



## China's Constructivist Approach Towards Neighborhood Diplomacy

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### Abstract

China's rise as a worldwide economic powerhouse and the geopolitical countermeasures taken by the United States pose increasing difficulties and opportunities for Asia as it becomes a focal point of global power politics. This essay provides a theoretical framework for comprehending China's foreign policy development by analyzing its neighborhood diplomacy during the last ten years via the constructivist lens. The study emphasizes how China's neighborhood policies, based on friendliness, reciprocity, and inclusivity, promote cooperative stability and a common regional identity. This study uses a qualitative technique and secondary data analysis to examine China's efforts to improve regional connectivity and support the constructivist emphasis on shared norms and values, including the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The results show that China's strategy has changed its interactions with its neighbors, encouraging good neighborliness and regional integration. China's diplomacy demonstrates a strategic commitment to inclusive growth and shared futures by constructing a peaceful and prosperous Asia, tackling the intricacies of modern geopolitics.

**Keywords:** China's neighborhood policy, Geopolitics, Constructivism, Regional Identity.

### Introduction

China's diplomacy in global affairs has changed significantly in recent decades. Following the twenty-first century's first decade, there have been notable changes in its relations with its neighbors. (Medeiros & Fravel, 2003). After 1989, when China feared being

encircled by the West, Chinese pundits no longer stressed the importance of maintaining a favorable regional environment – a key policy of the Deng Xiaoping era. Specially Deng's concept of China's opening up was a "peaceful rise" and "low profile" nation (He & Liu, 2020). Rising from a weak state to a powerhouse, a policy shift has been observed in China's diplomacy practice, from "low profile" to global power.

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To promote international peace and prosperity, China constructs a model for strategic partnerships, strengthens ties with its neighbors, modifies its relations with industrialized nations, and engages in multilateral diplomacy. China's success in international relations can be attributed to its "good neighbor diplomacy," which includes "win-win" scenarios and openness and reform programs (Womack, 2013). This change in the policy in its diplomacy is the policy choice of China. As China and its neighbors are closely bound by geography, connected by rivers and the Himalayas, building a community based on a shared future is actively promoted by China as a top policy aim in its neighborhood. Currently, most countries in the region see China as a friendly neighbor, constructive partner, non-threatening regional force, and attentive listener (Shambaugh, 2005). Historically, China, with good relations with its neighbor through the "tributary" state, had declined its power to maintain its relations with declining of the power (Yunling, 2016). In the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, China's relations with its neighbors were limited as its neighbors were colonized by the imperialist powers. After the formation of the People's Republic of China, there seems to be limited scope in its relations with neighbors. During this period, China's neighborhood policy was directed with defensive approaches and a reactive degree, as the CPC's various documents cite Chairman Mao (The CPC Central Committee, 2021)-

*"All reactionaries are paper tigers." Confronted with blatant US provocation, the CPC decided to fight to defend China, which led to victory in the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea (the Korean War), proving that hegemony would not be tolerated and was doomed to failure."*

China's opening up and reform provided political ground for developing and rearranging relations with its neighbors. Since then, there have been policy choices and changes regarding neighborhood policy. This paper seeks the answer: How is China constructing its diplomacy toward its neighbor? and how China applies the constructivist approach to maintaining its relations with its neighbor in a changing global context.

### **Literature Review: China's Neighborhood Diplomacy**

A vital part of China's foreign policy framework, neighbourhood diplomacy reflects the strategic, economic, and security goals of the nation (Chen & Pan, 2011). Due to its geographic location among many states with various political structures and historical backgrounds, China's policy towards its neighbours has changed over time in response to both domestic

concerns and international events (X. Li, 2016). The main ideas, theoretical models, and empirical discoveries in the academic discussion of China's neighbourhood diplomacy are examined in this overview of the literature.

