

US-INDIA RELATIONS UNDER THE JOE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION IN THE INDO-PACIFIC: IMPLICATIONS FOR CHINA

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Abstract:

The Indo-Pacific region has emerged as a critical arena for global geopolitics, with the U.S.-India strategic partnership playing a pivotal role in countering China's growing influence. Under the Biden administration, U.S.-India relations have strengthened through defense agreements, such as BECA and COMCASA, and multilateral initiatives like the Quad. These collaborations aim to ensure a free and open Indo-Pacific, emphasizing maritime security, technological advancement, and economic resilience. Meanwhile, China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and assertive policies in the South China Sea and Indian Ocean have faced growing resistance from this partnership. The evolving dynamics between the U.S., India, and China reflect a broader contest over regional dominance, supply chain resilience, and the technological race. China's responses include military expansions, diplomatic maneuvers, and economic initiatives like the AIIB and RCEP. The trilateral interplay profoundly influences the strategic and economic landscape of the Indo-Pacific, with implications for global trade and security. This article delves into the complexities of U.S.-India relations under Biden, their impact on China's strategic ambitions, and the broader implications for the geopolitical order.

Research Methodology

The article applies a comprehensive framework based on international relations theories to analyze U.S.-India relations in the Indo-Pacific under the Biden administration. Realism informs the examination of power dynamics, particularly in countering China's assertiveness and regional hegemony. Liberalism explores the collaborative efforts through economic initiatives, technological partnerships, and multilateral platforms like the Quad. Constructivism sheds light on how shared democratic values and historical tensions shape the strategic narratives of the U.S.-India partnership and its implications for China. The research employs qualitative methods, relying on secondary sources such as policy documents, academic articles, and expert analyses. Thematic analysis organizes the discourse into military, economic, and technological dimensions, while comparative case studies highlight strategic alignments and rivalries. This interdisciplinary approach ensures a nuanced understanding of the evolving geopolitical dynamics.

Introduction

The dynamics of a strategic partnership between Washington and New Delhi has attracted much attention, especially under the Biden presidency. This relationship has grown stronger due to common grounds particularly in efforts aimed at checking China's rising dominance in the region. The relations between India and America seen through economic, military, diplomatic cooperation have gradually evolved with the primary aim of safeguarding stability in the Indo-Pacific. Over the years, both countries have further embraced efforts of advocating for a free and open Indo-Pacific, with the Quad, being one of the most important forums for this cooperation (Singh et al., 2018). As China rises as an economic and military power through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), the US and India

see engagement to check China to ensure that the region remains accountable to international rules.

China's global aspirations would be epitomized by its Belt and Road Initiative, which is significant and expansive plan to grow China's economic and political clout in Asia, Africa and Europe. This has been the tool through which Beijing has been powering its way to becoming a dominant force within the world's economy and diplomatic circles through the massive infrastructure investments. Nevertheless, the development of the US-India relations, particularly after Biden's presidency, is a major problem for China's advance. This is especially in the Indo-Pacific region, which is significant to world trade routes, today being the main theatre of confrontation between the USA and India on one side, and China on the other (Bharti, 2023). Given China's aggressive stance in the South China Sea and other global seas, the US and India have had to improve on the cooperation to ensure protection of their freedom to navigate the seas and counter China's dominance in the region. This emerging relationship has further cemented the US-India relations as well as shaped the way China tends to shift focus according to this emerging strategic partnership. Therefore, the role of the US-India partnership in the Biden era is important to consider when evaluating the geopolitical system of relations in the Indo-Pacific region regarding China's increasing role on the international stage.

1.1. Bilateral Dynamics between US, India, and China

Basically, the power relations between the United States, India and China have changed dramatically in the past few decades due more so with the emerging international relations systems. India's position in this triangle is of special significance since the country has changed a point of view during the last years from non-aligned to strategically ally to the United States. India has always followed the policy of neutrality in the cold war era never joining either Soviet Union or United States bloc. However, in the 21st century India saw the dynamics of foreign policy in accordance with the global dynamics especially with the rise of China. Another evidence of this shift is progressive partnership between India and United States, which came into notice with Indo US Civil Nuclear Agreement in the year 2005 (Jabeen & Ahmed, 2011). This was not only useful for the cooperation on civilian uses of nuclear energy but also created basis for stronger strategic and defense cooperation between two countries. After that, the defense cooperation expanded quite often with a significant number of documents and drills to strengthen the Indian military considering the growing China's role.

Indian as a rising democratic power to check China's assertiveness is one critical component of the broader US backed Indo-Pacific strategy (Liu & Jamali, 2021). This strategic line pursues a vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific where India is regarded as a key actor to push back against China's increasingly assertive peaceful. For the US, India has been seen as that beacon of democracy and availability in a strategic geographical point in the world. In the last 10 years, following treaties including BECA and COMCASA have strengthened the defense ties between India and the US. BECA promotes exchange of geospatial intelligence, on the other hand, COMCASA provides secure mode of communication between the military forces of the two nations (Rosen, JD, LLM, & Jackson, 2017). These agreements do not only beneficial to increase India's defense power but also warning China that the US and India are moving forward in their strategic partnership. In Beijing these developments are seen with rising apprehension, because for China the emerging bonhomie between US and India is a clear threat to its hegemonic aspirations in the region.

