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# INDO-PACIFIC STRATEGY versus BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE: Implications for hegemony in Asia\*

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- I. Introduction
- II. South Korea: National-Strategic Drivers and Imperatives
- III. Theoretical Approach
- IV. Indo-Pacific Strategy/Concept
- V. Belt and Road Initiative
- VI. IPS versus BRI: Likelihood of Regional Conflict and South Korea's Choice

## ◀ Abstract ▶

Seoul is under increasing pressure to choose between the US-led Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

Accordingly, this paper undertakes a detailed appraisal of the IPS and the BRI in the context of Korea's national policy imperatives. Based on a study of network structure by Daniel Nexon and Thomas Wright (2007), the present study seeks to identify a particular network structure within the IPS and the BRI. Through this analysis, the relationship between the core and the participant states will be addressed. Awareness of specific configurations of the IPS and the BRI is important as these reveal what participant states can expect from each network. According to Nexon and Wright, there are four types of network structure: unipolar anarchy, hegemonic order, constitutional order, and imperial order. Based on this, we argue that the IPS has a constitutional order and the BRI has an imperial order.

Therefore, we suggest to Seoul that participating in the IPS may make more room for an independent foreign policy than would a BRI partnership with China. South Korea would benefit by participating in the IPS in terms of its national security, striking a favourable regional balance of power.

**Key Words** : Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS), Indo-Pacific Architecture, Belt and Road Initiative(BRI), Network Structure, Rule-based Order, Economic Prosperity

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## I . Introduction

A complex geo-political environment is emerging in Asia, as witnessed in the last two decades since the turn of the new 21st Century. Whereas the emerging global power transition and the ensuing geo-political rivalries involve nearly all major and medium powers of the world, it large involves the power competition between the United States (US) as an established global power, and China as an emerging one.

South Korea (hereinafter, Korea) is among the major economies of the world and is an important stakeholder and actor in the Indo-Pacific region, encompassing the littoral countries of the Pacific and Indian oceans. It is therefore, impacted by the regional geopolitical environment in a major way. This makes it exigent for Seoul continually assess the geopolitical and security dynamics in the region – more specifically its immediate neighborhood, but more generally in broader Asia – with the aim of shaping and reorienting its national strategy and policy, including in terms of its foreign and national security policies.

Many studies have been undertaken on various aspects of competition between the US and China. However, the policy takeaways of these studies for South Korea has been indirect, at best. Furthermore, whereas South Korea is being significantly impacted by the major-power geopolitical moves – the US Indo-Pacific strategy and China's Belt and Road Initiative – it is yet unclear how these would play out – individually and in opposition to each other – for the regional countries in general, and for South Korea in particular. Whereas South Korea seeks prosperity through economic links with major economies like China, it cannot possibly achieve this aim without national security ensured by the US as a long-standing military ally. The Director General of India's leading defence think-tank, the *Manohar Parrikar Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses* (MPIDSA) says, "To be or not to be is the question that confronts South Korea. It is one among many nations that today face a Hamlet-like dilemma in regard to their vision of the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)..." South Korea takes a benign view of China's Belt

and Road Initiative (BRI), regarding it as an opportunity to capitalize on its own New Northern Policy and Eurasia Initiative...”<sup>1)</sup>

## II. South Korea: National-Strategic Drivers and Imperatives

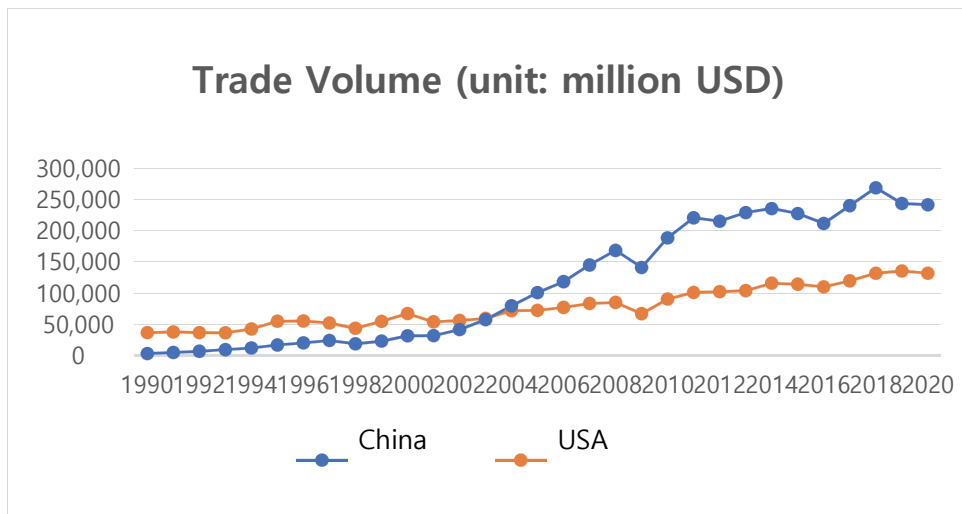
Korea’s National Objective mentioned in its Constitution says “Preamble: We, the people of Korea, proud of a resplendent history and traditions dating from time immemorial,..., having assumed the mission of democratic reform and peaceful unification of our homeland and having determined to consolidate national unity with justice, ...” So, Korea’s foremost objective is deeply connected to national unification and national security. As a comparison, India’s overarching national objective is the economic, material and societal well-being of its citizens inter alia through “social, economic and political justice”. On the external front, the overarching national objective is to “promote international peace and security”, including through “just and honorable relations between nations,... respect for international law and treaty obligations... (and) settlement of international disputes by arbitration” This is inferred from the detailed text of the Indian Constitution, especially its Part IV “Directive Principles of State Policy.”<sup>2)</sup> Alike India, most democratic major and medium powers have commonly laid down their national objective as economic well-being, or improvement of standard of living or prosperity of their citizens. However, for Korea, this cannot be achieved without consolidation of national identity and security. Nonetheless, leveraging its technological power for economic development correctly remains one of the key pillars of South Korea’s national strategy. This makes economic ties with China very important. China became ROK’s largest trade partner in 2010 with 24.5% of its total trade. China is South Korea’s largest

1) Sujan R Chinoy, ‘Seoul and the Indo-Pacific’, *The Indian Express*, August 19, 2020, at <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/columns/south-korea-foriegn-policy-free-and-op-en-indo-pacific-china-6560347/>

2) Constitution of India, 1950, Part IV (Directive Principles of State Policy), Articles 36-51, at [https://www.india.gov.in/sites/upload\\_files/npi/files/coi\\_part\\_full.pdf](https://www.india.gov.in/sites/upload_files/npi/files/coi_part_full.pdf)

export market. In 2019, bilateral trade rose to US\$ 284.54 billion, of which US\$ 173.57 constituted South Korea's exports to China.<sup>3)</sup> Presently, South Korea's trade with China accounts for more than the combined total of its trade with the US and Japan. South Korean corporations also invest heavily in China, where they can enjoy a large market, a convenient production base and China's relatively low-cost labor.

**Figure 1.** South Korea's trade with US and China (from 1990 to 2020)



(Source: Korea International Trade Association: KITA)

Therefore, South Korea dependence on the United States for its national security and its economic dependence on China presents a dilemma for South Korea. Also, as the U.S.-China relationship becomes more difficult in the coming years, it will further constrain South Korea's strategic options.

### III. Theoretical Approach

According to Daniel Nexon and Thomas Wright (2007), "Every social and

3) Huo Jianguo, "Cooperation with China crucial to South Korean economy", *Global Times*, August 04, 2020, at <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1196686.shtml> (accessed March 2, 2021).

political environment is characterized by a particular network structure, one generated by the pattern of symbolic and material transactions (“ties”) between actors,”(2007: 255)<sup>4</sup>). As the US-led Indo-Pacific Strategy (IPS) and the Chinese Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI) reveal, the strategy of the US and China as core states exert strong influences upon the national policies of the other participant states. The reason is that the IPS and BRI have a particular network structure, which generates stakes, problems, and expectations for these states. Thus, the awareness of the theoretical configuration of IPS and BRI is necessary for understanding its macroscopic and specific effects. According to Nexon and Wright, the relations between the core and the periphery states may be classified into four representational types, as follows.

### **Unipolar Anarchy**

The foremost of the constructs relate to the “polarity” of the world order. In this context, “unipolarity” is defined as “the existence of a single great power in the absence of a common authority”<sup>5</sup>); it typically refers to an arrangement of unitary states operating in an anarchical environment,<sup>6</sup>) wherein interstate ties are extremely weak and sparse, with “no significant vectors of authority”; (see Figure 2a below) in this system, the unipole may be either a “status quo” or “revisionist” state.<sup>7</sup>)

### **Hegemonic Order**

Related to “unipolarity” is the condition of “hegemony” (see Figure 2b below), in which a “single great power establishes the ‘rules of the game’

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4) Nexon, Daniel. H, and Thomas Wright. “What’s at Stake in the American Empire Debate.” *The American political science review* 101, no. 2 (2007): 253-271

5) Mastanduno, Michael (2005). “Hegemonic Order, September 11, and the Consequences of the Bush Revolution”, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol. 5 (2), p. 179, cited in Nexon and Wright (2007). “What’s at Stake in the American Empire Debate”, *American Political Science Review*, p. 255.

6) Waltz, Kenneth (1979). “Theory of International Politics” (New York: Addison-Wesley), pp. 104-105, cited in Nexon and Wright (2007). “What’s at Stake in the American Empire Debate”, *American Political Science Review*, p. 256

7) Nexon and Wright (2007). p. 256-57.

for economic and political cooperation.”<sup>8)</sup> The two main features of hegemonic orders are “ties of authority between the hegemon and the lesser powers,”<sup>9)</sup> and “higher levels of interdependence.”<sup>10)</sup> Concerning the latter feature, according to analysts, “hegemonic orders encourage the formation of cross-cutting political ties among states as they negotiate elements of the hegemonic order. The ability of states to reap gains from limited economic specialization, or from the creation of a network of security guarantees, is an important component in most accounts of the factors that stabilize hegemonic orders.”<sup>11)</sup>

### Constitutional Order

“Constitutional orders” represent a specific form of hegemonic order (see Figure 2c above), as

political orders organized around agreed-upon legal and political institutions that operate to allocate rights and limit the exercise of power. When hegemons establish constitutional orders, they create a system in which decision-making is highly institutionalized. Through institutional channels, lesser powers can, therefore, exert influence over the decisions of the hegemonic power. At the same time, these institutions diminish the political autonomy of the hegemon, thus allowing it to credibly commit to policies of strategic restraint.<sup>12)</sup>

The density of ties among every state including the core and the lesser powers and among the lesser powers are the same. <sup>13)</sup>

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8) Mastanduno, Michael (2005). “Hegemonic Order, September 11, and the Consequences of the Bush Revolution”, *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific*, Vol. 5 (2), p. 179, cited in Nexon and Wright (2007). “What’s at Stake in the American Empire Debate”, *American Political Science Review*, p. 255.

9) Nexon and Wright (2007). p. 256.

10) Nexon and Wright (2007). p. 257.

11) Ikenberry, G. John (2001). *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major War*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), p.10, cited in Nexon and Wright (2007). “What’s at Stake in the American Empire Debate”, *American Political Science Review*, p. 257.

