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## **THESIS**

**INDIA, PAKISTAN, AND CHINA'S ONE BELT ONE  
ROAD INITIATIVE**

by

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June 2019

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**INDIA, PAKISTAN, AND CHINA'S ONE BELT ONE ROAD INITIATIVE**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Current academic literature is replete with analyses on the return of great power competition due to China's rise. One area of concern among policy makers has been China's One Belt and One Road Initiative (BRI) and its impact on global security. This thesis examines India and Pakistan's reactions to China's BRI through analysis of political, economic, and geostrategic factors. India's non-support for the BRI stems from the perception that the BRI poses a direct threat to the rules-based international system and its own aspirations to become the South Asian region's dominant power. Conversely, Pakistan supports and has actively engaged in the BRI to counter a growing India and to increase its national power to achieve that end.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS**

AIIB	Asia Infrastructure Investment Bank
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BCIM	Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Corridor
BRI	Belt and Road Initiative
BRICS	Brazil, Russia, India, China as rising nations
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IOR	Indian Ocean Region
LEMOA	Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement
MSRI	Maritime Silk Road Initiative
OBOR	One Belt One Road Initiative
PLA	People's Liberation Army
PM	Prime Minister
PRC	People's Republic of China
QUAD	Quadrilateral Security Dialogue
SEZ	Special Economic Zones
TPP	Trans-Pacific Partnership
UNCLOS	United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea
USINDOPACOM	U.S. Indo-Pacific Command

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## I. INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

The Asian region's power structure is undergoing a momentous shift due to the rise of China. China's immense economic, political, and military prowess are unmatched by other Asian countries. China's annual GDP in 2016 was \$11.2 trillion and its military expenditures in 2018 exceeded \$207 billion.<sup>1</sup> Politically, China "enjoys diplomatic relations with 175 countries, is a member of more than 150 international organizations, and is party to more than 300 multilateral treaties."<sup>2</sup> China has set its sights on South Asia to enhance its geostrategic positions vis-à-vis the rest of Asia. China's One Belt One Road initiative (BRI) is its primary mechanism to solidify its position in South Asia.<sup>3</sup>

South Asia is a significant geostrategic region to which "extra-regional powers," such as the United States and China, have recommitted their attention.<sup>4</sup> Although scholars agree that Sino-centric Asia will be the focus of the "current century, South Asia is going to play a significant role."<sup>5</sup> The fact that South Asia is situated as "a gateway to the landlocked, energy-rich Central Asian Republics" and as "a new crossroad of power rivalry" only intensifies its geostrategic importance.<sup>6</sup> Thus, the region's response to the BRI has critical geostrategic implications not only for China, but for the world. Since India is one of the most prominent nations within South Asia, its reaction to the BRI will undoubtedly affect the region.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "China: Summary: Defense Budget," Jane's by IHS Markit, February 20, 2019, <https://janes-ihs-com.libproxy.nps.edu/Janes/Display/chins090-cna>; "Data for: China, Pakistan, and India," World Bank, accessed April 1, 2018, 2018, <https://data.worldbank.org/?locations=CN-IN-PK>.

<sup>2</sup> David Shambaugh, "Is China a Global Power?" in *Will China's Rise be Peaceful?* ed. Asle Toje (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 214.

<sup>3</sup> International actors refer to this Initiative by several recognized names, including OBOR. For the purposes of this thesis, BRI is the acronym of choice as it reflects the most recent scholarly research in the field.

<sup>4</sup> Parvaiz Ahmad and Bawa Singh, "Sino-Pakistan Friendship, Changing South Asian Geopolitics and India's Post-Obama Options," *South Asia Research* 37, no. 2 (2017): 138–139, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0262728017700184>.

<sup>5</sup> Ahmad and Singh, "Sino-Pakistan Friendship," 138.

<sup>6</sup> Ahmad and Singh, "Sino-Pakistan Friendship," 139.

<sup>7</sup> Ahmad and Singh, "Sino-Pakistan Friendship," 138–139.

India is one of the major contestants in this ongoing power game focused on the BRI. India's GDP in 2016 was estimated at \$2.27 trillion and in 2018 its military expenditures exceeded \$62 billion—making it the second largest fielded militaries in Asia.<sup>8</sup> Furthermore, India is a growing regional power and poses a direct strategic threat to China.<sup>9</sup> Regardless of its own might, India views the BRI as a challenge. Thus far, India has not decidedly balanced in response to China, leaving many South Asian countries hedging between these two major regional powers.<sup>10</sup> Rather, amidst this power shift, India has opted to employ a strategy that mixes various levels of “limited hard balancing, soft balancing, and diplomatic engagement with China.”<sup>11</sup> This can be characterized as a “wait and watch approach.”<sup>12</sup> The tensions stressing the Sino-Indian relationship have influenced how India has responded to the BRI.

China's BRI, an extensive foreign policy and economic initiative, has already made massive inroads in South Asia. Thus, the BRI has become a symbol of Chinese soft power in the region. China is attempting to advance its positive image in South Asia, spurring regional economic growth by tapping into underdeveloped markets via inter-regional connectivity.<sup>13</sup> As a result, the BRI could open the flow of trade and wealth to member countries. Specifically affecting India are the Chinese-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) corridor, and the Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI).<sup>14</sup> These three economic corridors represent the BRI in South Asia

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<sup>8</sup> Jane's by IHS Markit, “China: Summary: Defense Budget,” World Bank, “Data for: China, Pakistan, and India.”

<sup>9</sup> Taylor Fravel, “China Views India's Rise: Deeping in Cooperation, Managing Differences,” in *Strategic Asia 2011–12: Asia Responds to Its Rising Powers: China and India*, ed. Ashley J. Tellis, Travis Tanner, and Jessica Keough (Washington, DC: National Bureau of Asian Research, 2011), 71.

<sup>10</sup> TV Paul, “When Balance of Power Meets Globalization: China, India, and the Small States of South Asia,” *Politics* 39, no. 1 (February 2019): 55, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0263395718779930>.

<sup>11</sup> Paul, “When Balance of Power Meets Globalization,” 55.

<sup>12</sup> Paul, “When Balance of Power Meets Globalization,” 55.

<sup>13</sup> Tim Summers, “China's ‘New Silk Roads’: Sub-national Regions and Networks of Global Political Economy,” *Third World Quarterly* 37, no. 9 (2016), <https://doi.org/10.1080/01436597.2016.1153415>.

<sup>14</sup> Amitendu Palit, “India's Economic and Strategic Perceptions of China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative,” *Geopolitics* 22, no. 2 (2017): 294, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2016.1274305>.



and will eventually be incorporated into the greater BRI enterprise.<sup>15</sup> Especially concerning to India is the MSRI. The MSRI is essentially a maritime component of the BRI. The MSRI will connect the land-corridor between China and Pakistan to newly constructed and modernized maritime trade routes headed to the Middle East and Europe.<sup>16</sup> The MSRI is a crucial aspect of the entire BRI project. Thus, China has sought Indian cooperation in developing these extensive seaborne trade routes in the Indian Ocean and for Indian approval of China's CPEC in the contested Kashmir region. Regardless of the economic advantages India may reap in exchange for its cooperation, China has antagonized preexisting sensitivities by publicly announcing the various BRI-related projects and economic zones without having first informed or sought consent from India; these blatantly unilateral actions only serve to alarm India.<sup>17</sup>

This thesis argues that India is opting out of the BRI primarily because it believes China is using the BRI as a platform to change the rules of the regional and international order. India does not want a region or world shaped by Chinese characteristics. Additionally, both economic and geostrategic factors have motivated India to oppose the BRI. India lags far behind China in its capacity to export infrastructure development programs throughout the region. This is due in part by India's own deficit in infrastructure capable of connecting to the region and the world. Furthermore, various Indian economic sectors are unable to connect into the proposed BRI network. Most Indian business leaders believe that this is a major hindrance preventing their participation in the BRI, irrespective of strategic objections. In terms of geostrategic factors, India objects to the BRI due to its inherent ability to enhance China's military position in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region (IOR). Thus, this thesis will show that India has based its decision to not support the BRI on the long-term threat that it poses to the rules-based international system. Furthermore, India's non-support stems from the perceived strategic and political risks of a Sino-centric world order.

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<sup>15</sup> Palit, "India's Economic and Strategic Perceptions," 294.

<sup>16</sup> Palit, "India's Economic and Strategic Perceptions," 294.

<sup>17</sup> Summers, "China's 'New Silk Roads.'"

This thesis reviews India's political, economic, and geostrategic explanations for its decision to be unsupportive of China's BRI. In the context of China and India, the risks associated with the BRI can be framed through the Sino-Indian rivalry and the strategic implications that the BRI presents for both countries. China's and India's five-and-a-half-decade long border and territorial disputes have fed a Sino-Indian strategic rivalry, undermining India's support for the BRI.<sup>18</sup> Exacerbating the Sino-Indian border dispute and history of aggression is the growing inequality in power and economic parity—where China has an overwhelming advantage.<sup>19</sup> India's fear is that China's growing influence in the region, via the BRI, will disadvantage India's geostrategic security.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, India fears the possibility of China shaping the regional and global order in its image—an image depicted as authoritarian and coercive. In this context, India's non-support stems from its desire to be the economic leader of a liberal and open regional order, from territorial disputes, or, from the BRI's potential security threats. In sum, it is a combination of all three, but India's primary concern is living in a world shaped by Chinese interests and rule. This concern is borne out of the perception that the BRI represents China's attempts to “create a new playbook for Asia and Europe [and is a] growing threat to the liberal international order.”<sup>21</sup>

## A. SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH

Within the South Asian region, India and Pakistan are the most prominent nations and their responses to the BRI have implications for other regional neighbors, including Nepal, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, and Sri Lanka.<sup>22</sup> Moreover, the regional response to the BRI will highlight the ongoing balance-of-power strategies between China, the United

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<sup>18</sup> Jeff. M. Smith, *Cold Peace: China-India Rivalry in the Twenty-First Century* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014), 19–20, 22.

<sup>19</sup> Smith, *Cold Peace*, 6–7.

<sup>20</sup> Hafeez Ullah Khan and Ijaz Khalid, “New Delhi Response to Beijing ‘BRI’ Project: A Lucid Connection with Chinese ‘String of pearls,’” *Journal of Political Studies* 25, no. 1 (2018): 249, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700160801886314>.

<sup>21</sup> Samir Saran, “India's Role in a Liberal Post-Western World,” *The International Spectator* 53, no. 1 (2018), <https://doi.org/10.1080/03932729.2018.1396433>.

<sup>22</sup> Ahmad and Singh, “Sino-Pakistan Friendship,” 138–139.

States, India, Pakistan, and other regional nations.<sup>23</sup> These responses to the BRI will also determine the geographical avenues for China's expansion and for the regional pushback or acceptance associated with this encroachment. Finally, the variations in responses to the BRI will effectively shape the lines of demarcation between the powers vying for regional control and the nations caught in the middle of this power rivalry.

The BRI is directly tied to India's economic and security interests. First, the BRI affects India's geostrategic space in both the CPEC and BCIM corridors. CPEC directly challenges India's territorial interest in the Kashmir region, where China and Pakistan are planning several development projects. The BRI is also challenging another important global geostrategic and geopolitical area: the IOR.<sup>24</sup> One example of the IOR's strategic importance is that "more than 80 percent of the world's seaborne trade in oil transits through Indian Ocean choke points."<sup>25</sup> Additionally, "one-third of the world's cargo movement and nearly half of container traffic movement" go through the IOR.<sup>26</sup> The IOR is also very "rich with energy reserves and possesses major fish stocks."<sup>27</sup>

The BRI is designed to expand into the IOR via port development to secure Chinese energy lines of communication. It therefore directly challenges India's current prominence in the IOR; India, which has the largest naval force in the region, is the "preeminent Indian Ocean power."<sup>28</sup> Underpinning India's military posture and geographic position (with a coastline of 7500 km, 1,200 islands and 2.4 million square kilometers of Exclusive Economic Zone) is its need to protect its international trade through the IOR, which

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<sup>23</sup> Ahmad and Singh, "Sino-Pakistan Friendship," 140; Nadege Rolland, "China's Eurasian Century? Political and Strategic Implications of the Belt and Road Initiative," *The National Bureau of Asian Research* (2017), 178.

<sup>24</sup> Sergei DeSilva-Ranasinghe, "Why the Indian Ocean Matters," *The Diplomat*, March 2, 2011, <https://thediplomat.com/2011/03/why-the-indian-ocean-matters/2/>.

<sup>25</sup> DeSilva-Ranasinghe, "Why the Indian Ocean Matters."

<sup>26</sup> Sangeeta Khorana and Leïla Choukroune, "India and the Indian Ocean region," *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region* 12, no. 2 (2016): 122–125, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19480881.2016.1227516>.

<sup>27</sup> Sumeet Kaur, "The Indian Ocean Region is Key to U.S.-India Relations," *American Security Project*, April 28, 2017, <https://www.americansecurityproject.org/the-indian-ocean-region-is-key-to-u-s-india-relations/>.

<sup>28</sup> Khorana and Choukroune, "India and the Indian Ocean Region," 122–125.

encompasses “90% of its trade by volume and 90% of its oil imports.”<sup>29</sup> Thus, the BRI, via its Maritime Silk Road initiative, challenges this prominence and could offset the balance of power in favor of the People’s Republic of China (PRC); China has demonstrated this growing geopolitical influence throughout the IOR via its “expanding and modernizing military forces” and its diplomatic efforts with IOR nations.<sup>30</sup>

India’s response to the BRI also has strategic and security implications for the United States. The large amount of trade and energy that transits through IOR sea lines of communication is enough to merit U.S. attention, but the main area of concern is the PRC’s growing influence and military presence in the region.<sup>31</sup> After years of perceived withdrawal, the United States has singled its recommitment to the IOR with the recent rebranding of U.S. Pacific Command as the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) and the earlier iterations of its Pivot East agenda. The United States has, since 2005, engaged in rapprochement with India with the direct goal of containing the growing power of China.<sup>32</sup> The United States’ increased involvement with India (through increased arms sales, bilateral agreements, and joint U.S.-Indian military exercises) is indicative of increased U.S. influence in the region as a counter-balance to China.<sup>33</sup>

The BRI is also directly tied to Pakistan’s economic and security interests. Pakistan’s support for the BRI is yet another example of geostrategic motivations and concerns in Asia. China’s involvement with Pakistan under the BRI umbrella is formed by the CPEC.<sup>34</sup> CPEC is “in effect a rebranding of the long-term cooperation between the

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<sup>29</sup> Khorana and Choukroune, “India and the Indian Ocean Region”; Smruti S. Pattanaik, “Indian Ocean in the Emerging Geo-strategic Context: Examining India’s Relations with Its Maritime South Asian Neighbors,” *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region* 12, no. 2 (2016): 126–142, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19480881.2016.1226750>.

<sup>30</sup> Khorana and Choukroune, “India and the Indian Ocean Region.”

<sup>31</sup> Kaur, “The Indian Ocean Region is Key to U.S.-India Relations.”

<sup>32</sup> Smith, *Cold Peace*, 119–121.

<sup>33</sup> Smith, *Cold Peace*, 120.

