

INDIA-US STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP: A STUDY FROM THE LENS OF REGIONAL SECURITY COMPLEX

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Abstract

In the post-cold war period, the balance of power had shifted from the Atlantic to Pacific region. This distinct region has thus, emerged as centre of international politics due to its economic and strategic significance. South Asia which continued to maintain its identity as a separate Security Complex, has virtually merged with Asia Pacific region due to global connectivity hence, making the two regions as Asian super-complex. The key variables that would shape the security structure of Asian super-complex would depend largely upon the attitude and behaviour of the US and China and to a lesser extent India. From realistic perspective, China and the US are involved in strategic competition to exercise maximum influence in Asian super-complex which could turn into confrontation if it is not managed rationally. Yet, an in-depth study of the Joseph Nye's Theory of Complex Economic Interdependence and its relevance to this contested region indicates that the possibility of a conflict between the two great powers is less likely in near future. But, isolated studies in South Asian context alarms that there is a real possibility of war between India and Pakistan. The world community should therefore, focus on the causes leading towards the emerging security scenario and take steps to help this part of the region to avoid catastrophic that is possibly waiting if not contained well before time.

Keywords: Strategic Partnership, Catastrophic, Variables, Global Connectivity, Contained, Virtually, Conflict Formation, Security Regime and Structural Realism.

Introduction

After two hundred years of British rule, India emerged as one of the great country on the world map. Being located in the heart of Asia, the leading countries of the world decided to engage India with a view to bring it in their respective fold. From the very beginning, India played its cards smartly and decided to join Nonaligned Movement (NAM)¹ so that it should be able to observe the realist world from a distance. Nehru upheld balanced relations with both blocs.² The secret of Nehru's foreign policy was that it was neither permanently pro-west nor with the east, said Mamta Aggarwal.³ On the contrary, Pakistan, a fractured country had fewer options at the time of independence thus, it decided to join the United States (US) bloc⁴ by confining its future foreign policy options.

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On May 7, 1949, Nehru was invited by the US president but he avoided the US call and decided to formally join the Soviet bloc.⁵ Despite its clear position, the US did not overlook India and demonstrated its inclination towards New Delhi during Indo-China limited war of 1962. Three years later, during 1965 War with India, the US upset Pakistan by asking its authorities that the weapons provided by it should not be used against India.⁶ Gradually, Indo-American strategic thinking continued to converge to promote their common interests yet, the fall of Soviet Union helped them in speeding up the process. The talks for a strong strategic partnership between the two continued through 1990s-2000s which led towards signing of the historical accords including the Indo-US nuclear deal of 2008.

In the post- cold war era, the balance of power had been transferred from Atlantic to Pacific region. Thus, the Pacific region emerged as a distinct security complex which occupies a significant strategic position at the crossroads of a number of major sea and air routes. To protect its security and economic interests in the region, the US needed a strong partner and other than India, there was no better option for it.⁷ The author believes that Indians are too smart. They are drawing all benefits from the US but are unlikely to accommodate its wish list.

US Indian unusual collaboration in defence sector would make India a great military power in near future, capable of challenging China thus, creating a sense of insecurity in the entire region. The current discourse of the two partners clearly demonstrates that the future peace of South and Southeast Asian region is at stake. It is believed that these two distinctive regions which have been termed as Regional Security Complexes (RSCs) by Barry Buzan have virtually merged to become Asian Super Complex (ASC) because of the global connectivity and the strategic interests of the great powers.

It must be understood that besides the US, the six permanent states of this region including China, Japan, India, North Korea, Pakistan and South Korea are not the ordinary states. Four of them possess nuclear weapons while the remaining two have the potential to develop it. Thus, the US and India led initiatives and their future designs if spiral out of control could bring serious consequences for the entire region. Yet, a detailed study of Nye's theory of complex economic interdependence duly proves that due to compelling economic reasons, the possibility of war between China and the US is less likely in near future. Yet, isolated studies of South Asia reveals that there is a risk of war, between India and Pakistan that must be contained if a nuclear catastrophic is to be avoided in the region.

