ASEAN.⁴³

⁴⁰ Amini, Mariam. "At Stake in U.S. Military Efforts to Stabilize Afghanistan: At Least \$3 trillion in Natural Resources" *CNBC*, (19/07/2017). Retrieved from <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/08/18/trumps-afghanistan-strategy-may-unlock-3-trillion-in-natural-resources.html>

⁴¹ Catherine, P. "TAPI Moves Into Afghanistan, Taliban Promise to Protect the Project". *The Diplomat*, (17/02/2018). Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2018/02/tapi-moves-into-afghanistan-taliban-promise-to-protect-the-project/>

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Sudhanshu, T. "Why is India Switching from Look East to Act East Policy". *Asia Times*. (15/06/2017). Retrieved from <http://www.atimes.com/india-switching-look-east-act-east-policy/>

The U.S. President Donald Trump during his trip to Asia had a meeting with Asian allies including Japan, Philippine, Australia and India in November, 2017 to revitalize former quadrilateral initiative. The members of Quad initiative are ganging up to oppose China's Belt and Road Initiative. The Quad initiative is also against the foundation of Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank. India's revivalism of bilateral economic and military ties with other Quad members could not reach an agreed upon common declaration in recent years but India with another U.S. ally (Japan) is attempting to establish a counter-model to China's mega project. In responding to increased Chinese influence, India is even valuing small island nations including Mauritius, Maldives, the Seychelles and Comoros by enhancing military cooperation with them. Modi government is vying to bring up a counterweight to BRI by introducing Mausam project in 2014 and SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) in 2015. The problem that India faces in attracting other nations is that India has fewer political, economic and military resources to execute foreign policy ventures compared to China. India in collaboration with Russia and Iran envisaged trilateral project of the International North-South Transport Corridor in 2015. International North-South Transport Corridor begins at Iranian port of Chabahar and provides access to Afghanistan, Central Asian States and Russia. Because of Pakistan-Afghanistan rocky relations, Pakistan has refused overland trade to latter with India because of the security concerns as India has been engaged in sabotaging peace in Baluchistan province. Kulbhushan Yadav a captured Indian spy has confessed Indian activities to sabotage peace in Pakistan. Pakistan's Gwadar port is set to make Gwadar a hub of trade regional trade activity. India already has allocated in May, 2016 an amount of \$500 million for development of Chabahar which is about 70 kilometers from Gwadar. In the month of October, 2017 India shipped first consignment of wheat to Afghanistan via Chabahar port. India's investment in infrastructural projects of Afghanistan and Iran are aimed at neutralizing Pakistan's influence on those neighbouring countries. Asian order is somewhat China-centric as Asian states either are partners with China or want to benefit from China's BRI project but India. India has limited economic resources to match political influence with China. India and the European Union have already expressed willingness to cooperate in Indian Ocean militarily particularly off the coast of Somalia as part of Operation Atlanta. France is a European country that enjoys closest ties with India in terms of security policy. Both the countries have cooperated in arms and civil nuclear technology as well. France's overseas department Réunion makes it an essential partner in Indian Ocean. Another European partner that shows great interest in bolstering democratic ideals in South Asia is Germany. Germany has an interest in strengthening democratic norms and curb religious extremism in Afghanistan, Nepal and Bangladesh. India's

partnership with European powerful states provides an impetus to India's strategic partnership with the EU states.

China's growing interest in Pakistan is seen as major concern by some of the propagandists that China is likely to acquire military base Pakistan based at Jiwani. Jiwani is about 80 kilometers apart from Gwadar and in close proximity of Iranian border on the gulf of Oman. According to Bill Gertz of *Washington Times*, China has already acquired a military base at Djubuti in August, 2017 and now it would be a second foreign military base.⁴⁴ To guard Gwadar China envisages joint naval and Air facility at a short distance of Gwadar.