<sup>34</sup> Jeremy Garlick, “Deconstructing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Pipe Dreams Versus Geopolitical Realities,” *Journal of Contemporary China* 27, no. 112 (2018): 519, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670564.2018.1433483>.

countries which has been in progress since the 1950s.”<sup>35</sup> Pakistan is a major hub connecting China to the West.<sup>36</sup> This corridor could connect the “Persian Gulf port of Gwadar with Kashgar in northwest China’s Xinjiang province.”<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, CPEC could enable China to access the IOR by land as a secondary route, alleviating China’s concern over vulnerable maritime chokepoints.<sup>38</sup> Furthermore, if China views its relationship with Pakistan (via the CPEC) through a geostrategic scope, China could leverage Pakistan in a game of balancing against India and the United States.<sup>39</sup> If China is deliberately using the BRI as a mechanism to engage in power competition by strengthening Pakistan and for gaining regional influence, it therefore directly challenges U.S. influence and the rise of India. Further complicating the United States’ South Asian interests is the fact that the United States has not engaged in a project similar in scope and magnitude to the BRI. Therefore, the BRI represents a Chinese advantage over U.S. soft power in the region. Another area of concern is that the United States has had an unsteady and “fragile” relationship with Pakistan.<sup>40</sup> China’s increased cooperation with Pakistan through the BRI brings into relief waning U.S. regional prominence. Although U.S.-Indian relations have improved, India’s non-alignment tendencies complicate hard balancing with the United States against China. This, especially in light of the BRI, uniquely challenges U.S. solicitation of other regional nations to balance against China.<sup>41</sup>

The political and economic drivers for the BRI are therefore essential in identifying the factors that other nations are considering before signing onto it. Establishing a baseline of support, resistance, and engagement at the regional level of analysis will shed light on systemic responses to the BRI. The significance of highlighting South Asian regional

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<sup>35</sup> Garlick, “Deconstructing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,” 519.

<sup>36</sup> Andrew Small, “First Movement: Pakistan and the Belt and Road Initiative,” *Asia Policy* no. 24 (July, 2017): 83, <https://doi.org/10.1353/asp.2017.0024>.

<sup>37</sup> Garlick, “Deconstructing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,” 521.

<sup>38</sup> Small, “First Movement,” 83.

<sup>39</sup> Garlick, “Deconstructing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,” 532–533.

<sup>40</sup> Smith, *Cold Peace*, 129.

<sup>41</sup> Smith, *Cold Peace*, 122–123.

responses is that it could help predict which states will be more-or less-inclined to participate and for what reasons. Examining the case of India's non-support and Pakistan's support for the BRI presents key indicators for other nations. India, as a rising power, considers China a major trading partner, and both have extensive economic linkages.<sup>42</sup>

## **B. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Scholars have pointed out several key causal mechanisms behind India's and Pakistan's responses to the BRI. The literature review highlights three important factors influencing Indian and Pakistani responses to the BRI: economic, political, and geostrategic. India's perspective toward the BRI can be classified as cautious. The preponderance of the economic, political, and geostrategic explanations for India's negative response to the BRI stems from its perception that the BRI poses a large geostrategic security risk, which is exacerbated by India's belief that the BRI is China's mechanism to solidify its dominance in the regional hierarchy. On the other hand, Pakistan's involvement with the BRI was precipitated by its intent to continue its close political and security cooperation with China. Pakistan's support for the BRI is indicative of its motivation to give the Chinese-Pakistani security relationship a stronger economic basis—further bolstering strategic imperatives in the face of continued pressure from India. Both India and Pakistan are aware of the possible economic benefits of the BRI, but geostrategic concerns are of primary importance and shape both countries' responses.

### **1. India's Economic Explanations**

Scholars argue that India is against the BRI for two reasons. First, India perceived that entrance into the BRI would not be advantageous due to the preexisting regional hurdles to global market interface as a result of weak economic infrastructures.<sup>43</sup> When compared to other BRI regional sectors, which are more homogeneous, inner-IOR disorganization limits the potential economic gain promised by China.<sup>44</sup> As Palit suggests,

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<sup>42</sup> Ahmad and Singh, "Sino-Pakistan Friendship," 138.

<sup>43</sup> Palit, "India's Economic and Strategic Perceptions," 297.

<sup>44</sup> Palit, "India's Economic and Strategic Perceptions," 297.

the “more economically cohesive geographies would be more capable in linking seamlessly to the upcoming maritime infrastructure and would thereby anticipate greater future benefits.”<sup>45</sup> India does not see the potential for the BRI to plug into the region and therefore believes that the IOR is not economically conducive to BRI investments. The Indian business sector echoes this concern and perceives this lack of regional integration as a major hurdle. More specifically, both the IOR and inner-Indian connectivity issues make “Indian businesses skeptical about their abilities to exploit” BRI infrastructure for economic gain.<sup>46</sup> The inherent economic inefficiencies with India and the IOR impact the private sector’s view of the effectiveness of the BRI.<sup>47</sup> Second, further affecting Indian perspective is the BRI’s challenge to existing trade agreements and institutions, which are formed by business models and incentives that do not easily accommodate the new BRI infrastructure projects.<sup>48</sup> The BRI’s effect on existing modes of operations within the Indian business sector is a major concern, betraying deep uncertainty about the BRI’s ability to contribute to Indian prosperity.<sup>49</sup> The Indian business sector’s perception of interference outweighs the possible long-term benefits of the BRI. Additionally, Indian businesses are concerned that the BRI’s non-incorporation of pre-existing regional associations under its framework is a clear indication that the PRC is unwilling to work with groups in which it does not have a majority vote.<sup>50</sup> This unwillingness has increased the trust deficit between the two nations.

## **2. India’s Political Explanations**

Although the PRC claims that the BRI is “a virtuous and essentially economic gain-oriented project,” India perceives it otherwise.<sup>51</sup> India’s first impression is that the BRI “is

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<sup>45</sup> Palit, “India’s Economic and Strategic Perceptions,” 297.

<sup>46</sup> Palit, “India’s Economic and Strategic Perceptions,” 298.

<sup>47</sup> Palit, “India’s Economic and Strategic Perceptions,” 298.

<sup>48</sup> Palit, “India’s Economic and Strategic Perceptions,” 299.

<sup>49</sup> Palit, “India’s Economic and Strategic Perceptions,” 300–301.

<sup>50</sup> Palit, “India’s Economic and Strategic Perceptions,” 300–301.

<sup>51</sup> Palit, “India’s Economic and Strategic Perceptions,” 304.

primarily intended at entrenching Chinese territorial and economic interests.”<sup>52</sup> China has further propagated this image via its “lack of attention to regional associations not involving China in carrying forward the project.”<sup>53</sup> Further exacerbating China’s political pitfall regarding regional associations was its “strong emphasis on the Chinese-Pakistani corridor at a time when India–Pakistan bilateral relations are distinctly troubled” as a result of ongoing border disputes.<sup>54</sup> Chinese “commitment to invest \$47 billion in railway, road infrastructure and a virtual trade corridor connecting West China to the strategic Gwadar port in Pakistan” is seen as an attempt to leverage regional territorial issues. The investment “would enable China to carry oil and gas from Iran and Arab countries via Gwadar port” through the “trade corridor and rail-road link that goes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir.”<sup>55</sup> China’s insensitivities toward the political climate surrounding this issue have unfavorably colored India’s view of the BRI. This perspective could change if “China demonstrates its willingness to play by international rules” and by assuaging “emerging concerns of global cooperation among its neighbors.”<sup>56</sup>

Another area of concern between India and China is their ongoing border dispute; if actions are taken to resolve this issue, India’s assumptions about the BRI’s intent could change.<sup>57</sup> Sino-Indian competition is “fueled by a set of core issues.”<sup>58</sup> Among these core issues is the “territory issue” defined in the context of legacy border disputes between China and India.<sup>59</sup> Smith explains that “the China-India border dispute is better described as an amalgamation of separate territorial disputes occupying multiple, noncontiguous

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<sup>52</sup> Palit, “India’s Economic and Strategic Perceptions,” 304.

<sup>53</sup> Palit, “India’s Economic and Strategic Perceptions,” 304.

<sup>54</sup> Palit, “India’s Economic and Strategic Perceptions,” 304.

<sup>55</sup> Ajay Chhibber, “China’s Bank and Road Initiative and India’s Options: Competitive Cooperation,” *Journal of Infrastructure, Policy and Development* 1, no. 2 (2017): 243, <https://doi.org/10.24294/jipd.v1i2.83>.

<sup>56</sup> Dipankar Banerjee, “China’s One Belt One Road Initiative – An Indian Perspective,” *Institute of Southeast Asian Studies*, no. 14 (2016): 7, [https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/ISEAS\\_Perspective\\_2016\\_14.pdf](https://www.iseas.edu.sg/images/pdf/ISEAS_Perspective_2016_14.pdf).

<sup>57</sup> Banerjee, “China’s One Belt One Road Initiative,” 7.

<sup>58</sup> Smith, *Cold Peace*, 12.

<sup>59</sup> Smith, *Cold Peace*, 13.



sections of territories.”<sup>60</sup> These sections include the Western Sector, Shaksgam Valley, the Middle sector, Sikkim, and the Eastern Sector.<sup>61</sup> Continuing factors such as mutual arms build-up along the border regions, political claims by both sides, and mutual challenges to national sovereignty have “kept the border dispute at center stage in bilateral relations in recent years.”<sup>62</sup> The continuation of border issues between China and India is a major political explanation for India’s refusal to engage in the BRI.

### **3. India’s Geostrategic Explanations**

Some scholars argue that geostrategic factors are a major driver behind India’s response to the BRI, as it directly challenges India’s perception of itself as the dominant power in the IOR. Thus, “India has begun its own long-overdue initiatives in the Indian Ocean to counter the Chinese and ensure that China does not start to dominate the Indian Ocean” through the BRI.<sup>63</sup> India’s initiatives include its own maritime project known as “Project Mausam.”<sup>64</sup> India’s goal for Project Mausam is similar to China’s BRI. India hopes to “boost regional commercial and cultural linkages”; countering the BRI, which invariably shifts focus back to China, “Project Mausam seeks to return India to its role as the center of Indian Ocean trade.”<sup>65</sup>

India is particularly concerned about how the BRI could enhance Chinese capabilities to project military power in the IOR. With the Chinese-Indian border dispute at the foreground, Chinese support to Pakistan is one example of potential BRI related military and security pitfalls. According to Smith, China is using its relationship with Pakistan to implement a strategy of “containment vis-à-vis India.”<sup>66</sup> Although Pakistani aggression in the border regions has subsided in the 21st century, India is “still concerned

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<sup>60</sup> Smith, *Cold Peace*, 22.

<sup>61</sup> Smith, *Cold Peace*, 23–27.

<sup>62</sup> Smith, *Cold Peace*, 13.

<sup>63</sup> Chhibber, “China’s Bank and Road Initiative,” 243.

<sup>64</sup> Chhibber, “China’s Bank and Road Initiative,” 243.

<sup>65</sup> Chhibber, “China’s Bank and Road Initiative,” 243.

<sup>66</sup> Smith, *Cold Peace*, 231.

about the prospects for a two-front war” wherein China would intervene on Pakistan’s behalf.<sup>67</sup> India is aware that the “Sino-Pakistani military-to-military relationship remains robust and since the turn of the century” China has sold Pakistan a plethora of armaments.<sup>68</sup> Thus, India’s threat perception of China continues to be framed by the conflictual border regions and exacerbated by the BRI’s attempt to connect them.

Additionally, “the unprecedented docking of a PLA [People’s Liberation Army] Navy submarine at Colombo port, Sri Lanka, in September 2014” indicated that the BRI will continue to aid PRC force projection not only to India’s west but also to its south.<sup>69</sup> The BRI’s maritime infrastructure will most likely enable Chinese naval access to the IOR and “thereby increase its strategic presence in India’s backyard.”<sup>70</sup> India also feels it is being surrounded by PRC spheres of influence in the IOR. One example of PRC geostrategic expansion in the IOR was “the upgrade of the China–Sri Lanka relationship to a strategic cooperative partnership” that occurred in 2013.<sup>71</sup> This relationship status has “demonstrated the geopolitical influence of China’s generous support to Sri Lanka.”<sup>72</sup> India’s extrapolation of this trend to other IOR nations yields geostrategic areas of concern.<sup>73</sup> Thus, India is wary that the BRI could foster “support among other affected states,” leaving India isolated from the rest of the IOR—causing a domino effect.<sup>74</sup>

#### **4. Pakistan’s Economic Explanations**

A review of India’s economic, political, and geostrategic explanations for non-support offers insights into its concerns about the BRI. Conversely, Pakistan’s positive response reveals both a clear departure from Indian concerns and insight into what a

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<sup>67</sup> Smith, *Cold Peace*, 232.

<sup>68</sup> Smith, *Cold Peace*, 232.

<sup>69</sup> Chhibber, “China’s Bank and Road Initiative,” 243.

<sup>70</sup> Chhibber, “China’s Bank and Road Initiative,” 243.

<sup>71</sup> Chhibber, “China’s Bank and Road Initiative,” 246.

<sup>72</sup> Chhibber, “China’s Bank and Road Initiative,” 246.

<sup>73</sup> Chhibber, “China’s Bank and Road Initiative,” 246.

<sup>74</sup> Banerjee, “China’s One Belt One Road Initiative,” 8.

positive regional response to the BRI entails. Pakistan's physical involvement in the BRI is actualized through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Pakistan and China formalized CPEC in May 2017.<sup>75</sup> CPEC is intended to be a "transportation and energy corridor which will connect the port of Gwadar, in Pakistan's Balochistan, to Kashgar in China's westernmost region, Xinjiang."<sup>76</sup> Citing CPEC's "long term plan for the years 2017–2030," which was released in December 2017, CPEC was defined as "a growth axis and development belt with the comprehensive transportation corridor and industrial cooperation [between the two nations] as the main axis and concrete economic and trade cooperation as the engine."<sup>77</sup> Pakistan's leaders believed that the projects envisioned under the \$50 billion CPEC plan would be a "game-changer for Pakistan's economy" and offset the country's massive debt, totaling "66.5 per cent of its GDP in 2016".<sup>78</sup> The planned projects, incorporated under CPEC, are diverse and include energy and infrastructure development as well as agricultural and industrial development projects.<sup>79</sup>

The scheduled energy projects are among the main drivers for Pakistan's involvement in the BRI. Pakistan's emphasis on energy development is highlighted through its fund allocation: of the \$50 billion allocated for CPEC, \$35 billion has been earmarked for energy projects.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, Pakistan has had persistent issues providing adequate electrical output for its citizens, with some "regions suffering from 20–22 hours of power cuts every day" during the summer months.<sup>81</sup> The original CPEC document, written in 2014, outlined 24 major projects that were broken down into priority, short-term,

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<sup>75</sup> Shebonti R. Dadwal and Chithra Purushothaman, "CPEC in Pakistan's Quest for Energy Security," *Strategic Analysis* 41, no. 5 (2017): 515, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2017.1343270>.

<sup>76</sup> Filippo Boni, "Civil-military Relations in Pakistan: a case study of Sino-Pakistani relations and the port of Gwadar," *Commonwealth and Comparative Politics* 54, no. 4 (2016): 498–499, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14662043.2016.1231665>.

<sup>77</sup> "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks," *International Crisis Group Asia Report N297*, June 29, 2018, [https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/297-china-pakistan-economic-corridor-opportunities-and-risks\\_0.pdf](https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/297-china-pakistan-economic-corridor-opportunities-and-risks_0.pdf).

<sup>78</sup> Dadwal and Purushothaman, "CPEC in Pakistan's Quest for Energy Security," 515.

<sup>79</sup> Dadwal and Purushothaman, 515; "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks," 9.

<sup>80</sup> Dadwal and Purushothaman, 515.

<sup>81</sup> Dadwal and Purushothaman, 515.

and long-term projects with varying degrees of promotion; seven of these planned projects consisted of major energy development projects including coal plants, hydroelectric plants, solar energy fields, and wind farms.<sup>82</sup> In December 2017, that list increased to 67 major projects, with 21 listed as energy-related and 20 as transportation-related.<sup>83</sup> The plans for energy development through CPEC “on paper seem to offer the answer to Pakistan’s energy woes, which have been a major factor in the country’s lack of development and unattractive FDI [Foreign Direct Investment] environment.”<sup>84</sup>

A second key driver for CPEC is the development of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) for industrialization.<sup>85</sup> These zones were cited as crucial for “economic growth and job creation.”<sup>86</sup> Thus far, several provincial economic zones have been agreed upon for construction and include Sindh, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, and Punjab.<sup>87</sup> Some of Pakistan’s leaders, acknowledging the geopolitical aspect of the CPEC, are hopeful that CPEC could “have a demonstration effect, indicating to other investors that Pakistan is a safe and attractive destination for FDI.”<sup>88</sup> Thus, Pakistani businesses hope that the infrastructure projects incorporated under CPEC will offset the “infrastructure shortages [and] attract other countries’ suppliers and financial institutions to do business” in Pakistan.<sup>89</sup> The economic hopes for CPEC include provincial-level economic and manufacturing modernization via the stimulation of “local and foreign investment.”<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> Dadwal and Purushothaman, 515, 520–521.