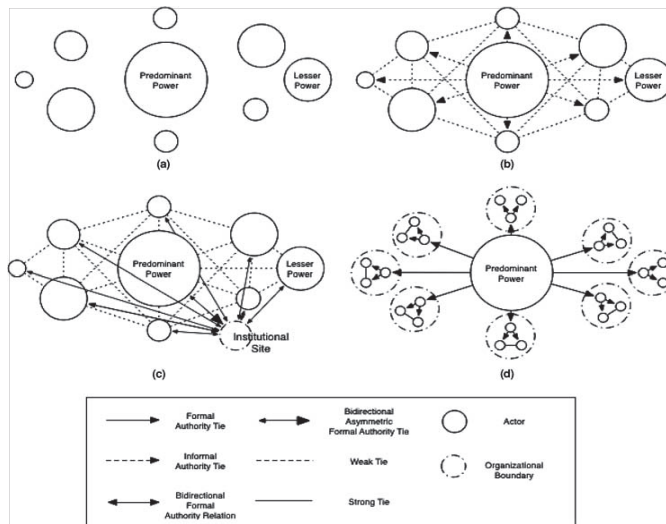
12) Ikenberry, G. John (2001). *After Victory: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major War*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), p. 29-49, cited in Nexon and Wright (2007). “What’s at Stake in the American Empire Debate”, *American Political Science Review*, p. 257-258.

13) Nexon and Wright (2007), p. 257.

### Imperial Order

It has “indirect rule” with which the empires hire intermediaries from peripheral states instead of making the officials directly hired from the imperial core state.<sup>14)</sup> Also, “imperial bargains may involve an exchange of basing rights in the periphery for access to markets in the core,”<sup>15)</sup> that “cores develop a particular bargain with each periphery under their control.”<sup>16)</sup> In this order, “imperial cores are not merely differentiated from peripheries, but peripheries are differentiated—or segmented—from one another”<sup>17)</sup> (see Figure 2d). The network of empires plays a significant in improving its position as the core to the peripheral entities: first, “heterogeneous contracting makes every imperial bargain unique, disputes between core imperial authorities and local actors over the

**Figure 2.** (a) Unipolar Anarchy, (b) Hegemonic Order, (c) Constitutional Order, and (d) Imperial Order Source: Nexon and Wright (2007), p. 257



14) Mamdani, Mahmood. 1996. *Citizen and Subject*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. cited in Nexon and Wright (2007). “What’s at Stake in the American Empire Debate”, *American Political Science Review*, p. 258.

15) *Ibid.*, p. 259.

16) Tilly, Charles. 1997. *How Empires End. After Empire: Multiethnic Societies and Nation-Building*, ed. K. Barkey and M. von Hagen. Boulder, CO: Westview, p. 3. cited in Nexon and Wright (2007). “What’s at Stake in the American Empire Debate”, *American Political Science Review*, p. 259.

17) Nexon and Wright (2007), p. 258.

terms of a bargain tend not to spill over the other peripheries”<sup>18)</sup>and second, “the existence of structural holes between peripheries creates”<sup>19)</sup>, by which the core can deter resistance from the peripheral segment.<sup>20)</sup>

The deliberate intention in the paper has been to understand IPS and BRI by drawing very broad comparisons with corresponding theoretical frameworks to facilitate analysis and better understanding. Also, these network structures are ideal-typical theoretical frameworks, which may not conform perfectly to real world phenomena like IPS and BRI. Hence, this paper uses these frameworks only as a broad yardstick.

The Indo-Pacific strategy resembles the Constitutional Order (c), as examined in detail in the succeeding part of the paper. The actions of individual states are strongly influenced by the current dominant power, the U.S., but at the same time, the power of the latter is also limited in the presence of institutions and international law. Also, what the Indo-Pacific strategy claims a “free and open Indo-Pacific” based on shared values among countries in the region such as of the rule-based order, freedom of navigation, respect for liberal values and human rights, transparent and fair competition for markets, freedom of changing status quo based on power, etc., that closely represents the “institutional site” of Constitutional Order.

On the other hand, the Belt and Road Initiative strategy is representative of an Imperial Order (d), as examined in detail in the succeeding part of the paper. BRI places importance on the relationship between China and the countries hosting the Chinese Initiative. Each contracting state’s relationship to China is unique and sui generis, without any direct cross-linkages among China's BRI partner States. The BRI is guided by rules and norms formulated by China.<sup>21)</sup> These rules, along with Beijing’s lending standards and the amount of investment, have not been released.<sup>22)</sup> While estimates of the overall budget currently range from \$1 trillion

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18) Ibid. p. 261.

19) Ibid. p.261

20) Ibid. p.262.

21) Yuan Feng, *China and Multilateralism*, Routledge: Abingdon, 2021



to \$1.3 trillion, Beijing has never disclosed its official budget.<sup>23)</sup> Such lack of transparency combined with its piecemeal negotiation as a series of bilateral agreements makes it hard to measure the overall size and shape of these commitments. This is similar in that the heterogeneous contracts made between the core and the peripheral segments which are the main characteristic of the (d) imperialist network structure above.

Also, BRI mainly provides loans to participating countries to help build infrastructure, and in this process, Chinese workers and necessary manpower are put in. In this process, China's technology, funding, and operating methods are similar to those of (d) the core and sub-states of the imperialist network structure in that it can deepen the dependence of the participating countries on China, thereby limiting their strategic autonomy.

## IV. Indo-Pacific Strategy/Concept

### 1. Genesis and Purpose

In geopolitical context, the term Indo-Pacific has been in vogue since 1920 but used very rarely and referred to the geo-economic linkage across Indian and Pacific oceans.<sup>24)</sup> However, in the early-21st Century, security linkage between the two oceans began to emerge for the first time since World War-2, leading to a coinage of the present Indo-Pacific concept. For instance, a security linkage was formed by the Proliferation

22) James Crabtree, "China Needs to Make the Belt and Road Initiative More Transparent and Predictable," Chatham House, April 26, 2019, <https://www.chathamhouse.org/2019/04/china-needs-make-belt-and-road-initiative-more-transparent-and-predictable>

23) Nadege Rolland, "A Concise Guide to the Belt and Road Initiative," The National Bureau of Asian Research, April 11, 2019, [https://www.nbr.org/publication/a-guide-to-the-belt-and-road-initiative/\(accessed March 2, 2021\)](https://www.nbr.org/publication/a-guide-to-the-belt-and-road-initiative/(accessed%20March%202021))

24) Gurpreet S. Khurana, 'What is the Indo-Pacific? The New Geopolitics of the Asia-Centred Rim Land', in Axel Berkofski and Sergio Miracola (eds.) *Geopolitics by Other Means. The Indo-Pacific Reality* (ISPI, Ledizioni Ledi Publishing, Milano - Italy: February 2019), pp. 13-32, at <https://www.ispionline.it/en/pubblicazione/geopolitics-other-means-indo-pacific-reality-22122>

Security Initiative (PSI) launched by US President George HW Bush in 2004, after the September 2001 terrorist attacks. Through PSI, the US sought to interdict the seaborne transportation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) worldwide, with a particular emphasis on the maritime area ranging from Iran and Syria in the Indian Ocean, to North Korea in the Western Pacific Ocean. Around the same time, China's actions became the most important factor connecting the Indian and Pacific oceans. In November 2003, President Hu Jintao expressed China's "Malacca Dilemma" reflecting its fears that "certain major powers" could control the strait. It highlighted the vulnerability of China's increasing sea-borne oil imports from Middle East and Africa plying across the Indian Ocean. Beijing thus began to increase its politico-military assertiveness in both Western Pacific and Indian Ocean, including though its "String of Pearls" strategy.<sup>25)</sup> This was accompanied with a rapid growth of China's long-distance naval capabilities, such as the new-generation *Shang*-class nuclear attack submarines, with the first one inducted in 2006. The submarine was especially suited for prolonged deployments in the Indian Ocean.

These developments relating to China were noted by the principal think-tanks of Japan and India. Analysts from *Japanese Institute of International Affairs* (JIIA) and *Institute of Defence Studies and Analyses* (IDSA) discussed the maritime security implications of these developments during their annual bilateral conference held in New Delhi in October 2006. For India, it implied a seaward (Indian Ocean) dimension of military threat from China, in addition to the then existing threat across the India-China land border. For Japan, the increasing presence of Chinese navy in the Indian Ocean posed a threat to shipping carrying its energy and food imports. For both New Delhi and Tokyo, China was also tilting the regional balance of power against them. The two sides also discussed how to persuade China to cooperate with India and Japan for security of

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25) "China builds up strategic sea lanes" *The Washington Times*, January 17, 2005, at <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2005/jan/17/20050117-115550-1929r/> Also see, Gurpreet S Khurana, "China's 'String of Pearls' in the Indian Ocean and Its Security Implications", *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 32(1), January 2008, at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09700160801886314>

sea-lines of communication (SLOC) under a new Indo-Pacific regional construct. In case this persuasion strategy failed, they also discussed an alternative option of dissuading China. Such strategy of “dissuasion” was to be implemented through strategic communications highlighting that SLOC-interdiction was the key component of Indian Navy's strategy against China. The conclusive deductions of the JIIA-IDSAs conference were published as a paper titled “*Security of Sea Lines: Prospects for India-Japan Cooperation*” in January 2007 issue of IDSA's Strategic Analysis journal.<sup>26)</sup> The paper was the first academic writing to introduce the Indo-Pacific concept in the current geo-political context.<sup>27)</sup> It also laid down the geographical boundaries of Indo-Pacific region - East Africa to Northeast Asia, encompassing the Indian Ocean and Western Pacific Ocean. Seven months later in August 2007, Japan's Prime Minister (PM) Shinzo Abe addressed the Indian Parliament in New Delhi. In his speech, he proposed the formation of “the Arc of Freedom and Prosperity” in “broader Asia” under the concept of “Confluence of the Two Seas”, enabled by a “Strategic Global Partnership of Japan and India.” He said that “open and transparent, this network will allow people, goods, capital, and knowledge to flow freely.... (In addition,) ... as maritime states, *both India and Japan have vital interests in the security of sea lanes* (emphasis added).”<sup>28)</sup>

Therefore, the current Indo-Pacific concept emerged to address the new security linkage between the Indian and Pacific oceans. The Concept was essentially meant to persuade and dissuade China to modify its aggressive behavior. However, as PM Shinzo Abe's address to the Indian

26) Gurpreet S Khurana, “Security of Sea Lines: Prospects for India-Japan Cooperation”, *Strategic Analysis*, Vol. 31(1), January/ February 2007 Issue, pp.139 and 144, at <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09700160701355485>

27) 김지석, “[김지석의 화들짝] ‘인도-태평양’ 구상의 허와실,” 『한겨레신문』, 2018.6.12; Mercy A. Kuo, “The Origin of ‘Indo-Pacific’ as Geopolitical Construct: Insights from Gurpreet Khurana,” *The Diplomat*, January 25, 2018, <https://thediplomat.com/2018/01/the-origin-of-indo-pacific-as-geopolitical-construct/>(accessed March 2, 2021).

28) “Confluence of the Two Seas”, Speech by H.E. Mr. Shinzo Abe, Prime Minister of Japan at the Parliament of the Republic of India, August 22, 2007, Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) website, at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/asia-paci/pmv0708/speech-2.html> (accessed March 2, 2021).

