

POLITICS OF CORRIDORS-EMERGING SUB-REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEX IN SOUTH ASIA

Dr. Syed Raghab Ali¹, Dr. Sapna Mumtaz^{*2}

¹Executive Director, Lahore Institute for Research and Analysis (LIRA), The University of Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

^{*2}Senior Research Fellow, Lahore Institute for Research and Analysis (LIRA), The University of Lahore, Punjab, Pakistan.

¹raghab.ali@lira.uol.edu.pk, ^{*2}sapna.mumtaz@lira.uol.edu.pk

Corresponding Author: *

Dr. Sapna Mumtaz

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15341855>

Received	Revised	Accepted	Published
13 December, 2025	13 January, 2025	23 January, 2025	30 January, 2025

ABSTRACT

South Asia is unique in many ways. One of the earliest known civilizations, it is home to a variety of sociocultural features besides being one of the most densely populated regions on the globe. Nevertheless, what makes the region special in the contemporary geopolitical scenario is the ability to obtain regional dynamics in the backdrop of evolving trade and economic corridors spanning the whole region. Under the Chinese vision of the 'Belt and Road Initiative'(BRI), at least six economic corridors have been announced linking various states, nations, and communities. As per the avowed claim of China, the main initiator, these are the infrastructure development avenues conceived to create regional connectivity and interdependence among regional states, leading towards 'shared destiny'. The planned corridors not only reflect exclusively unique geographical areas, but also present a complex intersection of economic, geo-political, and strategic values within and beyond the region. The study analyses the dual nature of these corridors as both opportunities for development and sources of geopolitical tensions, reflecting the intricate security architecture that may emerge as a result of evolving strategic competition between the major actors in the backdrop of 'politics of corridors. To theorize the study, Barry Buzan's theory of regional complex has been employed, whereby it is hypothesized that a 'sub-regional security complex' involving Pakistan, India, and China is emerging within South Asia in the backdrop of BRI and CPEC. Though, these corridors, just like the prosperous days of the ancient Silk Route, are primarily shaped by the forces of economic proximity, there are all the chances for a strategic conflict between Pakistan and India, if the undercurrents beneath the politics of corridor are not analyzed, understood in the right perspective and managed wisely. On the other hand, however, our research posits that one day China will emerge as a balance between Pakistan and India, as it cannot afford to risk the gigantic project of BRI.

Keywords: Politics of corridors, sub-regional security complex, BRI, CPEC, Pakistan, India.

INTRODUCTION

'The Belt and Road Initiative' (BRI), announced and led by China, is one of the most significant regional developments in recent times, likely to generate trends with global implications. The initiative comprises two strands: the land-based 'Economic Belt' (Beeson & Crawford, 2022)

with its six development corridors, and 'Maritime Silk Road'(Wu, 2023) that covers the sea route. Besides, it includes the industrial platforms with the construction of infrastructure in key towns located en route. For China, the main objective and goal behind this vision of

BRI is to create an alternative sea route to the Malacca Strait, besides accessing Central Asian energy reserves, focusing on oil fields in Kazakhstan, expanding the gas pipeline, and bringing in Turkmenistan's natural gas.

Historically speaking, the avenues perceived under BRI seem to retrace the ancient patterns of power and trade, providing modern parallels and insights into their contemporary relevance. With the introduction of BRI, China also announced **six Corridors**, stretching across the whole of the region to create regional connectivity. (Zhang et al, 2023) They refer to key economic and transportation avenues that are pivotal to the Chinese regional development and international trade strategies. In the study, we shall focus on these six regional corridors, which the scholars, analysts, and experts of the Chinese scene generally analyze from various angles using geo-economic, geopolitical, and strategic lenses. These planned corridors not only reflect exclusively unique geographical areas, but also present a complex intersection of economic, geopolitical, and strategic values within and beyond the region.

THE CORRIDORS - BRIEF OVERVIEW

The introduction of these corridors has resulted in numerous developments likely to steer the future regional as well as global dynamics (Ali, 2021). Each corridor has specific starting points based on strategic, geographic, and economic considerations.

A. New Eurasian Land Bridge

This corridor starts in the eastern Chinese city of Lianyungang and extends to Duisburg, Germany. Lianyungang is a major port city that facilitates sea-to-land connections, making it a crucial starting point for overland rail routes that connect China to Europe. This corridor links China with Europe, running through countries such as Kazakhstan, Russia, and Belarus, and ending in Germany. It is crucial for overland trade between China and Europe, offering an alternative to maritime routes and potentially reducing shipping times. Its role in connecting major economic regions makes it highly important for trade and economic relations. (Wong et al)

B. China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor

Starting in the northeastern Chinese city of Harbin, this corridor connects China with Mongolia and Russia. Harbin's location is strategic for accessing the vast resources of Siberia and facilitating trade between China and these northern neighbors. This corridor focuses on enhancing trade and economic cooperation between China, Mongolia, and Russia. It is particularly important for accessing Siberian resources and fostering regional trade. Its development supports China's interests in the northern regions and helps strengthen geopolitical ties with Russia and Mongolia. (Mongolia)

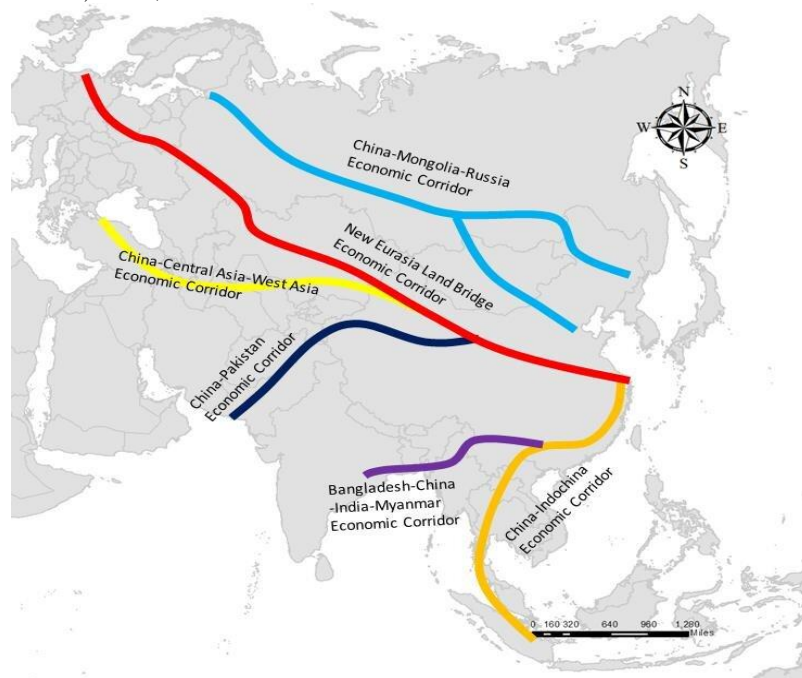
C. China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor

This corridor begins in the western Chinese city of Kashgar. Kashgar's position in Xinjiang makes it a central hub for connecting China with Central Asia and further into West Asia, leveraging its role as a historic trading post along the Silk Road. This corridor connects China with Central Asia and extends to West Asia, linking Xinjiang with countries like Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Iran. It is strategically significant for accessing energy resources and expanding trade routes into Western Asia. Its development is crucial for economic integration and access to energy markets.

D. China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

Starting in the western Chinese city of Kashgar and extending to the Pakistani port of Gwadar, this corridor is vital for accessing the Arabian Sea. It is designed to enhance trade and economic integration between China and Pakistan, with Gwadar's strategic port facilitating maritime trade. CPEC is often considered the most strategically significant corridor. It directly connects China to the Arabian Sea through Pakistan's Gwadar Port, providing a critical maritime gateway. (Mahmood, et al) This corridor is vital for improving China's access to international shipping routes and reducing its dependency on the Malacca Strait. (Alam, Baig, & Muhammad, 2023) The substantial investment and broad scope of projects (including roads, railways, and energy infrastructure) highlight its importance in enhancing economic integration and strategic

influence in South Asia and the Middle East.
(Aslam, Sattar, & Khan, 2023)



Source: B. Derudder, X. Liu, and C. Kunaka, "Connectivity Along Overland Corridors of the Belt and Road Initiative," *Connect. Along Overl. Corridors Belt Road Initiat.*, no. July, 2018, doi: 10.1596/30609.