<sup>83</sup> Garlick, “Deconstructing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,” 522.

<sup>84</sup> Dadwal and Purushothaman, “CPEC in Pakistan’s Quest for Energy Security,” 523.

<sup>85</sup> “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks,” 12.

<sup>86</sup> “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks,” 12.

<sup>87</sup> “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks,” 12.

<sup>88</sup> “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks,” 9.

<sup>89</sup> “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks,” 9.

<sup>90</sup> “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks,” 9.

## 5. Pakistan's Political Explanations

Sino-Pakistani relations, although not always entirely positive or consistent, have remained a steadfast priority for Pakistani military and civilian leadership.<sup>91</sup> Pakistan's domestic politics, although democratic, have largely been anchored by the military—especially regarding foreign policy development.<sup>92</sup> It has been noted that Sino-Pakistani relations are of primary importance for all key political actors in Pakistan.<sup>93</sup> Thus, one potential explanation of close economic cooperation between China and Pakistan is a result of “a broader, army-led security vision of Pakistan-China relations.”<sup>94</sup> The “decision making process” led by the Pakistani army to increase economic cooperation is set along the backdrop of strategic choices and interests “to balance the strategic situation vis-à-vis India.”<sup>95</sup> This decision-making process in regards to China “rests on a broad-based consensus between the Pakistani civilian and military leaders, in which the latter's role is dominant.”<sup>96</sup> The Pakistani military has had a large role in reversing historical areas of tension between Pakistan and China, such as the kidnapping of Chinese workers in 2008, balance of payments issues, and political party mistrust among Chinese leaders.<sup>97</sup> Thus, the Pakistani military assuaged Chinese concerns about the Pakistani leadership's ability to “deliver, both on the economic and security dimensions” by influencing the “domestic political agenda.”<sup>98</sup>

One example of this influence was the military's support of the Pakistani Parliament's 2010 “18th Amendment aimed at providing a peaceful province to attract Chinese investments” by quelling issues that were causing domestic political instability in

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<sup>91</sup> Boni, “Civil-military Relations in Pakistan,” 499.

<sup>92</sup> Boni, “Civil-military Relations in Pakistan,” 499.

<sup>93</sup> Boni, “Civil-military Relations in Pakistan,” 499; “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks,” 9.

<sup>94</sup> Boni, “Civil-military Relations in Pakistan,” 500.

<sup>95</sup> Boni, “Civil-military Relations in Pakistan,” 500.

<sup>96</sup> Boni, “Civil-military Relations in Pakistan,” 501.

<sup>97</sup> Boni, “Civil-military Relations in Pakistan,” 504–506.

<sup>98</sup> Boni, “Civil-military Relations in Pakistan,” 506.

Balochistan.<sup>99</sup> The military is aware that the “successful implementation of the CPEC” will determine Pakistan’s “economic growth” and therefore its “political stability.”<sup>100</sup> Thus, the Pakistani government “believes it can score points with the electorate by cultivating a Chinese business presence.”<sup>101</sup> Since 2013, most of the political contenders within Pakistan, “across the political spectrum,” have cited CPEC and the BRI as a “leap forward both in relations with China and for the country’s economic development.”<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, the military, “deeming [the CPEC] a national security priority, has sought more control over key parts of the project” with the establishment of a Special Security Division designed to protect Chinese workers and the projects incorporated under CPEC.<sup>103</sup> Another driving point of political explanations for CPEC is that “military and political consideration underpin many other principle and joint economic projects” with China.<sup>104</sup> Some areas of cooperation include Chinese investment in civil-nuclear sector development, defense sector cooperation, arms sales, and telecom sales.<sup>105</sup>

## 6. Pakistan’s Geostrategic Explanations

Some scholars trace Pakistan’s close cooperation and involvement in China’s BRI back to a shared interest in strategically balancing against India.<sup>106</sup> The history of the Sino-Pakistani strategic relationship can be summarized through the following events: first, the “unravelling of the Sino-India relationship in the 1962 boarder war”; second, solving the Sino-Pakistani border dispute by “ceding Gilgit-Baltisan’s Shaksgam valley to China” in 1962; third, China supporting Pakistan in its 1971 war with India; and finally, China’s

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<sup>99</sup> Boni, “Civil-military Relations in Pakistan,” 506–507.

<sup>100</sup> Boni, “Civil-military Relations in Pakistan,” 513.

<sup>101</sup> Garlick, “Deconstructing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,” 532.

<sup>102</sup> “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks,” i.

<sup>103</sup> “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks,” 7–8.

<sup>104</sup> Andrew Small, *The China Pakistan Axis: Asia’s New Geopolitics* (India: Penguin Random House, 2015), 107.

<sup>105</sup> Small, *The China Pakistan Axis*, 107–108.

<sup>106</sup> Garlick, “Deconstructing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,” 521; Small, *The China Pakistan Axis*, 52.

lending nuclear development support to Pakistan.<sup>107</sup> Strategic development and “shared priorities” gave birth to Sino-Pakistani economic cooperation and partnership development.<sup>108</sup> A tangible starting point for Sino-Pakistani economic cooperation can be traced back to the 1970s construction of the Karakoram highway, which “connects Pakistan’s north, via Gilgit-Baltistan, through the Kunjerab pass, to Xinjiang” and is a “potent symbol of China-Pakistan relations.”<sup>109</sup> The Sino-Pakistani “relationship is often described as a stool with two legs [one leg being political and the other being security cooperation], and there have been fears that the absence of a solid economic foundation risks destabilizing the whole edifice.”<sup>110</sup> Thus, CPEC is a possible materialization of the third leg.

Pakistan’s “motivations for promoting CPEC” stems from a desire to continue what it regards as a “key partnership which enables it to resist pressure from its historical enemy, India.”<sup>111</sup> Pakistan has become increasingly isolated on the international-geostrategic level due to its alleged state sponsoring of Islamic extremism; this allegation has weakened U.S.-Pakistani relations.<sup>112</sup> Thus, CPEC offers Pakistan a “counterpoint to India and a means of deflecting U.S. pressure [via China’s veto power] on Pakistan’s behalf in the UN Security Council.”<sup>113</sup>

Pakistan’s historical “animosity” towards India has shaped the views of “Pakistan’s military establishment [to appreciate a] deeper economic relationship with China, even if tilted in Beijing’s favor, as a counterpoint to rising U.S. diplomatic and economic pressure

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<sup>107</sup> “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks,” 3.

<sup>108</sup> “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks,” 3.

<sup>109</sup> “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks,” 3; Small, *The China Pakistan Axis*, 99, 105.

<sup>110</sup> Small, *The China Pakistan Axis*, 97.

<sup>111</sup> Garlick, “Deconstructing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,” 532.

<sup>112</sup> “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks,” 4; Smith, *Cold Peace*, 233.

<sup>113</sup> “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks,” 4; Smith, *Cold Peace*, 233.

to end support to Afghanistan-and India-oriented militant proxies.”<sup>114</sup> Thus, the region’s structural power shift has prompted Pakistan to balance with China against India.

### **C. POTENTIAL EXPLANATIONS AND HYPOTHESIS/EVIDENCE**

This thesis presents the following hypotheses to explain why India is apprehensive to work with China: 1) India would prefer to organize economic plans that do not rely on Chinese investment; 2) the Sino-Indian relationship is marred with distrust and contempt due to the ongoing combination of territorial and border disputes in Kashmir and other border areas; 3) India is wary of China’s challenge to the rules-based international system. Further examination of the aforementioned hypotheses will expose the underlying causal factors for why India is unsupportive of the BRI.

The next set of hypotheses pertain to Pakistan’s support for the BRI: 1) Pakistan needs China to catalyze economic growth and stability; 2) Pakistan supports the BRI because it considers it as a mechanism to further solidify the strategic Sino-Pakistani alliance to combat a growing India and an overbearing United States; 3) Pakistan is not supportive of the BRI and only one faction within the domestic political environment has synthesized support to the detriment to Pakistani sovereignty.

### **D. RESEARCH DESIGN**

This thesis qualitatively assesses three areas of explanations of national decision-making: economic, political, and geostrategic. These areas of explanation serve as the independent variables in two separate case studies, wherein the dependent variables are India’s and Pakistan’s individual responses to China’s BRI. First, each case study presents relevant instances of historical cooperation and antagonisms in the context of each country’s relationship with China. Second, each case study investigates scholarly literature regarding the economic, political, and geostrategic explanations for support or non-support of the BRI.

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<sup>114</sup> “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks,” ii, 3.



The Indian case study will formulate research on the economic, political, and geostrategic factors leading to its negative response to the BRI. In depth research in to each factor will lend credence to one of the following hypotheses: India would prefer to organize economic plans that do not rely on Chinese investment; the Sino-India relationship is marred with distrust and contempt due to ongoing territorial and border disputes; or, that India is wary of an international system shaped by Chinese characteristics. Preliminary analysis shows that political elements dominant the field of research.

The Pakistani case study will review the Sino-Pakistan relationship in the context of the BRI. This section will attempt to analyze the effects of economic, political, and geostrategic factors on Pakistan's decision. Furthermore, this analysis will attempt to highlight the plausible causal factors of following hypotheses: Pakistan needs China to catalyze economic growth and stability; Pakistan supports the BRI because it considers it as a mechanism to further solidify the strategic Sino-Pakistani alliance to combat a growing India and overbearing U.S.; or, that there is significant domestic opposition to the BRI because of unequitable development and unwanted Chinese influence and workers.

## **E. THESIS OVERVIEW**

Chapter I has clarified the context of the BRI and offered a brief review of relevant literature through the scope of economic, political, and geostrategic factors. Chapter II, titled *India and the BRI*, will further analyze the economic, political, and geostrategic factors to explain India's non-support for the BRI. This chapter will isolate one of these variables as the primary explanatory factors for India's non-support of the BRI. Chapter III, titled *Pakistan and the BRI*, will also analyze the economic, political, and geostrategic factors that explain Pakistan's support of the BRI. Additionally, this chapter will isolate the primary variables affecting Pakistan's decision to support the BRI. The concluding Chapter will summarize the main findings and offer several policy recommendations.

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## II. INDIA AND THE BRI

This chapter reviews the political, economic, and geostrategic factors influencing India's decision to not engage in the BRI. A preponderance of evidence from all three areas show that India is primarily concerned with the rising influence of China and its ability—if ordained as the regional hegemon—to shape the regional and global order.<sup>115</sup> India has benefited from an open international liberal order for decades and hopes to be a primary leader in that order as it increases its material and normative power.

### A. INDIA'S POLITICAL EXPLANATIONS: MAINTENANCE OF U.S.-LED INTERNATIONAL RULES

The political factor refers to India's ability to maintain the highly beneficial U.S.-led rules-based international system. Despite India's rise, it has maintained a liberal democratic framework and, since its 1991 economic reforms, "India has combined liberal values with the market economy."<sup>116</sup> This success has motivated many Indian political elites to deliberate over India's future role in the world. India desires to be a global leader and arbiter of a rules-based international order. Prime Minister Modi, speaking at the annual Shangri-La Dialogue defense conference, "called for the Indo-Pacific region to embrace freedom of navigation, territorial integrity, and respect for all nations, regardless of their size."<sup>117</sup> Furthermore, according to Samir Saran:

In terms of foreign policy, the Indian government has emerged as a prominent votary of the values embodied by the liberal order. At various speeches abroad, Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself has emphasized the importance of shared democratic values. He has highlighted the importance of globalization for economic growth and his government has

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<sup>115</sup> William H. Thornton and Songok Han Thornton, "Sino-Globalisation: The China Model After Dengism," *China Report* 54, no. 2 (May 2018): 217, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0009445518761087>.

<sup>116</sup> Saran, "India's Role in a Liberal Post-Western World," 101–102.

<sup>117</sup> Gallo William, "Eyeing China, India's PM Calls for Indo-Pacific 'Rule-Based Order,'" VOA News, June 01, 2018, <https://www.voanews.com/a/eyeing-china-india-s-pm-calls-for-indo-pacific-rule-based-order-/4419373.html>; Saran, "India's Role in a Liberal Post-Western World," 101.

repeatedly stressed the importance of a rule-based international order in various joint documents with the United States and Japan.<sup>118</sup>

Thus, it is apparent that Modi hopes his government will “become a normative power—a state with the influence to define what behavior is normal and desirable in international relations.”<sup>119</sup> India has a well-established track record of achieving its aims via established liberal international institutions—such as the WTO in 2003; India also believes that it could enhance the system by leading other countries who have not shared equitably in other global political and economic institutions.<sup>120</sup> But should India be concerned with the rise of China and the threat it poses to the established liberal global order? China does pose a direct threat to the established international order. Although China and India have partnered in such regional institutions as BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa) and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) to strengthen regional solidarity, China “implicitly seeks a new anti-U.S./anti-Western international order, [while] India is more interested in a more equitable distribution of power within pre-existing institutions.”<sup>121</sup>

India’s preference for utilizing preestablished institutions is evident throughout the Indian political system, as “Indian policymakers see open economic policies as central to India’s ambitions in the coming decades.”<sup>122</sup> A 2017 Economic Survey warned that, “given that India’s growth ambitions of 8–10 percent require export growth of about 15–20 percent, any serious retreat from openness on the part of India’s trading partners would jeopardize those ambitions.”<sup>123</sup> Thus, China’s objective of reshaping the region in its

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<sup>118</sup> Saran, “India’s Role in a Liberal Post-Western World,” 103.

<sup>119</sup> Ian Hall, “Narendra Modi and India’s Normative Power,” *International Affairs* 93, no. 1 (January 2017): 131, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ia/iw004>.

<sup>120</sup> Kristen Hopewell, “Different Paths to Power: The Rise of Brazil, India and China at the World Trade Organization,” *Review of International Political Economy* 22, no. 2, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09692290.2014.927387>.

<sup>121</sup> Chietigj Bajpae, “Book Review of *India–China Relations: Politics of Resources, Identity and Authority in a Multipolar World Order*,” *Strategic Analysis* 41, no. 3 (2017): 300–302, <https://doi.org/10.1080/09700161.2017.1295609>.

<sup>122</sup> Saran, “India’s Role in a Liberal Post-Western World,” 97.

<sup>123</sup> Saran, “India’s Role in a Liberal Post-Western World,” 97.

image has serious political and security implications for India. South Asian countries seeking infrastructure and economic development will consequently decide the course for the region's political future—a future of either Indian or Chinese characteristics.

India is faced with a “two-fold problem [in regard to China:] ‘material and ideational.’”<sup>124</sup> The ideational problem is associated with China's authoritarian system of government that limits and skews the information available to Indian strategists.<sup>125</sup> Indian strategists are therefore more apt to assess and extrapolate China's assertive actions in the region as prelude to a coercive Sino-centric regional order.<sup>126</sup> Further exacerbating this problem is China's efforts to “construct a wider Indo-Asia-Pacific region [in which it] erodes the autonomous politics of sub-regional groupings, using its economic leverage to create differences amongst ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] members, denying strategic space to India through economic projects like CPEC.”<sup>127</sup> China is also sidestepping traditional financial institutions that promote the liberal order by creating its own, such as the AIIB and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership.<sup>128</sup> Thus, India is greatly concerned that “China is not just evading the norms of globalization but doing its best to recast them in its own image.”<sup>129</sup> Although India has not presented a “fully formulated strategy for managing” its balancing act against China, India has taken steps to solidify the U.S.-Indian vertex of the “strategic triangle.”<sup>130</sup> One example of this process has been India's rebuke of China's dismissal of the 2016 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) tribunal. Following China's blatant disrespect for

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<sup>124</sup> S. Paul Kapur, “India's Relationships with the United States and China: Thinking Through the Strategic Triangle,” in *The New Great Game: China and South and Central Asia in the Age of Reform*, ed. Thomas Fingar (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2017), 54–55.