Parliament (August 2007) indicates, the end aim of Indo-Pacific vision has always been more economic in nature (economic well-being and prosperity), with maritime security and safety, free and open order, rules-based order, economic connectivity, etc. as its key enablers. The Indo-Pacific remained dormant for some years after 2007 and entered official lexicon only in the 2013 Australian Defence White Paper. In the US, the concept entered official vocabulary only in August 2017 during the Asia tour of President Donald Trump, and was soon incorporated as the US “Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy” in November 2019.<sup>29)</sup>

## 2. Indo-Pacific Architecture

The Indo-Pacific strategy was thus established during President Trump’s 2017 trip to Asia and is now adopted by Japan and Australia as a de facto strategy. In India, however, it has already been discussed in academia since 2006, and is only looking at it as a “concept” or a “vision” rather than a strategy. In other words, India sees this as a vision that all countries participate in and share, and if all countries can participate, this is not a strategy, but merely a vision for the region intended to be an inclusive road-map for the regional countries. Therefore, while the specific architecture of the Indo-Pacific strategy is still being evolved, the Indo-Pacific as a U.S.-led strategy and the Indo-Pacific vision of India differ. Besides, each country visualizes a different perspective of the geographic scope of Indo-Pacific concept based on the spatial extent of their respective geopolitical and maritime interests, viz. their respective geo-strategic frontiers.

The U.S. definition of “free” means that one’s sovereignty can be protected from the coercion of other countries, that citizens of all countries in the region can enjoy their freedom and human rights, and that “open” means an environment where peaceful legal resolution of maritime territorial disputes is possible, freedom of navigation as set forth in international

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29) “A Free and Open Indo-Pacific: Advancing a Shared Vision”, Department of State, United States government, November 2019, at <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Free-and-Open-Indo-Pacific-4Nov2019.pdf>(accessed March 2, 2021).

law, and economic growth can be achieved through fair trade and the signing of transparent treaties among countries.<sup>30)</sup>

Japan believes that a free and open Indo-Pacific is possible through the maintenance of a rule-based international system, the maintenance of international quality by law rather than force, freedom of navigation and aviation, peaceful resolution of disputes, and improvement of free trade, similar to the approach of the United States.<sup>31)</sup>

In other words, the United States and Japan have largely defended the existing rules-based international order and promoted economic prosperity by improving economic connectivity in the region with a "free and open" Indo-Pacific. In 2016, the International Court of Permanent Arbitration, in the China-Philippines case, was mindful of China's endeavor to weakening of the existing rule-based order through its own interpretation of international maritime law enshrined in the 1982 *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea* (UNCLOS), in the manner that it asserted its "historic claim" in the South China Sea, and its politico-military aggressiveness to push for a change in the status quo.

India interprets the concept of "free and open" in a more comprehensive sense, saying that "freedom" means the removal of all kinds of obstacles that constrain each country's prosperity, including freedom from security threats from the oceans, and "open" means to defend and promote the maritime interests and economic endeavors of all countries that share the Indo-Pacific vision.<sup>32)</sup>

Regardless of slight difference, the Indo-Pacific is largely to mean the support of freedom and human rights in the prescriptive way, the absence of

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30) Michael R. Pompeo, "Remarks on 'America's Indo-Pacific Economic Vision,'" July 30, 2018, U.S. Embassy in Malaysia, <https://my.usembassy.gov/remarks-on-americas-indo-pacific-economic-vision-080618/> (accessed March 2, 2021)

31) (Japan)Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Free and Open Indo-Pacific*, <https://www.mofa.go.jp/files/000430632.pdf> (accessed March 2, 2021).

32) Gurpreet Khurana, "The Indo-Pacific Idea: Origins, Conceptualizations and the Way Ahead," *Journal of Indian Ocean Rim Studies*, October-December 2019, pp.59-76, at <https://www.iora.int/media/24150/jiors-special-issue-on-indo-pacific-december-2019-22112019-min.pdf> (accessed March 2, 2021).

coercion by major powers, and in economic terms, the pursuit of prosperity in the region. This is a restrengthening of the U.S.-led international order based on democracy and free-market economies since World War II, a disprove of this weakening of order in the region. As mentioned earlier, the United States has a "free and open Indo-Pacific" strategy that provides a defense against forces threatening the existing international order, but for India, "free and open Indo-Pacific" ultimately means economic prosperity through free communication of logistics and maritime security. As a result, it is clear that if United States leads the Indo-Pacific strategy with the aim of targeting the third power and focusing on security issues, the opposition from India, primarily, and Japan and Australia which also sees IPS as important factor for economic prosperity, will be expected. Below are the two diverse perspectives of Indo-Pacific architecture: Figure 3 pertains to the US and Figure 4 represents India's conceptualization. The views of Japan and Australia lie midway, though closer to India's view.

Figure 3. The Emerging Indo-Pacific Architecture (mainly, U.S. 2017~)

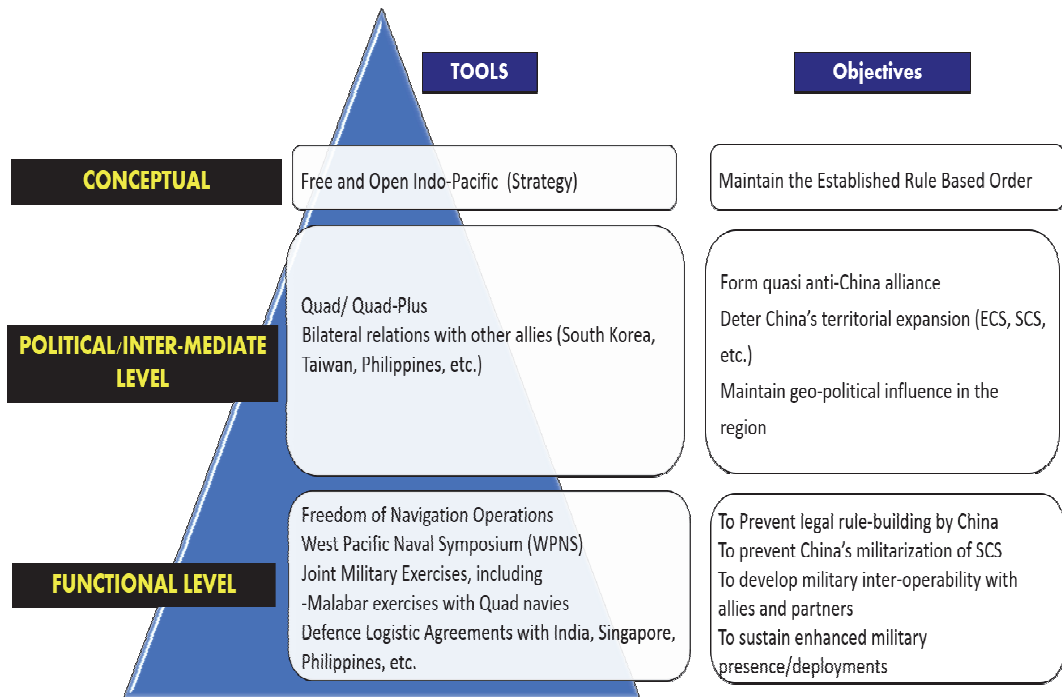
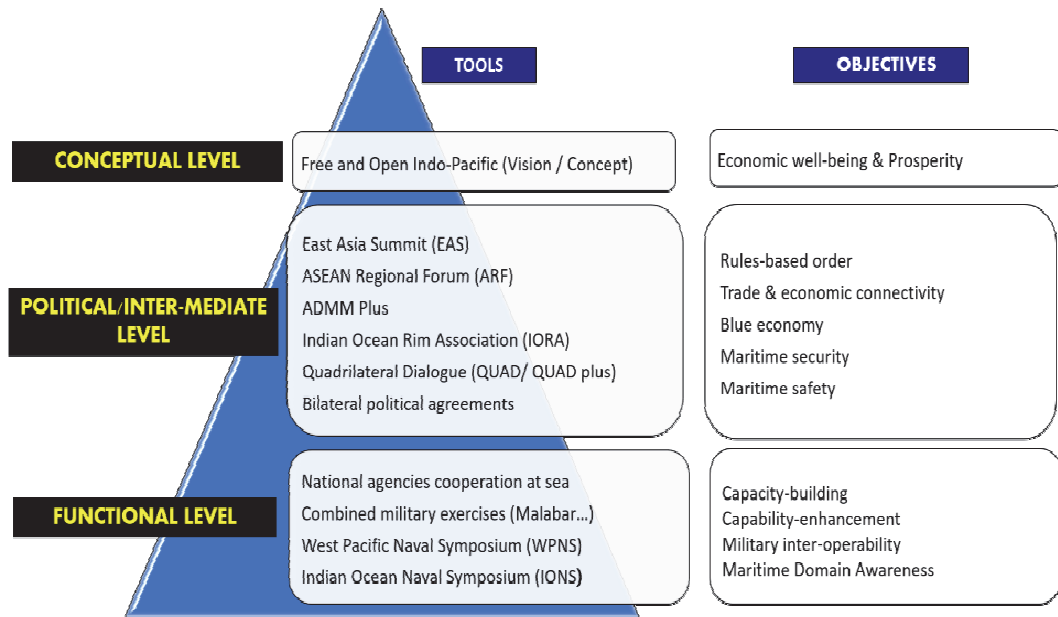


Figure 4. The Emerging Indo-Pacific Architecture (mainly, India, 2006~)



As indicated in the diagram above (Figure 3 and 4), the Indo-Pacific represents a broad vision at the Conceptual level, whose overarching aim is to uphold the established rules-based order and economic well-being and prosperity among all countries and stakeholders in the said region. This aim can only be achieved through a variety of intermediate objectives such as free, open, inclusive and rules-based order, maritime security and safety, economic connectivity, and a sustainable marine environment. These objectives need to be achieved by the use of various forums available at the Political level, ranging from the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and East Asia Summit (EAS) to the Quad, and bilateral partnerships/agreements. Although Quad is the only forum that does not include any ASEAN country, it also excludes China, which make it valuable to be used to increase geo-political pressures upon Beijing, if required.

The efforts at the Political Level need to be implemented through functional cooperation among the various national agencies operating in the maritime domain. This is the Functional or Executive level of the Indo-Pacific architecture. The national agencies include—but are not

restricted to—navies and coast guards. Hence, military-to-military cooperation is a tool at the Functional level, but only as a mechanism for assurance and insurance. Such cooperation is necessary, essentially to develop inter-operability (operational compatibility) among military forces for a range of missions ranging from fighting a war to humanitarian assistance. achieve it is also essential to attain maritime domain awareness (MDA) in the likely operational area. Notwithstanding this, many other civilian sectors also represent important tools, like trade, transport, travel and tourism—including ports, shipping and investment—legal capacity-building, disaster management and human safety at sea, technology and academic cooperation, blue-economy, cultural exchanges, people-to-people contact, and so on.

### 3. Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD)

In recent years, since the other tools at the Political level have clearly failed at persuading China to mend its assertive politico-military behavior, the Quad has been brought into play.

Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QSD) was first initiated in 2007 by Australia, India, Japan, and the US (Quad 1.0). It was a result of a joint naval Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) mission in the Indian Ocean following the Tsunami of December 2004. Singapore, also involved in the HADR mission, has not yet chosen to be incorporated in the Quad. In October 2007, five navies (including Royal Singapore Navy) participated in a massive Malabar naval exercise in the Bay of Bengal. Beijing made a strong protest, calling it the initiation of an “Asian NATO”.<sup>33)</sup> At this point in time, Quad was not linked to India-Japan vision of Indo-Pacific Concept, since the US had not yet accepted the Concept. The Quad 1.0 collapsed since Australia (led by PM Kevin Rudd) did not want to antagonize China due to Canberra's strong trade relations

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33) Gurpreet S Khurana, “China’s self-serving paranoia on Malabar”, *The Indian Express*, September 03, 2007, at <http://archive.indianexpress.com/news/china-s-self-serving-paranoia-on--malabar--gurpreet-/214240/>(accessed March 2, 2021).



with China.