In this backdrop, this brief research paper aims to highlight the strategic and security implications of the India-US strategic partnership for ASC. The study has been carried out from the prism of the theory of RSC. The arguments have been framed in following sequence:

- Background of the Indo-US strategic partnership.
- Contemporary history of convergences and divergences.

- The growing partnership from 2000 and beyond.
- The cost of the partnership for China and Pakistan.
- An in-depth analysis of Indo-US partnership from the lens of the theory of RSC.
- Suggestions and conclusions.

Indo-US Strategic Partnership: A Brief Background

Since 1947, the two sides continued to maintain closed links, despite the fact that India remained a close Soviet ally.⁸ Nehru also managed to enjoy good relations with China but later severed in the backdrop of the clash between China and the Soviet Union over the contested areas. Their relations further deteriorated because of their dispute over the areas along Tibet border.⁹ As explained earlier, right from the outset, India started to play its diplomatic cards smartly. By joining NAM, it could buy time to understand the changing nature of the world politics that has helped India in taking rational decisions about its foreign policy matters. In international theory, this is called structural realism.¹⁰ In the decade of 1950s, the US offered its assistance to help India in acquiring a permanent seat at the UN Security Council (UNSC). During 1955, the Soviet Union also extended similar offer to India.¹¹

Despite its cold response, India was still able to get the US support during the Sino-Indian war of 1962.¹² In 1970s, India followed the Soviet policies. As a result, its relations with the US remained cool.¹³ Despite being close Soviet ally, India still managed to stay away from the game of militarized development.¹⁴ Yet, during late 1980s and in early 1990s, it was the Soviet fiasco which enabled the two sides to get closer.¹⁵ During 1991, Narasimha Rao, the then Indian Prime Minister got a chance to review India's foreign policy.¹⁶ In an era of first Gulf War, India helped the US by providing refuelling facilities to its aircrafts en-route from Pacific to Middle East.¹⁸ Rao's visit to the US during May 1994 initiated a new phase of their relationship.¹⁹

Contemporary History of the India-US Strategic Partnership

Throughout the cold war period, the US tacitly accepted India as one of the central powers in the region²⁰ yet, the Soviet downfall proved to be a watershed in their renewed relationship. At the turn of new century, "the US started to classify India alongside its core friends, South Korea and Japan as an indispensable partner", said Ahmad Ejaz.²¹ The US tilt towards India from a fissured partnership to a solid bilateral relationship is based on commercial and strategic regional interests.²²

To begin with, militaries of the two countries started to expand their cooperation.²³ The formal talks for strategic cooperation started off during 1993 but the progress remained slow. During 1998, nuclear weapons tests conducted by India and Pakistan further spoiled their working environments.²⁴ India continued to play its diplomatic cards intelligently and managed to take away the US support for Pakistan especially in the backdrop of the Kargil crisis, a major security gain for India.²⁵

Strategic Partnership, the Possible Wish List of the Objectives

The US pivot to India has grown to a solid bilateral relationship based on strategic and commercial reciprocal interests. Furthermore, it has fostered specific multilateral eco-strategic commitments, and an enhanced Act East policy.²⁶ The possible security and economic interests that two sides have decided to protect as strategic partners may include:²⁷

Shared Security & Economic Interests

- The US wishes to accord India a great power status to balance out China.
- Joint strategy to fight against terrorism.
- Promote and protect democracy across the globe.
- Work together to protect their economic interests by protecting the SLOC, especially passing through India Ocean.
- To work together to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery.
- India and the US intend jointly protecting the critical infrastructures from cyber-attack.
- And finally, to cooperate on global issues such as climate change and fighting infectious diseases.