**Historical Context:** The People's Republic of China (PRC) attempted to forge its place in the area after 1949, which is when China's neighbourhood diplomacy first emerged. The ideological foundations of China's foreign policy, especially its attempts to aid revolutionary forces in nearby nations during the Cold War, were emphasized in early writings (Fairbank, 1968). The CCP sought to put an end to China's semi-colonial past after 1949 by forging diplomatic connections with nations that rejected imperialism and their affiliation with the Kuomintang (KMT). This strategy, which supported socialism, was strongly focused on the Soviet Union (Kraus, 2010). But this changed over time, particularly as the Sino-Soviet split grew. China's approach to Asia, Africa, and Western Europe was impacted by this change (Ni, 2022). Following the Sino-Soviet split, Beijing prioritized state sovereignty and territorial integrity, leading to a change towards pragmatic engagement (Keith, 1989).

An important part of the PRC's early years was cultural diplomacy. During the Cold War, translating Chinese literature was a means of promoting China and winning over other countries. Building bridges and forming new partnerships was the goal of this program, especially in the English-speaking world (Ni, 2022).

From the historical perspective, literature by Xiao Liu and Zhaoyi Liu (2023) suggests that the development of China's diplomacy can be divided into three periods: "diplomacy of peaceful liberation" (1921-1949), "diplomacy of peaceful coexistence" (1949-1979), and "diplomacy of peaceful development" (1979-present). And these changes have their own orientations- politics-oriented, economy-oriented, and global sustainable-development oriented- which are influenced by the national interest and changing global order (Tian & Li, 2022). These changes in Chinese diplomacy are influenced by their leaders Mao Zedong and Deng Xiaoping (Y. Wang, 2013) which has undergone two large 30-year cycles, with Mao Zedong's focusing on ideological components and alliance-building, Deng Xiaoping's economic orientation, and Xi Jinping's focus on geo-economic projects and influence (Grachikov, 2021).

**Strategic Frameworks and Regional Dynamics:** Different literatures suggest that China's "community of shared destiny" policy seeks to influence regional and global regimes by fostering economic development, infrastructure, and normative power. The idea of

"Peripheral Diplomacy" has been a key component of China's neighbourhood policy. Barmé R et al. (2015) highlighted the significance of creating a "community of shared destiny" in China's regional strategy, which is consistent with its overarching objective of reshaping the world order. Scholars such as Yunling (2016) have examined China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as an example of this strategy, which aims to increase economic interdependence and fortify geopolitical ties with neighbouring states. He further stated that actively fostering a community founded on common interests and a shared future is China's top objective in its neighborhood policy.

Stephen N. Smith (2021) argues that China's neighborhood strategy under Xi Jinping involves institution-building, regional integration, strategic partnerships, normative binding, and developmental statecraft to shape regional order. This strategy focused on the regional dynamics, including South, Southeast, and Central Asia. China's relations with Southeast Asia have been centered on the South China Sea issues. Although China's forceful measures have caused issues with certain ASEAN members, Wuthnow (2016) noted that tensions have been somewhat reduced by China's economic participation. Chambers (2008) examined ASEAN's varied reactions, which range from collaboration to balancing tactics, and China has maintained its relations with Southeast Asian countries, promoting a "good neighbour" policy since 1997.

Various studies related to China and South Asia show that China's South Asian strategy entails managing relations with South Asia to lessen the effects of the US Indo-Pacific strategy while simultaneously using its economic, diplomatic, and military might to offset India's rise, ensure regional cooperation, and preserve its geopolitical standing. China's South Asian strategy includes strengthening its ties with mountain nations like Nepal and Bhutan, forming alliances with Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Bangladesh, and applying pressure on India (Sachdeva, 2021).

Kafle (2022) argued that China is applying FDI as a strategic source in South Asia as its periphery diplomacy in the region. According to Sui (2018), China's strategy towards South Asia consists of bilateral relations and economic considerations focusing on restructuring industries and finding new markets. For achieving these goals, Mohan & Abraham (2020) claimed that China is establishing a balance of power in South Asia through its economic and military engagements, including BRI, to restrain India's rise.

Because of its strategic location and energy resources, Central Asia has become increasingly important in China's neighborhood diplomacy. Kerr (2010) study

shows that China's strategic in Central Asia involves creating strategic space for China. Sheives (2006) and Yujun (2019) argued that through cooperation, influence balancing, reliance on the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and energy cooperation, China's Central Asian strategy aims to create a peaceful, stable, and beneficial environment. According to Melniková (2020), China's main interests in Central Asia are energy and infrastructure through the implementation of BRI.