E. China-Myanmar Economic Corridor

Initiating from the southwestern Chinese city of Kunming, this corridor extends to Myanmar's ports on the Indian Ocean. Kunming is a key regional hub in southwestern China, and its location helps in linking China with Southeast Asia and beyond. This corridor links China with Myanmar and offers access to the Indian Ocean. It is strategically important for expanding China's trade routes into Southeast Asia and providing a maritime outlet. (Wasi and Ahmad

et,al) The corridor supports China's economic interests in the region and enhances connectivity with its southern neighbors. (Goswami, 2023)

F. China-Laos Economic Corridor

Starting in Kunming, this corridor connects China to Laos and further to Thailand. Kunming's position allows for easy access to Southeast Asia through Laos, promoting trade and economic development in the region. Connecting China with Laos and further into Thailand, this corridor supports China's engagement with Southeast Asia. (Kuik, 2023) It facilitates trade and investment in the region, improving connectivity and economic integration. (Onlamai, 2024)

Corridor	Length	Estimated Cost
New Eurasian Land Bridge	10,000 km (6,200 miles)	\$10 billion to \$20 billion (Debrecezeni,2016)
China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor	3,000 km (1,860 miles)	Approximately \$10 billion (Gu et all, 2020)
China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor	4,700 km (2,900 miles)	\$30 billion to \$50 billion (J Lei, 2023)
China-Pakistan Economic Corridor	3,000 km (1,860 miles)	Around \$60 billion (McCarthy,2020)
China-Myanmar Economic Corridor	1,500 km (930 miles)	\$10 billion to \$20 billion (Yang 2024)
China-Laos Economic Corridor	1,500 km (930 miles)	\$10 billion to \$20 billion(Bank, 2023)

Total 24,700 km (15,400 miles) \$130 billion to \$180 billion

THE CORRIDORS - NAVIGATING THE FUTURE DIRECTION

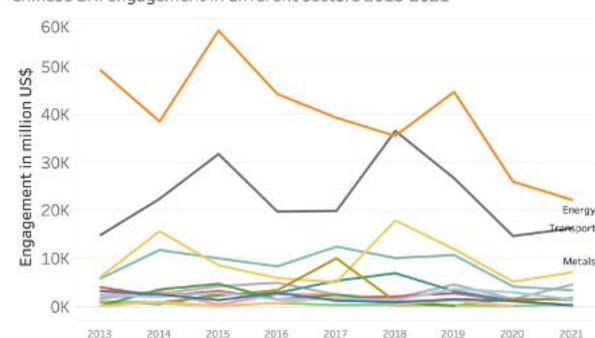
The discussion regarding the direction these corridors may take in times to come has been part of the center stage of global discourse on the future of China and the regional dynamics linked to it. In this context, several key themes and historical parallels emerge.

To some, the orientation of these corridors is purely economic, securing trade routes and accessing resources, while others believe that the essence of these corridors seems to align with Chinese ambitions for expanding influence, echoing ancient strategic interests and methods. In trade and investment, every corridor offers unique chances, such as the transportation of goods via China-Mongolia-Russia or the

Eurasian Land Bridge for logistics purposes, the development of infrastructure in Central Asia or Pakistan, or the transport of petrol and gas through South East Asia, among other things. Thus, it is important for Chinese firms and foreign investors aiming at tapping into the BRI potential to know each corridor's features.

The BRI's major characteristic is a case of a win-win situation for the countries involved because it reduces short-term industrial overcapacity while enhancing markets for products related to China and other related countries in the long run. (Jameel, 2023) In return, host nations will have their infrastructure under stringent financial conditions with deeds that are fixed in relation to mortgages.

Chinese BRI engagement in different sectors 2013-2021

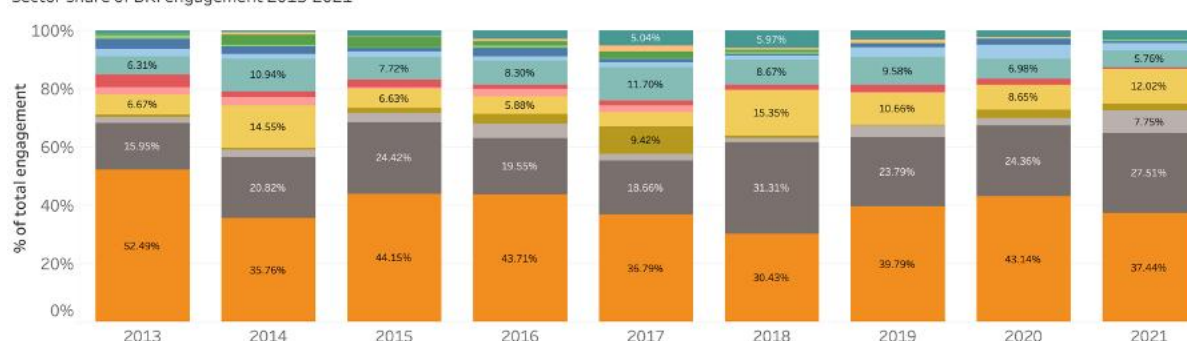


Growth/decline of BRI engagement in different sectors 2013 - 2021

	2013	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Agriculture	41.2%	-46.5%	108.8%	-55.6%	-26.8%	66.7%	-20.0%	-80.6%
Chemicals	38.8%	46.2%	4.5%	-15.3%	168.1%	18.9%	-50.3%	
Energy	82.8%	49.0%	-23.0%	-11.2%	-9.5%	25.7%	-41.8%	-14.6%
Entertainment	33.3%	-90.2%	710.0%	148.1%	-68.2%	100.0%	87.5%	-100.0%
Finance	-80.0%	32.9%	-67.7%	64.3%	-60.9%	-88.9%	-100.0%	
Health	31.1%	-66.7%	217.4%	-50.7%	30.6%	-44.7%	50.0%	246.2%
Logistics	92.0%	159.6%	48.9%	193.3%	-88.8%	-79.6%	630.4%	-16.1%
Metals	41.7%	-45.0%	-30.9%	-14.6%	252.5%	-33.3%	-56.4%	36.7%
Real estate	-18.2%	-14.8%	-16.4%	48.8%	-19.0%	6.2%	-60.9%	-18.7%
Technology	65.3%	53.0%	-54.7%	15.4%	25.0%	31.6%	-60.1%	-69.9%
Transport	-15.3%	41.5%	-37.7%	0.7%	83.5%	-27.0%	-45.0%	11.1%
Tourism	651.5%	-85.0%	451.1%	-0.4%	-91.9%	85.7%	-100.0%	
Utilities	-18.6%	56.8%	17.1%	-50.3%	-28.1%	158.1%	-65.8%	191.8%
Other	-68.4%	383.0%	12.1%	88.2%	29.4%	-53.6%	-60.5%	35.9%

(c) Copyright 2022 Green Finance & Development Center, FISF Fudan (Sources: based on AEI and others)

Sector share of BRI engagement 2013-2021



Chinese BRI engagement in different sectors through construction and investment (2013-2021) Source: Green finance Development Centre, 2021

Projects under BRI range from South East Asia to the Middle East and beyond. In this regard, China aspires to link industrial output from states with their partner, while being in the lead most of the time, and at the same time trying to explore new territories within some selected foreign nations that are important for them as per their national interests and policy objectives.

In its latest report entitled Future of Trade 2030: New growth corridors, Standard Chartered (DMCC,2020) points out that export flow routes in Asia, Africa and Middle East will go beyond the global growth rate by a margin of almost four per cent, causing the volume of exports in such regions to rise from US\$9 trillion in 2021 to US\$14.4 trillion by 2030. During the same period, world trade is expected to increase from US\$21 trillion in 2021 to US\$32.6 trillion. (DMCC,2020)

Rapid advancements are being made in trade integration in Asia under the influence of supply chain shifts as well as liberalization that is spearheaded by the People's Republic of China. From now until 2030, it is estimated that intraregional trade will increase by 65 percent or 400 billion dollars annually, with the main proponents being Chinese and ASEAN corridors. More and more institutional mechanisms are being introduced for regional integration, both in terms of trade and financial agreements.

However, many among the Western analysts tend to believe that the BRI constitutes China's outreach policy as part of its geopolitical designs and, thus, represents its future strategic direction. There are still some others who put across the same point of view, presenting China's outreach policies as her "go out" expeditions, which, to their mind, aim at expanding Chinese companies' presence around the globe. Both these views categorically reflect that China probably wishes to put her strategic weight behind these trade and economic corridors - the logic behind evolving strategic competition between China and her adversaries in the region. (Shah, 2023)

Another element for this emerging strategic rivalry is the presence of a significant maritime avenue within the region in the form of Indian Ocean. There cannot be any two opinions regarding the importance of Indian Ocean as a pivotal international maritime route for all the regional and global actors. This thriving sea is regarded by some researchers as a new ball of gravity in today's world order. (Dhaliwal, 2020) Therefore, maritime strategist Admiral Alfred Thayer Mahan once asserted that, "He who rules the Indian Ocean dominates Asia; upon those waters will be decided the fate of the universe." (Brewster, 2023) These words perfectly resonate with present struggles for maritime authority in this space.