India Specific Security & Commercial Interests

- India wishes to achieve the status of a major global power thus, striving to become member of the UNSC and the Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG), the US support is crucial in this respect.
- India would look for a partner to ward-off the upcoming Chinese security threats in Indian Ocean.
- India would like to isolate Pakistan on the long pending issue of Kashmir. In this regard, the US diplomatic support is vital.
- In South Asian context, India wishes to be dealt separately and does not want to be clipped with Pakistan. The US could play key role in elevating India's role and its 'exceptionalism' in the region.
- India would wish to have multiple options to acquire state of the art military technology, the US plays key role in meeting its objectives.

The US Specific Security & Commercial Interests

- The US looks for strategic partner to contain China in Asia Pacific region as well as the Indian Ocean. It is an individual as well as the collective interests of the two countries.
- China is an emerging global power. Directly/ indirectly, India could serve the US interests in gaining more time to be seen and believed as a sole superpower.
- The US is looking towards India for its greater role in maintaining peace and stability in Afghanistan.

- A strong bilateral partnership with India has a commercial angle as well. The US military industrial complex as well as its nuclear industry would benefit from India being one of the biggest markets.

The Growing Partnership from 2000 and Beyond

To promote the above mentioned interests, continuity in their ongoing policies was very crucial. During March 2000, Bill Clinton visited India and set a new pace in their friendship by signing a historical document, "India-U.S. Relations: A Vision for the 21st Century".²⁸ "After more than 50 years of missed opportunities, we are taking steps necessary to elevate, improve and regularize the relationship between the world's two largest democracies", said Albright. Vajpayee's visit to the US in September 2000 helped to reaffirm the broader vision of their relations.²⁹

India has been lucky because Bush junior (2001-2008) was even more curious to build on the progress made by the previous regimes.³⁰ In this regard, Dr Ravi Tomar is of the view that while India-US relations floundered for nearly half a century, the recent pace of development of these ties have taken many observers by surprise.³¹ The incident of 9/11 and later, an attack on Indian Parliament (which is believed to be a well thought out plan by RAW), further galvanised the growing closeness of the two sides. During this timeframe, the US needed Pakistani support for its operation in Afghanistan but instead, it decided to appease India and put pressure on Pakistan to stop cross border terrorism.³² The author believes that India remains the sole beneficiary of the incident of 9/11.

US India relations continue to grow. Within five years starting from 2003, the two sides made tremendous progress in defense as well as nuclear sector.³³ The 'nuclear deal' of 10th October 2008 has been one of the most significant developments that ended India's nuclear isolation and let it do nuclear business with the world leading countries. In process, the US caused serious damage to its own strong nuclear non-proliferation scheme pursued since the early 1950s.³⁴ The transformation process of their relationship continued during Obama's period as well.³⁵ During his visit to India from 7-9 November, 2010, he called the US-India alliance as one of the "defining and dispensable partnerships of the 21st century". In a joint statement, Obama "welcomed India's emergence as a major regional and global power".³⁶

India's strategic thinking since the beginning of 21st century is more aggressive and ambitious. It is involved in investing huge money in building its defence sector. It has already emerged as the largest arms importer during the past five calendar years (2013-2017).³⁷ The US defence sector is ready to work with India from a buyer-seller relationship to a partnership of co-development that would lead to self-sufficiency.³⁸ With the change of the administration in the US, Modi-Trump nexus seems even more proactive.³⁹ Finally, Indo-Israeli strategic network is yet another factor which favours Washington. This nexus might be willing to participate in an informal 'coalition of the willing' that would help US in protecting its long term strategic interests across the globe.⁴⁰

The Cost of the Partnership for China and Pakistan

A detailed analysis of the subject will be made in theoretical framework under the next heading yet, a brief scrutiny of the case proved that the US has chosen India as a potential partner in the Asian security affairs. The study also reveals that America is counting on India's rise as a leading power alongside Japan and Australia to play key role in Asia-Pacific affairs as a counter weight to China. Thus, the position taken by the US about India's role in Asia Pacific and elsewhere has been seriously contested by China. In South Asian backdrop, the US believes that it would be stable under the leadership of India.⁴¹

Internationally, a lot has already been said about the Indo-American nuclear deal. For others, it may have commercial angle but for Pakistan and possibly China, it has strategic implications. It is sufficed to mention that the deal has given India everything that it needed for which it struggled since 1974. Moreover, America's wish to bring India in the NSG without setting a criterion would also add on the problems for Pakistan.