To maintain its relations with neighbor, China keeps economic engagement as a central pillar for its neighborhood diplomacy. Smith (2021) further argued that institution-building, regional integration, strategic alliances, normative binding, and developmental statecraft are all components of China's neighboring strategy under Xi Jinping, which aims to establish regional order.

**Theoretical Framework and Methodology:** This study uses the constructivist approach to analyse China's neighborhood policy. Constructivism, a well-known theory of international relations (IR), emphasizes the influence of social constructions, such as norms, values, and beliefs, in forming international relations. Unlike liberalism and realism, which place more emphasis on material components like institutions and power, constructivism argues that social interactions determine the identity and objectives of a state (Wendt, 1992). The international system is socially produced and is shaped by states' perceptions of and interactions with other states (Bellamy, 2004). Constructivism holds that global norms and identities greatly influence the international system and state behavior. States operate based on financial interests and the principles and ideals they support (Charskykh, 2022). Constructivist academics contend that societal norms and values impact state behavior and desire rather than being innate or fixed (Weldes, 1996). Constructivist academics emphasize that social interactions mold a state's identity, shaping its interests and foreign policy decisions. The antiquated realist notion of national interest needs to be revised in light of the shifting global contexts (Dermawan, 2020).

China's national identity and values are important to its contemporary foreign policy and significantly impact its behavior with other countries. The idea of "Tianxia" (天下, or "All Under Heaven") reflects how the government perceives foreign affairs and is influenced by traditional Chinese worldviews (Qin, 2018). China has established international institutions and incorporated them into them in recent decades (Johnston, 2008). Constructivist analysis can be used to examine these interactions. China supports concepts like "win-win cooperation" and "community of common destiny" to establish a regional order that reflects its character and values. The basis of

China's vision for a new regional order is its historical identity and cultural standards (Krieger, 2022).

This paper uses the constructivist approach to analyse and evaluate China's foreign policy on its neighborhood policy. China and its neighbors have similar values, cultures, and geography. China has positive and negative experiences maintaining bilateral relations with its neighbors. This method offers theoretical frameworks for scenario analysis and direction towards conclusions. Theoretically, clarity and basement structure are essential to generalise even the most complex and diverse subjects systematically.

This research applied qualitative research method based on the interpretive paradigms and is descriptive in type. The data used in this study are secondary in type. This paper reviews the policy paper published by China entitled "Outlook on China's Foreign Policy on Its Neighborhood in the New Era" regarding different literature available. This research applies process tracing and casual-process observations by applying determined theory and logic.

### **Geopolitical Significant of the Region**

Asia is one of the world's most complex areas, and its impact on geopolitical rivalries is becoming more apparent worldwide. South and Southeast Asia now play a much larger role in geopolitics than they did ten years ago. The US's involvement in the region has expanded as Chinese influence has grown. The South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC) is on a collision course with the evolving dynamics of the Indo-Pak disputes. In the meantime, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) links South Asia with East Asia, except for Pakistan.

On the other hand, the competition between two emerging Asian powers, China and India, has encountered border conflicts and given new dynamics for regional security and geopolitical competitions (Ball et al., 2019). Chinese influence always seems to be constrained by US involvement in the region. The US-India Civil Nuclear Initiative is one of the US's actions to support India in stopping China in the region with its Indo-Pacific Strategy (He & Li, 2020). The US views India as a potential ally in balancing and decoupling China (Alden & Alves, 2017).

Before the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1970s, there were two power contests in the area: China joined the US alongside Pakistan, and India joined the Soviet Union. This system disintegrated twenty years later with the demise of the Soviet Union, making room for new partnerships. The US is becoming more and more present in the area. China's Belt and Road

Initiative has expanded mutual benefit in the interim. Furthermore, BRI may change China's foreign policy concerning security and intensify its rivalry with other powerful countries in the Indo-Pacific region (M. Li, 2020).

With 60% of the world's population, Asia is leading the global south. The global world order is polarizing, and the world is multipolar. China, peripheral Asia, with one-third of the world's population, is important in geopolitics.