In 2017, the Quadrilateral Dialogue (Quad 2.0) was revived. The four Quad powers are all the original proponents of the Indo-Pacific concept. Also, President Trump's first "Indo-Pacific" articulation coincided with the first Quad meeting in November 2017. Therefore, the Quad is widely seen as the only instrument of Indo-Pacific Concept. However, since its origin, the Indo-Pacific concept has had many other tools, both at the political and functional levels as explained above. The Quad members are attempting to increase the pressure upon Beijing by changing their strategy from more gentle "persuasion" in various forums like ARF and ADMM+ to stronger "dissuasion" through the Quad. This also involved a more active military cooperation among the Quad countries at the Functional level. For example, in October 2020, India invited Australia to participate in the Malabar naval exercises, which was originally a bilateral India-US exercise that began in 1992, with Japan joining in 2015. Notably, India had been reluctant to formally incorporate Australia in Malabar exercise, since it did not want the Quad to be perceived merely as a security alliance, and due to sensitivities of Beijing. The US now seeks to increase the pressure on China further by changing the Quad's strategy from "dissuasion" to "deterrence." For doing so, in Sep 2020, the US Defense Secretary Mark Esper insisted that the Quad be expanded to countries like South Korea, calling it Quad-Plus, and even formalize a collective, multilateral alliance. He said,

What I think is one of the biggest advantages we have that does impose costs on countries such as Russia and China is our robust network of alliances and partnerships... (However,) there's too much one-on-one, too much bilateral(s): US-Japan, US-Korea, US-Australia, etc. ... I think the more we can multilateralize the relationships in this theater, the better. I think the more we can move in that direction the stronger we are... When China has to think about a potential conflict with the United States, it just can't think about the United States. It has to think about the United States and Japan and Australia and Korea, Singapore and whoever else.<sup>34)</sup>

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34) "Esper says 'Quad' will be more effective than bilateral alliance", Yonhap, *The Korea Herald*, September 17, 2020, at <http://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20200917000149>(accessed March 2, 2021).

However, Seoul apparently remains reluctant, saying its alliance with the US is the key to its security but that its economic ties with China may also be a key to its survival. Opinions are divided in other countries on whether institutionalizing the Quad and expanding it will contribute to the objectives of Indo-Pacific vision. Opposing views are most prevalent in India, which is not a military ally of the US, and yet is a key actor of Indo-Pacific construct and the Quad. China's increasing military power and aggression are compelling India to overcome some hesitation of forging security partnerships. But New Delhi does not want to deviate from its longstanding independent foreign policy of strategic autonomy. Whereas it would not like to be forced into a military alliance, it does not mind military-strategic and security cooperation with partners. It is conscious of the positive potential of the Quad, but favors the progressive evolution of Indo-Pacific and Quad calibrated to suit China's behavior. While some in India support the formalization of the Quad, others opine that it may be better to keep Quad an informal and flexible arrangement so that it is not escalatory in symbolic terms, and each country can pursue its national interests without the need to follow an alliance discipline.<sup>35)</sup>

#### 4. Indo-Pacific Strategy Characteristics: Rules-Based Order (RBO)

Through the Indo-Pacific concept, the US and Japan seek to restore in broader Asia, the “rules-based order” (RBO), which is being disrupted by China. Through its politico-military aggressiveness, China's behavior has tended to diminish the importance of such order, setting a dangerous precedent of changing the status quo via military power. China's continued claim based on historic rights outlining “nine-dash line (南海九段线)” represents a major challenge to the UNCLOS. According to China, RBO refers to “*universally* applied rules of international law” rather than “imposed

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35) Arvind Gupta, 'India favours gradual evolution of the Quad', VIF Commentary, 22 Oct 20, Vivekananda International Foundation (VIF), at <https://www.vifindia.org/2020/october/22/India-favours-gradual-evolution-of-the-Quad>(accessed March 2, 2021).

international law of one single state.” This was the essence of the talk by Captain (Retired) Tian Shichen of PLA Navy at the 6<sup>th</sup> International Maritime Security Conference (IMSC) held in May 2019 at Singapore.<sup>36)</sup> Beijing seems to be developing a new narrative on the premise is that the UNCLOS is based on the erstwhile “western” legal system - and is, therefore, an unfair imposition upon “Asian values”. This was added by the Chinese speaker at the 6<sup>th</sup> IMSC-2019, but an Indian analyst interjected: “India too represents “Asian values”, but upholds the Law (UNCLOS). New Delhi accepted the adverse verdict of the international arbitration to settle its maritime dispute with Bangladesh.”<sup>37)</sup> The reference was to the 2014 *Permanent Court of Arbitration* (PCA) verdict in the Bay of Bengal maritime boundary arbitration (Bangladesh versus India).<sup>38)</sup> This stands in stark contrast to China’s rebuttal of the 2016 PCA verdict in the South China Sea arbitration (China versus Philippines), which ruled against any legal basis for China’s historic “nine-dash line” claim.<sup>39)</sup> Notably, alike India, China is a signatory to the UNCLOS and has ratified the treaty in June 1996. The PAC adjudicated that China’s historic “nine-dash line” was never consonant with the UNCLOS.

The US and Japan RBO approach to Indo-Pacific is similar to India's own, but India qualifies it with more elements. As mentioned earlier, at

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36) Captain (Retired) Tian Shichen, PLA Navy, is Research Fellow, Collaborative Innovation Center of South China Sea Studies, Nanjing University. He was speaking at the International Maritime Security Conference, 2019 (IMSC-2019), Singapore was co-organized by S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies (RSIS), and Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) at Singapore. The Conference theme was “Safe and Secure Seas: Fostering Mutual Security in Our Maritime Commons”. See, 6th IMSC Session 1: Panel Discussion at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hTESVrQMGFc&feature=youtu.be>

37) Proceedings of International Maritime Security Conference, 2019 (IMSC-2019), Singapore, May 2019 on “Safe and Secure Seas: Fostering Mutual Security in Our Maritime Commons”. See, 6th IMSC Session 1: Panel Discussion at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hTESVrQMGFc&feature=youtu.be>

38) Bay of Bengal Maritime Boundary Arbitration between Bangladesh and India (Bangladesh v. India) under Annex VII to the UNCLOS, Permanent Court of Arbitration, 08 July 2014, at <https://pca-cpa.org/en/news/bay-of-bengal-maritime-boundary-arbitration-between-bangladesh-and-india-bangladesh-v-india/>

39) PCA Press Release: “The South China Sea Arbitration (The Republic of the Philippines v. The People’s Republic of China)”, Permanent Court of Arbitration, 12 July 2016, at <https://pca-cpa.org/en/news/pca-press-release-the-south-china-sea-arbitration-the-republic-of-the-philippines-v-the-peoples-republic-of-china/>

the *Shangri La Dialogue* in June 2018, the Indian PM Narendra Modi spoke about freedom of navigation and overflight; peaceful resolution of disputes; respect for international laws and multilateralism; open and stable international trade regime; sustainable development of marine resources; maritime safety and security; fostering connectivity and developing infrastructure; respecting ASEAN-centrality; inclusive from the shores of Africa to that of the Americas, and so on.<sup>40)</sup> Hence, whereas “rules-based order” may not be the objective of Indo-Pacific vision as conceived in 2006-07, it is an important enabler of such vision.

Lately, the RBO element of Indo-Pacific is also being endorsed by the ASEAN at East Asia Summit (EAS) and other forums. The 34<sup>th</sup> ASEAN Summit held at Bangkok in June 2019 culminated in adoption of a crucial document: “ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific” (AOIP).<sup>41)</sup> Based on the traditional principles of ASEAN—notably, norm-building, dialogue, and inclusivity laying the roadmap for ASEAN’s future in the Indo-Pacific region, Vietnam (as ASEAN chair) has consolidated the ASEAN position on RBO that UNCLOS should be the basis of sovereign maritime rights and entitlements in the South China Sea.

The initial reaction of the European countries/European Union (EU) was similar to that of the ASEAN, though its apprehensions were largely related to the Quad. In January 2018, a German analyst said, “A strategic alignment of the Indo-Pacific “Quad” is tempting (but) involves a quasi- military alliance, which would run counter to the EU’s approach of strengthening regional solutions and cooperation”.<sup>42)</sup> However, alike some ASEAN countries, some major European powers like France, Germany, the

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40) Text of Prime Minister’s Keynote Address at *Shangri La Dialogue*, Press Information Bureau (PIB), Government of India, Prime Minister’s Office, 01 June 2018, at <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=179711>

41) Dio Herdiawan Tobing and Vicky Barreto, “Decoding the Indo-Pacific Outlook”, *Bangkok Post*, June 28, 2019, at <https://www.bangkokpost.com/opinion/opinion/1703344/decoding-the-indo-pacific-outlook> (accessed March 2, 2021).

42) Mercy A Kuo, “What the EU Thinks of the US ‘Indo-Pacific’ Strategy”, *The Diplomat*, January 31, 2018, at <https://thediplomat.com/2018/01/what-the-eu-thinks-of-the-us-indo-pacific-strategy/> (accessed March 2, 2021).

Netherlands and the UK have lately become more amenable to strategic partnerships in the region under the “Indo-Pacific” construct. France, which has territorial possessions in the Indian Ocean and south-western Pacific Ocean, was the quickest to adopt the Indo-Pacific concept in May 2018, and even appointed an Indo-Pacific envoy in October 2020.<sup>43)</sup> Germany formulated its Indo-Pacific policy in September 2020.<sup>44)</sup> Soon thereafter, the Netherlands released a similar policy document in November 2020.<sup>45)</sup> The UK is likely to follow France, the Netherlands and Germany in finalizing its Indo-Pacific strategy to benefit from the shift in the global economic focus from the Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific. A report written by UK politicians for Policy Exchange says that the UK has a responsibility to “counter the threats which strike at the pillars of the post-1945 international system of norms and rules – the system in whose creation Britain was essential and whose demise would adversely affect the country’s security and prosperity.<sup>46)</sup> This policy is also driven in large part by Britain’s imperative to seek economic engagement with India after Brexit.<sup>47)</sup>

The push from European nations to subscribe to the Indo-Pacific construct is mainly driven by two reasons. The first is China’s growing

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43) Rezaul H Laskar, “France appoints first envoy for Indo-Pacific, to focus on cooperation with India”, *Hindustan Times*, October 14, 2020, at <https://www.hindustantimes.com/world-news/france-appoints-first-envoy-for-indo-pacific-to-focus-on-cooperation-with-india/story-DQC7xgAfYujyN5fMHRJUM.html> (accessed March 2, 2021).

44) “Germany – Europe – Asia: Shaping the 21st Century Together, Policy guidelines for the Indo-Pacific region”, *The Federal Government*, Republic of Germany, September 01, 2020, at <https://www.auswaertiges-amt.de/blob/2380514/35e5c739e1c9a5c52b6469cfd1ffc72d/200901-indo-pazifik-leitlinien--1--data.pdf>

45) Sebastian Strangio, “Following France and Germany, the Netherlands Pivots to the Indo-Pacific”, *The Diplomat*, November 18, 2020, at <https://thediplomat.com/2020/11/following-france-and-germany-the-netherlands-pivots-to-the-indo-pacific/>

46) Patrick Wintour, “UK should tilt foreign policy to Indo-Pacific region, report says,” *The Guardian*, November 22, 2020, <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2020/nov/22/uk-should-tilt-foreign-policy-to-indo-pacific-region-report-says> (accessed March 2, 2021).

47) Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, “UK looks East, plans to boost ties with India in Indo-Pacific region”, *The Economic Times*, November 10, 2020, at <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/uk-looks-east-plans-to-boost-ties-with-india-in-indo-pacific-region/articleshow/79144789.cms>(accessed March 2, 2021).

aggressiveness against its neighbors. This is linked with Beijing 'non-status quoist' tendency to undo the established international order, including international maritime law, which goes against the collective interest of European countries that have benefited much from the prevailing Western-led global order. The second reason is that Europe's own geo-economic stakes in the Indo-Pacific region are increasing, particularly after BREXIT. This is leading the European countries to deepen their strategic, political and economic ties with the regional powers like Australia, India, Japan, New Zealand and South Korea, as well as with the key Southeast Asian countries like Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia, and Vietnam, all of which share a growing concern about China's rise in the region.<sup>48)</sup>

## 5. Economics versus Security

Whereas regional peace and prosperity through improving economic connectivity and rule-based order have been the overarching objective of Indo-Pacific vision, security – including maritime security, safety at sea, and respect for sovereignty – is a necessary enabler to attain the economic objective. However, the emphasis on security in the US approach has led to China containment in the Concept. The Quad 2.0 was initially named by the US as the “Quadrilateral Security Dialogue” (QSD). However, India was reluctant to address only security issues. It sought to make both the Indo-Pacific and Quad more comprehensive and benign by inclusion of various other aspects of cooperation ranging from maritime connectivity to human safety at sea. Therefore, the word “security” was dropped in Indian official communication, using the shortened term “Quadrilateral Dialogue.”<sup>49)</sup> Whereas the US focus on security has since prevailed, ostensibly, the US accepted India's proposal to discuss other issues like

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48) Sebastian Strangio, “Following France and Germany, the Netherlands Pivots to the Indo-Pacific”, *The Diplomat*, November 18, 2020, at <https://thediplomat.com/2020/11/following-france-and-germany-the-netherlands-pivots-to-the-indo-pacific/>(accessed March 2, 2021).

49) “First Quad Leaders' Virtual Summit”, Prime Minister's Office press release, Government of India, March 11, 2021, at <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleaselframePage.aspx?PRID=1704244>(accessed March 2, 2021).

economic connectivity in Quad discussions. Notably, in end-March 2021, the US President proposed to the British Prime Minister that the democratic countries should be encouraged to develop an infrastructure plan based on private-sector investment as a viable alternative to the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI),<sup>50)</sup> examined later.

Nonetheless, owing to China's increasing assertiveness against its land and maritime neighbors, the Quad and security issues are likely to maintain centrality in the Indo-Pacific construct in the foreseeable future. Notably, in Sep 2020, the U.K., France, and Germany issued a *note verbal* to the UN with an unprecedented criticism of China. The Europe Big Three, or the E3, stated China's exercise of its so-called "historic rights" in the South China Sea, does not comply with international law. The statement is an indicator that major European states are visibly joining the U.S. in confronting China on maritime dispute.<sup>51)</sup> The NATO mentioned China as security challenger along with Russia in February 2021, for the first time in history of NATO.<sup>52)</sup> The medium maritime powers of the Indo-Pacific region are also bracing up to the threat that China poses to them. Soon after China's military incursion in Galawan Valley in India's northern province of Ladakh in mid-2020<sup>53)</sup>, in October 2020, India entered into the last of the four foundational defence agreements with the US, the Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA), which would enable their military forces to share in real-time classified space-based intelligence dat

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50) Jarrett Renshaw, "Biden says he suggested to UK's Johnson a plan to rival China's Belt and Road", *Reuters*, March 17 2021, at <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-britain-biden-china/biden-says-he-suggested-to-uks-johnson-a-plan-to-rival-chinas-belt-and-road-idUSKBN2BI32M>

51) Viet Anh, "Europe big three condemnation of China unprecedented: experts", *VN Express International*, September 24, 2020, at <https://e.vnexpress.net/news/news/europe-big-three-condemnation-of-china-unprecedented-experts-4166139.html>

52) *NATO 2030: United for a New Era*, NATO, November 25, 2020, [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/12/pdf/201201-Reflection-Group-Final-Report-Uni.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/12/pdf/201201-Reflection-Group-Final-Report-Uni.pdf)(accessed March 2, 2021).

53) "To India's Shock, China Now Claims the entire Galwan Valley & Refuses to Leave", *The Eurasian Times*, July 20, 2020 at <https://eurasianimes.com/to-indias-shock-china-now-claims-the-entire-galwan-valley-refuses-to-leave/> (accessed March 2, 2021).

a.<sup>54)</sup> It has also strengthened the Quad by allowing Australia to join the India-US-Japan Malabar naval exercises in November 2020, as mentioned earlier. In November 2020, Australia and Japan entered into the Reciprocal Access Agreement (RAA) – also called the Visiting Forces Agreement (VFA) – which is practically a security alliance directed against China.<sup>55)</sup> This is an important development since it is only the second such defence agreement signed by Japan after its first one with the US signed in 1960. China's *Global Times* reacted to it saying,

“It's fair to say Japan and Australia set a bad example by interpreting their biggest trading partner, China, as a “security threat,” acting at the behest of the US and creating the shape of the region's first bilateral military alliance excluding the US.”<sup>56)</sup>

## V. Belt and Road Initiative

### 1. Genesis and A Main Issue

The BRI is a global infrastructure project adopted by the Chinese leadership: President Xi Jinping announced the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) in September 2013 and the Maritime Silk Road (MSR) in a speech before the Indonesian parliament in October 2013. In 2014, the Belt and Road Initiative was announced as the combination of the SREB and MSR.

BRI is an economic connectivity infrastructure development initiative to integrate the logistic supply chains in Asia and beyond. The integrated sea- and land-based transportation and logistics routes converge at key points and spaces, creating the need and incentive for creating supporting

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54) “India, US Sign Major Defence Pact BECA, Days Before Presidential Polls”, *NDTV News*, October 27, 2020, at <https://www.ndtv.com/india-news/india-us-sign-landmark-defence-pact-basic-exchange-and-cooperation-agreement-during-2-2-dialogue-2316370>

55) “Japan, Australia Sign Defence Pact to Counter China's Influence”, *Business World*, November 17, 2020, at <http://www.businessworld.in/article/Japan-Australia-sign-defence-pact-to-counter-China-s-influence/17-11-2020-343670/>

56) Japan-Australia agreement against China goes astray: Global editorial,” *Global Times*, November 17, 2020, at <https://www.globaltimes.cn/content/1207181.shtml>



infrastructure eco-system comprising special economic zones (SEZ), inland dry ports and commercial hubs. Whereas the BRI is projected as an attractive proposition for the BRI partners in terms of their infrastructure development, as an externally oriented infrastructure development programme, it is devised to revitalize China's slowing economic growth and boost employment among the Chinese populace. It could also facilitate market access to Chinese manufactured exports and imports of energy and raw-materials, and also lead to savings on transportation costs and time for its merchandise trade. Furthermore, the design of BRI is conceived to provide Beijing the political control of its management in a hub-and-spoke model, with China being the “hub” and its BRI partners the various “spokes.” Eventually, BRI may also help Beijing to meet its longer-term geopolitical goals of promoting the Renmibi (Yuan) as an international currency and gain influence and leverages across Asia and beyond.<sup>57)</sup>

The Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi said in 2013, “The Asia-Pacific has been the home and root of the Chinese nation for thousands of years.”<sup>58)</sup> A year later, China’s quest for dominant power was couched in President Xi Jinping's call of “it is for the people of Asia to run the affairs of Asia, solve the problems of Asia and uphold the security of Asia.”<sup>59)</sup>

Since the core of BRI is infrastructure construction and economic development, ① whether China has the ability to sustain the initiative;<sup>60)</sup> ② and from the perspective of the participating countries, whether their participation in BRI would be in their longer-term national interest are major issues. The former ① issue is related to financial, economic power of China, including the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the Silk

57) V Mahalingam, “Does the World Need Chinese Hegemony,” Vivekananda International Foundation Paper, October 2020, at <https://www.vifindia.org/sites/default/files/Does-the-World-Need-Chinese-Hegemony.pdf>

58) Brookings, “Wang Yi: Toward a New Model of Major-Country Relations between China and the United States,” January 1, 1970, <https://www.brookings.edu/on-the-record/wang-yi-toward-a-new-model-of-major-country-relations-between-china-and-the-united-states/>(accessed March 2, 2021).

59) Xi Jinping, “New Asian Security Concept for New Progress in Security Cooperation,” Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, May 21, 2014, [https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa\\_eng/zxxx\\_662805/t1159951.shtml](https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/mfa_eng/zxxx_662805/t1159951.shtml)(accessed by 2021. 3. 2)

60) 김상원, “중국의 일대일로와 중앙아시아 경제 변화,” 『외국학연구』, 제46집, 2018.12.30, p. 676.

Road Fund, and China's foreign exchange reserves.<sup>61)</sup> In the latter case ② on the other hand, some participating countries seeking to develop their economic infrastructure through BRI have complained of debt crisis, potentially leading to national bankruptcy. Some even allege China is seeking to gain strategic leverages over its BRI partner countries, with adverse national security implications for the latter. As per some report, owing to burdensome loan conditions set by China, countries such as Laos,<sup>62)</sup> Djibouti, Pakistan,<sup>63)</sup> Mongolia, Maldives, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Montenegro were unable to repay their debts, resulting in a state of bankruptcy, and countries such as Sierra Leone, Malaysia, Nepal, Vietnam,<sup>64)</sup> Sri Lanka,<sup>65)</sup> and Myanmar declared postponement, and suspension of BRI participation. This is because China sets an interest rate of 3.5%, which is 3.5 to 6 times higher than the 0.6% set by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and 1.0% of the World Bank (WB),<sup>66)</sup> which makes it difficult to repay the debt within a short maturity limit. The BRI participating countries are, therefore, compelled to seek from China extension of the maturity period. Reportedly, Chinese banks often demand collateral guarantees such that when a country has applied for debt relief, that country's Chinese creditors will be able to claim the rights to the asset held as collateral.<sup>67)</sup> If such allegations are true, these would help China to obtain

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61) Ibid.

62) 이현승, “일대일로 참여국 ‘라오스,’ 국가부도 맞다,” 『조선일보』, 2020.9.3., [https://biz.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2020/09/03/2020090302682.html](https://biz.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2020/09/03/2020090302682.html)(accessed March 2, 2021).

63) 김수현, “파키스탄, ‘일대일로 빚더미’에 IMF 서 7조원 구제금융,” 『머니투데이』, 2019.5.13., <https://news.mt.co.kr/mtview.php?no=2019051311052375068> (accessed March 2, 2021).

64) 김민정, “일대일로 참여국가들 ‘빚더미’ 오를라, ‘... 건설사업 취소 잇따라’ 『조선 Weekly Biz』, 2018.12.28., [http://weeklybiz.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2018/12/27/2018122701475.html](http://weeklybiz.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2018/12/27/2018122701475.html) (accessed March 2, 2021).

65) 정주호, “중국, 말레이 이어 스리랑카. 네팔서도 일대일로 사업 좌절,” 『연합뉴스』, 2018.6.2., <https://www.yna.co.kr/view/AKR20180602033000089> (accessed March 2, 2021).

66) 장서우, “中, 개도국 대출 4년새 2배 가까이로 늘었다,” 『문화일보』, 2020.8.7., <http://www.munhwa.com/news/view.html?no=2020080701071239346001>(accessed March 2, 2021).