India-US Strategic Partnership: A Study from the Lens of RSC

In order to make this study more practicable, the subject has been analysed from theoretical prism. When I say 'theoretical prism', I mean dealing the issue from the perspective of 'Structural Realism' with more focus on the theory of RSC. For easy understanding of the readers, the theory and its applications in ASC have been briefly explained below.

The background to contemporary research on RSC can be traced to the late 1940s when scholars got special interest in the notion of regional integration/ regional security institutions.⁴² Though, there are scholars like Katzenstein, Solingen and Achyarya who have written on this concept but Barry Gordon Buzan, the 20th century scholar got fame by introducing the concept in his work *People, States and Fear* (1983).⁴³ Buzan and Ole Waever define RSC as, "set of states whose major security perceptions and concerns are so interlinked that their national security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another".⁴⁴

The concept was revised during 2003 which concludes as "a set of units whose major processes of securitization, de-securitization or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed/resolved apart from one another".⁴⁵ This concept covers how security matters are clustered and played within the limits of geographical bounds.⁴⁶ As narrated by Wayne McLean, RSCs themselves are formed through strong patterns of amity and enmity as a consequence of securitisation/de-securitisation processes.⁴⁷

As explained by Buzan, the central idea in RSC theory is that "since most threats travel more easily over short distances than over long ones, security interdependence is normally patterned into regionally based clusters". He was of the view that there is often intense security interdependence within a region because the security of each actor in a region interacts with the security of the other actors. To

validate Buzan's argument, Friedberg viewed that historically, security concerns of most of the states have primarily been linked with the capabilities and intentions of their neighbours.⁴⁸

The Copenhagen School brings in another factor to separate the RSCs by introducing the concept of 'insulation'. In the present context, the concept relates to outlier states or 'buffer states' which separate one RSC from other.⁴⁹ With regards to buffers, Michael Partem asserts that geography is the only precise variable in a state occupying such a role. Yet, the author believes that there is a difference between the two. While the insulator states are likely to be more stable and powerful but the buffer states may or may not be strong enough to sustain the pressure of either side. Historically, some states like Afghanistan and Tibet have played this role in the past.⁵⁰ Buzan argues that there is a distinct and longstanding regional structure in Asia Pacific. With the end of the cold war, regional level structure got more importance as compared to the global level approach.⁵¹ Furthermore, Buzan and Waeuver's RSC theory summarizes that the RSC comprises of a group of states united by common security problems.⁵² Buzan opines that the overall architecture of RSC theory involves examination of security dynamics at four levels: domestic, regional, interregional and global.⁵³

The normal expectation is that the inter-regional level will be relatively weak except either where the boundaries of RSCs are breaking down (external transformation), or where a global-level power links two or more complexes together (leading to a looser super-complex). The theory distinguishes between globally operating *superpowers and great powers* whose sphere transcends two or more regions, and *regional powers* whose sphere is largely contained within a single RSC. Its central focus is security interdependence whether negative (conflict formation) or positive (security regime-security community).⁵⁴

Currently, both China and US have the capacity to influence the three RSCs namely South Asia, Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia. Historically, as a result of internal/external transformation, the security dynamics of Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia have effectively merged together to form a single East Asian RSC. With regards to South Asian, it has retained its status as an independent RSC though there have been lots of events impacting its security structure.⁵⁵ Yet, a general view is that South and East Asia, the two distinct RCSs are gradually merging in a wider ASC.