Among the states of BRI, located along the land route, the influence of China's soft power is significantly expanding. Again, it is a source of concern for the West, particularly the US analysts. They term it as China's 'sharp power' (Sharma, 2023) and believe that for it to succeed, China has to remove trade barriers between the participating nations through trade in major commodities and promotion of the

trade market. That is how, in Western view, the economic orientation of Chinese policies connects to her strategic designs. For example, the anti-China elements view that some of the developing nations are being forced by China to resume quality standards to ensure that they develop sustainable ecological agriculture by way of product safety, environmental pollution reduction, and forest cover maintenance and biodiversity conservation.

Furthermore, the BRI also confronts a lot of criticism about loss of local identities and autonomy, possible mismanagement, perceived competitive pressure from China, which creates threats for local vendors and thus undermines genuine rights of local workers, contractors, and suppliers who miss out on this rare chance at prosperity. (Duarte, Leandro, & Galán, 2023) Chinese authorities are sometimes accused of "debt trap diplomacy" that, as per the criticism, strategically entangles or traps recipient nations into loans they cannot repay due to high interest rates and heavy installments. This may result in seizure of assets, thus threatening the host nation's sovereignty (Kou & Peng, 2023) - the move cities of China can comfortably put into the set of 'strategic consequences' of China's outreach campaign by any standards.

The scholars critical of China hold that the forty-two ports in thirty-four nations, built and operated by China, only served to enhance Chinese military presence in key strategic locations against the increasing global and regional threats. Now, this is a major argument supporting the viewpoint of strategic orientation of the Chinese vision. On the other hand, the fast-growing naval power of China is alerting its rivals, such as the United States, Russia, and India. Add to this another red light, that is, the predatory market interventions on the part of China to acquire influence over limited strategic assets.

Those who believe that China aims to use its increasing influence for strategic reasons hold that such actions by China can accelerate global conflicts, deepen economic crises, or cause financial disasters such as stock crashes, and can even lead to interstate wars. In pursuing this line of argument, the critics of the Chinese scene generally link the BRI and related trade and economic corridors to strategic regional dynamics that are likely to have global

consequences, such as Sino-US contestation in

which, the analysts believe, has all the potential to derail the existing international order.

Table 2: Countries involved in each of the Six Corridors of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

Corridor	Countries Involved	Notes
New Eurasian Land Bridge	China, Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Poland, Germany	Connects China with Europe, passing through several countries to reach its destination.
China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor	China, Mongolia, Russia	Focuses on enhancing trade and cooperation between China, Mongolia, and Russia.
China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor	China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran	Connects China with Central Asia and extends into West Asia, passing through several key countries.
China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)	China, Pakistan	Links China with Pakistan, connecting Kashgar in China with Gwadar Port in Pakistan.
China-Myanmar Economic Corridor	China, Myanmar	Connects China with Myanmar, extending to Myanmar's ports on the Indian Ocean.
China-Laos Economic Corridor	China, Laos, Thailand (in some discussions)	Starts in China and extends through Laos, with potential links into Thailand.

Note: This table provides a clear overview of the countries involved in each corridor and highlights any relevant notes regarding their connections and strategic goals.

STRATEGIC LABYRINTH OR ECONOMIC MAZE?

Analyzing the six trade and economic corridors from the following angles may help unwind the complicated situation while pinpointing the underpinnings in play behind these avenues

1. Expanding Influence - Mirror Imaging the past

The ancient Silk Road was a network of trade routes connecting China with Central Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. It was instrumental in facilitating the exchange of goods, culture, and ideas. (Shen, Li, & Wang, 2023) The Six Corridors serve a similar purpose, aiming to enhance global trade connectivity. By linking China with Europe, Central Asia, South Asia, and Southeast Asia, these corridors mirror the historical Silk Road's role in economic expansion and trade dominance. (Akhtar et al, 2024)

In ancient times, securing maritime trade routes was crucial for accessing distant markets. The maritime Silk Road connected China with Southeast Asia, South Asia, the Arabian Peninsula, and East Africa. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), with its access to

Gwadar Port, and the New Eurasian Land Bridge are modern equivalents. They ensure China's access to global shipping lanes, reduce dependency on strategic choke-points like the Malacca Strait, and diversify trade routes. (Uren et al)

Ancient China sought to control or access critical resources, such as silk, spices, and minerals, which were crucial for its economy and military strength. The China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor and the China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor focus on accessing energy resources and raw materials. They enhance China's energy security and access to key resources from Central Asia and Siberia, reflecting ancient strategies of securing resource supplies. China's historical expansion often aimed to exert influence over neighboring regions to ensure security and stability. The Han and Tang dynasties, for instance, expanded their control over the Silk Road regions to maintain influence and security. (Han & Paul, 2020)

Treading upon the footsteps of the ancient Silk Road, the new trade and economic corridors under the BRI vision also seem to achieve extended control over areas crucial for Chinese interests. For instance, the corridors connecting China with Mongolia, Russia, Myanmar, and Laos demonstrate a strategic intent to enhance China's influence and control over neighboring regions. (Li, Zhang, & Wang, 2023) This helps in fostering economic ties, ensuring regional

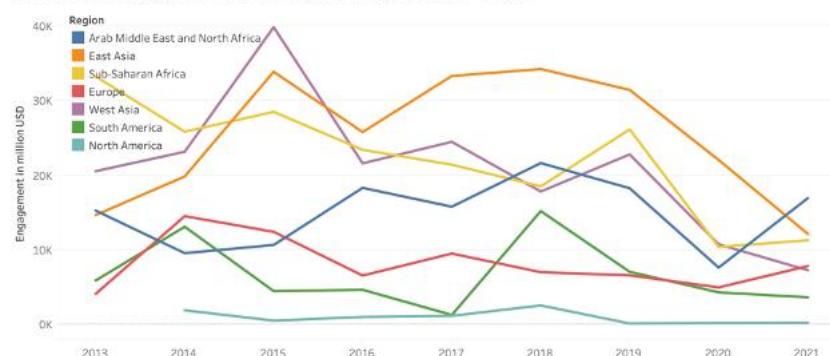
stability, and extending China's geopolitical reach.

The Han and Qing dynasties invested in the development of frontier regions such as Xinjiang and Manchuria to integrate these areas into the Chinese empire and secure borders. (Alpermann, et al) The development of infrastructure in regions like Xinjiang (China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor) and the establishment of economic corridors through Laos and Myanmar reflect similar objectives. These projects aim to integrate frontier regions into the national and international economic framework, boosting regional development and stability.

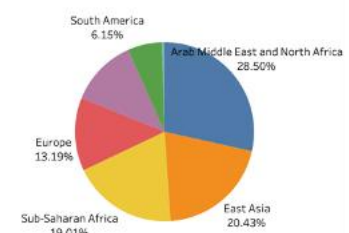
Throughout history, China formed alliances and partnerships along the Silk Road to secure trade

and political stability. The Tang dynasty's diplomacy with Central Asian states is an example. (Amarasinghe, 2023) China's corridors involve strategic partnerships with countries like Pakistan, Mongolia, Russia, and various Southeast Asian nations. These alliances help in building a network of political and economic relationships that support China's broader strategic goals. (Ali, n.d). Strategically, the Six Corridors represent a modern extension of ancient Chinese practices aimed at expanding influence, securing trade and resource routes, and integrating frontier regions. They reflect a continuity of China's historical objectives in securing economic dominance, regional stability, and strategic partnerships on both land and sea.

Chinese BRI engagement across different regions 2013 - 2021



Chinese BRI investment and cooperation 2021 by region



Growth/decline of BRI engagement in different regions

		2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Sub-Saharan Africa	Construction	15%	-10%	-2%	-33%	32%	-49%	-21%
	Investment	-2%	-43%	-41%	150%	63%	-81%	156%
Arab Middle East and North Africa	Construction	9%	59%	-23%	43%	-28%	-44%	116%
	Investment	742%	85%	11%	52%	-96%	361%	
West Asia	Construction	84%	-46%	41%	-45%	20%	-56%	-3%
	Investment	51%	-46%	-49%	84%	42%	-48%	-70%
South America	Construction	-4%	-28%	-76%	84%	-67%	-33%	643%
	Investment	-94%	242%	-66%	2,187%	-52%	-39%	-61%
East Asia	Construction	17%	31%	14%	24%	-13%	-15%	-33%
	Investment	114%	-49%	78%	-9%	-4%	-40%	-56%
Europe	Construction	-85%	560%	22%	12%	46%	-11%	106%
	Investment	-3%	-62%	55%	-39%	-38%	-44%	-56%
North America	Construction	17%	0%	119%	119%	-94%	44%	22%
	Investment	-100%		-100%				

(c) Copyright 2022 Green Finance & Development Center, Fudan University (Sources: based on AECI and others)

Green finance development Centre report, 2021

2. From Geo-Economic to Geo-Strategic - The Balance Sheet

The Six Corridors of the BRI offer substantial economic and strategic benefits to the states associated with the 'Belt and Road', in terms of economic growth and geopolitical influence. However, these benefits come with risks related to strategic dependency, regional competition, and increased foreign influence. Each country will need to carefully manage these dynamics to balance the advantages with potential security challenges. In the preceding paragraphs, we shall

focus on the China-Pakistan-India trio, as the ties between the three states will largely impact the success or failure of BRI and the related corridors.