Since the extension of cooperation between India and the USA in service, there has been a significant development in military cooperation over the years with joint exercise like the Malabar Exercise. What started as a bilateral naval exercise between India and the US has graduates into series involving other partners like Japan and Australia thus highlighting the cooperative approach to the military power that seeks to tame China (Hanif & Sharif, 2021). These combined drills have enhanced India's wartime capabilities by strengthening its naval force where China's aggressive stance in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean is worrisome. From these exercises, India has acquired modern technologies and techniques in warfare especially in ASW, MR and compatibility with the US and its other allies. These military collaborations pose an existential threat to China, more so given the fact that it hurts its strategic interests in the Indian Ocean region and beyond. China's government has time and again condemned such military drills as it considers this as a form of encirclement that the US is trying to make on China's 'Backyard.' These changes may bring about a new surge of tensions in that region since China will most probably increase its military influence in the Indian Ocean as well as enhancing its relations with other regional states.

These technological relations between the US and the Indian also depict how trilateral relations are developed between the three. One such partnership is the Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (ICET) that has been established between the two countries to work together in advanced technological fields such as 5G, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and quantum computing (Parpiani, 2024). Both emerging technologies are considered strategic assets to security and economy and India and US have identified the need to cooperate in these fields of technology to reduce their competitiveness to China. China's "Made in China 2025" strategy aims at making China the leading producer of high-tech products such as advanced manufacturing and AI (Elica & Elias, 2021). The technological cooperation between the US and India, thus, amounts to a direct threat to China's evolving agenda. It is believed that if India and the US collaborate in some of the most sensitive and strategic technologies, each party's technological sophistication will increase at the same time restricting China's influence on supply chains crucial to these sectors. Moreover, the two countries have also paid attention to guarding their computer networks from possible cyber threats, though cybersecurity has become a concern in recent times.

There is always tension between India and China in cyberspace security relations especially after India banned several Chinese apps from its market on security and data breach concerns. This decision was understood by many as a part of a trend that India is more willing now to lessen its tech ties to China and build out its local digital ecosystem. In return, China has responded in some of the following ways: limiting the access of Indian companies to do business in China and expanding the investigations on the Indian businesses operating in China (Saxenian A. , 2002). These cyber combats represent the rising animosity of two nations in the technological world where both countries are now perceiving technology as a principal component of their defense systems. The US has backed India's position steering clear from the country's technology mainly in sensitive sectors like 5G networks due to alleged spying by China.

The relations between the US, India, and China can be characterized by multi-dimensional historical cooperation and current military as well as technological rivalry. As a democratic power India is positioned opposite to China and backed up by its evolving security partnership with the US, the country is at the heart of the US Indo-Pacific conception (Panda J. P., 2021). Through joint military exercise and defense cooperation, the capability of the region to counterbalance China has enhanced; technology partnership or cybersecurity complications further complicates the tri-partite geopolitics. These three nations as they

struggle for power and dominance in the global world, their relations will determine future dynamics of the Geo-politics of the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

1.2. Geopolitical Implications for China

There is not much doubt that China has faced significant transformations of its geopolitical context within the geographically expansive and strategically vital Indo-Pacific region because of the developing US-India strategic relationship. The Indo-Pacific strategy which is spearheaded by America focuses on the freedom of navigation, security in the maritime domain and checking China's rise through its BRI project. The core of the strategy is a strong sense of partnership between the US and India, two states with comparable interests in stability and free access to the area. The security partnership is grounded on contentious democratic principles and common apprehensions of China aggression especially in Sea of South China and the Indian Ocean. The US India collaboration is viewed as strategic in sustaining the larger Indo-Pacific framework which is designed to foster a free, open, and prosperous and rules base order than is often a wildcard for China's more autocratic governance and BRI (Shekhar, 2018).

China interprets this strategic alliance with some form of grim determination especially under the backdrop of the Quad; a Quadrilateral Security Dialogue involving the US, India, Japan and Australia. The Quad was initially making its decisions in the year 2007 but could not sustain its formation for some time and got active once again in the year 2017 and is a prominent member of the Indo-Pacific axis. China is more fixated on the Quad's military sentiment as a nascent security architecture designed to counter it, due to raised military cooperation and diplomatic talks between the Quad countries. China's reactions – diplomatic demarches and military operations – to Quad meetings and military exercises are quite illustrative as Beijing has used diplomatic protests and repeated military signposting to express its concerns and reservations (Kroenig & Cimmino, 2020). For instance, in a statement after a Quad meeting held in 2020, China through its foreign ministry described the formation of this group as one that wanted to 'form cliques' and counseled, against any effort aimed at causing division within the region. In addition, China's military activities near the border with India have been viewed as indexical of China's counter measures to India's membership in the Quad especially after the fatal face-off between them in the Galwan Valley of 2020. These incidents perfectly demonstrate how entangled China is in the expanding strategic partnership of the Quad countries, with India having the most significant role as a counterweight to China in Asia.

China has responded to the "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" policy as a hostile policy towards it. This policy, which the United States has aggressively promoted as a means to foster openness in the region, directly contradicts China's vision of the Indo-Pacific, which is heavily intertwined with its BRI. The BRI is China's grand plan to establish a range of connectivity projects encompassing the Asian, African, and European continents through both overland and maritime links. However, many of these projects have been accused of creating debt traps for the smaller nations and there is rising discontentment on what is China's true motivations behind the 'win-win' economic cooperation. Due to the Free and Open Indo-Pacific initiative, China has increased its diplomatic activity and militarization, especially near the borders with India. Operations within proximity to the Line of Actual Control (LAC) have also escalated in recent years, with Chinese forces commonly encroaching into the disputed territories (Hossain, 2024). These actions are perceived as showing aggression and refusal to surrender to what is considered as encroachment by other entities on what China considers its territory.