### **The US Engagements in the Region**

US President Richard Nixon noted that Asia was only a minor interest for the United States in an article titled "Asia after Viet Nam." He also said that the greatest threat to conflict that could result in a third world war would come from Asia (Nixon, 2008). Nixon had expressed his idea of rebalancing US foreign policy toward Asia to build a Pacific community, by which it tends to focus on the East from the West.

With the beginning of 2023, the US engagement in South and Southeast Asia has increased. These engagements concluded as the counter steps of the US against the Chinese influence in the region. Trump's "America First" policy was focused on containing China in global affairs. The Biden Administration, with "America is Back," is continuing the policy and has worked more closely with its regional allies (Roehrig, 2022). With the policy continuity of the Trump Administration, the Biden Administration adopted its policy of confrontations with China, leveling it as "Strategic Competition"(Roehrig, 2021).

Soon after Biden took charge of the White House, Sino-US relations worsened, and the Trade War, Chip War, Taiwan Issues, and other issues froze relations between the two superpowers. The Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue) with India, Japan, and Australia was continued as a project from the Trump Administration, and another security pact, AUKUS, was added to the policy, including Australia and the UK containing China (Dhakal, 2023).

After its period of seclusion, the US became active in this region, and over the years, it has had a range of interests in the area. Given the recent geo-economic shift in the world, the US has significant economic potential in South and Southeast Asia and security and military interests against China. The South and Southeast Asia region has always been important to the US, containing the USSR throughout the Cold War and, more recently, China.

India appears to be the US's possible regional ally in its efforts to restrain China. With more Indo-US interests

convergent, India recalibrated its line to the Indo-Pacific (Pant & Saha, 2020). The United States is committed to assisting India's sustained ascent and leadership in the region. According to the US Indo-Pacific Strategic Report-2022, the US will keep forming strategic alliances through which it collaborates with India through regional organizations. India is seen as a leader in the Indian Ocean and South Asia, active in Southeast Asia, and a like-minded ally (White House, 2022). For this US interest, BIMSTEC can be such a group that India has a huge influence.

### China's Neighborhood Policy

China's proposal for friendship, honesty, and tolerance in neighborhood diplomacy completed its 10th year in 2023. In October of the same year, China published "Outlook on China's Foreign Policy on Its Neighborhood in the New Era," an official policy document (FMPRC, 2023). China attempted to codify its peripheral foreign policy for the first time. China has prioritized growing its power by fortifying ties with its neighbors when relations with the US over the trade war are worsening. China has suggested the Global Security Initiative in addition to the Belt and Road Initiative to advance global security cooperation, address the underlying causes of international crises, enhance global governance, and bring about long-lasting peace and prosperity. (左, 2023).

President Xi Jinping has repeatedly stated that China will cooperate with other nations to create an Asian homeland marked by peace, prosperity, beauty, and amicable coexistence. China is committed to upholding the values of friendship, honesty, mutual benefit, and inclusivity (Xinuha, 2024). The Chinese sayings "Be kind to your neighbor," "Seek amity through integrity," and "Promote harmony among all nations" are echoed in the document, which argues that China's fundamental policy of neighborhood diplomacy is to advance friendship and partnership with its neighbors and build a harmonious, secure, and prosperous neighborhood (FMPRC, 2023).

With the aspiration of the Chinese traditional saying, "True friendship weathers the changing seasons without fading away and is made even stronger by hardships," China has incorporated its policy towards neighboring countries to "enjoy geographical proximity, cultural affinity, and integrated interests" with a shared future from the millennium-old friendly exchanges between the two sides with a vivid history of exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations.

Documents contend that China prioritizes the neighborhood on its diplomatic agenda, places a high value on neighborhood diplomacy, and is steadfast in its

commitment to advancing regional peace, stability, development, and prosperity as a responsible country of the region. The publications elaborate on the accomplishments, policies, goals, and ambitions of China's neighborhood diplomacy and express China's commitment in four sections based on an evaluation and analysis of the current situation and future developments in Asia.

The first section covers the "Opportunities and Challenges" that Asia faces in the twenty-first century. It makes the case that history has once again brought the globe to a crossroads, with Asia experiencing tremendous transformation over the past century and facing unprecedented potential and challenges as it begins a new chapter of development and renewal.