67) 폴라 수바키 (Paola Subacchi), “중국 부채 함정에 빠진 아프리카,” EconomyChosun, 해외칼럼 제381호, 2021.1.25., [http://economychosun.com/client/news/view.php?boardName=C06&t\\_num=13610232](http://economychosun.com/client/news/view.php?boardName=C06&t_num=13610232)(검색일: 2021. 3. 2).

the client countries' assets, including sovereign land on long-term lease, with severe strategic and national security repercussions for these countries.

## 2. BRI Characteristics: Strategic Culture

China sees the BRI as a long-term geo-political plan up to the year 2049, seeking to expand its influence across the world, begging with Asia. It seeks to fulfil its long-cherished vision of China as the Middle Kingdom (*Chung-Kuo*), which was indeed a historic reality soon after the advent of the Chinese civilization in circa 2000 BC with tributary vassal states around China paying homage to Chinese emperors. Typically, "developing countries do not envision such a long-term grand strategy because there are limits to states' capacity to pursue such a strategy, and also it can damage national interests by placing limits on strategic flexibility."<sup>68)</sup> In that sense, envisioning the grand strategy, BRI, implies that China is no longer perceiving itself as a regional power but one that sees its power expanding globally with the entire world as its strategic space.<sup>69)</sup> Wang Yiwei, Associate Research Fellow at the China Institute of Special Socialist Thought at Renmin University of China, says that 5,000 years of Chinese civilization, which has characters of "openness, tolerance, eclecticism, and integration,"<sup>70)</sup> are the strengths of BRI, underpinning China's strategic culture. He further argues that the Chinese Communist Party is superior to the short-term regimes of democracies in that it is able to establish a coherent policy as the world's longest ruling party, so as to assume the responsibility even for humanity.<sup>71)</sup> Also, BRI is a reflection of the "Tianxia(天下)" of traditional Chinese culture, which expresses an overall interest in all human beings around the world, said Chunyi, a Professor at

68) 김흥규, "중국 일대일로(一帶一路) 전략과 동북아 국제관계의 변화: 한계점과 전망," 『중소연구』, 제40권 제3호, 2016(가을호).

69) Ibid.

70) Wang Xuejie (王雪洁), "【百位专家谈中国制度】"一带一路"为构建人类命运共同体提供强力引擎"央视网(China National Radio), 2019. 12. 17,

[http://china.cnr.cn/yaowen/20191217/t20191217\\_524900609.shtml](http://china.cnr.cn/yaowen/20191217/t20191217_524900609.shtml) (accessed March 2, 2021).

71) Ibid

the University of International Relations. Professor Wang Wen, Director of the Cheongyang Institute of Finance at Renmin University of China, says that China has transformed from a student who had learned the West in the past, to a teacher through BRI, and that prominent scholars and politicians from around the world are now coming to China to learn.<sup>72)</sup> Shen Yanxin, Associate Professor in Institute of Contemporary Political History at Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), says that it is necessary to have military and civilian integration in the process of developing BRI to provide a solid material foundation for national defense through economic construction.<sup>73)</sup> Since the “Belt and Road” infrastructure construction project involves a large financial investment over long period of time along with plenty of unpredictable political risks, the top-level planning needs to be led by the state (Chinese government), and the implementation and promotion of the BRI project cannot be separated from (national) policy guidance.<sup>74)</sup>

### 3. BRI Characteristics: Hub and Spokes (China at the Core of BRI Partnerships)

The BRI is centered on China, where individual countries engage in it through political negotiations with the Chinese government. Venkateswaran Lokanathan, who studied China's BRI strategies in Africa, argues that China's investment deals with its BRI partners in Africa are bilateral.<sup>75)</sup> From the China's point of view, if China has to negotiate with the entire African region as a whole, these African countries can take upper hand in the

72) Wang Wen (王文), “Shaping the Chinese People’s Worldview [塑中国人的世界观]”, Sina (新浪), 2017. 6. 20, <https://finance.sina.com.cn/zt/china/2017-06-20/zt-ifyhfnqa4478453.shtml>(accessed March 2, 2021).

73) Shen Yanxin(沈雁昕), “군-민간 통합 촉진 및 “일대일로”를 조정 (统筹推进军民融合与“一带一路”),” Qiushi (求是), 2017.4.25., [http://www.qstheory.cn/dukan/hqwg/2017-04/25/c\\_1120868189.htm](http://www.qstheory.cn/dukan/hqwg/2017-04/25/c_1120868189.htm) (accessed March 2, 2021).

74) Shen Yanxin(沈雁昕), “군-민간 통합 촉진 및 “일대일로”를 조정 (统筹推进军民融合与“一带一路”),” Qiushi (求是), 2017.4.25., [http://www.qstheory.cn/dukan/hqwg/2017-04/25/c\\_1120868189.htm](http://www.qstheory.cn/dukan/hqwg/2017-04/25/c_1120868189.htm) (accessed March 2, 2021).

75) Lokanathan, Venkateswaran, “China’s Belt and Road Initiative: Implications in Africa,” *ORF Issue Brief*, No. 395, Observer Research Foundation, August 2020

negotiations.<sup>76)</sup> Western regional multilateral institutions such as the USMCA or EU provide a space for free trade in their respective regions by creating uniform standards that are consistently applied to all multilateral negotiations. China, however, leads and induces participation in the BRI through practical economic incentives such as infrastructure construction; each country negotiates only bilaterally with China, without a common multilateral framework.<sup>77)</sup> If this is interpreted in a positive light, it means that all countries have different circumstances, so that appropriate policies will be adopted according to those of each country.<sup>78)</sup> However, in the end, this means that policies centered on China will be promoted. At a 2016 lecture sponsored by the Korea Foundation for Advanced Studies, Zhang Yuyan (张宇燕), Director of the Institute of World Economics and Politics of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, presented seven basic principles by which BRI negotiations should be promoted: (1) policy communication is central; (2) there is no single model to be used, (but rather each negotiation should be completed on a case-by-case basis), with a high degree of flexibility; (3) uniformity is not the goal; (4) cooperation with participant countries should be promoted; (5) cooperation content and methods should be continuously diversified; (6) joint timetables and roadmaps outlining action plans should be shared; and (7) a negotiation should be completed in a cooperative manner, with memorandums of understanding. <sup>79)</sup>

According to these guidelines, the high level of flexibility afforded by not having one single model, by not uniformly implementing policies, and by diversifying the content and methods of cooperation, all illustrate that China plans to implement various policies according to individual countries' circumstances, bilaterally, on a case-by-case basis. This bilateral policy negotiation process centered on China also means that China's needs with respect to individual partner countries will vary. The BRI

76) *ibid*

77) David Arase, "China's Two Silk Roads Initiative: What It Means for Southeast Asia," *Southeast Asian Affairs* 2015(2015), pp. 25-45.

78) 이강국, 『중국의 新실크로드 전략: 일대일로(一帶一路)』(파주: 북스타, 2016). p. 59.

79) 장위연, "일대일로 전략 구상과 중국경제전망," [China Lecture Series] 20강(1), 2016. 5. 9, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FFO7L1LGCFo> (검색일: 2021. 3. 2).

“requires access to the partner country’s resources or contract packages as a condition of aid,” which “often includes certain kinds of Chinese requirements.”<sup>80)</sup> For example, in 2016, Djibouti approved the construction of a naval base;<sup>81)</sup> in 2017, Sri Lanka handed over the strategic port of Hambantota, on the country’s southern coast, to China on a 99-year lease when it had trouble repaying its initial loan for the port;<sup>82)</sup> and China gained a 40-year right of over the Port of Gwadar in Pakistan;<sup>83)</sup> and also in 2017 Myanmar agreed to concede to China a 70 percent stake in the Port of Kyauk Pyu on the Bay of Bengal.<sup>84)</sup>

#### 4. BRI Characteristics: State (Government)–Centric BRI

The Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has ruled China, a country with the world’s largest population, since 1949, creating a special structure in which a minority elite group effectively controls the majority. The Leading Small Group (LSG, 领导小组), which appeared in the late 1950s, is a small elite group that leads national policy formulation. The LSG is a special organization that exists in the Chinese political system, as an informal decision-making body that is established to solve specific tasks rather than be involved in routine governance. With high-ranking officials in charge, decisions are made over the heads of the leaders of various ministries. This enables the decisions to be readily accepted by the Standing

80) 윤성화·김영진, “중양아시아와 일대일로: 중국식 개발모델의 한계.” 『슬라브연구』, Vol. 35, No. 1, 2019, p. 41.

81) Shannon Tiezzi, “China Has ‘Reached Consensus’ With Djibouti on Military Base”, *The Diplomat*, January 23, 2016, at <https://thediplomat.com/2016/01/china-has-reached-consensus-with-djibouti-on-military-base/>

82) “China signs 99-year lease on Sri Lanka’s Hambantota port,” *Financial Times*, December 11, 2017, at <https://www.ft.com/content/e150ef0c-de37-11e7-a8a4-0a1e63a52f9c> (accessed March 2, 2021).

83) “Pakistan’s Gwadar port leased to Chinese company for 40 years”, *The Economic Times*, April 20, 2017, at [economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/pakistans-gwadar-port-leased-to-chinese-company-for-40-years/articleshow/58284735.cms](http://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/pakistans-gwadar-port-leased-to-chinese-company-for-40-years/articleshow/58284735.cms) (accessed March 2, 2021).

84) Yimou Lee, Thu Thu Aung, “China to take 70 percent stake in strategic port in Myanmar – official,” *Reuters*, October 17, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/china-silkroad-myanmar-port-idUSL4N1MS3UB>(accessed March 27, 2021).

Committee of the Political Bureau, making it a practical decision-making body. It is predicted that there are at least 18 LSG.<sup>85)</sup> The Hong Kong-based South China Morning Post comments on LSG as being “a Russian nesting doll,” because “Each layer removed would reveal another underneath with ever more powerful entities hidden further from view.”<sup>86)</sup> This means that the real power of China lies in the LSG rather than formal political bodies ostensibly responsible for decision making in their respective areas. The LSG for BRI was established in 2015 with Zhang Gaoli (张高丽) as Chair of Standing Committee Member of the Party, Wang Yang (汪洋) as the Deputy Premier in charge of Economic and Trade issue, Wang Huning (王沪宁) as Head of Policy Planning for the CCP, Yang Jiechi (杨洁篪) as the State Councilor for Foreign Affairs, and Yang Jing(杨晶) as the Secretary General for the State Council. The LSG is tasked to promote BRI in a direction consistent with the big picture envisioned by President Xi Jinping. In a study of 2018, Kim Song-juk concluded that as “a national corporation centered around ‘the Party,’ China will mobilize Chinese state-owned enterprises, Chinese state-owned banks, and Chinese workers to carry out work on the BRI in ways that promote China’s strategic interests.”<sup>87)</sup>

Another pivotal role being played by the Chinese government may be seen in the national courts to resolve BRI disputes. On June 29th, 2018, to support BRI, the Supreme People’s Court (SPC) of China established the China International Commercial Courts (CICC) at Shenzhen (Guangdong province) and Xian (Shanxi province). The 16 judges constituting each court (as of March 2021), are all Chinese. While the Courts permit the evidence to be submitted in English, the Courts’ working language is Mandarin Chinese.<sup>88)</sup>

85) 중국망, ‘중공중앙 ‘영도소조’ 최소 18개…시진핑 4곳서 조장직 맡아,’ 『머니투데이』, 2014. 6. 23, <https://news.mt.co.kr/mtview.php?no=2014062316158861328> (accessed March 2, 2021)

86) Cary Hwang, “How leading small groups help Xi Jinping and other party leaders exert power,” January 20, 2014, 『South China Morning Post』, <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/article/1409118/how-leading-small-groups-help-xi-jin-ping-and-other-party-leaders-exert> (accessed on 2021. 3. 2).