For China

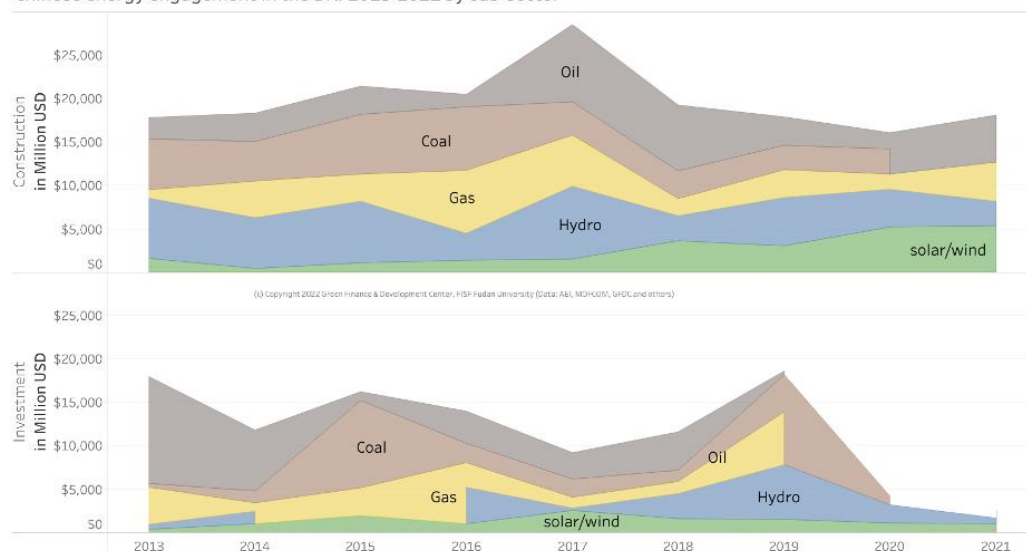
As the initiator of various corridors, China gains significant strategic advantages, including increased influence and economic benefits. However, it also faces the challenge of managing relations with multiple countries and potential backlash from other global powers.

Nations like Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan benefit from improved infrastructure and economic growth, but might also face increased dependency on China and potential geopolitical pressures from other regional players (Saeed et al, 2014). Pakistan and Myanmar see significant economic benefits but may also encounter increased strategic dependence on China and

potential tensions with other countries affected by the BRI.

European nations linked with BRI are likely to benefit from improved trade routes. Nonetheless, countries like Germany may face a dilemma in striking a balance between their economic and geopolitical interests, particularly when it comes to diplomatic ties with the global competitors of China. (Mau & Seuren, 2022)

Chinese energy engagement in the BRI 2013-2021 by sub-sector



For Pakistan

● *Economic Growth and Development*

Pakistan is a central player in CPEC, which is a flagship project of the BRI. The corridor aims to connect China's western region (Kashgar) with Pakistan's Gwadar Port. This infrastructure project includes roads, railways, energy projects, and industrial zones, which are expected to drive economic growth, create jobs, and boost industrial development in Pakistan (Ali, n.d.). The investment in infrastructure will enhance connectivity within Pakistan and with China, potentially transforming Gwadar into a major trade hub.

● *Strategic Position*

Pakistan's strategic location as a transit country for CPEC enhances its geopolitical importance. (Abbas et al) It gains access to Chinese investment and technology, which can boost its regional influence.

● *Economic Diversification*

CPEC provides Pakistan with access to Chinese markets and investments (Shahzad et al), diversifying its trade routes and economic partnerships beyond traditional ties with the West.

For India

● *Indirect Benefits*

While India is not directly involved in CPEC, it stands to benefit indirectly from improved regional connectivity and trade routes that enhance overall economic growth in South Asia. (Naseer et al., 2023) Better connectivity in the region can facilitate trade with other countries that might use these corridors.

● *Economic Opportunities*

Improvements in regional infrastructure can provide opportunities for Indian trade and investment by integrating South Asia into broader economic networks, potentially benefiting Indian businesses and markets. (Shishir and Sakib, 2023)

● *Strategic and Diplomatic Leverage*

India can leverage its regional initiatives and partnerships to counterbalance China's influence, especially if it can strengthen its own infrastructure and trade networks, such as through the Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC) or partnerships with the U.S. and other global powers. (Gaens and Sinkkonen, 2023)

Apropos, it seems a safe inference that Pakistan is the main beneficiary to experience more

immediate and tangible benefits from the BRI, particularly through CPEC. This includes significant infrastructure development, economic growth, and enhanced geopolitical leverage due to its central role in this major project. However, Pakistan also faces challenges such as increased dependency on Chinese investment and potential geopolitical tensions.

Largest Chinese investors in the BRI in 2021 (parent companies)

	% of total
Zijin Mining	17.2%
Boyu Capital, Hillhouse Capital	16.0%
China National Off-shore Oil (CNOOC)	12.2%
Tsingshan Holding	11.7%
China Three Gorges	11.2%
China Railway Construction	9.9%
Alibaba	9.4%
China Communications Construction	6.2%
Jinko Solar	6.2%

Countries involved in or benefiting from the BRI corridors are likely to experience economic growth due to increased trade, investment, and infrastructure development. Improved transportation links, such as railways, highways, and ports, can boost economic activity, create jobs, and enhance regional connectivity. Economic development can strengthen national security by improving economic stability and reducing poverty, which can help mitigate internal unrest and enhance overall resilience. Countries that are central to the BRI corridors, such as Pakistan (CPEC) and Kazakhstan (New Eurasian Land Bridge), may gain geopolitical leverage by becoming key transit hubs for international trade (Vasa and Barkanyi, 2023). This increased importance can enhance their strategic position in regional and global politics. Enhanced geopolitical influence can sometimes lead to increased external attention and pressure, potentially creating strategic vulnerabilities. Countries may face challenges in balancing relations with major powers, such as China, the U.S., and the EU. (Han & Paul, 2020)

India benefits indirectly from regional economic growth and improved connectivity that can facilitate trade and investment opportunities. India's strategic and economic benefits are more about positioning itself within a broader regional context and countering potential challenges posed by China's influence. (Jiao, 2023)

Largest Chinese companies involved in construction projects in the BRI in 2021 (parent companies)

	% of total
Power Construction Corp. (PowerChina)	23.8%
China Communications Construction	16.5%
China Petroleum and Chemical (Sinopec)	9.2%
China International Trust and Investment (CITIC)	9.0%
China Railway Construction	8.6%
China State Construction Engineering	7.3%
China Energy Engineering	6.1%
China Railway Engineering	4.3%
Sinosteel	2.6%
Shandong Gaosu, China Communications Construction	2.6%
China Energy Engineering, China Minmetals	2.2%
China National Petroleum Corp. (CNPC)	2.2%
China National Machinery Industry (Sinomach)	2.1%
China Minmetals	1.9%
China National Building Material	1.4%

Investments in infrastructure—such as ports, railways, and roads—can significantly boost a country's economic capacity and connectivity, fostering trade and improving logistical efficiency (Saleh et al., 2023). While infrastructure development can be beneficial, it can also lead to dependency on external investments and technologies. This dependency might create vulnerabilities if geopolitical tensions arise or if there are disruptions in the supply of essential components. Such corridors are likely to promote regional integration, which can lead to more cooperative relationships between neighboring countries, reduce conflicts, and enhance collective economic growth. (Azizi, 2023) Regional integration might also lead to competition and disputes over resources or trade routes. Additionally, improved connectivity can increase the risk of cross-border issues, such as smuggling or trafficking, which can challenge security agencies. (Sundram, 2020)

Table 3: Direct and indirect beneficiary countries of each of the Six Corridors of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

Corridor	Countries Involved	Directly Involved	Indirectly Benefited
New Eurasian Land Bridge	China, Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus,	China, Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus,	Other European countries (e.g., France, Italy, UK), Central

	Poland, Germany	Poland, Germany	Asian countries (e.g., Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan)
China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor	China, Mongolia, Russia	China, Mongolia, Russia	Northeast Asia countries, Central Asia countries
China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor	China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran	China, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran	Other Central Asian countries (e.g., Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan), Western Asian nations
China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)	China, Pakistan	China, Pakistan	South Asian countries (e.g., India, Afghanistan), Iran
China-Myanmar Economic Corridor	China, Myanmar	China, Myanmar	Southeast Asian countries (e.g., Thailand, Bangladesh, India)
China-Laos Economic Corridor	China, Laos, Thailand (in some discussions)	China, Laos, Thailand	Other Southeast Asian countries (e.g., Cambodia, Vietnam)

Countries benefiting from the BRI may leverage their involvement to enhance their strategic partnerships and gain access to Chinese markets and investments. There can be a risk of strategic dependency on China, which may influence domestic policies and international stances. (Cuong et al., 2023) Such dependency might lead to internal political and security challenges, especially if there is domestic opposition to foreign influence. Enhanced foreign influence through Chinese investment can lead to improved infrastructure and economic opportunities, potentially strengthening national capacities. Increased foreign influence can sometimes lead to security concerns, such as increased surveillance, control over critical infrastructure, or foreign interference in domestic affairs (Kramsky et al., 2023).