However, China has also been working towards countering the Quad in a more discreet manner diplomatically. Even though Beijing is not shy to express its disdain towards the Quad, China has been engaging in bilateral diplomacy with individual Quad members like Japan and Australia to prevent the formation of a very solid group among them. China has also courtship other countries in the region particularly Southeast Asia, which is viewed as a geopolitical frontline in the Indo-Pacific. Using economic carrots in the form of initiatives such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) as well as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), China has also sought to frame itself as a more desirable partner to these nations than the one offered by the Quartet. The AIIB especially is recognized as an instrument used by China to assert economic hegemony in the region providing credits and infrastructure financing to the countries that would rather not provoke either the US or India (Chan L.-H. , 2017). Likewise, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, a trade agreement that incorporates China besides other regional power players, including the ASEAN states, gives China just the right instruments to retain its economic hegemony in the region even as the US-India partnership gains traction.

The economic repercussion of US-India relationship for China goes as follows: Trade between the US and India has expanded over years with both countries continuing to look for suppliers other than China. The US has been quite vocal on the necessity to de-Orientalize global supply chain away from China, a process that has been made even more imperative by the COVID-19 outbreak. India is a strategic partner for this goal because of its large market and the rapidly developing production capacity. In the last few years, the US and India have entered into various bilateral trade agreements with a view to diversifying the bilateral economic relationship and weaning themselves off China's exports (Palat, 2012). This economic partnership poses a direct challenge to China's hegemony within the Asian market since more countries look for solutions to Chinese financing and production. In addition, such allows registering the Blue Dot Network, a project of the US, Japan and Australia, focused on the creation of infrastructure with high transparent standards as the economic counterpart of BRI. Blue Dot Network aims to create an assurance for infrastructure projects that are good not just for investors but for the people and the environment and for the countries in the Indo-Pacific region where Chinese BRI projects raised issues regarding inclusiveness and sustainability.

That is why they have intensified the use of their own financial instruments that form the basis of the AIIB and RCEP, which poses a threat to regional countries. The AIIB began in 2016 in response to the World Bank and IMF domination with its initiative promoting a Chinese voice in the globalization process (Beeson & Xu, 2019). Through loans and investments to such countries which may not be willing to accept China's help via BRI, AIIB enables China to market itself as a premier developer in Asia while also challenging India-America led organizations like the Blue Dot Network. In the same regard, China's has used its membership to RCEP to continue cement its economic dominance in a region were countries such as India and Japan are looking to diversify their international trade relations.

However, there are enormous challenges that China encounters in the attempt to retain its dominance in the geopolitical and socio-economic realms in the Indo-Pacific region. The formation of strategic partnership between the US and India, and slowly emerging coalescence of Quad countries, poses a substantial challenge to China's expansionist design. There are rising trends of focusing on the Indo-Pacific region as the main theatre of competition in the 21st century politics and scope of such competition will determine China's position in global politics (Kapur, 2019). As the all-corner stone and the rising strategic bilateral relation between US and India lasts longer, China will find it difficult to impose its

hegemonic formula in the south Asian region. But Beijing has an exceptional ability to learn, and future research must discover how China will recalibrate extensively in the light of these changing conditions in the Indo-Pacific region.

The relationship between geopolitics of China in US-India partnership and the broader Indo-Pacific strategy have been many folds and is very much layered. Therefore, as China strives to realize the BRI and to advance its hegemon power within the region, there is increasing nervousness in the form of an emerging alliance between the US and the Modi administration to support openness, rule of law and transparency opposed to China's unexplained expansionist agenda. The Quad has turned out to be an influential multilateral to challenge China's rise, while China will not cease its attempt for weakening the Quad through bi-lateral cooperation and institutionalization following its economic lure (Anwar, 2023). On the other hand, Indo-US commercial relations pose a direct threat to China by attempting to construct an equal to the BRI. While these geopolitical moves happen, the capability of China keeping up with power will depend on the capacity of this country to respond to changes in Indo-Pacific region where strategic partnerships and economic rivalry will determine the balance of power more than ever.

1.3. China's Responses to US-India Cooperation

Recently China has had military, diplomatic and economic strategies to fight the increasing strategic partnership between the USA and INO-IA. The increasingly strong partnership between Washington and New Delhi that recently received a strong impetus in defense and economic cooperation, as well as the mutual concern over China's growing dominance, has forced Beijing to reevaluate its position in the IPE and further afield. From this perspective, we have analyzed China's strategic reactions to the US-India partnership in terms of military, diplomacy and economy.

A noticeable element of China's reaction to the US-India rapprochement has been its military buildup, especially naval. The South China Sea has become one of the priorities of Chinese military strength as the number of Chinese naval forces and their supports has been rapidly increasing in recent years. "Beijing has taken a huge interest in the development of artificial islands with several being equipped with military facilities, runways and radar systems., Geological factors that have been evident and proven to have an impact include; Such outposts are useful in that they can act as centers of China's naval power in the region and back up occupation claims to the waters (Aziz & Basir, 2022). Upgrades in China's navy, including the development of its maritime force beyond its coast, are part and parcel of a diversification strategy to counter the US and Indian presence in the IOR, especially where rights of innocent passage are at stake for both Washington and New Delhi. Stakes have also been raised and proven action on regional waters through naval exercises in the South China Sea and shown China will not yield dominance to other countries even though other countries in the region and the international community are opposing that.