<sup>125</sup> Kapur, “India's Relationships,” 56.

<sup>126</sup> Kapur, “India's Relationships,” 56.

<sup>127</sup> Samir Saran and S. Paul Kapur, “How India and the U.S. Can Lead in the IndoPacific,” Observer Research Foundation, August 18, 2017, <https://www.orfonline.org/research/how-india-us-can-lead-indo-pacific/>.

<sup>128</sup> Saran and Kapur, 3.

<sup>129</sup> Thornton and Thornton, “Sino-Globalisation: The China Model After Dengism,” 217.

<sup>130</sup> Kapur, “India's Relationships,” 53.

international law, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) was revived.<sup>131</sup> The QUAD is “bound by a common view that the current balance of power is changing, and the rules-based order is coming under increasing strain by China’s emergence as a great power.”<sup>132</sup> India has not exaggerated its ideational concerns. China wants to write the rules of the game and the BRI offers China an increased ability to start rewriting them.

India’s emphasis on maintaining the rules-based international system is evident in its friendly overtures to the United States to garner an important partner in countering the rise of China. The foundations for an Indo-U.S. strategic relationship, to counter a growing China, were laid following the collapse of the Soviet Union.<sup>133</sup> Following 1990, both countries began to see the utility in forming better relations.<sup>134</sup> President Clinton took the first steps in toward Indo-U.S. rapprochement, which President George W. Bush further consolidated throughout his two terms in office; President Bush made overtures to India by promising U.S. aid to India’s civil nuclear program—a marked turn from the U.S. resentments over India’s disregard for non-proliferation.<sup>135</sup> Despite gains in Indo-U.S. relations, “the momentum in the Indo-US relations hit a plateau after the 2008 nuclear agreement.”<sup>136</sup> This setback was induced “during the first few years of President Barack Obama’s administration, [when he] made an attempt to seek a grand accommodation with China in the form of G-2.”<sup>137</sup> Thus, “Washington’s failed attempt at rapprochement with Beijing made India feel both vulnerable and ignored after years of being wooed under the presidency of George W. Bush.”<sup>138</sup> After the 2008 U.S. economic recession, China began

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<sup>131</sup> Renato Cruz De Castro, “Taking the Cudgel for the 12 JUL 2016 UNCLOS Ruling? The Revival of the Quad,” *The Japan Institute of International Affairs*, September 20, 2018, 2, [https://www.jiia-jic.jp/en/policybrief/pdf/PB\\_DeCastro\\_Taking\\_the\\_Cudgel\\_for\\_the\\_12\\_July\\_2016 UNCLOS\\_Ruling.pdf](https://www.jiia-jic.jp/en/policybrief/pdf/PB_DeCastro_Taking_the_Cudgel_for_the_12_July_2016 UNCLOS_Ruling.pdf)

<sup>132</sup> De Castro, “Taking the Cudgel,” 3.

<sup>133</sup> Sobia Hanif and Muhamad Khan. “US Security Strategy for Asia Pacific and India’s Role,” *Strategic Studies* 38, no. 1, 2, <http://libproxy.nps.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/2083862414?accountid=12702>

<sup>134</sup> Hanif and Khan “US Security Strategy for Asia Pacific,” 2.

<sup>135</sup> Hanif and Khan “US Security Strategy for Asia Pacific,” 3.

<sup>136</sup> Hanif and Khan “US Security Strategy for Asia Pacific,” 3

<sup>137</sup> Hanif and Khan “US Security Strategy for Asia Pacific,” 3

<sup>138</sup> Hanif and Khan “US Security Strategy for Asia Pacific,” 4

exerting its power, and “as course corrective, in November 2011, the Obama administration announced the U.S. rebalancing to Asia Pacific and India was accorded a special place in that strategy.”<sup>139</sup>

Paradoxically, India’s leader during the pivot, Manmohan Singh, was weary of the United States’ anti-China tilt and did not want to undermine India’s relationship with China.<sup>140</sup> Thus, Prime Minister Singh called for “a non-alignment [strategy] and for greater strategic autonomy in the [India’s] dealing with the United States and China.”<sup>141</sup> Prime Minister Singh’s “hedging strategy was motivated by the necessity to signal to Beijing that New Delhi was not a partner in the American plan to contain China.”<sup>142</sup> However, “with the coming to power, Narendra Modi, with little ideological commitment to non-alignment, adopted a strategic tilt towards the US, responding with greater favorability to the rebalancing strategy.”<sup>143</sup> A 2012 U.S. Department of Defense strategic document, *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, highlights “the challenges that the U.S. faces from the rising China,” stating that ““over the long term, China’s emergence as a regional power will have the potential to affect the U.S. economy and security in a variety of ways”” which emphasizes “the need for greater ‘clarity of its strategic intentions to avoid causing friction in the region.’”<sup>144</sup> Furthermore, it also “emphasized India’s role in the strategy by asserting that ‘the United States is investing in a long-term strategic partnership with India to support its ability to be a regional economic anchor and provider of security in the Indian Ocean.’”<sup>145</sup> Warmer Indo-U.S. ties have resulted in increased U.S. assistance to modernize the Indian Navy, the creation of Joint Principles for Joint Cooperation, the renewal of the New Framework for Defense Cooperation, an increase in annual military exercises, over \$8 billion in defense sales, and

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<sup>139</sup> Hanif and Khan “US Security Strategy for Asia Pacific,” 4.

<sup>140</sup> Hanif and Khan “US Security Strategy for Asia Pacific,” 5.

<sup>141</sup> Hanif and Khan “US Security Strategy for Asia Pacific,” 5.

<sup>142</sup> Hanif and Khan “US Security Strategy for Asia Pacific,” 5.

<sup>143</sup> Hanif and Khan “US Security Strategy for Asia Pacific,” 5.

<sup>144</sup> Hanif and Khan “US Security Strategy for Asia Pacific,” 6.

<sup>145</sup> Hanif and Khan “US Security Strategy for Asia Pacific,” 6.

a marked increase in maritime cooperation between the two nations.<sup>146</sup> The latter indicates that the two nations share convergent strategic end-states for the region which uphold the U.S.-created rules-based international system.

Indo-U.S. maritime cooperation can be best exemplified through the “institutional dimension.”<sup>147</sup> The institutional dimension refers to the annual Malabar Exercises that began in 1992.<sup>148</sup> Malabar, now including Japan as permanent member with Australia and Singapore as non-permanent members, is an avenue for Indo-U.S. coordination.<sup>149</sup> Furthermore, India has been able to utilize the Malabar Exercises as a strategic entrance in the South China Sea to continue to raise the issues of “freedom of navigation” in direct contest to China.<sup>150</sup> Additionally, “the growing maritime cooperation between the U.S. and India within Asia Pacific is also evident by the progress made in advancing the bilateral inter-operability between the navies of both states.”<sup>151</sup> This inter-operability is bolstered by several agreements, such as the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA), which will eventually allow “U.S. naval warships and aircraft to gain refueling, repair and other logistical support from the Indian military bases.”<sup>152</sup> In sum, this agreement will “provide greater credence to the Indo-US strategic partnership and complement the U.S. rebalance to Asia Pacific, which has a strong maritime focus.”<sup>153</sup>

Indo-U.S. relations have experienced further advances under President Trump’s administration. President Trump wants to maintain “stability in the Indo-Pacific while safeguarding U.S. trade interests.”<sup>154</sup> Accordingly, the National Defense Authorization Act for 2017 “designated India as a major defense partner, which brings India at par with

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<sup>146</sup> Hanif and Khan “US Security Strategy for Asia Pacific,” 7.

<sup>147</sup> Hanif and Khan “US Security Strategy for Asia Pacific,” 9–10.

<sup>148</sup> Hanif and Khan “US Security Strategy for Asia Pacific,” 9–10.

<sup>149</sup> Hanif and Khan “US Security Strategy for Asia Pacific,” 9–10.

<sup>150</sup> Hanif and Khan “US Security Strategy for Asia Pacific,” 10.

<sup>151</sup> Hanif and Khan “US Security Strategy for Asia Pacific,” 10.

<sup>152</sup> Hanif and Khan “US Security Strategy for Asia Pacific,” 10.

<sup>153</sup> Hanif and Khan “US Security Strategy for Asia Pacific,” 11.

<sup>154</sup> Hanif and Khan “US Security Strategy for Asia Pacific,” 15.



the closest American partners in terms of defense trade and technology transfer.”<sup>155</sup> Furthermore, the 2017 National Defense Strategy places greater emphasis on relying on India as a “leading global power and strong strategic and defense partner.”<sup>156</sup> In sum, “the Indo-US relationship has come a long way in the post-Cold War era and despite many rounds of elections, the bilateral relationship has continued to strengthen due to overarching strategic, economic and political convergences.”<sup>157</sup> These convergences indicate that India resonates with the U.S. perception that China is a major threat to the U.S.-established international system. Furthermore, India is taking steps to abandon its non-aligned cloak by engaging with the United States to stem the rising tide of China.

Regardless of China’s actual potential to change the international system, India is taking active steps to mitigate the possibility. India does not wish to partake in the BRI because it represents a distinctly Chinese approach to economic growth within the region. India’s objections are noticeable through its increased interactions and growing partnerships with the United States, Japan, and Australia. Although these partnerships have an inherently “anti-Chinese connotation,” each country has divergent attitudes for dealing with China.<sup>158</sup> Despite some areas of divergence, India is converging with other nations on one thing: “a free and open Indo-Pacific in terms of governance, fundamental rights, and economic transparency.”<sup>159</sup> India unequivocally believes that China is a threat to a free and open Indo-Pacific. Therefore, it opposes the BRI.

## **B. INDIA’S ECONOMIC EXPLANATIONS**

The maintenance of a free and open Indo-Pacific and a rules-based international system has great economic implications for India. Thus, the BRI risks India’s developing market economy. Although India severely lacks the economic infrastructure capable of

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<sup>155</sup> Hanif and Khan “US Security Strategy for Asia Pacific,” 15.

<sup>156</sup> Hanif and Khan “US Security Strategy for Asia Pacific,” 15.

<sup>157</sup> Hanif and Khan “US Security Strategy for Asia Pacific,” 19.

<sup>158</sup> Kaura, Vinay, “India-US Relations: From Distant Partners to an Alliance,” *Parameters* 48, no. 3 (September 22, 2018): 42, [https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/parameters/Issues/Autumn\\_2018/8\\_Kaura.pdf](https://ssi.armywarcollege.edu/pubs/parameters/Issues/Autumn_2018/8_Kaura.pdf).

<sup>159</sup> Vinay. “India-US Relations,” 43.

connecting Indian markets to those within the BRI network, India's markets would most likely gain little from the BRI, potentially standing to lose more to the proposed regional competition.<sup>160</sup> Indian businesses believe that Indian market fragility and outward connectivity issues are fundamental hurdles before even considering the BRI as a possible enterprise. In this case, the BRI does not portend an end to globalization, but rather an opportunity not worth taking.<sup>161</sup> More specifically, both the IOR and inner-Indian connectivity issues make "Indian businesses skeptical about their abilities to exploit" BRI promised infrastructure for economic gain.<sup>162</sup> This is not to downplay the BRI's threat to India's market economy.

Indian businesses are concerned that the BRI's non-incorporation of pre-existing regional associations under its framework is a clear indication of PRC unwillingness to work with groups in which it does not have a majority vote.<sup>163</sup> Indian businesses are aware of the unfair practices of most Chinese companies exporting the BRI to BRI-member countries. In sum, the Indian business sector does not support the BRI because it will most likely be a waste of resources due to India's internal economic infrastructure issues and because the Indian business sector has witnessed the BRI being implemented in an unfair fashion outside preestablished regional associations.

Although the BCIM and MSRI both offer India economic promises via port and other infrastructure development, India "continues to suffer from poor trade infrastructure and suboptimal logistics—traits visible in varying degrees across the entire South Asian region, accounting substantially for the region's low economic cohesion and intra-regional trade."<sup>164</sup> Regardless of the economic merits of the BCIM and MSRI, India is worried that they will increase China's strategic hand at shaping the economic and security order of the region and the world.

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<sup>160</sup> Palit, "India's Economic and Strategic Perceptions," 297.

<sup>161</sup> Palit, "India's Economic and Strategic Perceptions," 297.

<sup>162</sup> Palit, "India's Economic and Strategic Perceptions," 298.

<sup>163</sup> Palit, "India's Economic and Strategic Perceptions," 300–301.

<sup>164</sup> Palit, "India's Economic and Strategic Perceptions," 298.

### C. INDIA'S GEOSTRATEGIC EXPLANATIONS

In addition to the economic factors affecting India's non-support for the BRI, there are several geostrategic factors. The BRI is directly tied to several Indian geostrategic concerns regarding territorial integrity and maritime superiority. Specifically, the CPEC, BCIM, and MSRI aggravate Indian fears regarding China's overall BRI involvement in the region. These fears are substantiated by Sino-Pakistani development in Kashmir, continued Sino-Indian border disputes, and an increased Chinese presence in the IOR.<sup>165</sup> Furthermore, China's ability to project power and increase its geostrategic position in South Asia is particularly concerning to India.

One of India's primary concerns is that China is using the MSRI as a mechanism to entrench itself militarily in the IOR under the pretense of port development. On the surface, China has stated that its primary aim for the MSRI is to secure its energy lines of communication. Regardless of Chinese motivations, China has directly challenged India as leading Indian Ocean power.<sup>166</sup> Furthermore, China is challenging India's ability to protect its immense geographic position and its ability to protect seaborne trade.<sup>167</sup> Fundamentally, India believes that the MSRI could offset the balance of power in favor of the PRC. China has demonstrated this growing geopolitical influence throughout the IOR via its "expanding and modernizing military forces" and its diplomatic efforts with IOR nations.<sup>168</sup> China's BRI activities are infringing upon India's strategic space in the IOR. India's counteractions indicate the gravity of the situation and further drive India's unsupportive response to the BRI writ large.

India has taken direct action to counter China's growing influence in the IOR; one prime example of this is Project Mausam.<sup>169</sup> In theory, Project Mausam is primarily designed to boost cultural linkages between IOR nations rather than infrastructure

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<sup>165</sup> DeSilva-Ranasinghe, "Why the Indian Ocean Matters."

<sup>166</sup> Khorana and Choukroune, "India and the Indian Ocean Region," 122–125.

<sup>167</sup> Khorana and Choukroune, "India and the Indian Ocean Region"; Pattanaik, "Indian Ocean in the Emerging Geo-strategic Context."

<sup>168</sup> Khorana and Choukroune, "India and the Indian Ocean Region," 125.

<sup>169</sup> Chhibber, "China's Bank and Road Initiative," 243.

development projects.<sup>170</sup> To date, Project Mausam includes over 39 IOR countries and has conducted several academic lectures in New Delhi.<sup>171</sup> Thus, India hopes the Project will directly challenge the BRI's soft power projection. India's goal for Project Mausam is like China's BRI. India hopes to "boost regional commercial and cultural linkages," and in contrast to China's BRI leading back to China, Project Mausam is designed to project India as the center of Indian Ocean trade.<sup>172</sup> India hopes to force the hedging South Asian states into its own political and security orbit, thus promoting an Indian-centric region that would fulfill the economic needs of regional inhabitants especially when juxtaposed to China's lucrative and secretive BRI.

To India's chagrin, the BRI necessitates China's geostrategic posturing in the IOR and South Asia. As previously stated, the "21st Century Maritime Silk Road provides both a highway for Beijing's drive towards cultivating new overseas markets, yet at the same time creates a new set of strategic vulnerability."<sup>173</sup> China's need to secure its energy-specific sea lines of communication is a strategic national interest.<sup>174</sup> To this end, "the National Development and Reform Commission together with the State Oceanic Administration unveiled the Vision for Maritime Cooperation under the BRI on June 20, 2017."<sup>175</sup> This document "essentially called on MSRI partner countries to jointly safeguard maritime connectivity, marine environment, and ensure maritime security."<sup>176</sup> The "policy manifestations of this vision came in the form of Chinese maritime security capacity building assistance for these foreign governments, which goes beyond arms sales or transfers to include regular port calls and bilateral naval exercises whenever PLAN ships

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<sup>170</sup> Mahesh Sharma, "Project Mausam Update." Press Information Bureau, Government of India Ministry of Culture, Dec. 17, 2018. <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=186490>.