Emerging Sub-Regional Security Complex in South Asia-Theoretical Framework

In the backdrop of the above developments, it seems that a security situation is emerging within the region involving China, Pakistan, and India. To begin with, there is no denying the fact that BRI, and the six corridors linked to it, have generated an extensive discourse vis-à-vis the Chinese vision behind these initiatives. Mainly, the Western scholars [anti-China elements] hold that the initiatives under the BRI perspective are nothing but a manifestation of Chinese strategic designs to encroach upon the space currently occupied by the West and the USA within the international political system. This way, they believe, China aspires to challenge the Western and American hegemony and instead promote the Chinese vision, systems, and culture, which is antithetical to Western democratic ideals. To analyze the economic and strategic scenarios likely to emerge against the backdrop of the politics of corridors, we shall apply theories of economic integration and theories of regional security.

THEORIES OF ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

Theory	Author(s)	Assumption	Indicator/Application in BRI
Customs Union Theory	Viner, J. <i>The Customs Union Issue</i> (1950)	"A customs union is formed when two or more countries agree to remove barriers to trade among themselves and establish a common external tariff on imports from non-member	Application in BRI: The CPEC, BCIM, and China-Nepal-India Corridor have the potential to form a de facto customs union.

Theory	Author(s)	Assumption	Indicator/Application in BRI
		countries (Jacob et al., 1960)."	
Common Market Theory	Balassa, B. <i>The Theory of Economic Integration (1961)</i>	"A common market goes beyond a customs union by allowing the free movement of factors of production, such as labor and capital, within the integrated area (Bela et al., 1962)."	<u>Application in BRI:</u> The CPEC, BCIM, and other corridors could evolve into a common market with more fluid movement of labor and capital within South Asia, especially with projects like CPEC and China-Nepal-India Corridor facilitating greater mobility.
Optimal Currency Area (OCA) Theory	Mundell, R.A. <i>A Theory of Optimum Currency Areas (1961)</i>	"An optimum currency area is a region in which it is economically efficient to have a single currency because the area has similar business cycles, labor mobility, and open trade (Robert 1961)."	<u>Application in BRI:</u> While unlikely in the short term, BRI corridors could foster closer economic synchronization and cooperation, leading to more unified economic policies. CPEC and the China-Nepal-India Corridor could push for monetary integration as regional economies grow more interdependent.
Functionalist Theory of Integration	Mitrany, D. <i>Functionalism (1943)</i>	"Regional integration is best achieved by focusing on specific sectors such as energy, transport, and communications, leading to spillover effects that foster broader cooperation (David, 1943)."	<u>Application in BRI:</u> The CPEC, BCIM, and other corridors focus on infrastructure, transportation, energy, and trade , which could trigger a spillover effect , integrating regional economies over time. This could lead to increased political cooperation as economic integration advances.

THEORIES OF REGIONAL SECURITY

Theory	Author(s)	Assumption	Indicator/Application in BRI
Realist Security Theory	Kenneth Waltz <i>Theory of International Politics (1979)</i>	"The international system is anarchic, and states seek power and security through military means, often leading to competition and conflict over resources and strategic	<u>Application in BRI:</u> The six BRI corridors might lead to competition for strategic dominance , especially in regions like CPEC (Pakistan-India rivalry) and China-Nepal-India

		locations (Kenneth, 1979)."	Corridor (India-China tensions). This could exacerbate militarization along borders and increase regional rivalries .
Offensive Realism	John Mearsheimer <i>The Tragedy of Great Power Politics</i> (2001)	"States are inherently power-maximizing entities and will expand their influence when the opportunity arises, potentially leading to conflicts (Mearsheimer, 2001)."	Application in BRI: According to offensive realism, China's infrastructure projects (such as CPEC and the BCIM corridors) could be viewed by neighboring countries, like India , as an attempt to expand China's geopolitical influence in South Asia. This may lead to regional security concerns and a possible arms race .
Security Dilemma Theory	John Herz <i>Political Realism and Political Idealism</i> (1951)	"When one state increases its military capability for security, it makes other states feel less secure, potentially leading to an arms race and escalating tensions (Herz, 1951)."	Application in BRI: As China strengthens its infrastructure and economic ties through BRI corridors , countries like India may perceive this as a military buildup and respond by increasing their defense capabilities. This could result in a security dilemma in the region.
Constructivist Security Theory	Alexander Wendt <i>Social Theory of International Politics</i> (1999)	"International politics is shaped by shared ideas, identities, and norms rather than just material factors, and states act based on these constructed identities (Wendt, 1999)."	Application in BRI: Constructivism emphasizes the importance of perceptions and identities . China's engagement in the six BRI corridors could lead to South Asian countries viewing these actions through the lens of historical rivalry (e.g., India's view of China's growing influence). This could lead to security concerns due to identity-based rivalries . India's Perception of China's Growing Influence in South Asia Through Projects Like CPEC
Regional Security Complex Theory	Barry Buzan & Ole Wæver <i>Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security</i> (2003)	"A regional security complex is a group of states whose security concerns are interlinked, such that security threats to one state are perceived as threats to others within the region	Application in BRI: BRI's six corridors could create a regional security complex in South Asia. Countries near BRI projects, like India, Nepal, and Bangladesh , may perceive the rise of Chinese

		(Buzan, 2003)."	infrastructure as a shared security threat , especially around disputed regions (e.g., Kashmir).
Hegemonic Stability Theory	Charles Kindleberger <i>The World in Depression (1973)</i>	"A global hegemon is necessary to provide stability in the international system, and this hegemon can maintain peace by setting and enforcing rules (Kindleberger, 1973)."	Application in BRI: The theory suggests that China could take the role of a regional hegemon through the BRI , but its actions might be perceived as attempts at dominating South Asia, leading to security concerns among other regional powers, especially India .

DISCUSSION

Assumption 1: The BRI Promotes Trade Integration in South Asia

While a full-fledged customs union among BRI countries has not been established, there are significant efforts to reduce trade costs and harmonize trade policies. According to the World Bank (2019), BRI transport projects could reduce travel times along economic corridors by 12%, boost trade between 2.7% and 9.7%, and raise incomes by up to 3.4%.

Efforts to eliminate trade barriers are evident through initiatives focused on trade facilitation. Real incomes for BRI corridor economies could be two to four times higher with improved trade facilitation and fewer trade restrictions (World Bank, 2019).

Additionally, the expansion of Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) is crucial. A key example is the China-Pakistan Free Trade Agreement under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which aims to eliminate tariffs on a wide range of goods, enhancing bilateral trade.

Assumption 2: The BRI Influences Labor Migration and Foreign Direct Investment

Labor migration plays a vital role in South Asian economies, with remittances comprising a substantial share of GDP in Nepal (27.3%), Pakistan (7.9%), and Sri Lanka (7.8%) (IOM, 2023). Infrastructure and economic integration under the BRI indirectly support labor mobility by facilitating job creation and regional connectivity.

The BRI has also enabled significant FDI flows into South Asia. China's outbound FDI to the region, especially in energy and mining, accounts for 47.3%, with projects such as CPEC

leading this investment trend (House of Representatives, US, 2022). Notably, CPEC alone features 17 energy-related projects with an estimated cost of \$14.5 billion, promoting economic cooperation.

Assumption 3: Monetary Cooperation and Economic Synchronization Are Strengthened Under BRI

China has signed bilateral currency swap agreements with 29 countries and monetary authorities as of March 2024, promoting cross-border financial transactions (Reuters, 2024).