The Chinese military expansion is not only restricted to the South China Sea region only as well. The China-India border disputes, especially the Line of Actual Control (LAC), have recently become tenser to show the military aspect of China's reaction to the US-India collaboration. The Stone-Pelling incident in June 2020 during which soldiers from both China and India were killed for the first time – highlighted the unresolved border dispute that exists between the two countries. Although the Galwan incident was not related to the cooperation between the United States and India, recent events still indicate an increased confrontation between China and India. Such a close association of India with the US has probably heightened China's concern over its status within the negotiated LAC and has perhaps made it more assertive in the region (Verma, 2023). Since the Galwan valley

incident, both forces have been further building up their forces along the LAC and China has conducted several military drills aimed at demonstrating its preparedness to take on India. These exercises are usually conducted with Pakistan one of China's key strategic partners in the region to put up a strong defense against India whose forces are set to receive a major boost they are training with the US.

Leveraging of diplomatic initiatives in South Asia are just as emblematic of China's grand strategy of balancing the US-India relationship (Malik M. , 2016). Though China has always focused on Pakistan as a strategic partner, it actively engages other SA countries like Nepal and Sri Lanka in the present decade. Such diplomatic moves are to foster economic and political power within South Asian neighbors in a bid to offset New Delhi's hegemonic outlook within the region. With infrastructure development, Overseas trade relations, and economic cooperation China has endeavored to expand cooperation with the countries in south Asia as seeker of dominance against India. For instance, investment made by China in Sri Lanka especially BRI has surfaced India's worries regarding Beijing's emerging presence in the Indian Ocean region. The establishment of Hambantota Port in Sri Lanka, which upon Sri Lanka failed to pay back the given loans was handed over to China is also another example of how China uses its economic power to pull strings of strategic power within the region (Wibisono, 2019). Likewise, the economic relations between China and Nepal are considered a threat in New Delhi because the growth of Beijing's influence in the Himalayan States is seen as a direct threat to its security (Sood, 2016).

Besides the economic diplomacy in South Asia, China has also joined the "vaccine diplomacy" as a part of broader strategy to check the emerging India-US cooperation in health diplomacy. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit the global world, China was very swift to take the geopolitical advantage it needed among world countries in providing vaccines to the less-developed countries in Asia and Africa (Gauttam, Singh, & Kaur, 2020). Probably, by providing vaccines to countries that were unable to negotiate for the vaccines from western manufacturers with an aim of establishing itself as a responsible global player, China used the vaccines diplomacy to improve its soft power. This strategy was also focused on responding to the US-India cooperation in the sphere of global health, including through initiatives, such as vaccine diplomacy within the framework of the Quad that seeks to deliver vaccines to the countries of the Indo-Pacific region. Despite this, vaccine diplomacy has had its challenges too for China; there were the issues with the effectiveness of Chinese vaccines and the probably perceived lack of transparency frustrated Beijing's potential exploit of this opportunity fully. But Chinese participation in global health diplomacy demonstrates its general approach to expanding its sphere of economic and humanitarian influence in areas where American and Indian interests are emerging concurrently (Mol, Chattu, Kaur, & Singh, 2022).

In its economic context, China still depends on both the BRI and the AIIB to ensure strategic stability in the long-run, which is becoming more and more firmly contested by the India and other members of the Indo-Pacific region (Thammavong, 2020). The BRI which seeks to link up Asia, Africa and Europe through infrastructure investments has been one of the key tools for China's economy since its launch. The initiative may be criticized for promoting indebtedness and opaqueness to the domestic audience, but it is a valuable weapon to counterbalance the geopolitical cooperation between the US and India. India, which has been one of the more critical of BRI, has decided not to participate in this project due to controversy over sovereignty and which argued that some countries that signed deals with China would be subjected to economic pressure. However, China has kept on developing the BRI in other areas of the region to get infrastructure power cooperation agreements and trade

partners yearning for investment. Likewise, the AIIB that was created as an anti-Western new financial institution has provided an opportunity to China to extend loans and investment to the Indo-Pacific and other regions, and thereby consolidate its economic power.

As the cooperation between the United States and India increased in the field of technology and cyberspace, China also started investing in it and works to minimize its dependence on the West. One of the most graphic examples of this is the Chinese drive to become a world powerhouse in the area of 5G technology which is currently is the area of focus in the general rivalry between the US and China. Companies from China, such as Huawei, took up this mantle, providing 5G infrastructure to countries globally and at a cheaper price to their western counterparts (Lee, 2020). But Huawei's progress has been threatened by a campaign by Washington to downgrade the company's access to vital hardware on the grounds of security and spying. Like the United States, India has banned Huawei and other Chinese tech companies and has barred the purchase of Chinese made 5G equipment to be used in Indian telecommunication networks. These restraints are a part of a network by the US and India to lessen their reliance on Chinese technology and development more resilient electronic ties.

Indeed, in response to these challenges, China has increased its efforts to build new technological standards to challenge dominant technologies in the new technology frontend like artificial intelligence (AI), quantum computing, and semiconductors. Key to these processes is the "Made in China 2025" strategy announced by the Chinese authorities, which is aimed at making China the world leader in the development of high technologies. Planning to spend a lot on the research and development and supporting domestic technology industries, China aims to minimize the dependence on the US and Indian technologies and create more localized technology environment. This encouragement of technology self-reliance can be even more encouraged in the semiconductor sector, which still relies on imports from the US, Taiwan and South Korea as pointed by Bown (Bown, 2020). The US has recently imposed export controls on semiconductor technologies, which means that China needs to build its own semiconductor industry even more.