<sup>171</sup> "Project Mausam Update."

<sup>172</sup> Chhibber, "China's Bank and Road Initiative," 243.

<sup>173</sup> Koh Swee Lean Collin, "China-India Rivalry at Sea: Capability, Trends and Challenges," *Asian Security* 15, no. 1 (2019): 7, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14799855.2019.1539820>.

<sup>174</sup> Collin, "China-India Rivalry at Sea," 7.

<sup>175</sup> Collin, "China-India Rivalry at Sea," 7.

<sup>176</sup> Collin, "China-India Rivalry at Sea," 7.

call at those ports.”<sup>177</sup> Essentially, China has ensured its right to protect its interests while simultaneously increasing its geostrategic position in South Asia and in the IOR. Access to foreign ports is necessary to sustain offensive combat operations against potential adversaries. The BRI is a perfect avenue to solidify China’s geostrategic hold in the region.

It is no wonder that India is particularly concerned about how the BRI could enhance Chinese capabilities to project military power in the region. India understands the threat posed by the BRI-enhanced Sino-Pakistani relationship. This relationship has severe military and security implications for India. There is no doubt that China is using its relationship with Pakistan to implement a strategy of “containment vis-à-vis India.”<sup>178</sup> Thus, the Indian-Pakistani border region remains a strategic threat to India, where China could potentially enter a strictly Indian-Pakistani tête-à-tête.<sup>179</sup> India understands that the Sino-Pakistani military relationship is strong.<sup>180</sup> Thus, India’s threat perception of China has increased, acknowledging the inevitability of the BRI to further disadvantage India’s geostrategic position in the border region.

Indian-Pakistani-Chinese border issues are essentially long-term territorial disputes that have been antagonized by the BRI.<sup>181</sup> Sino-Indian competition is advanced by these underlying border and territorial issues.<sup>182</sup> Smith explains that, “the China-India border dispute is better described as an amalgamation of separate territorial disputes occupying multiple, noncontiguous sections of territories.”<sup>183</sup> These sections include the Western Sector, Shaksgam Valley, the Middle sector, Sikkim, and the Eastern Sector.<sup>184</sup> Continuing factors such as mutual arms build-up along the border regions; political claims by both sides; and mutual challenges to national sovereignty have “kept the border dispute

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<sup>177</sup> Collin, “China-India Rivalry at Sea,” 7.

<sup>178</sup> Smith, *Cold Peace*, 231.

<sup>179</sup> Smith, *Cold Peace*, 232.

<sup>180</sup> Smith, *Cold Peace*, 232.

<sup>181</sup> Smith, *Cold Peace*, 12.

<sup>182</sup> Smith, *Cold Peace*, 12–13.

<sup>183</sup> Smith, *Cold Peace*, 22.

<sup>184</sup> Smith, *Cold Peace*, 23–27.

at center stage in bilateral relations in recent years.”<sup>185</sup> The continuation of border issues between China and India is a major political explanation for India’s refusal to engage the BRI. This was nowhere more evident than during the 2017 Doklam standoff between India and China. Doklam, a “tri-junction of Bhutan, Tibet, and India” was the scene of a 73-day crisis between aggressive Indian and Chinese army forces.<sup>186</sup> The crisis ended in “status quo” amidst antagonistic polemic exchanges.<sup>187</sup> The Doklam standoff exacerbated Indian anxieties regarding its current hot-cold relationship with China. Additionally, several press and analytical reports regarding the Doklam incident have correlated the incident to broader issues surrounding India’s refusal to partake in the BRI.<sup>188</sup> In a sense, the Doklam incident was “symptomatic of a greater power game between India and China for regional and global dominance, at whose core is China’s vigorous pursuit of its BRI inking East with West.”<sup>189</sup> India perceives the Doklam incident as indicative of future Chinese territorial pursuits to envelope India—essentially a “double pincer” movement enabled by the BRI and MSRI.<sup>190</sup>

Unfortunately, “the unprecedented docking of a PLA Navy submarine at Colombo port, Sri Lanka, in September 2014” indicated that the BRI will continue to aid PRC force projection not just to India’s west but also to its south.<sup>191</sup> Prior to this incident, “no PLAN submarine had ever visited Indian Ocean ports.” Amid Indian backlash, “Geng Yansheng, spokesman for the Chinese Ministry of National Defense, described the foreign port call—the first for PLAN submarines—as ‘routine’ and said it was on ‘an escort mission to the

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<sup>185</sup> Smith, *Cold Peace*, 13.

<sup>186</sup> Paul, “When Balance of Power Meets Globalization,” 52.

<sup>187</sup> Paul, “When Balance of Power Meets Globalization,” 52.

<sup>188</sup> Raj Chengappa, “India-China standoff: All you need to know about Doklam dispute,” *India Today*, July 17, 2017, <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/cover-story/story/20170717-india-china-bhutan-border-dispute-doklam-beijing-siliguri-corridor-1022690-2017-07-07>.

<sup>189</sup> Shinder Thandi, “Chinese Dreams, Indian Nightmares: Does the BRI Imply a Collision Course?” *21<sup>st</sup> Century Global Dynamics*, Nov. 9, 2017, <https://www.21global.ucsb.edu/global-e/november-2017/chinese-dreams-indian-nightmares-does-bri-imply-collision-course>.

<sup>190</sup> Thandi, “Chinese Dreams, Indian Nightmares.”

<sup>191</sup> Chhibber, “China’s Bank and Road Initiative,” 243.

Gulf of Aden and Somalia’.”<sup>192</sup> Usually submarine port calls would be perceived as benign, since every other naval power in the world does the same thing, but “Beijing’s real intent became speculative because the visit coincided with a standoff between Chinese and Indian troops in Ladakh.”<sup>193</sup> Additionally, the Doklam incident further exacerbated Indian fears of Chinese encroachment into the IOR—fears that can be made reality through the BRI. A month into the Doklam crisis “the [Indian Navy] reportedly observed at least 14 PLAN ships in the IOR, with Indian naval authorities remarking that ‘Chinese activity in the Indian Ocean has touched a new high in recent months,’ indicating concerns about connection between the PLAN presence and the border standoff.”<sup>194</sup> Indian concerns were warranted, “especially given Beijing’s unyielding stance and subtle threats to use force over Doklam.”<sup>195</sup> PLAN ships surged in the IOR between June–August 2017: “four distinct surface flotillas—including the 26th ETF—one submarine task unit, and two individual vessels, operated in the IOR.”<sup>196</sup> It was reported that “most of the ships were missile-armed principal surface combatants capable of self-defense and limited offensive operations.”<sup>197</sup> China’s naval force, if concentrated, could have posed a direct threat to IOR shipping, but the PLAN assets would have found it inherently difficult to conduct sustained offensive operations.”<sup>198</sup> These ships would require in-theater basing and shorter supply-lines to have any effect.<sup>199</sup> The BRI in terms of securing IOR basing would prove invaluable—an Indian perception not easily assuaged.

The BRI’s maritime infrastructure will most likely enable Chinese naval access to the IOR and “thereby increase its strategic presence in India’s backyard.”<sup>200</sup> India also

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<sup>192</sup> Collin, “China-India Rivalry at Sea,” 13.

<sup>193</sup> Collin, “China-India Rivalry at Sea,” 13.

<sup>194</sup> Collin, “China-India Rivalry at Sea,” 13–14.

<sup>195</sup> Collin, “China-India Rivalry at Sea,” 13–14.

<sup>196</sup> Collin, “China-India Rivalry at Sea,” 14.

<sup>197</sup> Collin, “China-India Rivalry at Sea,” 14.

<sup>198</sup> Collin, “China-India Rivalry at Sea,” 14.

<sup>199</sup> Collin, “China-India Rivalry at Sea,” 14.

<sup>200</sup> Chhibber, “China’s Bank and Road Initiative,” 243.

feels the pressure mounting from BRI-enabled PRC spheres of influence in the IOR. One example of PRC geostrategic expansion in the IOR was the elevation of the Chinese-Sri Lankan relationship to a “strategic cooperative partnership” in 2013.<sup>201</sup> This relationship status revealed the BRI’s true ability to generate soft power projection from Chinese investment.<sup>202</sup> India’s observation of the Chinese-Sri Lankan relationship confirms its anxiety that the BRI could garner similar Chinese pacts with other IOR nations. Such an outcome would further increase China’s geostrategic posture in the region at the detriment to India.<sup>203</sup> Thus, India is concerned that the BRI could foster “support among other affected states,” leaving India isolated from the rest of the IOR—causing a domino effect.<sup>204</sup>

#### **D. CONCLUSION**

India is concerned that the BRI will further expand Chinese influence and that the BRI is a prelude to an illiberal Sino-centric regional order. Underlying India’s fears regarding the BRI is how India greatly benefited from the U.S.-established and -led international system, which has enabled India to prosper when it overhauled its own economic system in the early 1990s. India cannot afford to be ensnared in a Sino-centric regional and global order that seeks to enhance Chinese economic and strategic aims. Rather, India only sees sustained growth from an open and equitable international system. Thus, India’s leaders have started to push the narrative that India can be the next great leader of an open and further-integrated global commons. India cannot afford to lose the long-term normative game with China. Thus, behind Indian pledges to maintain the rules-based international system are Indian actions taken against Chinese soft- and hard-power projection. One such action is India’s enhancement of its maritime cooperation with the United States and other regional states. India hopes these actions will check Chinese provocations in the South China Sea and China’s ambitions in the IOR. Fundamentally,

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<sup>201</sup> Chhibber, “China’s Bank and Road Initiative,” 246.

<sup>202</sup> Chhibber, “China’s Bank and Road Initiative,” 246.

<sup>203</sup> Chhibber, “China’s Bank and Road Initiative,” 246.

<sup>204</sup> Banerjee, “China’s One Belt One Road Initiative,” 8.



India sees itself as the region's leading economic and political power. India's investment in the rules-based international system and its want to protect that investment is indicative of its desire to continue receiving its benefits. India is invested in a rules-based international order and cannot allow China, via the BRI, to set illiberal international standards. India thus primarily does not support the BRI because it represents China's systemic remaking of the international order.

In addition to Indian perceptions that the BRI is a threat to the established international political system, India's non-support of the BRI is also due to economic considerations. Indian business and government leaders think their country cannot engage in the BRI due to its internal infrastructure deficits. In the eyes of many Indian business elites, to do so would be a sunk cost when compared to possible benefits of the BRI. Furthermore, India wants to be able to build itself up and not be reliant on Chinese investment—regardless the BRI's future potential. India wants to lead the region and yet is unable to do so—a fact that adds to Indian resentments toward China and the BRI. Further exacerbating these resentments are the geostrategic impacts of the BRI.

The territorial disputes between China and India continue to be a source of mistrust between the two states. India believes that supporting the BRI will be like acquiescing to Chinese encroachment in terms of its territorial claims to the north and within the IOR. Additionally, India cannot dismiss China's blatant strategic posturing in Kashmir, Doklam, and the IOR via BRI-connected initiatives. In sum, India believes that the BRI will enable China to secure its position in South Asia and the IOR. Therefore, the BRI's geostrategic implications also instigate India's non-support of the BRI.

Regardless of current Indian concern surrounding the BRI, India has stood fast to its 'wait and watch' strategy. In late April 2019, India sent two warships, the INS Kolkata and Shakti, to Qingdao, China, to partake in the People's Liberation Army Navy fleet review commemorating the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its inception.<sup>205</sup> This action is a clear continuing of India's mixed strategy aimed at China. India's non-provocative stance with

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<sup>205</sup>“Two Indian Naval Ships to Take Part in Chinese Navy's 70th Anniversary Celebrations,” *Economic Times*, April 8, 2019, <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/two-indian-naval-ships-to-take-part-in-chinese-navys-70th-anniversary-celebrations/articleshow/68760631.cms>.

China and strategic posturing with the United States will further complicate the South Asian region's security environment. India, the ever-prudent strategic player, does not intend to lose this power game. Thus, the possibility of India changing its position on BRI seems unlikely.<sup>206</sup> India does not support the BRI because it represents a direct threat to India as the heir-apparent to the throne of South Asia.

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<sup>206</sup> Richard W. Hu, "China's 'One Belt One Road' Strategy: Opportunity or Challenge for India?" *China Report* 53, no. 2 (May 2017): 108, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0009445517696619>.

### III. PAKISTAN AND THE BRI

Pakistan, since its inception, has oriented its security strategy toward balancing against its regional adversary, India. Decades of reciprocal defense posturing between the two nations has embroiled Pakistani nationalism and underpinned its entire strategic footing. Although Pakistan's 2017 military expenditures were \$10.7 billion, with a planned increase between 10–20% for 2018, India's figures dwarfed Pakistan's, coming in at \$63 billion.<sup>207</sup> Additionally, India's 2017 GDP (in current U.S. dollars) was \$2.6 trillion compared to Pakistan's \$304 billion.<sup>208</sup> Although military expenditures and GDP are only two indicators of national power, Pakistan in this sense, is disadvantaged when compared to its main rival. Pakistan continues to lag behind India in terms of military power and economic growth due to macroeconomic pitfalls.<sup>209</sup> Pakistan's desire to strategically counter growing Indian power within the region lacks a crucial pathway to its potential power. The BRI offers such a pathway. Pakistan has engaged with China's BRI because it offers Pakistan a road to economic growth and, by extension, national power. Pakistan will then use this acquired national power to increase the strength of its geostrategic position in South Asia to counter the growing threat of Indian dominance in the region.

This chapter argues that geostrategic factors, underpinned by the historical roots of Sino-Pakistani cooperation, dominate the explanations for Pakistan's involvement in the BRI. Furthermore, economic and political factors are observably subsumed under geostrategic considerations. Thus, this chapter shows that Pakistan is deeply involved with China's BRI for two reasons: first, due to its preestablished relationship with China and

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<sup>207</sup> "SIPRI Military Expenditure Data," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), accessed April 1, 2018, <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>; "Chapter Six: Asia," *The Military Balance* 119, no. 1 (2019) <https://doi.org/10.1080/04597222.2018.1561032>; "Pakistan: Summary: Defense Budget," Jane's by IHS Markit, February 20, 2019, <https://janes-ihc-com.libproxy.nps.edu/Janes/Display/>; "Data for: China, Pakistan, and India," World Bank, accessed April 1, 2018, 2018, <https://data.worldbank.org/?locations=CN-IN-PK>

<sup>208</sup> "Data for: China, Pakistan, and India," World Bank, accessed April 1, 2018, 2018, <https://data.worldbank.org/?locations=CN-IN-PK>

<sup>209</sup> Faisal Pervaiz, "Pakistan Trudges Along a Familiar Economic Path," Stratfor, September 2018, <https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/pakistan-trudges-along-familiar-economic-path#/home/error>

second, due to its desire to solidify its geostrategic position in response to a growing India—as the BRI is a mechanism to further solidify the strategic Sino-Pakistani alliance arrayed against India. Pakistan’s desired geostrategic end-state is therefore closely linked to the interplay between economic and political factors. The political and economic variables expose the necessity of Pakistan’s military (and political) elites’ search for avenues of economic growth and domestic political stability to reap the benefits of the BRI and the reinvigorated Sino-Pakistani relationship.