Infrastructure investments through the BRI have fostered economic synchronization. For example, transportation network upgrades facilitate labor movement and align business cycles across borders (Yao et al., 2018). Enhanced infrastructure has also contributed to industrial growth and trade openness, thus minimizing regional economic disparities (Li, Zhang, & Wang, 2023).

Assumption 4: The BRI Enhances Cross-Border Infrastructure and Political Cooperation

Under CPEC, major infrastructure projects completed include:

- **KKH Phase II (Havelian–Thakot Section)** – a 120 km stretch improving north-south connectivity.
- **Multan–Sukkur Motorway** – 392 km of high-speed road connectivity.
- **Cross-Border Optical Fiber Cable (Khunjerab–Rawalpindi)** – 820 km of digital infrastructure (CPEC.gov.pk).

In the BCIM corridor, Northeast India's energy exports to Bangladesh and India's energy

cooperation with Myanmar indicate regional interdependence (East Asia Forum, 2020). Moreover, BCIM has transitioned from Track II to Track I diplomacy, with formal intergovernmental dialogues in 2013 and 2014, underscoring growing political commitment (Li, Y., 2015).

Assumption 5: The BRI Spurs Militarization and Border Tensions

- **Increased Military Presence:** China has assisted in fortifying Pakistan's military infrastructure near the LoC, including the provision of UAVs (Chauhan, 2023).
- **Border Tensions:** The 2020 Galwan Valley clash is a stark example of heightened India-China tensions due to BRI-linked strategic developments (Crisis Group).
- **Rising Defence Budgets:** India's defence expenditure rose by 13% in 2023, partly as a response to BRI-related security concerns (Peri, 2023).

Assumption 6: The BRI Shifts Strategic Power in the Indian Ocean Region

- **Strategic Projects:** China's involvement in Gwadar Port under CPEC underscores its intent to expand strategic reach in the Indian Ocean (Sharma, 2021).
- **India's Strategic Responses:** India has enhanced partnerships with regional powers like Seychelles, Maldives, and Mauritius to counterbalance China (Chakma, 2020).
- **Security Concerns:** India remains wary of a potential Chinese military presence in Pakistan-administered Kashmir via CPEC infrastructure (Kapur, 2018).

Assumption 7: The BRI Triggers Regional Militarization and Diplomatic Friction

- **Defence Initiatives:** India has approved new defence deals to enhance its capabilities against perceived BRI-linked threats (Ladwig, 2018).
- **Military Mobilization:** The Indian military has increased surveillance and mobilization along BRI routes, especially around the disputed CPEC corridor (Economic Times, 2018).

- **Diplomatic Strains:** India continues to oppose CPEC due to its route through disputed territory, contributing to diplomatic rifts with China.

Assumption 8: Strategic Rivalries Intensify Due to BRI Expansion

- **India's Strategic Perception:** India sees BRI as a tool to undermine its regional influence, particularly through projects like CPEC (Rajagopalan, 2017).
- **Diplomatic Standoffs:** India's concerns over Chinese investments in Sri Lanka and Nepal reflect fears of a regional strategic encirclement (CIDOB, 2020).
- **Political Rhetoric:** India uses sovereignty and territorial integrity narratives to oppose BRI, especially in the context of Pakistan-administered Kashmir (Baruah, 2018).

Assumption 9: The BRI Sparks Security Collaboration and Conflict

- **Cross-Border Security Tensions:** India has consistently raised security alarms over projects like CPEC and BCIM due to disputed territorial involvement (Sibal, 2021).
- **Security Dialogues:** India has initiated discussions with Pakistan to express concerns over BRI's strategic implications (Economic Times).
- **Chinese Military Concerns:** India's suspicion of China's military intentions along BRI routes remains a persistent source of regional tension (Khurana, 2018).

Assumption 10: Strategic Realignments Are Occurring Due to China's Expanding Role

- **China's Growing Role:** CPEC and similar initiatives have bolstered China's economic and military influence in South Asia (Jacob, 2024).
- **India's Counterbalancing Strategy:** India has strengthened ties with the U.S. and Japan through mechanisms like the Quad to counterbalance China (Khurana, 2024).
- **Regional Opposition:** India's consistent resistance to Chinese-led leadership in

South Asia indicates a growing strategic rivalry.

ANALYSIS

Amid the shifting geopolitical dynamics of South Asia, a complex security arrangement appears to be emerging among China, Pakistan, and India. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), with its six strategic corridors, has intensified global discourse regarding China's long-term ambitions. Many Western scholars contend that BRI represents more than an economic agenda—it is a geopolitical strategy aimed at expanding China's influence and challenging the Western-centric global order. This perception raises critical questions about regional stability and power realignments. Barry Buzan's Regional Security Complex Theory (RSCT) offers an effective framework for analyzing these developments, emphasizing that regional dynamics are key to understanding security threats and alliances.

Economic integration theories also help explain the evolving nature of regional cooperation under the BRI. Jacob Viner's Customs Union Theory, which emphasizes the removal of trade barriers and the establishment of a common external tariff, provides a foundational lens. Although a formal customs union has not materialized, initiatives such as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) corridor, and the China-Nepal-India corridor suggest steps toward trade harmonization. These corridors prioritize infrastructure development and trade facilitation, laying the groundwork for organic economic integration that could eventually reduce tariff barriers and promote regional trade cohesion.

Balassa's Common Market Theory and Robert Mundell's Optimal Currency Area (OCA) Theory offer further insight into deepening economic interdependence. South Asia already exhibits substantial labor mobility, with countries like Nepal and Pakistan heavily reliant on remittances. BRI-linked infrastructure projects such as CPEC enhance connectivity, enabling freer movement of labor and capital. Mundell's OCA Theory, while not immediately applicable due to divergent economic conditions, becomes relevant in light of China's currency swap agreements and increased economic

synchronization efforts. These developments point toward incremental financial integration, fostering closer economic ties within the region. From a security standpoint, Realist theories offer a contrasting view. Kenneth Waltz's Realism and John Mearsheimer's Offensive Realism suggest that China's infrastructure investments, particularly in contested regions like Kashmir, intensify regional rivalries. These projects are seen by India as strategic encroachments, prompting counterbalancing measures, including partnerships with external powers. Buzan's RSCT remains the most comprehensive model for analyzing these tensions, as it underscores how interlinked security concerns create patterns of alliance and enmity within a specific region. South Asia's evolving security environment—characterized by economic interdependence, political distrust, and strategic maneuvering—illustrates how regional security complexes take shape and reinforce the necessity of a region-focused lens in international relations.

Conclusion

The Belt and Road Initiative, through its six economic corridors, reflects China's ambitious strategy to reshape global trade, infrastructure, and political influence, mirroring the ancient Silk Road in both scope and intent. While the corridors promise significant economic benefits such as connectivity, development, and resource access, they also carry substantial geopolitical weight. Countries like Pakistan, Kazakhstan, and Myanmar have become central to this strategy, serving as vital transit hubs and beneficiaries of Chinese investment. However, these gains are often accompanied by rising debt levels, governance challenges, and strategic vulnerabilities.

In South Asia, the effects of the BRI are especially complex. Pakistan, as the primary recipient of CPEC investments, has seen marked improvements in energy infrastructure and trade routes, but it also faces increasing dependence on China. India, meanwhile, has opted out of BRI participation due to concerns over sovereignty and China's strategic motives, especially with projects in disputed territories like Gilgit-Baltistan. India's counter-strategy includes forging alternative alliances, investing in regional connectivity through the India-

Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC), and deepening ties with the United States, Japan, and ASEAN countries. This strategic divergence between India and Pakistan illustrates the dual-edged nature of BRI in South Asia—it promotes development but also fuels rivalry.

Looking forward, South Asia is at a crossroads between economic integration and the emergence of a security complex. If mutual economic interests are prioritized and multilateral mechanisms are strengthened, the region could move towards greater connectivity, trade liberalization, and shared prosperity. Initiatives like regional trade agreements, digital infrastructure cooperation, and people-to-people exchanges could reinforce a more peaceful and economically integrated South Asia. However, this requires trust-building, transparency in BRI projects, and inclusive decision-making that considers the strategic concerns of all regional actors.

Conversely, if the current trajectory of strategic competition continues, especially between China and India, and by extension, between their respective allies, a security complex may emerge. This would likely involve increased military spending, arms races, border tensions, and diplomatic polarization. The overlapping influence zones created by BRI and counter-initiatives could harden geopolitical divides rather than bridge them. In such a scenario, the BRI corridors may become contested battlegrounds rather than pathways to cooperation. Therefore, the future of South Asia hinges on whether economic logic can supersede political distrust or whether geopolitical rivalries will overpower the region's developmental potential.