Describing the ongoing century as the Asian century, the document calls for jointly promoting the modernization process with neighboring countries and jointly building communities with a shared future in neighboring countries, jointly carving out a vision of Asia in a new era of peace, prosperity, and friendly coexistence. China examined the challenges faced by Asia, like unequal economic development, significant security risks, and administrative problems. Furthermore, China argued that the world is divided into bipolarity concerning the future of Asia.

*Meanwhile, global governance is dysfunctional; the Cold War mentality resurfaces; unilateralism, protectionism, and hegemonism run rampant; multiple risks in such fields as energy, food, finance, industrial and supply chains, and climate change have a greater impact on Asia. Asia also faces challenges like uneven economic growth and pronounced security and governance issues. Some countries have intensified efforts to build regional military alliances; the Korean Peninsula issue remains complicated and intractable; Afghanistan faces numerous challenges in its reconstruction; terrorism, natural disasters, and other non-traditional security threats persist.*

*There are two opposite propositions and trends concerning the future of Asia. One advocates open regionalism, true multilateralism, a development-first approach, mutually beneficial cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, integrated development, and the pursuit of harmonious common development. The other represents a relapse into the Cold War mentality and exclusive clubs and attempts to draw lines*

*based on values, politicize economic issues, divide the region into different security blocs, and stoke division and confrontation.*

-Outlook on China's Foreign Policy on Its Neighborhood in the New Era, (FMPRC, 2023).

In the policy document, China also took a constructive approach to its relations with its neighbors. It denies isolation, confrontation, division, and hegemony in the region and advocates for a prosperous and better Asia. China has updated its relations with its neighbors more quickly and with positive results since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012 (Zhao & Gao, 2015), which guided the country's neighborhood policy.

The right choice for Asia should be openness, solidarity, cooperation, justice, and harmony rather than isolation, division, confrontation, hegemony, and a zero-sum approach. This not only hinges on the prospects of countries in the region but will also have a fundamental and far-reaching bearing on the future of Asia and the world. Building a community with a shared future for mankind is the sure path to a prosperous and better Asia and the world.

China will stay committed to equality, mutual benefit, and win-win cooperat

ion, and it will work with regional countries to advance modernization. Chinese modernization provides a new choice for developing countries to explore modernization pathways. China will seek to develop itself while safeguarding regional peace and development, keep creating new opportunities for neighboring countries with China's new development, and follow a path of open, cooperative, and win-win development together with neighboring countries.

-Outlook on China's Foreign Policy on Its Neighborhood in the New Era, (FMPRC, 2023).

### Multi-Dimensional Partnership with Neighbor

China has established cooperative relations or strategic mutually beneficial relations with 28 neighboring countries. Meanwhile, China has resolved border disputes with 12 neighboring countries through dialogue. Meanwhile, China has partnered with 24 neighboring countries to build the 'Belt and Road jointly'. Similarly, China said it has supported its neighbors' development by establishing the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Silk Road Fund. China has taken shape with "six corridors, six multi-country roads, and multi-ports." China has committed to promoting the creation of a new kind of international relations and will deepen

partnerships of equality, openness, and cooperation with neighboring countries and adhere to its bottom points for the foreign policy of the "One-China Principle."

**Table 1 China's Relations Status with its Neighbors.**

S.N.	Relations Status	Countries
1	Established partnerships, cooperative relations or strategic relations of mutual benefit with China	Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Timor-Leste, Russia, the Philippines, Kazakhstan, the Republic of Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Cambodia, Laos, Maldives, Malaysia, Mongolia, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Nepal, Japan, Sri Lanka, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, Brunei, Uzbekistan, Singapore, India, Indonesia and Viet Nam.
2	Lancang-Mekong Cooperation	Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam
3	China-Central Asian Countries Cooperation	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan
4	Resolved the boundary issues	the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Russia, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Myanmar, Laos and Viet Nam
5	Treaties of good-neighborliness and friendly cooperation	Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Russia, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan.
6	China as largest trading partner	Pakistan, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Russia, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Cambodia,

		Malaysia, Mongolia, Bangladesh, Myanmar, Japan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Singapore, Indonesia and Viet Nam.
7	Signed Belt and Road cooperation documents	Afghanistan, Timor-Leste, Russia, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Kazakhstan, Laos, Cambodia, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Brunei, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Nepal, Maldives, Singapore, Tajikistan, Thailand, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Indonesia and Viet Nam.