The geostrategic explanations for Pakistan’s involvement in the BRI are thus motivated and represented by historical, economic, and political factors. First, the historical foundation of the Sino-Pakistani alliance as a strategic counterbalance against India remains a prominent trend and driver in Pakistan’s decision to engage the BRI. This relationship has found new life among the changing global power distribution and the waning U.S.-Pakistani relationship. Second, in terms of economic factors, the Pakistani government’s desire to establish a solid macroeconomic footing to create a stable investment environment amenable to foreign investors via the BRI’s infrastructure development is one side of the coin. Pakistan’s elite believe that economic development is a prerequisite for national power. Economic development is therefore a means to a geostrategic end. Additionally, under the pretense of economic reasons, the BRI’s promise of energy security is multifaceted. Although the BRI promises an end to the effects of energy scarcity upon the local Pakistani population, it is largely underwritten by geostrategic motivations for both Pakistan and China. Finally, in terms of political factors, the deliberate actions of Pakistan’s political elite reveal the hidden geostrategic intentions for joining the BRI. The instability of Pakistan’s domestic political landscape offers a glimpse of how far the Pakistani government will go to protect its investments in the BRI for the geostrategic dividends. The following sections first review the BRI’s CPEC and then reviews the evidence for the geostrategic argument via geostrategic, economic, and political explanatory factors.

## A. OVERVIEW OF CHINESE-PAKISTAN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR (CPEC)

The BRI's Chinese-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) specifically concerns Pakistan.<sup>210</sup> CPEC entails the development of “multimodal infrastructure links, proposed to be eventually integrated with the OBOR.”<sup>211</sup> Most of the planned projects will be funded through direct investment loans via the Silk Road Fund, China Development Bank, and Export and Import Bank of China.<sup>212</sup>

CPEC was formalized between Pakistan and China in May 2017.<sup>213</sup> CPEC was designed to be a comprehensive economic development corridor that will create efficient transportation networks, facilitate secure energy lines of communications, and eventually connect the port of Gwadar to Xinjiang.<sup>214</sup> According to CPEC's long-term plan, it will be the physical dimension of future Sino-Pakistani trade and economic cooperation.<sup>215</sup> The Long Term Plan also stipulates measures to increase Pakistan's domestic outlook in terms of “socio-economic development and prosperity.”<sup>216</sup> Pakistan's leaders believe that the CPEC will be a panacea to many of the country's economic problems, including its massive debt.<sup>217</sup> CPEC's planned projects include energy, infrastructure, agricultural, and industry infrastructure development projects.<sup>218</sup> Although CPEC professes a goal of economic

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<sup>210</sup> Palit, “India's Economic and Strategic Perceptions,” 294.

<sup>211</sup> Palit, “India's Economic and Strategic Perceptions,” 294.

<sup>212</sup> Zheping Huang, “Your Guide to Understanding OBOR, China's New Silk Road,” Quartz, May 15, 2017, <https://qz.com/983460/obor-an-extremely-simple-guide-to-understanding-chinas-one-belt-one-road-forum-for-its-new-silk-road/>.

<sup>213</sup> Dadwal and Purushothaman, “CPEC in Pakistan's Quest for Energy Security,” 515.

<sup>214</sup> Boni, “Civil-military Relations in Pakistan,” 498–499.

<sup>215</sup> “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks,” *International Crisis Group Asia Report N297*, June 29, 2018, [https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/297-china-pakistan-economic-corridor-opportunities-and-risks\\_0.pdf](https://d2071andvip0wj.cloudfront.net/297-china-pakistan-economic-corridor-opportunities-and-risks_0.pdf), 10.

<sup>216</sup> “Long Term Plan for China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,” CPEC, 2017, 4, <https://www.pc.gov.pk/uploads/cpec/LTP.pdf>.

<sup>217</sup> Dadwal and Purushothaman, “CPEC in Pakistan's Quest for Energy Security,” 515.

<sup>218</sup> Dadwal and Purushothaman, 515; “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks,” 9.

development, the Long Term Plan subtly portrays geostrategic aspirations: CPEC will enable Pakistan to “harness its location advantage” to grow into an Asian Tiger.<sup>219</sup>

## **B. EXPLANATORY FACTORS**

The proceeding sections will review three factors (or motivations) contributing to Pakistan’s supportive response to the BRI: geostrategic, economic, and political. Each factor will review evidence and existing analysis on why Pakistan has chosen to engage in the BRI.

### **1. Geostrategic**

China and Pakistan’s relationship is a geostrategic one. Sino-Pakistan cooperation was forged via a historic *quid pro quo* for strategic assistance. Thus, since 1950 and through multiple wars, the geostrategic relationship has been highlighted by multiple instances of mutual diplomatic, military, and political support. A common thread of the relationship was that the Sino-Pakistani partnership was bolstered when they both had to act as a countervailing force against India and the United States. The historical geostrategic motivations behind Sino-Pakistani relations can therefore be extrapolated to Pakistan’s support of the BRI—the BRI incorporates the geostrategic precedence set by years of mutual strategic assistance between China and Pakistan.

As previously mentioned, Pakistan and China have been politically and strategically interconnected since 1950, when Pakistan “became the first Muslim country to recognize the People’s Republic of China and establish diplomatic ties.”<sup>220</sup> The 1962 Sino-Indian war dramatically affected China’s relationship with Pakistan for the better, when “diplomatic relations achieved real momentum.”<sup>221</sup> The pace of cooperation was accelerated in 1963 when China and Pakistan resolved their then border dispute (in the

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<sup>219</sup> “Long Term Plan for China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,” 5–6.

<sup>220</sup> Ahmad and Singh, “Sino-Pakistan Friendship,” 133–134.

<sup>221</sup> Ahmad and Singh, “Sino-Pakistan Friendship,” 135.

vicinity of Xinjiang).<sup>222</sup> This move signified that both China and Pakistan were willing to start amiable relations under the threat of thawing U.S.-Indian relations; the United States supported India in the 1962 war with “vast quantities of weapons [that] radically [shifted] the power balance in the region.”<sup>223</sup> In the years following the 1962 border war, China and Pakistan engaged in multiple high-level diplomatic exchanges.<sup>224</sup> Furthermore, in 1963, “Pakistan and China entered into an agreement granting each other the most favored nation status in trading and shipping, thus, furthering their trade relations.”<sup>225</sup> This move was precipitated by the Sino-Pakistani perception that they had to cooperate to check increasing U.S.-Indian regional cooperation.

The Sino-Pakistani relationship was further strengthened during the Indian-Pakistani War of 1965, when Pakistan pushed into the contested Kashmir region.<sup>226</sup> China “supported Pakistan in diplomatic, economic, and moral terms.”<sup>227</sup> The 1965 War marked the beginning of the geostrategic context of their relationship. With the 1962 War as a precedence, China used the full weight of its diplomatic power to contest India during the Indian-Pakistani War of 1971.<sup>228</sup> China openly criticized India for its military support of the liberation of Bangladesh.<sup>229</sup> Furthermore, “China threatened the use of veto power in support of Pakistan, a move which later on facilitated the release of 90,000 Pakistani soldiers detained by India during the war.”<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>222</sup> Umbreen Javaid and Rameesha Javaid, “Strengthening Geo-strategic Bond of Pakistan and China Through Geo-economic Configuration,” *Pakistan Economic and Social Review* 54, no. 1 (Summer 2016): 125, [http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/pesr/PDF-FILES/9\\_V54\\_1\\_SUM2016.pdf](http://pu.edu.pk/images/journal/pesr/PDF-FILES/9_V54_1_SUM2016.pdf).

<sup>223</sup> Ahmad and Singh, “Sino-Pakistan Friendship,” 135; Javaid and Javaid, “Strengthening Geo-strategic Bond,” 125.

<sup>224</sup> Ahmad and Singh, “Sino-Pakistan Friendship,” 135.

<sup>225</sup> Javaid and Javaid, “Strengthening Geo-strategic Bond,” 125.

<sup>226</sup> Ahmad and Singh, “Sino-Pakistan Friendship,” 135.

<sup>227</sup> Ahmad and Singh, “Sino-Pakistan Friendship,” 135.

<sup>228</sup> Ahmad and Singh, “Sino-Pakistan Friendship,” 135.

<sup>229</sup> Ahmad and Singh, “Sino-Pakistan Friendship,” 135.

<sup>230</sup> Ahmad and Singh, “Sino-Pakistan Friendship,” 135.

Since the inception of their relationship, the Sino-Pakistani partnership evolved to a strong alliance with increasingly shared economic and political interests.<sup>231</sup> Contemporarily, it can be characterized as being “all weather.”<sup>232</sup> Besides China’s history of armed and political support to Pakistan, both China and Pakistan “have engaged in prolific political, strategic and economic shared activities, [where] every military or political regime in Pakistan has strongly favored ties with China.”<sup>233</sup> Thus, the evolution of the Sino-Pakistan relationship was forged through geostrategic motivations. China was and will continue to be interested in Pakistan due to its geostrategic position (situated along critical energy routes, sea lines of communications, and as an entrance to Eurasia and Europe); pursuing this interest has been made easier by the established precedence of geostrategic cooperation against regional competitors.<sup>234</sup> Furthermore, “the bond between Pakistan and China is, therefore, crucial because it enables China to limit Indian ambitions to rise as a regional power, to counter-balance the emerging US-India partnership and to enhance her standing against India.”<sup>235</sup>

Strategic development and “shared priorities” gave birth to Sino-Pakistani economic cooperation and partnership development.<sup>236</sup> The first trace of Sino-Pakistani economic cooperation was observed through the construction of the Karakoram highway during the 1970s and is often quoted as an example of their friendship.<sup>237</sup> Although, the Sino-Pakistani relationship has often persisted through political and security cooperation, the lack of economic linkages between the two nations has undermined their

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<sup>231</sup> Ahmad and Singh, “Sino-Pakistan Friendship,” 133–134.

<sup>232</sup> Ahmad and Singh, “Sino-Pakistan Friendship,” 135.

<sup>233</sup> Ahmad and Singh, “Sino-Pakistan Friendship,” 135.

<sup>234</sup> Ahmad and Singh, “Sino-Pakistan Friendship,” 135.

<sup>235</sup> Javaid and Javaid, “Strengthening Geo-strategic Bond,” 125.

<sup>236</sup> “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks,” 3.

<sup>237</sup> “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks,” 3; Small, *The China Pakistan Axis*, 99, 105.



partnership.<sup>238</sup> CPEC offers both Pakistan and China a way to materialize that highly valuable yet elusive link.

According to Muhammad Chawla, since 2013, Chinese think tanks have deliberated on what “path China’s foreign policy should take.”<sup>239</sup> The alleged conclusion of these talks was that China should focus on its periphery.<sup>240</sup> Furthermore, at the 2013 “Peripheral Diplomacy Work Conference, President Xi said that China wish [es] to increase its relations with neighbors by strengthening economic ties and deepening security cooperation.” Pakistan understood the importance of China’s wish to keep its periphery strong.<sup>241</sup> The Chinese perspective was simple: enable Pakistan to achieve stability, thereby enabling peripheral security. The Pakistani perspective was twofold: increase its security against regional threats and further integrate with China. Thus, Pakistan’s desire to support CPEC is tied to its want to further develop its relationship with China for the purpose of balancing against India.<sup>242</sup> Furthermore, as a result of Pakistan’s alleged state-sponsorship of terrorism, it has lost one of its major supporters, the United States.<sup>243</sup> China not only offers Pakistan a counterweight to India, but also a friend on the international stage that could potentially fill that void.<sup>244</sup> A rising India and an unsupportive United States have created a power vacuum for Pakistan, thus prompting Pakistan to balance toward China.

The Gwadar Port exemplifies Sino-Pakistani balancing. As previously mentioned, Gwadar is strategically located on Indian Ocean near the Persian Gulf and Strait of Hormuz

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<sup>238</sup> Small, *The China Pakistan Axis*, 97.

<sup>239</sup> Muhammad Iqbal Chawla, “One Belt One Road Summit 2017 and Its Implications for CPEC: An Overview” *South Asian Studies* 32, no. 2 (Jul, 2017): 278, <http://libproxy.nps.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.libproxy.nps.edu/docview/2007652555?accountid=12702>.

<sup>240</sup> Chawla, “One Belt One Road Summit 2017,” 279.

<sup>241</sup> Chawla, “One Belt One Road Summit 2017,” 279.

<sup>242</sup> Garlick, “Deconstructing the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,” 532.

<sup>243</sup> “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks,” 4; Smith, *Cold Peace*, 233.

<sup>244</sup> “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks,” 4; Smith, *Cold Peace*, 233.

and the oil rich Middle East.”<sup>245</sup> It has been noted that Pakistan “lacks ports for shipping and maritime security—in past conflicts, the Indian Navy quickly blockaded Karachi, severely limiting the Pakistan Navy’s maneuverability.”<sup>246</sup> The port will aid the Pakistani Navy in force projection into the IOR.<sup>247</sup> From China’s perspective, the port will “operate as a tail of the New Silk Road, which will connect China’s Kashgar to different communication networks and it holds an essential position in the CPEC venture.”<sup>248</sup> Thus, in terms of China’s energy security, “Gwadar is a key shipping point as it provides a much shorter route than the current 12,900km route from the Persian Gulf through the Strait of Malacca to China’s eastern seaboard.”<sup>249</sup> In conjunction to energy security, the port will undoubtedly “broaden [Chinese] influence in the Indian Ocean.”<sup>250</sup> Thus, geostrategic motivations provide the most context for Pakistan’s involvement in the BRI. Pakistan needs China to not only grow economically, but to solidify its place in a highly contested region—a region that has been contested since the founding of their countries. The BRI not only offers an avenue of growth, it also offers effective geostrategic balancing mechanisms (e.g., ports, highways, presence) for both China and Pakistan.

## **2. Economic**

The economic factors affecting Pakistan’s positive support of the BRI are foreign direct investment, energy security, economic development zones, and labor development. Pakistan believes that CPEC will enable economic growth via the aforementioned factors, but each economic factor has incorporated geostrategic motivations. As previously mentioned, CPEC is the engine for Pakistan’s growth—a growth necessitated by India’s performance and allegedly delayed by the United States. Thus, “Pakistan and China are

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<sup>245</sup> Manzoor K. Afridi and Iram Khalid, “The Politics of Interdependence: A Case of China Pakistan Economic Corridor,” *A Research Journal of South Asian Studies*, 31, no. 2 (Jul 2016): 283, <https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1P3-4311939951/the-politics-of-interdependence-a-case-of-china-pakistan>.

<sup>246</sup> Afridi and Khalid, “The Politics of Interdependence,” 283.

<sup>247</sup> Javaid and Javaid, “Strengthening Geo-strategic Bond,” 126.

<sup>248</sup> Afridi and Khalid, “The Politics of Interdependence,” 283.

<sup>249</sup> Javaid and Javaid, “Strengthening Geo-strategic Bond,” 131.

<sup>250</sup> Javaid and Javaid, “Strengthening Geo-strategic Bond,” 126.

attempting to create a new alliance, outside military cooperation, through economic cooperation that will further cement the Pak-China friendship.”<sup>251</sup> In sum, Pakistan expects the confluence of the areas of economic development to enable Pakistan to reach parity with India and to be a regional economic power. Furthermore, “Pakistan and China’s relationship is likely to bolster and become more vibrant in the coming future as the attractive geo-economic dimension is intensifying and deepening their geostrategic alliance; thus, further fortifying and reinforcing their association.”<sup>252</sup> The following drivers support the geostrategic underpinnings of the economic explanatory factor.

One driver for Pakistan’s support of the BRI is the potential allocation of FDI. Some scholars argue the empirical basis of FDI’s impact on developing states, but there is no doubt that it enables a country’s total capital accumulation—a key ingredient for growth.<sup>253</sup> According to a World Bank study, *Foreign Investment across the Belt and Road: Patterns, Determinants, and Effects*, the BRI’s proposed infrastructure development could “increase FDI flows to BRI’s South Asian region by 5.19 percent.”<sup>254</sup> The report projects increases in FDI flows throughout other regions as well.<sup>255</sup> Pakistan is aware of the impact that infrastructure development will have on its ability to attract FDI from other country sources. But the question remains, who in Pakistan will benefit from a strengthened economy? The BRI’s economic benefits could eventually be felt by all, but the positive impact of cash flows into Pakistan will increase the state’s relative position to India.