A Way Forward

To navigate the complexities of the Belt and Road Initiative in South Asia, regional stakeholders must prioritize dialogue and cooperative frameworks that balance economic development with security concerns. Strengthening regional institutions like SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) and fostering open communication channels can mitigate geopolitical tensions. South Asian nations should work together to ensure that BRI projects are transparent, mutually beneficial, and

inclusive, addressing the needs of all involved parties while minimizing the risks of dependency or strategic imbalance. Furthermore, fostering diversification of trade routes and partnerships, while maintaining sovereignty, will be essential in ensuring that economic integration does not lead to geopolitical fragmentation. Ultimately, the path forward lies in creating a stable, interconnected region where economic cooperation can flourish without exacerbating security dilemmas.

References

- Ali, G. (2021). CPEC: A gateway to regional connectivity. *Contributions to South Asian Studies*, 1(1), 1–10. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/355714044_CPEC_A_Gateway_to_Regional_Connectivity
- Ali, M. (n.d.). *The CPEC projects and the entrepreneurial opportunities in Pakistan*. Retrieved from <https://csc.kiu.edu.pk/wp-content/uploads/2024/06/Chapter-6.pdf> (PDF) 6 The CPEC Projects and the Entrepreneurial Opportunities in ...)
- Alam, S., Baig, M., & Muhammad, A. (2023). China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: An alternative trade route. *International Journal of Trade and Commerce*, 12(1), 1–12. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/373049653_China-Pakistan_Economic_Corridor_An_Alternative_Trade_Route
- Askari, M., Saeed, A., & Mahmood, S. (2023). Pakistan's maritime security and China Pakistan Economic Corridor. *Kurdish Studies*, 11(1), 1–15. <https://kurdishstudies.net/menu-script/index.php/KS/article/view/3291>
- Aslam, M., Sattar, A., & Khan, N. (2023). Gwadar port's geostrategic significance: A gateway to regional prosperity and integration. *Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal*, 7(1), 1–15. <https://ideapublishers.org/index.php/lassij/article/view/1018>
- Azizi, H. (2023). China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI): The role of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) in geopolitical security and

- economic cooperation. *Open Journal of Political Science*, 13(1), 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.4236/ojps.2023.131001>
- Baruah, A. (2018). *India's answer to the Belt and Road: A roadmap for South Asia*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. <https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/08/30/india-s-answer-to-belt-and-road-road-map-for-south-asia-pub-77110>
- Bank, A. D. (2023). Asian Development Bank Lao People's. *Asian Development Bank Reports*, 2023(1), 1–15. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358507570_Putting_the_BRI_in_Perspective_History_Hegemony_and_Geo_economics
- Balassa, B. (1962). *The theory of economic integration*. London: Allen & Unwin.
- Beeson, M., & Crawford, J. (2022). Putting the BRI in perspective: History, hegemony and geoeconomics. *Asia Europe Journal*, 20(1), 1–14. <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s41111-022-00210-y>
- Brewster, D. (2023). An Indian sphere of influence in the Indian Ocean? The maritime dimension in Indian strategic thinking. *Journal of Indian Ocean Studies*, 12(1), 1–10. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358507570_Putting_the_BRI_in_Perspective_History_Hegemony_and_Geo_economics
- Buzan, B., & Wæver, O. (2003). *Regions and powers: The structure of international security*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chauhan, N. (2023, December 19). China enhances military support to Pakistan along LoC in Kashmir. *The Economic Times*. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/china-enhances-military-support-to-pakistan-along-loc-in-kashmir/articleshow/105982345.cms>
- Chakma, B. (2020). *India's strategic response to China's Belt and Road Initiative*. SWP Berlin. https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/comments/2020C07_wgn_Chakma.pdf
- China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. (n.d.). *Transport infrastructure projects under CPEC*. <https://cpec.gov.pk/infrastructure>
- CIDOB. (2020). *India and Pakistan: Pivot to China's South Asia strategy*. <https://www.cidob.org/en/publications/india-and-pakistan-pivot-chinas-south-asia-strategy>
- Cuong, T. Q., et al. (2024). US-China global competition and dilemma for Vietnam's strategic choices in the South China Sea conflict. *Heritage and Sustainable Development*, 2(1), 1–15. Retrieved from <https://hsd.ardascience.com/index.php/journal/article/view/550> (US-China global competition and dilemma for Vietnam's strategic ...)
- Debreczeni, J. (2023). The New Eurasian Land Bridge: Opportunities for China, Europe, and Central Asia. *Journal of Eurasian Studies*, 14(1), 1–10. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358507570_Putting_the_BRI_in_Perspective_History_Hegemony_and_Geo_economics
- Duarte, P., Leandro, F. J., & Galán, M. (Eds.). (2023). *The Palgrave Handbook of Globalization with Chinese Characteristics: The Case of the Belt and Road Initiative*. Palgrave Macmillan. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358507570_Putting_the_BRI_in_Perspective_History_Hegemony_and_Geo_economics
- East Asia Forum. (2014, July 18). *BCIM corridor a game changer for South Asian trade*. <https://eastasiaforum.org/2014/07/18/bcim-corridor-a-game-changer-for-south-asian-trade/>
- Gaens, B., & Sinkkonen, V. (2023). Contentious connectivity—the USA, Japan, and the Free and Open Indo-Pacific. *Asia Europe Journal*, 21(1), 1–17. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12140-023-09407-7> (Contentious Connectivity—the USA, Japan, and the Free and Open ...)
- Goswami, S. (2023). Politics of sub-regional connectivity: A comparative study of the India-Myanmar and Myanmar-China multisectoral cooperation initiatives. *Journal of Asian Politics*, 10(1), 1–15.

- <https://scholar.google.com/citations?hl=en&user=h4kth9gAAAAJ>
- Gu, J., Novikov, A., & Simonett, O. (2023). China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor: Opportunities and challenges. *Journal of International Development*, 35(1), 1-15.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358507570_Putting_the_BRI_in_Perspective_History_Hegemony_and_Geo_economics
- Han, Z., & Paul, T. V. (2020). China's rise and balance of power politics. *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*, 13(1), 1-26.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/cjip/paaa001> (China's Rise and Balance of Power Politics - Sacred Heart ...)
- Herz, J. H. (1951). *Political realism and political idealism: A study in theories and realities*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Huang, Y., & Yao, Y. (2018). A network analysis of the BRI economies. *PLOS ONE*, 13(12), e0209520.
<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0209520>
- International Crisis Group. (2021). *On thin ice: Managing the India-China border dispute*.
<https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-asia/india/306-thin-ice-managing-india-china-border-dispute>
- Initiative. *Transport Policy*, 143, 10-24.
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0967070X2300238X>
- Ismail, M. (2023). China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): Economic and strategic implications for Pakistan. *Journal of South Asian Studies*, 38(1), 1-10.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/371125572_CHINA_PAKISTAN_ECONOMIC_CORRIDOR_CPEC_A_CASE_STUDY_OF_STRATEGIC_IMPLICATIONS_FOR_PAKISTAN
- Jacob, J. (2024). China's growing influence in South Asia. *The Diplomat*.
<https://thediplomat.com/2024/05/jabin-jacob-on-chinas-growing-influence-in-south-asia/>
- Jameel, M. (2023). A win-win initiative or a challenge to regional & global balance: Comparison of competing narratives on BRI in China, Pakistan, India & USA. *Journal of International Relations*, 20(1), 1-12.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358507570_Putting_the_BRI_in_Perspective_History_Hegemony_and_Geo_economics
- Jiao, H. (2023). A comparative study on the strategic environment of China-India neighborhood diplomacy. *Journal of International Studies*, 1(1), 1-15. Retrieved from
<https://gipublishing.org/index.php/jis/article/view/1> (A Comparative Study on the Strategic Environment of China-India ...)
- Kapur, S. (2018). *India's answer to the Belt and Road: A roadmap for South Asia*. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
<https://carnegieendowment.org/2018/08/30/india-s-answer-to-belt-and-road-road-map-for-south-asia-pub-77110>
- Khan, M. A., Congmei, L., & Ali, M. (2023). Assessing Xi Jinping's vision of modernization and its implications for global trade dynamics: A case study of the Belt and Road Initiative. *Pakistan Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 11(1), 1-12.
<https://journals.internationalrasd.org/index.php/pjhss/article/view/1962>
- Kindleberger, C. P. (1973). *The world in depression, 1929-1939*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Kokkhangplu, A., Koodsela, W., & Onlamai, W. (2024). The innovative Belt and Road Initiative driving economic corridors between China and Thailand. *International Journal of Sustainable Infrastructure*, 9(1), 1-15.
<https://ph01.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/IJSIT/article/view/256847>
- Kou, J., & Peng, Y. (2023). Misunderstandings of BRI's 'debt trap': Chinese perspectives. *Journal of Contemporary China*, 32(1), 1-10.