87) 김송죽, “중국 일대일로 참여국의 위협요인과 메커니즘: 중국 접경국가의 인프라 건설사례를 중심으로,” 『평화학연구』, 제19권 제4호, 2018, p. 177.

88) Chaisse, J., & Qian, X. (2021). Conservative Innovation: The Ambiguities of the China

Furthermore, “Its jurisdictional ambit stems from a judicial interpretation issued by the SPC, and is hence technically subject to the overarching civil procedural rules under the Chinese Civil Procedure Law.”<sup>89)</sup> Parties who wish to bring a case before the CICC can only do so when represented by “a lawyer of the People’s Republic of China”(Article 263).<sup>90)</sup> In contrast, the parties bringing a case before Singapore’s International Commercial Court may be represented by registered foreign lawyers.<sup>91)</sup>

The only foreign-related mechanism in the CICC is the International Commercial Expert Committee (国际商事专家委员会), which includes a total of 55 experts, with more than half of them being foreigners.<sup>92)</sup> These new experts have begun serving their inaugural four-year terms from August 26<sup>th</sup>, 2018 to August 25<sup>th</sup>, 2022. Their role is providing advice and suggestions (Article 3); opinions, mediation, and observing (Article 4); and preparing and organizing seminars and consultations (Article 6).<sup>93)</sup> Since China allows for mediation and treats, it is equivalent to adjudication, and the parties can avoid litigation in this manner if they so choose. However, the Expert Committee Members’ role is limited to pre-trial mediation only. The 20-day time limit for pre-trial mediation further limits the role of the Expert Committee.<sup>94)</sup> Also, the Supreme People’s Court has the power to terminate Committee members’ appointments (Article 5).

Comparing the CICC to other international commercial courts reveals how the BRI’s dispute settlement system tends to be highly China-centric.

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International Commercial Court. *AJIL Unbound*, 115, 17-21. doi:10.1017/aju.2020.81

89) Lance Ang, “International Commercial Courts and the Interplay Between Realism and Institutionalism: A Look at China and Singapore,” *Harvard International Law Journal*, <https://harvardilj.org/2020/03/international-commercial-courts-and-the-interplay-between-realism-and-institutionalism-a-look-at-china-and-singapore/>

90) “Civil Procedure Law of the People’s Republic of China (Revised in 2017),” China International Commercial Court, June 29, 2017, <http://cicc.court.gov.cn/html/1/219/199/200/644.html>

91) Order 110, Singapore International Commercial Court, [https://sso.agc.gov.sg/SL/SCJA1969-R5?ProvIds=PO110-#PO110-P4\\_32-pr32-](https://sso.agc.gov.sg/SL/SCJA1969-R5?ProvIds=PO110-#PO110-P4_32-pr32-)

92) China International Commercial Court, <http://cicc.court.gov.cn/html/1/219/index.html>

93) *ibid*

94) Shan, Wenhua. 2019. “Chinese solutions for global commercial disputes resolution,” China International Commercial Court, <http://cicc.court.gov.cn/html/1/219/208/209/1316.html>



**Table 1.** Comparison of CICC to other International Commercial Courts

	Number of international judges out of total number of judges	Foreign lawyers?	Working language	Applied law
China International Commercial Court (CICC)	0/16	No	Chinese	Chinese civil law
Singapore International Commercial Court (SICC)	17/40	Yes	English	
Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) Courts	8/13	Yes <sup>95)</sup>	English	
Netherlands Commercial Court (NCC)	0/10	EU or EEA member states	English	Dutch procedural law

James Scott captured the essence of multilateralism in his entry on the subject in *Britannica*.<sup>96)</sup> According to Scott, Multilateralism has informal or formal mechanisms for the redress of grievances. In this way, multilateralism provides the means to ensure that countries abide by a certain set of norms. While the IPS is based on the existing norms as its main character—the rule-based order—refers to the existing norm, and thus assume to use the existing multilateral international institutions, if this principle is applied to the current case of BRI, then its form of multilateralism can be described as China-centric and one that is devoid of transparency, along with the lack of necessary checks and balances against the approach of the Chinese government.

In conclusion, the BRI resembles the Imperial order from the Nexon and Wright's network structure. While the BRI is not a perfect representation of the Imperial order, the BRI has an important characteristic of the Imperial order: Guided by the rules and norms formulated by China, the relationship between China and participant state is bilateral rather than multilateral, and each contracting state's relationship to China is *sui generis*, without any cross-linkages amongst China's BRI partners.

95) Koster, Harold and Obe, Mark Beer, "The Dubai International Financial Centre (DIFC) Courts: A Specialised Commercial Court in the Middle East," SSRN. January 22, 2018.  
<https://ssrn.com/abstract=3237126>

96) James Scott, Multilateralism, Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/multilateralism>

The BRI is less likely to be called a unipolar order, because a unipolar order involves “no significant vectors of authority.”<sup>97)</sup> China has formulated and implemented the BRI. Thus, China is a significant vector of authority. Further, unlike unipolar order, the BRI possesses an established mechanism for continuous interaction between China and the BRI participant states. BRI does not represent a hegemonic order either, wherein the density of ties between states is equal.<sup>98)</sup> In the future, China may aim for BRI becoming the core of a Constitutional order, wherein the hegemon establishes a highly institutionalized system involving less powerful states restraining the hegemon through such institutions. The establishment of disputes courts concerning BRI aptly exemplifies China's efforts at such institutionalization. However, the BRI disputes courts have not yet proved adequate to restrain China's autonomy as these are China-centered. In that sense, at least at present, BRI is closer to Imperial order than any other orders.

## VI. IPS versus BRI: Likelihood of Regional Conflict and South Korea's Choice

### 1. Likelihood of Regional Conflict

The Indo-Pacific is perceived by Beijing as a strategy of US-led coalition of democracies with the end aim of containing China's rise. The Chinese *People's Daily* analyzed this as a reincarnation of the US 'rebalance to Asia' strategy to “restrict China and weaken its influence in Asia-Pacific”, wherein India would be the strategic “pillar”. The analysis also referred to the Quad, saying that,

“the US is actively promoting India's "Act East policy" policy, which is deeply integrated with the "Indo-Pacific" strategy of the US and Japan, and gradually forms the Asian security architecture dominated by the United States, India, Japan and Australia.”<sup>99)</sup>

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97) Nexon and Wright (2007). p. 256.

98) Nexon and Wright (2007). p. 256.

99) 不谈“亚太”谈“印太” 特朗普访华前在暗示什么 (Don't talk about "Asia-Pacific" and talk about "Indo-

Australia has been incorporated into the US-India-Japan Malabar naval exercises due to China's aggressive behavior, which has activated the military dimension of Quad. The Quad is thus being feared in Beijing as the beginning of an anti-China military alliance, and possibly even an "Indo-Pacific NATO".<sup>100)</sup> This may drive China to enter into collective-security agreements with its own potential allies in broader Asia, such as Russia and Iran. Since China seeks to portray the image of a benign rising power to woo the regional countries with economic incentives like BRI, it is likely to maintain a low profile while forging such alliances, and keep these informal. Cambodia is another one such potential ally, where China seeks to develop a military base at Ream, near Sihanoukville, which is also a focal point for Chinese BRI.<sup>101)</sup> In the IOR, Pakistan is another candidate, which could offer the Chinese military the use of maritime and aviation facilities at Gwadar, which is the seaward link of the CPEC/ BRI. Notably, in November 2020, China and Pakistan signed an agreement to further strengthen military ties. The details of the pact were not made public.<sup>102)</sup>

The clash of IP and BRI is already begun manifesting in the IOR in the form of a new Cold War, accompanied with a struggle for influence. A foothold in Pakistan's Gwadar port is providing China easier military access to the Strait of Hormuz and Persian Gulf, and an opportunity to develop a strategic partnership with Iran. This is an area of critical interest for the US, leading to an overlapping sphere of influence

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Pacific": What is hinted before Trump's visit to China?", 人民日报海外版-海外网 (*People's Daily Overseas Edition*), 分享 1,116评论2017年11月06日(November 6, 2017), at <http://news.sina.com.cn/w/zx/2017-11-06/doc-ifynmnae2345205.shtml> (accessed March. 2, 2021).

100) Shi Jiangtao, "China's nightmare scenario of an 'eastern Nato' starts to take shape. Donald Trump isn't the only reason", *South China Morning Post*, October 21, 2020, at <https://www.scmp.com/news/china/diplomacy/article/3106278/chinas-nightmare-scenario-eastern-nato-starts-take-shape>

101) Christopher Woody, "Demolition of US-built facility at Southeast Asian base raises new fears about a secret Chinese military deal", *Business Insider*, October 6, 2020 at <https://www.businessinsider.in/international/news/demolition-of-us-built-facility-at-south-east-asian-base-raises-new-fears-about-a-secret-chinese-military-deal/articleshow/78500785.cms>

102) "MoU signed with China to enhance defence ties", *The Dawn*, December 01, 2020, at <https://www.dawn.com/news/1593334/mou-signed-with-china-to-enhance-defence-ties>

between US and China. The visit of the US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo to India, Sri Lanka and Maldives in Oct 20 was meant to displace China's influence with American influence, along with a reinforcement of India's influence. Japan already has some influence in Sri Lanka *inter alia* through its substantial investment in Colombo Port. In Nov 20, Japan offered to assist Maldives to strengthen its Coast Guard. Such cold war in the IOR could not only lead to localized skirmishes in select areas in the Indian Ocean, but also aggravate China-US tensions in the western Pacific. Analysts are of the view that a **new Cold War** may be emerging between China and the United States driven by the irreconcilable interests detailed above.<sup>103)</sup>

## 2. Options for South Korea

### Indo-Pacific alternatives to BRI

India seeks to offer the Indo-Pacific countries alternatives to the BRI, in consonance with the Indian concept of SAGAR (Security And Growth for All in the Region); and specifically through connectivity projects like the AAGC and the Indo-Pacific Oceans' Initiative (IPOI). The **Asia-Africa Growth Corridor (AAGC)** is an India-Japan collaboration in partnership with key African countries to develop economic connectivity across the Pacific and Indian oceans, and to provide a more attractive option to the regional countries vis-à-vis the Chinese BRI. The AAGC vision document was launched in May 2017 at the African Development Bank meeting in Gujarat (India).<sup>104)</sup> It lays down the aims of AAGC as developing quality infrastructure, complemented by digital connectivity, towards creating a free and open Indo-Pacific region and thereby fulfil the Indo-Pacific vision of regional peace and prosperity. The AAGC seeks to prioritize

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103) S. Kalyanaraman, "China-India-US Triangle: Changing Balance of Power and a New Cold War," *IDS Comment*, September 21, 2020, at <https://idsa.in/idsacomments/the-china-india-us-triangle-kalyanaraman-210920>

104) "Asia-Africa growth corridor launched," *The Times of India*, May 25, 2017, at <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/ahmedabad/asia-africa-growth-corridor-launched/articleshow/58830900.cms>

development projects in health and pharmaceuticals, agriculture and agro-processing, disaster management and skill enhancement.