A 2015 economic survey estimated that “when the CPEC project will complete in 2017, the value of this project would be greater than the inflow of FDI in Pakistan since 1970.”<sup>256</sup> Furthermore, China has already “committed \$50 billion [to CPEC], of which

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<sup>251</sup> Javaid and Javaid, “Strengthening Geo-strategic Bond,” 133–134.

<sup>252</sup> Javaid and Javaid, “Strengthening Geo-strategic Bond,” 139.

<sup>253</sup> Shazia Kousar, Abdul Rehman, Mahwish Zafar, Karman Ali, Nadia Nasir, “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: A Gateway to Sustainable Economic Development,” *International Journal of Social Economics* 45, no. 6 (2018): 913, <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJSE-02-2017-0059>.

<sup>254</sup> Maggie Xiaoyang Chen and Chuanhao Lin, “Foreign Investment Across the Belt and Road: Patterns, Determinants, and Effects” (working paper, World Bank Group, 2018), 26.

<sup>255</sup> Chen and Lin, “Foreign Investment Across the Belt and Road,” 26.

<sup>256</sup> Kousar et al., “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,” 912.

\$35 billion [has already been invested in ongoing energy projects] and \$15 billion in infrastructure, [such as] Gwadar development, industrial zones, and mass transit schemes.”<sup>257</sup> But it is expected (Pakistan hopes) that the committed \$50 billion will be far exceeded in the next five years.<sup>258</sup> This expectation was rooted in the fact that “Pakistan received \$975.4 million FDI during the period 2015–2016, and the disbursement of FDI from China to Pakistan was \$2.1 billion and share of China in FDI grew up to \$516 million in Pakistan during the period.”<sup>259</sup> This massive influx of FDI, as a result of the BRI, is therefore a key driver of Pakistan’s support. Pakistan has had a rough time generating global interest (via FDI) due to its unstable political landscape. But, Ishaq Dar, Pakistan’s Finance minister, highlighted the economic benefits of CPEC in an Asian Development Bank summit conference and claimed that, in the near future, “Pakistan will be the only choice destination for foreign investors.”<sup>260</sup> Furthermore, as a result of Pakistan’s involvement in the BRI, there have been claims that “different prospective investors have shown their willingness to invest almost \$150 billion in different business and manufacturing centers of Pakistan.”<sup>261</sup>

Those prospective investors are eyeing CPEC, which since 2015 has “entered into the realization phase where many projects have been completed, many projects are being developed and multiple business opportunities are being generated.”<sup>262</sup> Therefore, CPEC offers foreign investors an avenue into Pakistan, specifically in sectors such as “machined farming, electricity-operated cottage industry, high-capacity industrial unit, construction of transportation, communication, storage facilities, tourism, consultancy and medical sector.”<sup>263</sup> Thus, FDI is a main driver for Pakistan’s support of the BRI. The BRI has offered Pakistan an avenue for growth. This growth has been motivated by Pakistan’s need

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<sup>257</sup> Kousar et al., “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,” 912.

<sup>258</sup> Kousar et al., “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,” 912.

<sup>259</sup> Kousar et al., “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,” 912.

<sup>260</sup> Kousar et al., “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,” 912.

<sup>261</sup> Kousar et al., “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,” 912.

<sup>262</sup> Kousar et al., “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,” 912.

<sup>263</sup> Kousar et al., “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,” 912.

to balance against India. Pakistan is acutely aware of India's growing economic and military power in the region. In order to compete within South Asia, Pakistan had to take its relationship with China to the next level. Pakistan understands the implications of economic weakness on geostrategic security. Thus, FDI is a minor causal factor in an overwhelmingly geostrategic-centric causal chain leading to Pakistan's support of the BRI.

A second economic driver for Pakistan's involvement in the BRI is its proposed energy projects. These energy projects would hopefully enable Pakistan's investment atmosphere and by default, enhance Pakistan's geostrategic alliance with China. Pakistan's need for energy development can be deduced through CPEC fund allocation. Of the \$50 billion allocated for CPEC, \$35 billion has been earmarked for energy projects.<sup>264</sup> Furthermore, it is widely known that Pakistan suffers from persistent electrical outages.<sup>265</sup> This may be one motivating factor behind CPEC's original energy development plans, which emphasized the need for the construction of coal plants, hydroelectric plants, solar energy fields, and wind farms.<sup>266</sup> On paper, CPEC has all of the answers to Pakistan's energy and FDI problems.<sup>267</sup> But from the PRC's perspective, the geographic position of Pakistan makes it a perfect energy allocation hub for China. Thus, Pakistan's energy security would enable China to focus on securing Chinese energy lines of communication from the Middle East to Pakistan. Ergo, Pakistan's need to develop its energy extraction industry cannot be viewed through the context of pure economic motivations—there are geostrategic overtones.

A third key driver for CPEC is the development of Special Economic Zones (SEZs) for industrialization.<sup>268</sup> Pakistan believes these SEZs to be crucial for “economic growth and job creation.”<sup>269</sup> Furthermore, Pakistani leaders believe that SEZs will create suitable

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<sup>264</sup> Dadwal and Purushothaman, 515.

<sup>265</sup> Dadwal and Purushothaman, “CPEC in Pakistan's Quest for Energy Security,” 515.

<sup>266</sup> Dadwal and Purushothaman, 515, 520–521.

<sup>267</sup> Dadwal and Purushothaman, 523.

<sup>268</sup> “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks,” 12.

<sup>269</sup> “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks,” 12.

environments for foreign investors.<sup>270</sup> This infusion of foreign investment in localized Pakistani sectors would then lead to greater local-level economic stimulation.<sup>271</sup> Fundamentally, SEZs are one more level of CPEC designed to enable FDI and economic stimulation—to reach economic parity with India.

Finally, Pakistan believes that CPEC will develop the labor market—a key element in achieving relative economic and political stability.<sup>272</sup> Therefore, “it is being documented that the CPEC project will create job opportunities in real estate, construction, agriculture, fishery, cottage industry and in tourism sector”<sup>273</sup> The Applied Economic Research Centre has estimated “that at the completion of the mid- to long-term plan of CPEC, 700,000 direct jobs during the period of 2015–2030 and 1.4 million indirect jobs will be originated in supply chain and services sector. Official data revealed that, by the end of June 2017, almost 30,000 Pakistani engineers and doctors were directly employed in early harvest CPEC projects.”<sup>274</sup> Thus, it has been advocated by several scholars that “CPEC will increase the employment level, improve quality of life of people and lower the poverty in Pakistan.”<sup>275</sup> Pakistan understands the importance of human capital investment in economic development, but further amplifying the geostrategic overtones of CPEC is the alleged reputation of “Chinese firms [bringing] most of their employees with them, from highly skilled engineers to construction workers.”<sup>276</sup> Other scholars have noted that “while [Pakistani] officials insist that CPEC has already generated an employment boom, the only concrete evidence of job creation is in the armed forces” in the form of security for CPEC projects and Chinese nationals.<sup>277</sup> Given the lack of transparency and data, the

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<sup>270</sup> “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks,” 9.

<sup>271</sup> “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks,” 9.

<sup>272</sup> Kousar et al., “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,” 915.

<sup>273</sup> Kousar et al., “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,” 915.

<sup>274</sup> Kousar et al., “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,” 914.

<sup>275</sup> Kousar et al., “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor,” 915.

<sup>276</sup> Aasim Sajjad Akhtar, “The China–Pakistan Economic Corridor: Beyond the Rule of Capital?” *Monthly Review*, June 1, 2018, 41, <https://monthlyreview.org/2018/06/01/the-china-pakistan-economic-corridor/>.

<sup>277</sup> Akhtar, “The China–Pakistan Economic Corridor,” 41.

employment rates attributable to CPEC will have to be studied in the coming years of CPEC's life cycle. If CPEC fails to ignite employment growth or human capital development, then CPEC can be better understood in a geostrategic context. If development fails to stimulate sustained economic growth, it will succeed in strengthening the Sino-Pakistan axis.

### **3. Political**

The political factors for Pakistan's involvement in the BRI are effectively subsumed under geostrategic concerns. Pakistan is effectively steering support for the BRI due to the BRI's promise of enhancing Pakistan's geostrategic position. It has been noted that CPEC has "acquired the status of a sacred cow."<sup>278</sup> For the most part, the Pakistani government and military elite agree that protecting Chinese investment under CPEC is a main priority—a protection in the form of public relations campaigns and outright suppression of fomenters of regional backlash to the BRI.<sup>279</sup> But domestic politics in both Pakistan and China play a large role in moving CPEC forward—to fulfill the two countries' geostrategic end states.

Domestic politics have a variable impact on Sino-Pakistani relations. But, the importance for both China and Pakistan to generate mutual public support for the BRI and for continued geostrategic cooperation remains paramount. For example, "one of the more uncomfortable characteristics of the bilateral relationship is the recognition that the Chinese people do not view Pakistan nearly as favorably as Pakistanis view China."<sup>280</sup> Exemplifying this characterization was a 2012 Pew Poll: "60 percent of Pakistanis reported a 'very favorable' view of China while only 4 percent of Chinese reported a 'very favorable' view of Pakistan."<sup>281</sup> In most cases throughout the Sino-Pakistani relationship, the decisions for mutual assistance were motivated by achieving geostrategic superiority over other regional powers. There is a possibility that domestic politics can affect bilateral

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<sup>278</sup> Akhtar, "The China–Pakistan Economic Corridor," 44.

<sup>279</sup> Akhtar, "The China–Pakistan Economic Corridor," 44–45.

<sup>280</sup> Smith, *Cold Peace*, 135.

<sup>281</sup> Smith, *Cold Peace*, 134.

economic and political relations. In 2008, Pakistan attempted to secure foreign currency to avoid a financial crisis—China refused to help because, among many other reasons, Beijing could not convince a skeptical Chinese citizenry to aid Pakistan.<sup>282</sup> Thus, the political motivations for Pakistan’s support for the BRI remain tied to the need to appease its northern neighbor—for without China, Pakistan will be unable to actualize parity with India or gain regional dominance.

Sino-Pakistani relations, although not always entirely positive or consistent, have remained a steadfast priority for Pakistani military and civilian leadership.<sup>283</sup> Pakistan’s military has unilaterally monopolized foreign policy development.<sup>284</sup> As a result, there is a uniform consensus among Pakistani political elites that Sino-Pakistani relations are of primary importance to Pakistan’s national security.<sup>285</sup> Thus, Pakistan’s commitment to the BRI can be further attributed to the military’s “security vision of Pakistan-China relations.”<sup>286</sup> Underlying the military’s decision to support the BRI is its desire to combat the threat posed by India.<sup>287</sup> The military has taken great steps to protect its involvement in the BRI.<sup>288</sup> Furthermore, the Pakistani military continues to influence “domestic political agenda” to both maintain the Sino-Pakistani relationship and to quell domestic dissent.<sup>289</sup>

One example of this influence was the military’s support of the Pakistani Parliament’s 2010 “18th Amendment aimed at providing a peaceful province to attract Chinese investments” by quelling issues causing domestic political instability in

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<sup>282</sup> Smith, *Cold Peace*, 135.

<sup>283</sup> Boni, “Civil-military Relations in Pakistan,” 499.

<sup>284</sup> Boni, “Civil-military Relations in Pakistan,” 499.

<sup>285</sup> Boni, “Civil-military Relations in Pakistan,” 499; “China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks,” 9.

<sup>286</sup> Boni, “Civil-military Relations in Pakistan,” 500.

<sup>287</sup> Boni, “Civil-military Relations in Pakistan,” 500.

<sup>288</sup> Boni, “Civil-military Relations in Pakistan,” 504–506.

<sup>289</sup> Boni, “Civil-military Relations in Pakistan,” 506.



Balochistan.<sup>290</sup> The military understands the importance of CPEC for Pakistan's economic strength and internal political stability.<sup>291</sup> As a result, most political actors have signed on to the initiative. Since the start of BRI-related projects, most of Pakistan's political elites have touted CPEC as an important tool for developing Sino-Pakistani relations and for economic growth.<sup>292</sup> Furthermore, the military has deemed CPEC "a national security priority" and has taken measures to protect it from predation.<sup>293</sup> The direct influence of Pakistan's security apparatus clearly denotes the geostrategic motivations for CPEC.

To the military's chagrin, there are continuous challenges to CPEC from Pakistan's internal domestic political environment. According to a 2015 Pew Research Poll, 82% of Pakistani respondents had a favorable view of China.<sup>294</sup> When compared to 2012 poll results, where there has been a 20% increase in favorable ratings in just three years, this seems to bode well for the BRI and China's presence in Pakistan. These data support the claim that the BRI is a welcome agenda and that domestic dissent is limited. However, this is not true. Domestic political dissent remains a driving force behind the Pakistani military's preservation activities regarding CPEC. Dissent has manifested in several areas and is largely a result of internal regionalism.<sup>295</sup>

One area of recent dissent comes from Pakistan's elected officials. The underlying fears that CPEC will lead to debt trap economics have started to percolate to the highest levels of Pakistani government. In September 2018, the newly elected populist Prime Minister, Imran Khan, began questioning the efficacy, motivations, and impacts of

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<sup>290</sup> Boni, "Civil-military Relations in Pakistan," 506–507.

<sup>291</sup> Boni, "Civil-military Relations in Pakistan," 513.

<sup>292</sup> "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks," i.

<sup>293</sup> "China-Pakistan Economic Corridor: Opportunities and Risks," 7–8.

<sup>294</sup> Bruce Stokes, "How Asia-Pacific Publics See Each Other and Their National Leaders," *Pew Research Center*, September 2, 2015, <https://www.pewresearch.org/global/2015/09/02/how-asia-pacific-publics-see-each-other-and-their-national-leaders/>.

<sup>295</sup> Maham Hameed, "The Politics of the China—Pakistan Economic Corridor," *Palgrave Communications* 4, no. 1 (December 2018): <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-018-0115-7>.

CPEC.<sup>296</sup> The populist nature of Khan's rise indicates that he is beholden to a more Sinophobic constituent base and, which has motivated him to review CPEC projects—a review that the military would be less inclined to do. Regardless of PM Khan's "anti-corruption and transparency pledges," PM Khan and the government were still wary of offending China throughout the review process.<sup>297</sup> Thus, shortly after threatening a year-long moratorium on CPEC until a comprehensive review was conducted, this initiative was quickly abandoned. This renegeing further exacerbated the regionalism that has dogged every step of CPEC.<sup>298</sup> This regional backlash is best represented in the Balochistan region of Pakistan.

Baloch residents claim that CPEC and, by default, the political elite, further marginalizes them. Baloch frustrations and countering activities have thus created a direct challenge to the Sino-Pakistani relationship. In January 2019, "separatist insurgents in southwestern Pakistan have vowed to continue attacks on Beijing-led Belt and Road projects in the region."<sup>299</sup> Baloch Liberation Army attacks are specifically designed to warn "China to vacate Balochistan and stop plundering its resources [as] China is seen as a neocolonist who was beckoned by Pakistan's political elite."<sup>300</sup> Domestic backlash to CPEC offers a considerable challenge to the military's geostrategic goals for economic development and desired growth of national power. The fact that the Pakistani military has, in the short term, reorganized its security strategy to counter domestic terrorism clearly

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<sup>296</sup> Drazen Jorgic, "Fearing Debt Trap, Pakistan Rethinks Chinese 'Silk Road' Projects," *Reuters*, September 29, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-silkroad-railway-insight/fearing-debt-trap-pakistan-rethinks-chinese-silk-road-projects-idUSKCN1MA028>.

<sup>297</sup> "Pakistan Rethinks its Role in China's Belt and Road Plan: Financial Times," *Straits Times*, September 20, 2018, <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/south-asia/pakistan-rethinks-its-role-in-chinas-belt-and-road-plan-financial-times>.

<sup>298</sup> Hameed, "The Politics of the China—Pakistan Economic Corridor," 4.

<sup>299</sup> Adnan Aamir, "Pakistani Separatists Vow to Target Belt and Road Projects," *Nikkei Asian Review*, January 8, 2019, <https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Belt-and-Road/Pakistani-separatists-vow-to-target-Belt-and-Road-projects>.