Chinese companies have also reciprocated the action by using economic countermeasures and fostering other markets for designing their products. In 2020, India has therefore blocked such applications as TikTok and WeChat out of fear of the threat posed by China to their data security (Mishra, Yan, & Schroeder, 2022). The ban came after the Galwan Valley clash and was part of the larger attempt by India to diversify the anti-China digital economy. In response, China has retaliated by levying restrictions on the Indian companies to operate their business in China and by formulating campaigns to hinder the Indian products' sale in China. On the same note, Chinese tech companies have sought to venture out to cover other markets, in the Southeast Asia as well as Africa where the nationals' governments do not offer stiff competition.

Addressing the strengthening of the US-India relations, China has adopted a complex and tactical approach including military confrontation, diplomatic maneuver and economic strategies that create an anti-balance between Beijing and New Delhi. In military power, China has increased its aggression on the South China Sea and on the border of India conducting military exercise with Pakistan and enhancing its navy to control disputed territories. It has thus sought regional diplomatic relations with countries like Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka among others mainly through economic machineries such the BRI and AIIB (Mori, 2018). From the economic perspective, China has persevered to use BRI as a counter-Belfort to the initiatives led by US and India and use vaccine diplomacy to strengthen its soft power. Last but not least, in technology and cyber security, China has retaliated over

restrictions on its companies by creating its technological benchmarks and exerting its dominant control over new domains such as 5G and Artificial Intelligence. Such responses are consistent with China's long-term approach to the geopolitical realignment which the United States and India represent an increasingly formidable barrier to Chinese goals in the Indo-Pacific region and beyond.

1.4. Strategic Implications for China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

China's Belt and Road Initiative is one of the most significant endeavors of the country in the global perspective intended for improving cooperation and connection in Asia, Europe and Africa. The aim of all of this development in infrastructure, trade, and economic corridors under the BRI framework is to develop one of the largest networks of business and trade routes possible to minimize the transaction cost of goods and services between the countries involved. Forum at the center of this scheme is the multi-billion-dollar China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) road infrastructure master-link that links China's restive Xinjiang province to the Arabian Sea port of Gwadar in Pakistan. This corridor offers not only a direct sea access to Arabian Sea to China but also plays a significant role to establish Pakistan as a regional trade center (Clary, Blackwill, & Chandra, 2011). CPEC is considered a pilot for the large goals of the BRI that aims to upgrade connectivity across the region.

However, the CPEC has been used a center piece for geopolitical rivalry not only in the region but the world over especially between India and China. A good slice of the proposed corridor will go through the Gilgit-Baltistan part of Pakistan administered Kashmir which is claimed by India. This has result in India's vehement rejection of CPEC as it sees the project as a challenge to its sovereignty over the disputed territory. Thus, the position that India has taken over the CPEC has altered its basic relationship with China's on foreign policy quite significantly (Curtis & Grossman, 2022). The Indian resentment over the said project is primarily due to its strategic concern of China in South Asian region as well as with the fear of China's Belt and Road project encompassing of India. Moreover, India has been also against CPEC which has set its approach to the overall BRI structure and made India to abandon the initiative and look for other partners to balance China's regional dominance by providing regional connectivity.

The objections of India toward CPEC are geographically and tactically motivated. The intended path of CPEC is that it will traverse through Gilgit-Baltistan, which is Indian administered Kashmir territory, however, taken over by Pakistan. New Delhi considers this as apostles' infringement of its sovereignty since it deems the project as an intrusion on its space. Therefore, India has expressed its displeasure over the CPEC on various forums calling it not only an economic venture but as part of Chinese aggression in South Asia. From the Indian point of view, CPEC is one of the strategies of the China's regionalization that building a direct economic and strategic access in the area able potentially to challenge Indian hegemony.

India considers cogent to the beat of Pearl of China's Sea strategy alongside which China plans to develop string of pearl that includes Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Nepal besides other countries with vague architecture of project CPEC. Public opinion holds this strategic chain of alliances as a means by which China sought to block India and its dominion in the region. These country-state relationships might constrain India and facilitate China to exert more control over those important sea lanes by demonstrating increased relationship with these neighboring countries (Garrett, 2021). This has made India to develop a hard lined strategic policy on CPEC which is a major defining feature of its broader bilateral dealings with China. India's misgivings about CPEC are a result of the more profound anxieties it has towards China's hegemonic ambitions in the region and have shaped its foreign policy

strategy as it has tried to look for better ties with other countries to pull down the Chinese dominance in South Asia.

A key element of India's strategic concerns regarding the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) lies in the geopolitical implications, particularly China's potential to establish a foothold in the Indian Ocean. India perceives CPEC as a broader effort by China to expand its influence beyond South Asia and secure strategic access to the Indian Ocean (Hussain, Ahmad, Nawaz, Haider, & Atif, 2021). Central to this concern is the development of the Gwadar port in Pakistan, which is seen not only as an economic asset but also as a potential military outpost for China. The port's location on the Arabian Sea provides China with a direct gateway to key maritime routes, and India fears it could serve as a future military base for the projection of Chinese naval power into the region, thereby challenging India's traditional dominance over the Indian Ocean.

These concerns are heightened by China's efforts to develop a blue-water navy, capable of operating globally, and its increasing investments in enhancing the defense capabilities of ports across the Indian Ocean region. For India, maintaining control over the Indian Ocean has long been a strategic priority, as it is vital for securing trade routes and regional security (Kakar, 2022). The possibility of Gwadar evolving into a strategic outpost for Chinese naval operations is therefore seen as a direct threat to India's security and maritime interests. In response, India has sought to counterbalance this perceived threat by strengthening its naval capabilities, expanding its fleet, and modernizing its maritime infrastructure. Additionally, India has pursued deeper security cooperation with other regional and global powers, particularly the United States, to ensure a collaborative effort to maintain a free and secure Indo-Pacific region. This strategic alignment underscores India's commitment to preserving its influence in the Indian Ocean while countering China's growing presence through both military preparedness and diplomatic alliances.