Source: Outlook on China's Foreign Policy on its Neighborhood in the New Era.

Furthermore, China is engaging with its neighbor through regional organizations. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which China and its neighbors co-founded, has grown into the most extensive regional organization in terms of population and geographic reach during the time that regional engagements have been the main focus. SCO has established a model for constructing state-to-state relations characterized by reciprocity, equity, justice, and win-win situations while gaining invaluable experience in creating a community with a shared destiny for all people (Yuan, 2010).

To maintain regional stability and security in the region, a crucial forum for close collaboration among the six nations is the China-Central Asia mechanism, which China formed and the five Central Asian nations (Zhekenov et al., 2021). An example of cooperative mutual benefit is the sub-region Lancang-Mekong Cooperation, and the Economic Development Belt that links the two is beginning to take shape. Through its involvement in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), China-Japan-ROK cooperation, and the East Asia cooperation mechanism centered around ASEAN, China actively engages in multilateral cooperation openly and inclusively, supporting the region's integrated development and people's well-being. (Xiao, 2009). Chinese diplomacy in the area and the developing world depends heavily on these regional forums (Alden & Alves, 2017). China formally adopted a constructive policy towards its neighbor for win-win cooperation for the shared future of humankind.

### China's Constructivism Approach towards Neighbor

The constructivist approach focuses on cultural aspects, ideas, norms, and identities in international relations and highlights how interest and identity are interdependent through socio-historical processes (Faraj & Othman, 2019). China and its neighbor have comparable social identities and cultures linked to comparable civilisations. These days, poverty, underdevelopment, and climate change are similar problems in this area. China's neighbor engagement strategy promotes national interests and identity; it seeks to establish a common society with a shared identity and a framework of friendship and cooperation that benefits both parties (Singh, 2021). It entails strategic alliances with the surrounding nations, infrastructure, and economic development (Rashid et al., 2023). Chinese initiatives, such as BRI, GSI, GDI, and GCI, foster national identities by valuing collaboration and the common future of humanity.

**Table 2 BRI's Six Economic Corridors**

Corridor	Participating Countries	Connecting Area
CMREC	China, Mongolia and Russia	Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei-Hohhot-Mongolia-Russia, And Dalian-Shenyang-Changchun-Harbin-Manzhouli-Chita
NELB	China, Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Poland, and Germany	Chongqing-Xinjiang-Europe (reaching Germany's Duisburg via Poland), the Chengdu-Xinjiang-Europe Railway (reaching Poland), and the Yiwu-Xinjiang-Europe Railway (reaching Madrid).
CCWAEC	Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan	17 countries and regions in West Asia (including Iran, Saudi Arab and Turkey)
CICPEC	Vietnam, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand,	China's Pearl River Delta westward along the Nanchong-Guang'an Expressway and the Nanning-Guangzhou High-

	Myanmar and Malaysia	speed Railway via Nanning and Pingxiang to Hanoi and Singapore.
CPEC	China and Pakistan	China's Kashi and Ends at Pakistan's Gwadar
BCIMEC	China, Bangladesh, India, Myanmar	Start From Kunming connecting Myanmar, Bangladesh and North-east India

Source: State Council Information Office of PRC

China's engagements in the region have promoted regional connectivity and constructed the regional economic identity. Economic cooperation between China and its neighbors, notably India, Nepal, Pakistan, Bhutan, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Laos, and other central Asian neighbors, has played a crucial role in regional stability and growth through the multidimensional field of collaborations such as commerce, infrastructure, and investment (Bhattacharyay & De, 2005). Despite their complex relationship, China's economic relationships with these neighboring countries have increased in the last ten years. Compared to 2013, trade between China and South Asian countries increased to around \$200 billion in 2023 (K. Wang, 2024). With the utilization of significant FDI, China and Southeast Asian nations saw notable improvements in their economic growth rate (Chaudhury et al., 2020).