India-China relations have not been much smooth but the year 2017 experienced renewed tensions close to disputed border area. Tensions mounted with the visit of Dalai Lama to disputed Arunachal Pradesh and China also blocked India's fierce diplomatic endeavors to designate Jaish-e-Mohammed chief Maulana Masood Azhar a global terrorist. Other tensions included Doklam military standoff, prompted by China's construction of a road in disputed territory of Bhutan but not far from India-China border. India stood out as to boycott the BRI Summit held at Beijing in May, 2017. India was hoping that other nations including Japan and United States will also boycott the summit but they attended the summit which further deteriorated China-India relations. India's hostility to unprecedented project (BRI) is to deny Beijing as international leader of development. Chinese President Xi Jinping's immediate snub to India was also about securing and legitimizing the CPEC that India claims it passes through disputed area with Pakistan. Quadrilateral Security Dialogue held in November, 2017 between India, the United States, Japan and Australia had a naval component that Beijing opposed as a potential alliance of democracies against China's maritime rise in Indo-Pacific region.⁴⁵ China may further its goals by successfully completing BRI in general.

China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is set to promote connectivity across Pakistan by developing roads, railways, pipelines, energy projects, industrial zones and related infrastructural projects. The CPEC will address energy crisis and boost economic growth in Pakistan. China's city of Kashgar will be connected with Pakistan's Gwadar port by facilitating trade between China and rest of the world particularly Indian ocean states.

⁴⁴ Gertz, B. "China Building Military Base in Pakistan". *The Washington Times*. (3/1/2018). Retrieved from <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/jan/3/china-plans-pakistan-military-base-at-jiwani/>

⁴⁵ Lidarev, I. "A Tough Year for China-India Relations". *The Diplomat*, (4/1/2018). Retrieved from <https://thediplomat.com/2018/01/2017-a-tough-year-for-china-india-relations/>

Completion of CPEC will also address issue of Xinjiang by promoting trade and infrastructure. Another benefit that China may get is to alleviate 'Mallaca Dilemma' that China is vulnerable to as roughly 85% of China's oil imports pass through this chokepoint and any interruption may incur heavy loss to China's oil imports. Gawadar is likely to provide a substitute to China and may minimize reliance over strait of Mallaca route. Reliance on Gawadar would reap high economic benefits for Pakistan and Baluchistan may experience rapid economic growth couple with development. Pakistan and China are determined to combat terrorism as both countries often hold joint military exercises to control terrorist activities in their respective countries. East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM) fighters have been cozying up with Al-Qaeda and Islamic State and such terrorist groups are planning to sabotage economic development. China-Pakistan have planned strategy to combat such groups to avert any threats to Chinese working on CPEC as well as protecting Pakistan's strategic sites. Under the CPEC three highway routes would be connecting various provinces of Pakistan. Western route would be passing through Pakistan's underdeveloped but significant provinces i.e. Baluchistan and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa as Eastern route will pass through Sindh and Punjab whereas central route crisscrosses the whole country. The Northern route connects to Kashgar via the Karakoram Highway. Indian stupendous diplomatic efforts to stigmatise BRI as China's imperialist design to control other countries whereas CPEC is being maligned as a project of military that Gawadar would be used against India by China-Pakistan joint navy.

The success of the project is that some major powers including Russia are becoming part of this mega project. A stable Pakistan and Sino-centric Asian order is unacceptable for India, therefore, it opposes CPEC and BRI and counter-allying with Japan to balance China. China's support to Pakistan in achieving Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) testifies invincible friendship. The BRI is an approach that would make China a natural leader of Eurasia.

Conclusion

International order has never been the constant. Major powers continue their struggle to become super power and rising challengers continue to challenge former's supremacy. China's rise to world's centre-stage is viewed as triumph of multilateralism in which all the stake-holders will benefit from the system. The BRI is a mega project that will provide China ascendancy to the position of super-power. India, being a competitive neighbour has possible ramifications for China's rise. Indian P.M Modi is aiming for counter-weighting the BRI and therefore launched SAGAR and Mausam projects which reflect India's relentless efforts to catch up with China. India is also becoming the member of world's powerful bodies like

G-20 and is striving to achieve permanent membership of the United Nations Security Council. China aims to maintain balance of power between India and Pakistan therefore, laying more emphasis on successful completion of flagship project of the BRI (CPEC). China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has been under immense propaganda from India because of India's efforts to halt this project. If China's BRI project is completed, it certainly is going to change power-landscape in world arena in 50 years to come. Pakistan's reliance on the U.S. is also minimizing and a new chapter of Russia-Pakistan relations is in the offing.

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