Emerging as a strong partnership the United States and India present a counter to the CPEC and even to the much larger BRI projects of China. The United States has had a steady backward of the BRI stating that the BRI enables China to expand its dominance since its debt-trap diplomacy among the developing countries (Skidmore, 2021). Washington sees such loans as the Chinese method of capturing the political and economic narratives of the participating countries, only to put them into a debt trap. Consequently, the U.S. has attempted to propose new projects of infrastructure development that will attract public attention and investments and will exclude such voices as corruption, non-eco-friendly technologies and low quality. These endeavors are intended to provide a viable option to the forms of financing proposed in the BRI to the countries in South Asia and in the rest of the world and hence, will decrease China's dominance.

India as a member of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad) with the United States, Japan, and Australian members of the effort has supported such measures. The Quad is an important part of the American perspective for the Indo-Pacific, the principle of which is to oppose attempts at a unilateral change of the region against sanctions for the common goal of a free and open Indo-Pacific. Among them, the Blue Dot Network is a multi-country development infrastructure investment initiative under this strategy, co-initiated by the United States, Japan and Australia (Konstadt, 2006). This has been set to drive efficient framework towards the achievement of proper infrastructure projects that are characterized by high standards of transparency, the protection of the environment as well as efficient financial profile. The transparent and sustainable criteria of project that is aimed under the Blue Dot Network will be a viable input to the BRI projects that raise concerns for lack of transparency or sustainability. To India, the participation in such initiatives has the dual effect

of enhancing its strategic partnership with the United States while also achieving its broader political objective of containment of China in South Asia. Thus, both India and the United States act to support the development projects there towards the fairness, accountability and balanced development in the interest of both nations which gives the regional countries some better options to consider against the CPEC and BRI investments.

Not only physically has India buffered the CPEC by constructing roads and rails within its territory, but diplomatically also it has been striving to garner consensus against CPEC throughout the region. India is also trying to forge closer relations with immediate neighbors such as Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka, providing grants and funds for projects as an addition to loans. Responsible for financing 'regional friendly' projects worth \$125 billion at home and \$54 billion outside the country, India hopes to weaken CPEC and BRI strategies by limiting South Asian countries' reliance on Chinese financing (Singh & Arun, 2023). The cooperation of two countries is critical in this context as Washington's financial and diplomatic support enhances Indian capabilities of countering with China in the strategic area.

Of such impacts, economic sanctions made on Chinese companies by the US have also had a universal effect on China's BRI and technological intent. The United States has limited China in exporting its technology through its sanctions applied on certain software companies such as Huawei and ZTE and the extent of reduced exportation of China's technology is reflected in the 5G telecommunication (Hwang, 2020). To support these strategies, India has also contributed to those actions by applying its measures toward the limitation of Chinese technology corporations as well. After the border tension with China in last year of 2020 India banned a lot of Chinese related applications such as TikTok, WeChat and other on grounds of data security and sovereignty. These bans were part of a larger Indian campaign to cut off Chinese technological penetration in South Asia especially in communication and data connectivity industries.

The sanctions have impacted China across its technological goals, especially in its desire to control new technologies such as 5G, AI, and QCI among others. Huawei, which was for a long the leading designer of 5G systems, has been unable to sustain its market share because of sanctions led by the United States, which have placed tight constraints on supplies of essential components and software (Ryan & Burman, 2024). The attendance of Huawei to signal and communication sectors in India has become restricted due to India's decision not to allow the company to provide services in its 5G network. This situation has posed a challenge to the Chinese policymakers to reassess its strategic approach in technology acquiring and development hence this promoting development of indigenous technologies.

In response to economic sanctions and restrictions, China has adopted a two-pronged strategy: violence and autonomy. On the one hand, Beijing has responded to the US and India sanctions through its counter sanctions on foreign companies and giving incentives to domestic consumers to boycott foreign products. For instance, China has closed its market to some of the US and Indian businesses and used economic aggression as a way of countering the same. On the other hand, China has intensified its efforts to develop its own technological standards and avoid importing high-tech products. Strategies, such as the "Made in China 2025," which seeks to position the nation as a hub for high value manufacturing, have become even more important as China seeks to capture the market in matters touching on segments such as semiconductors, 5G, and artificial intelligence (Prajapati, 2024).

Indigenous technologies are crucial to China's enduring interests in both economic development and security (Feigenbaum, 2003). As for example, China's heavy dependence on foreign semiconductors has been pinpointed as a weakness; more so with the Trump

administration's export bans limiting its supply of such vital materials. China has prosecuted its domestic investment in semiconductor manufacturing industry with the long-term vision of making China a hub for this industry in the next ten years. In the same way, a Chinese couple has aimed at creating their own standards and networks of 5G, decreasing their reliance on high technologies of developed European and American countries and establishing China as a world leader in the telecommunication sector.

Therefore, India linking up with the US on sanctions and restricting Chinese technological incursion is a deliberate policy to check China's rise in South Asia. On the one hand, the support for US policies, regarding the security of 5G networks and data localization, ensured India's place in countering China's high-tech advance at the global level with the assistance of its strategic partner – Washington. This alignment is not only about depriving China from accessing to the Indian domestic market but also about the positive remaking of the Internet regional and global architecture. India's recent exclusion of Chinese companies in its 5G networks for instance has created a precedence for other countries in the region most of which are equally security conscious on Chinese technology (Dewan, 2022).