Chinese investment in India is increasing significantly, even though China is not included in the Belt and Road Initiative. Through venture capital investments in start-ups, China's virtual Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has allowed it to access the Indian market and permeate the internet ecosystem through its widely utilized smartphones and applications (Bhandari, 2020). The report suggests that Chinese tech investors have invested an estimated \$4 billion into Indian start-ups by 2020. Collaborative economic projects have strengthened regional economies and provided employment; consolidating the political and economic basis for the "Belt and Road" strategy's influence will come from strengthening mutual political trust amongst member nations and constructing a common community for people's livelihoods (Han & Li, 2018).

Meanwhile, China is actively constructing the transportation infrastructure—including the national policy plan—necessary to connect South Asia via Tibet (NDRC PRC, 2021). Ports at Shenzhen, Tianjin, Zhanjiang, and Lianyungang were made accessible, as

were the roads leading to China's dry (land) ports at Lhasa, Shigatse, and Lanzhou (Lee & Shen, 2020). Following extensive implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative, Nepal will function as the transit nation between China and India.

The Silk Road Economic Corridors, which connect China, do not include Nepal in their network of corridors. However, a draft plan identified Nepal as a beneficiary rather than a target country (Sapkota, 2017). The Lanzhou-South Asia Corridor (BCIM), which connects Kathmandu and Kolkata, India, with Lanzhou in Gansu Province, China, requires development (Adhikari & Ma, 2022). The trains connecting China to Europe and Central Asia, the Lanzhou-Hamburg train and the Lanzhou-Alma-Ata train, will eventually be followed by the Lanzhou-Kathmandu corridor, which will connect China with South Asia.

Within the framework of its 'Western development' program and outer periphery strategy and as part of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China has declared its intention to build six dry ports close to the Nepal-China border and extend highways and trains (N. R. Nayak, 2016). As a result, trade will rise both locally and with neighboring countries. Enhancing transcontinental connectivity and regional cooperation are the goals of the expansive Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Dai, 2022). Developing programs and economic corridors foster cooperation, reduce conflict, and foster interdependence by creating a shared regional economic identity among the surrounding nations.

China makes infrastructural and economic growth investments to promote a stable and cooperative political climate. This stability is necessary for long-term regional integration and the BRI to succeed. Constructivism is reflected in the program, which promotes cooperative and harmonious cohabitation values through economic means (Yadav, 2022). BRI, GCI, GSI, GDI, and other Chinese initiatives are China's constructivist approaches to constructing a platform for cooperation among regional countries.

### Conclusion

The US's involvement in South and Southeast Asian nations is consistent with its plan to encircle China. With its IPS defense policy, the US has a strong interest in the region. It appears that the little nations of China's periphery will be under the strategic control of the major powers in this situation. India is in direct competition with China as an IPS member. The US's predominance in world affairs has been put in jeopardy by China's ascent. By 2050, China wants to surpass the US as the dominant country. The US worries that Beijing might usurp it as the world's dominant power. The United



States has also directed its IPS toward Southeast Asia to prevent China from realizing its 2050 aspirations.

Asia is now taking center stage in the global affair. Additionally, the small and underdeveloped nations of the region will suffer directly when the planet is split into two poles. The US is isolating China, which has the world's largest population, by referring to regional peace and stability. China is making progress in its efforts to increase its sway over Asia. India, a growing economy in and of itself, has assisted the US in stopping China.

Underdeveloped China's neighboring countries can benefit from the competition between the two polar power centers and the three-tiered economy regarding economic and infrastructure development. Together are potential balance losses and the possibility of becoming a flashpoint in the Sino-U.S. conflict. Therefore, China and its neighbors must consistently enhance political mutual trust and deepen the convergence of interests. This has paved the way for good neighborly friendly and win-win cooperation. Chinese leadership expressed their commitment to deepening friendly cooperation with regional countries guided by friendship, honesty, mutual benefit, and inclusivity. It is committed to contributing more knowledge and strength to building a community with a shared future for Asia and humanity. This policy choice will expand its influence in the region. They will provide better policy choices by constructing a common regional identity.

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