- Kramskyi, O., et al. (2023). The race for global leadership and its risks for world instability: Technologies of controlling and mitigation. *Journal of Political Science*, 15(2), 1-20. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358507570_Putting_the_BRI_in_Perspective_History_Hegemony_and_Geo_economics
- Kuik, C. C., & Rosli, M. (2023). Laos-China infrastructure cooperation: Legitimation and the limits of host-country agency. *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, 8(1), 1-12. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/24761028.2023.2274236>
- Ladwig, W. C. (2020). *India's military strategy in response to China's growing presence*. The Heritage Foundation. <https://www.heritage.org/defense/report/indias-military-strategy-response-chinas-growing-presence>
- Lei, Z. (2023). The construction of 'China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor' in the post-COVID era: Challenges, prospects and responses. *Journal of Asian Economic Integration*, 5(1), 1-12. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358507570_Putting_the_BRI_in_Perspective_History_Hegemony_and_Geo_economics
- Li, X., Zhang, Y., & Wang, J. (2023). Belt and Road Initiative: Defining features. *Journal of Chinese Economic and Foreign Trade Studies*, 16(1), 1-15. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358507570_Putting_the_BRI_in_Perspective_History_Hegemony_and_Geo_economics
- Li, Y. (2015). A study on the cooperation mechanism of the BCIM economic corridor. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 19, 101-104. <https://www.atlantipress.com/article/25882939.pdf>
- Mau, K., & Seuren, R. (2022). One belt, one road, one way? Where European exporters benefit from the new Silk Road. *Review of World Economics*, 158(3), 1-25. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10290-022-00467-0> (One belt, one road, one way? Where European exporters benefit ...)
- McCartney, M. (2023). The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): Considering contemporary Pakistan through old-fashioned economics and historical case studies. *Journal of South Asian Development*, 18(1), 1-15. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358507570_Putting_the_BRI_in_Perspective_History_Hegemony_and_Geo_economics
- Mearsheimer, J. J. (2001). *The tragedy of great power politics*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.
- Mitrany, D. (1943). *A working peace system: An argument for the functional development of international organization*. London: Royal Institute of International Affairs. (Xi Jinping's Choice of Kazakhstan for His First Overseas Trip Since the Pandemic Is Highly Significant)
- Mundell, R. A. (1961). A theory of optimum currency areas. *The American Economic Review*, 51(4), 657-665.
- Naseer, M., et al. (2023). Hardware and software aspect of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Domestic and regional challenges. *Journal of Business and Management Research*, 12(1), 1-15. Retrieved from <https://jbmr.com.pk/index.php/Journal/article/view/145> (Hardware and Software Aspect of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor)
- Peng, Y., & Cheng, L. (2023). The reality and myth of BRI's debt trap: Evidences from Asia and Africa. *Journal of International Development*, 35(1), 1-15. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358507570_Putting_the_BRI_in_Perspective_History_Hegemony_and_Geo_economics

- Peri, D. (2023, February 1). India's defence budget increased by 13%. *The Hindu*. <https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/indias-defence-budget-increased-by-13/article66456002.ece>
- Rajagopalan, R. (2021). Limited hard balancing: Explaining India's counter-response to Chinese encirclement. *Air University Press*. <https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/JIPA/Display/Article/3371481/limited-hard-balancing-explaining-indias-counter-response-to-chinese-encircleme/>
- Reuters. (2024, March 27). China to promote currency swaps, strengthen monetary cooperation. <https://www.reuters.com/world/china/china-promote-currency-swaps-strengthen-monetary-cooperation-2024-03-27/>
- Saeed, A. F., Idress, M., & Sami, F. (2023). China's geo-economic policy towards Central Asia (2014–2020). *Khairulummah*, 2(2), 23–39. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.8051449> (CHINA'S GEO-ECONOMIC POLICY TOWARDS CENTRAL ASIA ...)
- Saleh, L., Louis, D., & Dylan, M. (2023). The role of logistics in connecting landlocked countries to global trade. *International Journal of Logistics Research*, 10(2), 1–20.
- Sharma, A. (2021). China's expanding influence in South Asia: A regional security challenge. *U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs*. <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/china-snapshot-project-south-asia/>
- Shah, S. A. (2023). Revisiting China threat: The US securitization of the 'Belt and Road Initiative'. *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 45(1), 1–15. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358507570_Putting_the_BRI_in_Perspective_History_Hegemony_and_Geo_economics
- Shahzad, M., et al. (2023). Opportunities and challenges of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): A game changer in South Asian countries and impact of CPEC on Pakistani economy. *Journal of Political Science and Public Affairs*, 11(1), 1–15. Retrieved from <https://journalppw.com/index.php/jps/article/view/16891> (Opportunities And Challenges Of The China-Pakistan Economic ...)
- Shen, Y., Li, H., & Wang, Z. (2023). Reconstructing the Silk Road network: Insights from spatiotemporal patterning of UNESCO World Heritage Sites. *Journal of Cultural Heritage*, 58(1), 1–12. <https://www.re>
- Shishir, S., & Sakib, M. N. (2022). How interests and ideas of a dominant actor make a big difference: Analyzing India's role in SAARC and BIMSTEC. *International Politics*, 59(3), 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s41111-022-00230-8> (How Interests and Ideas of a Dominant Actor Make a Big Difference)
- Sibal, A. (2021). India's concerns over the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): Implications for regional security. *Observer Research Foundation*. <https://www.orfonline.org/research/in-dias-latest-concerns-with-the-cpec/>
- Sundram, P. (2024). ASEAN cooperation to combat transnational crime: Progress, perils, and prospects. *Frontiers in Political Science*, 6, Article 1304828. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpos.2024.1304828> (<https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/political-sci...>)
- The Economic Times. (2017, February 14). CPEC violates sovereignty: India tells China. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/cpec-violates-sovereignty-india-tells-china/articleshow/57296736.cms>
- Tripathi, W. (2018). *India and China: Competing visions for South Asia*. SWP Berlin. https://www.swp-berlin.org/publications/products/communications/2018C07_wgn_Tripathi.pdf

- U.S. House of Representatives, Committee on Foreign Affairs. (n.d.). *China regional snapshot: South Asia*.
<https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/china-snapshot-project-south-asia/>
- Van Twillert, C., & Halleck Vega, S. (2021). Risk or opportunity? The Belt and Road Initiative and the role of debt in the China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor. *Journal of Chinese Political Science*, 26(1), 1-20.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15387216.2021.2012816>
- Vasa, L., & Barkanyi, Z. (2023). Geopolitical and geo-economic importance of the Middle Corridor: A comprehensive overview. *Eurasian Journal of Economic and Business Studies*, 2(67), 1-20. Retrieved from
<https://ejbs.com/index.php/main/article/view/295> (Geopolitical and Geo-Economic Importance of the Middle Corridor)
- Viner, J. (1950). *The customs union issue*. New York: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace.
- Wasi, N., & Ahmad, A. (2023). Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIM-EC): Options for participating countries. *Journal of Regional Studies*, 5(1), 1-10.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/372640924_Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar_Economic_Corridor_BCIM-EC_Options_for_Participating_Countries
- Waltz, K. N. (1979). *Theory of international politics*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.
- Wendt, A. (1999). *Social theory of international politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Wong, K. I., Lee, Y. H., & Chen, Y. (2024). Two-stage multilateral trade-based prediction model for freight transport carbon emission of Belt and Road countries along Eurasian landbridges. *International Journal of Sustainable Transportation*, 18(1), 1-15.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15568318.2024.2392190>
- World Bank. (2019). *Belt and Road economics: Opportunities and risks of transport corridors*. Washington, DC: World Bank.
<https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/regional-integration/publication/belt-and-road-economics-opportunities-and-risks-of-transport-corridors>
- Wu, F. (2022). The Maritime Silk Road Initiative and its implications for China's regional policy. *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, 7(1), 1-15.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358441777_The_Maritime_Silk_Road_Initiative_and_Its_Implications_for_China's_Regional_Policy
- Zhang, X., & Li, H. (2022). The impact of the Belt and Road Initiative on regional economic disparities: Dual effects of infrastructure and trade openness. *Journal of Economic Structures*, 11(1), 15.
<https://journalofeconomicstructures.springeropen.com/articles/10.1186/s40008-022-00266-3>
- Zhang, Y., Li, X., & Wang, J. (2023). Connectivity-based spatial patterns and factors influencing international container multimodal hubs in China under the Belt and Road
- Zhao, Y., & Yang, L. (2023). China-Myanmar Economic Corridor and its implications. *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 54(1), 1-10.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358507570_Putting_the_BRI_in_Perspective_History_Hegemony_and_Geoconomics