The Chinese attitude toward all these challenges has been defensive offensive, whereby the country has expanded defense force while at the same time threatening other countries. Long term, China has tried to reduce the effect it feels from both the US and Indian sanctions by expanding the range of its clients and agreeing on new association with nations that are not all that close with the US and India (Shukla, 2015). For instance, China has expanded cooperation with Russia, Iran, and other countries undergoing the same experience, and formed an economic and technological cooperation mechanism that ignores the US system. Despite this growth, there is increased strategic thinking about the need to develop indigenous technologies required to support the growth of Chinese industries.

On the same note, China has continued to deepen the Belt, and Road Initiative as a foreign policy and economic technique employed to achieve the country's superior hegemonic power advantage. However, international pressures such as from Indian government, BRI is still an essential part of China's foreign policy that involved infrastructural, telecommunication, energy sectors across Asia, Africa, and Europe. The AIIB, which is another foundational piece of China's economic model, offer additional source of fund for developing nations that may be averse to access credit from Western dominated institutions such as WB or IMF (Garrett, 2021). Bare legal requirements compared to the US-India cooperation, China can continue to provide loans and investments with less conditions of western financial institutions.

In terms of strategy, the Chinese BRI and Indian CPEC are very significant in nature. Despite India's attempt to balance such initiatives through its economic and diplomatic moves, the enormous amount of investment In Inspector is a tough nut to crack. It will be important in future studies to understand the diplomatic forms of US-India cooperation in support of alternative GVC infrastructure, beyond merely mobilizing financial resources (Chan, 2020). On its way to cement its influence over the BRI and continuing to ramp up its relations with Pakistan and SL, China's strategies can only be navigated by India in the future landscape of South Asia.

Where the China's BRI and CPEC are strategic significances can be analyzed within the contexts of Sino-US and Sino-India rivalry. Indian opposition to the CPEC is not only about the territory but also more extensive apprehensions of Chinese incursion in South Asia. Partnership in infrastructural projects, android security, and technology between US and India provides a check to China (White, 2021) but assessing the effectiveness of such initiatives would depend on the capacity to keen with China BRI investment size and

outreach. Continuing to counter the US sanctions and restrictions, China will deepen the domestic technological development and advance the BRI initiatives; the further trajectory of interaction between these three powers will define the future of the Indo-Pacific region at least.

Strategically, the partnership between the United States and India harbor deep-seated post-Black Swan implications for China within the Indo-Pacific theatre. Washington gradually comes closer to New Delhi puts pressure on China in several fields such as defense, technology, and infrastructure. As the relations between the USA and India are becoming more solid, both nations offer themselves as balancing power against China, particularly when it comes to initiatives in terms of ensuring security in the Indo-Pacific region, economics or trying to offer alternatives to BRI and the establishment of own technological standards. Their presence as allies has reinforced for the United States the effort to protect the free and open Indo-Pacific which is in sharp contrast with China's attempts to expand its dominance in that region especially in the South China Sea and via its BRI (Liu F. , 2020).

The further arrangement of the geopolitical politics in Asia can take different directions depending mostly on the relations of big powers like China, US and India. At core of this shifting paradigm is the further emergence of China as a regional power that proceeded to wield its power through economic endeavors such as the BRI. Nonetheless, over the years, the US has increased cooperation with India and demonstrated its power and ability to enable China to maintain and even increase its influence through economists' might Political and strategic partnerships (Adhav, 2023). Thus, one of the guarantees of the Chinese longevity is the liberalization of restrictions on the export of high-technology equipment, which has strengthened the trade relations and developed economic cooperation. In addition, China's BRI-underpinned investments have established a web-like system of synergy of infrastructure that not only interlinks two or more continents, but also intertwines China with the economic structures of most of the developing states. This web of connectivity has been vital in keeping a stronghold for China given rising counterparts from other world powers.

This paper aims to look at China's strategic partnerships with South Asian countries with focus on Pakistan and Sri Lanka in China's statecraft. The CPEC, which is one of the more famous Belt and Road projects, has brought about strong bonds on the economic and strategic fronts of China-Pakistan relationship. In fact, After CPEC the Chinese government invested over \$ 62 billion on infrastructure sector including roads & railways, energy etc. to make its strong mark in Pakistan. These investments also have social economic returns, apart from establishing a strategic corridor through which China gains access to the Arabian Sea with trade routes that are not easily subjected to choke hold. Besides, the constructions by China in the development of the Gwadar port have political connotations, which provided possibility for China to put up a naval force in the region (Afsharipour, 2010). In the similar sense, where Sri Lanka is concerned, China has actively involved in the construction of infrastructure especially ports and highways which has built a safe haven for the Chinese navy and has also secured a permanent stake in key sea-lines of communications in the Indian ocean region. These connections prevent Pakistan and Sri Lanka from allowing another power to curb China's influence within the region of South Asia.