On November 04, 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the **Indo-Pacific Oceans' Initiative (IPOI)** at the East Asia Summit held in Bangkok, Thailand. As an open global initiative, the IPOI draws on existing regional cooperation architecture and mechanisms to focus on seven central pillars conceived around Maritime Security; Maritime Ecology; Maritime Resources; Capacity Building and Resource Sharing; Disaster Risk Reduction and Management; Science, Technology and Academic Cooperation; and Trade Connectivity and Maritime Transport.<sup>105)</sup> After the October 2020 meeting between the Japanese Foreign Minister and his Indian counterpart in Tokyo, Japan agreed to be the lead partner in the connectivity pillar of IPOI and jointly take both countries' respective visions for the Indo-Pacific forward.

In the wake of COVID-19 and US-China trade war placing trade supply chains at grave risk, in September 2020, Japan mooted the **Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI)** as a trilateral arrangement along with India and Australia, which may be expanded later to other regional economies. It would help the participating countries to create a free and transparent trade and investment environment and diversify their supply risks across a range of economies instead of being dependent on just one like China during adverse contingencies ranging from humanitarian disasters to armed conflicts.<sup>106)</sup> At the end of the Australia-India-Japan Economic Ministers' meeting held on September 01, 2020, a joint statement was issued, which said, "The ministers reaffirmed their determination to take a lead in delivering a free, fair, inclusive, non-discriminatory, transparent, predictable and stable trade and investment environment and in keeping

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105) Indo-Pacific Division Briefs, Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India, February 07, 2020, at [http://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Indo\\_Feb\\_07\\_2020.pdf](http://mea.gov.in/Portal/ForeignRelation/Indo_Feb_07_2020.pdf)

106) K. Bharat Kumar, "The Hindu explains why has Japan mooted the Supply Chain Resilience Initiative?", *The Hindu*, August 30, 2020, at <https://www.thehindu.com/business/Economy/what-is-the-new-idea-on-supply-chains/article32476160.ece> (accessed March 2, 2021).

their markets open”.<sup>107)</sup>

The **Economic Prosperity Network (EPN)** is a partnership conceived by the US in March 2020 in the wake of the disruption of global supply chains due to COVID-19 pandemic. The overarching aim of the partnership is to develop a robust global supply chain that is not is heavily dependent on China. The specific elements of its agenda are expected to be broad, including trade and commerce, digital business, financial aid, infrastructure development, research, education, health, and so on. It would include companies and civil society groups operating under a common set of standards on various issues. The network is not formally linked to specific countries, but is envisaged to include Australia, India, Japan, New Zealand, South Korea, the US and Vietnam, among other countries.<sup>108)</sup>

Ostensibly under the umbrella concept of **Economic Prosperity Network**, in November 2020, the US signed an agreement with Taiwan for a joint plan to finance infrastructure and energy projects in Asia and Latin America. The financing is envisaged to be done through the capital raised from the private sector, such as Taiwanese bank bonds, insurers and other private capital. Hence, the US-Taiwan plan based on capital drawn from the market will provide much greater transparency. It will thus be a vastly superior alternative to the Chinese BRI, which is is non-transparent since it is driven by Chinese government's own agenda and typically involves Chinese state-owned enterprises. The partnership with Taiwan is merely an element of the larger US plan to link up other countries. 16 countries have already reached similar agreements with the US, whose companies will work with the US International Development Finance Corporation to fund infrastructure projects. Japan, South Korea and

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107) Dipanjan Roy Chaudhury, “India-Japan-Australia decide to launch resilient supply chain initiative in the Indo-Pacific region”, *The Economic Times*, September 02, 2020, at <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/economy/foreign-trade/india-japan-australia-decide-to-launch-resilient-supply-chain-initiative-in-the-indo-pacific-region/articleshow/77870346.cms?from=mdr>

108) “US creates ‘Economic Prosperity Network’ on efforts to restructure global supply chain”, *Vietnam Times*, May 13, 2020, at <https://vietnamtimes.org.vn/us-creates-economic-prosperity-network-on-efforts-to-restructure-global-supply-chain-20290.html>

Australia had announced the partnership with the US in 2018.<sup>109)</sup>

### South Korea: Suggested Responses

National policy compulsions have led the South Korean government to be placed in a geopolitical dilemma of being forced to make a discomforting choice between the US-led Free and Open Indo-Pacific Strategy and the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The choice is complicated by South Korea's strong geo-economic dependence upon China, and yet, the national security dependence upon the US, which provides Seoul the necessary security assurances against North Korea through a formal military alliance agreement. The choice between Indo-Pacific and BRI is hard to make, affecting Seoul's strategic policy options and strategic autonomy. This dilemma has particularly aggravated in the recent past when China is begun to behave aggressively against its neighbors, in disregard for the established norms and principles of international conduct, and the US – along with its other allies and partners – have scaled up collective responses against China, including in terms of the military dimension of the Indo-Pacific strategy, viz. The Quad.

As a major economic and industrial power, and a key regional power, South Korea has the potential of becoming a major regional power and **Swing State**, like India, Japan and collectively, the ASEAN, with the ability to play a crucial role of a **Balancer** of geo-political power and influence in the Indo-Pacific region. For this reason, South Korea must begin to realize and secure its major geopolitical (including geo-economic and security) stakes in the entire Indo-Pacific region. Undeniably, South Korea's primary areas of geopolitical and maritime interest lie in the Western Pacific and its littoral. Nonetheless, its vital secondary interests lie in areas spanning from the eastern shores of Africa and West Asia to the western shores of Americas. However, due to pressing national security

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109) “US, Taiwan to push an alternative to China’s Belt and Road”, *Bloomberg*, November 27, 2020, at [https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/china/us-taiwan-to-push-an-alternative-to-chinas-belt-and-road/articleshow/79450401.cms?UTM\\_Source=Google\\_Newsstand&UTM\\_Campaign=RSS\\_Feed&UTM\\_Medium=Referral](https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/world/china/us-taiwan-to-push-an-alternative-to-chinas-belt-and-road/articleshow/79450401.cms?UTM_Source=Google_Newsstand&UTM_Campaign=RSS_Feed&UTM_Medium=Referral)

concerns relating to North Korea, Seoul has not been able to define its **geo-strategic frontiers**, or use the various instruments of national power - economic power, technological power, military power, soft power, etc. - to influence events within these geo-strategic frontiers. Hence, a beginning needs to be made by Seoul formally articulating the geographic scope of its geo-strategic frontiers in a formal national-strategy document.

The Indo-Pacific concept is centered on the minilateral form participation, and based on the shared values of upholding the existing rule-based free and open order. The network structure of the US Indo-Pacific strategy is akin to “Constitutional order” in international relations theory, wherein less powerful states have an advantage of being able to establish their own independent policies within common laws and standards. This is in consonance with Korea’s broader position of maintaining the existing global order through respect for international law.

On the other hand, the China-centered BRI is assessed to be a non-transparent arrangement without common rules or laws, which creates for a BRI participant the disadvantage of constraining the autonomy of its foreign policy due to its strategic dependence on China. Since BRI is a China-centered structure, if Korea participates, it should reduce its dependence on China by placing emphasis on mutual cooperation and equal-footed dialogue among participating countries. In other words, the disadvantages of the China-centered structure may be mitigated by South Korea through coordination and mutual cooperation with its neighboring countries. In addition, in order to reduce economic dependence on China, if Korea participates, it should implement infrastructure projects though funds raised independently rather than though any loans from China, though involving consultations with China on related issues such as planning for logistic supply chains, maritime safety issues and the effects of infrastructure development on maritime ecology. At the same time, if Korea opts to subscribe to the Indo-Pacific concept, in order not to give China the perception that it turns it back completely on China, Korea should become an indispensable entity to China in some key fields. In case of India, for example, in February 2016, it held its first Maritime



Dialogue with China. India has also been taking common and shared positions with China at global forums like the Paris Climate Change Agreement and the World Health Organization (WHO). Korea will need to identify such areas where its interests converge with that of China, and it is critically important to China. However, Korea should avoid cooperation with Chinese companies in high-tech sectors sanctioned by the United States. It should also avoid collaborating with Chinese companies in sensitive technology sectors, considering the high possibility that the Korean technologies could be transferred to China. Nonetheless, South Korea should be free to choose the benign version of the Indo-Pacific concept, rather than being forced to align itself to the US version, called the Indo-Pacific Strategy, which has hitherto been focused more on military security and the containment of China. If so, the “free, open and inclusive” Indo-Pacific concept will provide immense advantage to Korea of greater independence, autonomy, regional acceptability and predictability in shaping its foreign policy in the medium and long term timeframes. In other words, South Korea will need to take a well-considered position on a **Free and Open Indo-Pacific** in a manner that it is construed as a more inclusive construct, rather than one that creates regional divisions.

South Korea’s acceptance of the Indo-Pacific concept is essential, based on its understanding that unless powers like the US, UK, France, India and Australia enhance their geopolitical influence East of Malacca Straits, the regional Balance of Power will tilt in favor of China, which will act to the detriment of South Korea. This will also compel South Korea and the smaller countries of the region like ASEAN to not **bandwagon** with China. This clearly illustrates the value of the Indo-Pacific Concept, including the Quad. The Indo-Pacific platform of Quad is becoming increasingly necessary to exert persuasive and dissuasive pressures upon China’s growing politico-military assertiveness. Besides, it is also becoming increasingly inclusive with new supporters ranging from the Vietnam to France . Therefore, it may be in South Korea’s interest to embrace the Indo-Pacific concept, similar to the ASEAN and EU countries which had initial reservations on the objectives of the Indo-Pacific

Concept. Furthermore, if South Korea subscribes to the Indo-Pacific Concept, it would be in a better position to shape the discourse on its objectives and specific activities at various multilateral forums like ARF, EAS, ADMM+. South Korea may also consider becoming an observer in the Quad meetings, or even a full participant in the Quad Plus format of the future.

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## 〈국문초록〉

**인도-태평양 전략 vs. 일대일로 이니셔티브: 아시아 헤게모니에 대한 시사점**

류하연

(한국해양전략연구소)

한국 정부는 미국 주도의 인도-태평양 전략 (Indo-Pacific Strategy, IPS)과 중국의 일대일로 계획 (Belt and Road Initiative, BRI) 간 양자택일이라는 점차 커져가는 압박을 마주하고 있다.

이에 따라, 이 연구는 한국 국가 정책 과제의 맥락에서 IPS와 BRI를 상세히 분석해 본다. Daniel Nexon and Thomas Wright (2007)의 네트워크 구조 연구를 기반으로, 이 연구는 IPS와 BRI에 각각 특정한 네트워크 구조를 규정하고자 한다. 이 분석을 통해 핵심국과 참가국 간의 관계를 설명할 수 있다. IPS와 BRI의 특정 구성에 대한 이해는 참가국이 각 네트워크에서 기대할 수 있는 바를 나타내므로 중요하다. Nexon and Wright에 따르면, 네트워크 구조에는 단극성 무정부 상태, 헤게모니적 질서, 헌법적 질서, 제국적 질서의 네 가지 유형이 있다. 이를 바탕으로 IPS는 헌법적 질서를, BRI는 제국적 질서를 가지고 있는 것으로 분석된다.

따라서, 이 연구는 IPS 참여가 중국과의 BRI 파트너십보다 독립적인 외교 정책을 가능케 할 여지가 크다는 점을 한국 정부에 제안한다. IPS 참여를 통해 한국은 국가 안보 측면에서 이익을 누릴 수 있고, 보다 유리한 지역 권력 균형을 달성할 수 있을 것이다.

**핵심어:** 인도-태평양 전략 (IPS), 인도-태평양 아키텍처, 일대일로 이니셔티브 (BRI), 네트워크 구조, 규범 기반 질서, 경제 번영.