<sup>300</sup> Aamir, "Pakistani Separatists Vow to Target Belt and Road Projects."

demonstrates the military's resolve to protect CPEC.<sup>301</sup> Thus, political factors and actions of Pakistan's military and political elite underwrite the geostrategic motivations for CPEC.

### C. CONCLUSION

Pakistan's positive support for China's BRI can be traced back to geostrategic motivations. A review of economic, political, and geostrategic factors revealed that they are not mutually exclusive but rather highly interrelated. Furthermore, the historical context of the Sino-Pakistani relationship adds weight to the geostrategic variable. This chapter has shown that both the economic and political variables are directly tied to Pakistan's desire to solidify its advantages over India via the mechanisms of the BRI.

Pakistan's overemphasized involvement in the BRI is highly valuable for the Chinese government. This extreme connection is rooted in decades of Sino-Pakistani cooperation. Pakistan and China are, through the BRI, bringing this geostrategic relationship to the next level. Pakistan, in terms of national power, has consistently lagged behind India and knows it cannot reach parity without the help of Chinese investment. Pakistan understands the emerging geostrategic power dynamic. India is rising, the United States has pledged varying support, and China is emerging as a global power. Pakistan, as a prudent strategic state, believes that the BRI will enable it to achieve economic and military parity with India. Thus, in conjunction with economic and political factors, Pakistan has engaged in the BRI due to strategic reasoning.

The economic and political factors are relevant to the geostrategic discussion. The economic factors affecting Pakistan's positive support of the BRI are foreign direct investment, energy security, economic development zones, and labor development. These economic areas are, on the surface, primary objectives for any developing state. But in the case of Pakistan, they must be further scrutinized. Pakistan's motives for development relate directly to its national desire to match Indian power. Pakistani elites, especially the Pakistani Armed Forces, understand that economic development is a prerequisite for the growth of sustainable national power. Thus, the economic factor must be subsumed under

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<sup>301</sup> "SIPRI Military Expenditure Database," Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, accessed April 1, 2018, <https://www.sipri.org/databases/milex>.

the geostrategic motivations for BRI membership. In addition to the interconnected relationship between economic and geostrategic factors, the political factors can also be easily defined through a geostrategic lens.

The political explanations for Pakistan's involvement with the BRI have been deduced through the great lengths that Pakistan's political elite have gone to secure its BRI investments. Pakistan has, in the interim, shifted its military strategy to deal with domestic terrorism and insurgency, which aim to subvert China and its BRI-related activities in Pakistan. Of note is that, up until 2013, Pakistan has traditionally oriented its defense strategy at deterring Indian aggression. The elevation of the BRI's priority over that of countering India is therefore unprecedented and adds to the argument that Pakistan is willing to sacrifice short-term strategic planning space for long-term strategic benefits of the BRI. Furthermore, the Pakistani government has gone to great lengths to promote the BRI to domestic audiences and to silence dissent. Underlying these activities are Pakistan's fears of adversely affecting China's decision to heavily invest in an unpredictable environment. For example, Pakistan has committed an entire army unit to protect ongoing BRI-related infrastructure projects from terrorist predation. Thus, Pakistan's political motivations are directly linked to the importance of the BRI for increasing national power—and, by default its geostrategic position in South Asia.

The Sino-Pakistani relationship has found new life in the shifting power structure of world and in South Asia. Pakistan hopes CPEC will strengthen its position relative to both India, just as China's strategic aims of CPEC will strengthen its position relative to the United States and India. The economic and political factors show that Pakistan's elites are determined to protect CPEC's promised growth, because it represents the future of Pakistani strength in the region. Pakistan sits at the crossroads of the world, and both Pakistani elites and China want to bring this latent advantage to the fight of the 21st century.

## **IV. CONCLUSION**

The BRI's effects on the South Asian security environment represent one example in the recommencement of global great power competition. Although the dynamic relationships between China, India, and Pakistan have always been plagued by soft and hard balancing, harsh polemic exchanges, military posturing, and economic maneuvering, the BRI is a concerted Chinese effort to tilt the balance in its favor. Therefore, studying India's and Pakistan's responses to the BRI offers a glimpse into the ongoing struggle for dominance in the geo-strategically significant South Asian region. This thesis has reviewed the geostrategic, political, and economic factors affecting Indian non-support and Pakistani support to the BRI. Fundamentally, India does not support the BRI because it perceives it as a threat to the open rules-based international order and a strategic threat to its regional power. Conversely, Pakistan supports the BRI due to its ability to strengthen its military and economic positions vis-à-vis growing Indian power. Through the scope of great power competition, both nations see the BRI as a leveraging tool for strategic gain or loss.

### **A. OVERALL FINDINGS:**

India is a prudent strategic player, and it has navigated the current security environment with caution. India's objections toward the BRI are therefore unsurprising in light of the political, geostrategic, and economic factors. The primary reason for India's negative response to the BRI is due to the initiative's ability to recreate the international order in a Chinese image. This assumption is supported by Prime Minister Modi's political posturing on both the domestic and international levels. Modi believes, as evident from his remarks, that India should not only be the normative leader of the rules-based international order in the region, but also one of the primary international leaders as well. Further adding weight to this assertion is India's upward economic growth bolstered by the open rules-based order. India fears that its economic trajectory would be stymied by a closed and authoritarian Sino-centric order. In addition, evidence of India's moves into the U.S. orbit, such as maritime cooperation, increased military technology transfers, and the reemergence of the QUAD, prove that India is taking actions to deter Chinese threats to the rules-based

system. Thus, the primary reason for India's non-supportive response can be extrapolated from the data as it relates to the international political order. India desires that the politics of the region and the international environment remain on a free trajectory—as that best suits India's strategic interests.

Aside from the political factor, the geostrategic explanations for India's unsupportive response cannot be ignored. India has witnessed that the BRI enhances China's position in South Asia at India's expense. Evidence of this conclusion was extrapolated from China's posturing via the MSRI in the IOR and territorial disputes on India's northern frontier. Regarding the MSRI, China has shown that its "String of Pearls" necessitates an increased presence of PLAN ships. India has noted that China has increased its ability to posture PLAN assets via its BRI development in Sri Lanka. Although Sri Lanka has recently forbidden any further Chinese military docking at Colombo, it still represents Chinese leveraging of the BRI for geostrategic advantage. Furthermore, India cannot but be distressed by China's activities in Pakistan's Gwadar port. Although China sees this port as an investment in securing its energy-sea-lines of communication, it also has the dual use of encircling India—as it necessitates further PLAN posturing in the IOR to protect its investments. From India's perspective, the Chinese BRI-enabled military posturing in the IOR, coupled with BRI-exacerbated territorial and border disputes to the North, represents the geostrategic encirclement of India. The Doklam incident unfolded in the North with not only increased PLA posturing along India's northern border, but also in India's south throughout the IOR where an increased PLAN presence signaled it was ready to act if tensions exploded. Thus, to India, the BRI represents a combination of political and geostrategic threats, while economically it represents a waste of time. The economic factors inhibiting Indian support of the BRI are simple. India does not see itself, due to its own infrastructure deficits, as being able to plug into the initiative. Furthermore, India would rather build itself up than rely on Chinese investment. In sum, India sees the BRI as a geostrategic and political threat, and an economic burden. This is not the case for Pakistan.

Pakistan sees the BRI as a geostrategic, political, and economic boost. Pakistan has always arrayed its security strategy against a threatening India. Furthermore, Pakistan has

always maintained good relations with its seemingly ‘all-weather friend,’ China. Thus, Pakistan seems like a perfect BRI candidate in China’s CPEC. Pakistan’s geostrategic motivations for furthering involvement in CPEC are simple. Pakistan’s perception of recent U.S. withdrawal of support prompts Pakistan to increase its reliance on China. China offers a sure way of strengthening Pakistan’s position in South Asia. Gwadar port development was therefore essential at gaining Chinese presence at the expense of India. Essentially, Pakistan has opened its arms to Chinese investment in hopes of strengthening its geostrategic position by reinvigorating its relationship with China.

Pakistan believes that the economic benefits of CPEC will further advance its strategic position. Pakistan has suffered from erratic economic growth, and CPEC offers Pakistan the hope of stability. Pakistan believes that CPEC’s infrastructure development will increase flows of FDI from international investors. Connecting FDI to the geostrategic factor is therefore important. If Pakistan can show the global community it is a desirable place to invest, it will be strengthening its economic position in comparison to India. Further economic gain of CPEC comes in the form of energy development and security. Pakistan offers China an avenue to secure its energy lines of communication and, in doing so, secures its own avenue of growth in the energy sector. Pakistan is more than willing to use this as further leverage in securing long-term Chinese investment in the Sino-Pakistan axis. Additionally, CPEC’s planned SEZs and labor development promises offer Pakistan improved economic growth. Pakistan understands that economic power translates to military power. Thus, the economic factors must be tied to the geostrategic factors. Pakistan needs the BRI if it hopes to establish parity with India.

The political factor adds weight to the merger of geostrategic and political factors behind Pakistan’s involvement in the BRI. Pakistan’s political elite, i.e., the military, has gone to great lengths to protect CPEC and its relationship with China. The military understands the importance of the relationship as it pertains to increasing national power to face a growing threat from India. For example, although civilian officials in Pakistan believe that the CPEC initiative will increase Pakistan’s debt to untenable levels, the military has effectively silenced all opposition. This indicates that the military sees CPEC as a strategic imperative. Furthermore, Pakistani armed forces have reoriented, for the time

being, its security strategy from facing the long-term threat of India to the short-term threat of terrorism and domestic insurgency. The Pakistani military has temporarily shifted its focus due, in part, to the terror threat to CPEC and Chinese assets. The military has exerted great effort to protect Chinese assets because they represent a long-term solution to its national power latency. In sum, Pakistan supports the BRI because it offers an avenue to match Indian power.

### **1. Main Ideas:**

The main idea for this thesis was to uncover the reasons for why India does not support the BRI and why Pakistan supports it. The results for both cases show that there is an emphasis on the strategic implications of the BRI for both countries. India's opposition to the BRI has been marked by increased actions on diplomatic fronts as well as increased cooperation with China and anti-Chinese parties. India clearly propagates an ambiguous strategy. The reasons for this strategic ambiguity is beyond the scope of this paper. However, it is important to note as the BRI progresses or digresses in the South Asian Region. Pakistan's involvement in CPEC is indicative of its desire to match Indian power. Until now, it lacked the strategic importance for complete Chinese attention and investment. Thus, against the backdrop of great power competition, Pakistan is a perfect partner for China to check Indian and U.S. posturing in Asia. Although Pakistan is playing a role on the larger scale, the BRI's promised growth will enable it to play from a better position as it aims to challenge Indian hegemony in South Asia. In sum, the BRI is an avenue along which the great power competition is playing out in South Asia.

### **2. Policy Recommendations:**

The ongoing struggle for dominance in South Asia, through the context of the BRI, offers the United States a unique opportunity. This thesis has uncovered the critical contributing factors influencing India's non-support and Pakistan's support of the BRI; U.S. policy must now take into account these factors to better reflect the reality of competition and cooperation in South Asia.



*a. U.S. Policy Recommendations Concerning India*

India's regional strategy is changing as a result of a growing China. India, for a time, held fast to its 'wait and see' strategy as China ascended to global prominence. Unfortunately, by doing so, India gained both a valuable trading partner as well as a regional challenger in China. India's refusal to support the BRI is the first step in India's strategic evolution. India's refusal to support the BRI plays into Prime Minister Modi's Hindu nationalistic narrative. India does not want to cede ground in the normative realm by allowing China to lead the development of South Asia. Prime Minister Modi believes India is the rightful leader of the region. Additionally, India understands the strategic threat that the BRI poses to India's national power and integrity. The United States should continue to build closer ties with India, as the country's 'wait and see' approach shifts to full balancing against China. The United States and India see China as a global strategic challenger and a dangerous long-term threat to the existing international order. The United States should encourage and aid Indian efforts to export infrastructure development to interregional nations. By doing so, India could overtake the present foreign political capital gap between India and China—where Chinese efforts have already gained increased support throughout the region. The United States should not take center-stage in this effort, but rather a supporting role as to avoid undermining India's claims as being the normative leader in South Asia. In sum, India's desire to maintain the U.S.-led and -built international order must be used to U.S. advantage.

In order to accomplish this objective, the United States should continue to sell Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) assets to India and further integrate intelligence-sharing mediums as trust-building measures. Although the Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement, signed in September 2018, is a step in the right direction, the United States needs to do more in terms of stimulating joint U.S.-Indian intelligence production as it relates to the maritime domain.<sup>302</sup> Furthermore, the United States should increase and accelerate maritime cooperation exercises between the Indian

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<sup>302</sup> Dilsher Dhillon, "India and the U.S. Just Signed a Landmark Military-Intelligence Sharing Agreement," Business Insider Online, Sep. 7, 2018, <https://www.businessinsider.in/india-and-the-us-just-signed-a-landmark-military-intelligence-sharing-agreement/articleshow/65716448.cms>.

Navy and USINDOPACOM naval assets. Additional security training and force-interoperability training should also be fielded through QUAD channels. Additionally, the United States should reconsider entering the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and develop a pathway forward for India to eventually plug into the economic bloc. The TPP, or equivalent, would need to go further than establishing trade rules based on U.S. best practices. This endeavor would need to be more inclusive of developing countries and include a broader economic infrastructure development plan. Although the United States has a multitude of options going forward in its relationship with India, India's reaction to increased U.S. attention could be less than optimal. India's domestic political landscape will either enable or complicate Indo-U.S. relations. India's perception of U.S. commitment in the region will be directly tied to the amount of cooperation India is willing to offer the United States. India's non-support for the BRI stems from the strategic and normative threat it poses to Indian power. The United States, therefore, could also be dismissed if its policies appear to replicate Chinese assertiveness.

***b. U.S. Policy Recommendations Concerning Pakistan***

Although the United States has highlighted the importance of U.S.-Indo cooperation in the age of great power competition, it has clearly alienated a potentially important strategic partner: Pakistan. The U.S.-Pakistani relationship has entered troubled territory. This new territory is demarcated by the Trump Administration's shift away from Afghanistan, and the United States' questioning of Pakistan's state sponsorship of terrorism has eroded the U.S.-Pakistani relationship. Fundamentally, Pakistan has begun witnessing a decrease of its value in U.S. strategic calculations. As a result, the United States has pushed Pakistan further into China's orbit. In terms of great power competition, this is a mistake. The United States must take measures to secure an amicable relationship with Pakistan to obfuscate the Sino-Pakistani bloc. Unfortunately, Pakistan could be less susceptible to U.S. overtures due to its overwhelming investment in its relationship with China. The United States, at the very least, should maintain military-to-military channels regarding anti-terrorism operations and include Pakistan in the economic dialogues this thesis previously proposed. The United States should operate under the pretense that every South Asian nation can be reintegrated into the U.S. sphere of influence regardless of

China's overwhelming advantage created by the BRI. Pakistan can still be an important chess piece in the coming battle for the maintenance of the liberal rules-based international system. As of right now, Pakistan has no other alternative than China. The United States should recognize this reality and act, or risk losing a potential partner in the region. Conversely, a continued U.S.-Pakistani relationship has the potential of destabilizing the foundation of U.S.-Indian cooperation. It is outside the scope of this thesis to offer a solution to this intense balancing act, but it is nevertheless imperative that the United States avoid alienating either state.

Although the South Asian region is full of hedging states, the BRI represents the first Chinese foray into changing the region's perspective towards its rise. The United States should implement the aforementioned recommendations to begin the process of hard balancing necessary to check the threat of China. As time progresses, regional hedging will become impossible. South Asia's geostrategic importance in this competition cannot be understated. If the BRI proves to be successful, China will have secured key lines of communication in terms of energy, economic, and military access. The large amount of trade and energy that transits through IOR sea lines of communication is enough to merit U.S. attention, but the main area of concern remains to be the growing PRC influence and military presence in the region.<sup>303</sup> The U.S. cannot afford inaction in South Asia.

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<sup>303</sup> Kaur, "The Indian Ocean Region is Key to U.S.-India Relations."

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