Naturally, with the fast advancement of China and expansion of its economic relations, there are issues that come along with the strategies. The endeavors which have made significant progress in the recent past are the improved relations between the United States and India which is a perfect counterbalance to China. Since the 9/11 world change and more particularly over the last decade, the USA India relations have evolved further with strategic bilateral relationship anchored on economic engagement (Ali, 2020). The United

States has realized that India is a natural ally that can help it contain conflicts in the Indo-Pacific region more so with increasing dominance of China. In this connection, they lifted the ban of export of high technology equipment to India including in the field of defense technology, technology and innovation partnership. Besides adding to bilateral trade, have also bolstered the Indian defense system and turned India into a checked that can effectively challenge China's Military power in the region. Furthermore, the US has gone ahead to encourage investment on India and has facilitated trade agreements that has cemented this relationship. Much more than trade and security cooperation, this partnership covers post-2020 joint efforts in such critical sectors as cyber, green, and smart, as well as technological cooperation for sustained growth.

The cooperation of the United States and India also establishes a different plan of economic development and security relations in comparison with the Chinese model within the frame of BRI. Unlike the BRI, which has been accused of entrenching debt dependencies on the participating nations, the partnership between the United States and India put importance to issues relating to transparency and high standards of quality, as well sustainability. This has been done through such programs as the Blue Dot Network which President Trump recently jointly launched with Japan and Australia to support infrastructure standards around the world, meaning the projects will be financially sustainable, and socially and environmentally sustainable. However, India supports these interventions in a way that complements its goal of checking China's influence by offering regional counterparts an option apart from BRI funding (Anwar & Dewi Fortuna., 2023). The partnership between the United States and India targets to present attractive financing options and focus on sustainability, thus the confrontation with China aims to create economic stability in the South Asian region. It also furthers American interest in a free and open environment in the Indo-Pacific theatre as well as enhances the strategic posture of India in South Asia.

Nonetheless, all these counter-efforts are apparent, China continues steadfast into fostering its rise, relying on the strong friendly relations with various countries around Asia. Besides Pakistan and Sri Lanka, China has signed elegant economical and strategic relations with many of the Southeast Asian countries. Jakarta –Through the BRI, China has increasingly encroached to some ASEAN members like Myanmar, Laos, Cambodia and Thailand, thus financing several infrastructural projects that improve in the connectivity of the region (Koga, 2020). Such strategic investments do favor China and have ensured that it acquires strategic sea/land corridors for products transit, assured access to natural resources; and accrues political capital critical for supporting its long-term strategies. In addition, the increasing Chinese-Russian cooperation has only strengthened it, because the two states have been coordinating their actions in rejecting the initiatives of the West. Through extending the bond with Russia and with other countries such as Pakistan and Iran, China is laying down powerful allies that may bolster its goals, because of rising threats from the NATO group headed by America. This web work of relationships will guarantee China's ascendancy, albeit, at the same time, it is being met with more opposition from competing powers.

Nonetheless the characteristics of the strategic competition in this area are quite dynamic, and the changes in the alliances and partnerships might influence the overall regional configuration. Together, India and the United States have moved up to become more strategic partners, and their cooperation rejects China's leadership in the economic growth and security essential for the global economy. This could lead to more competition and rivalry, not only between these powers, but the countries this power struggle will pin down as well (Ahamed, 2021). For many of the SEA countries, it is a dilemma. On the one hand, they gain economically from their business relations with the Asian giant who invested heavily in

their infrastructure as well as in their trade domains. On the other hand, they want the protection clauses provided by the United States and India especially at this time of rising military power of China. This situation provides them with a polarity, which makes them in a position where they should balance themselves with two blocs without compromising their relations with the other blocs. It is made worse by recent developments such as China's capability enhancements in military sea power and the behavior of exercising sovereignty over disputed areas in the South China Sea that has caused tensions, and which implies the need for stronger security policies.

As argued, for the US-India partnership to weaken China's influence, China requires the strategic adjustment at the international level. An example of the type of adaptation could be diplomatic activity in India. If China paying attention or responding certain apprehensive of India concerning BRI especially the CPEC and its passage through the disputed territory it possible to ease some of the existing tension between India and China. The troops can also build confidence between the two neighbors along the line of actual control further can reduce the chances of tactical skirmishes also opens areas of cooperation in cases where mutual interests such as climate change or regional trade stabilize the LAC (Sidhu & Yuan, 2001). Furthermore, to mute the criticism that accompany debts annually from the BRI projects, China could rearrange its economic strategies to make its investing actions more transparent and sustainable. China could offer a less political useful economic model where it supports Foreign Direct Investments and development of the region without the imposition of political demands.

Thus, it means that China should consider at diversifying its strategic partnership. At the same time, China might seek to expand its partnership with states which traditionally were not its strategic partners, including the states of South-East Asia and African states. Cutting across political and military power, economic interdependent opportunities were available for Beijing to expand influence that did not directly impinge on the US-India interests. Consequently, China can lessen all of these problems resulting from the integration of US-India through diplomatic measures, economic measures, and changing the scope of its partnerships and can continue giving a consistent impact on its long-term interests in Indo-Pacific and other regions as well.

Conclusion

The U.S.-India partnership under the Biden administration has emerged as a cornerstone of Indo-Pacific geopolitics, characterized by deepening defense ties, multilateral cooperation, and shared democratic ideals. This strategic alignment aims to counter China's assertive policies, particularly its Belt and Road Initiative and activities in disputed maritime territories. The partnership has implications for technological innovation, supply chain diversification, and regional stability. China's responses—ranging from military expansion to economic diplomacy—illustrate its attempts to mitigate the strategic challenges posed by this alliance. While the trilateral dynamics between the U.S., India, and China continue to reshape the Indo-Pacific, the outcomes will significantly influence the global balance of power. For the U.S. and India, sustaining this collaboration is vital for promoting a rules-based international order. For China, recalibrating its strategies to address emerging challenges will be critical in maintaining its regional and global aspirations.

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