The definition of RSCs given by Buzan seems losing its value. In author's view, argument given by Buzan would have been valid, provided the region under debate was marginally influenced by the outside actors. It is believed that due to global connectivity, there is hardly a region that operates in isolation. The hard and soft powers of the global leading actors have improved, having direct influence across the globe. The interplay between global/the regional security structures has thus, become more intensive.⁵⁶

It is viewed that the great powers like US and Russia and the emerging great powers including China and to an extent India would wish to remain relevant to every

region with a view to promote their respective national interests. Thus, one can safely assume that distinction between various regional security structures is going to vanish quickly. Hence, it is opined that in South and East Asian context, instead of thinking in terms of RSCs, we might think and make strategic plans to protect and preserve the peace in terms of ASC.

The issues related to the architecture of South Asia and Pacific regions could be analysed in the light of RSC theory involving examination of security dynamics at four different levels namely domestic constraints, state to state relations, region's interaction with neighbouring regions and the role of global powers in the regions.⁵⁷ The author opines that the idea of 'Insulator States' would not work in South Asia and Pacific region. It is believed that in the presence of China and the US in the region, there are no 'Insulator States' which would effectively separate the two regions.

Despite being members of South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the South Asian countries stand in different camps due to their serious domestic constraints. Social construction especially between India and Pakistan is based on historical enmity.⁵⁸ Thus, despite sharing the common boundaries, there is a little possibility that South Asia would move away from conflict formation. The US support to India, has made the security problem of this region more complex. Moreover, it is believed that the key variables that would shape the security structure of South Asia depend largely on triangular relationship between China, India and the US. Pakistani response in the region would be tailored accordingly.

As far as India is concerned, social divisions persist that can threaten its political stability. Besides local insurgences, the Hindu-Muslim question also remains unresolved. Modi's BJP has created a new trend of projecting Hindus as a dominant class thus, an underlying potential for deep social division, and violence, remains in India.⁵⁹ Based on sectarian divide, similar social order also persists in Pakistan.

With regards to security structure of East Asia, Buzan argued that the key "variables that would shape the security structure of this region would depend largely within US and China and the relationship between them". He goes on to say that the nature of bond between China and US would also depend on pattern of Chinese behaviour and its ties with its neighbours.⁶⁰ The author fully endorses Buzan who opined that there is a little possibility that "either East Asia, or Asia as a whole, will be able to form a security community in the foreseeable future".

While social construction of Southeast Asia is not based on enmity, still they are unable to remain united because of the outside influence. The US has willingly taken over the role of balancing China in this region. Though, most of the members of Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) would wish to remain neutral in the upcoming 'Great Game', but being weak, they are unable to take independent decisions on security matters. Chinese decision to maintain its sole claim over the resource rich South China Sea further complicates the security situation around the region.⁶¹ Indo-US partnership would make the problems of the individual states of this region more complex.

One can approach the problem from another angle. In geographical sense, the security of Southern Asia is better thought of as a series of concentric but overlapping circles. What happens in Asia Pacific/West Asia, directly affects the security of southern Asia and given the open geography of the Indian Ocean maritime domain, what happens in southern Asia affects the rest of Asia as well.⁶² The author believes these two RSCs have already merged as ASC therefore, cannot be dealt separately in any future conflict due to the direct influence of a superpower, a great power and an emerging great power.

Many scholars consider India as a key component of the US grand strategy to balance out China. Paul Staniland says, "India is a ray of optimism about America's ability to sustain its position in Asia".⁶³ This argument besides, how India would response to the American call is yet to be seen. It is believed that India would stand by US as long as its national interests are well protected. But it would avoid direct clash with its next door neighbour China because one has the option to change friends and not the boundaries.

Though, the nature of Indo-US strategic relationship is presumed to be unyielding; in reality, there seem many differences. According to Sourabh Gupta, while India is looking towards a "broad-based and loosely-defined strategic partnership with Washington as envisioned in its 'Act East' policy yet, the US by contrast, has emphasized a narrower and focused maritime defense alignment in the Indo-Asia-Pacific".⁶⁴ From a functional standpoint, "a comprehensive defense cooperation remains off-the-table", said Gupta.

Harshita Kohli opined that India is conscious about being seen by Beijing as US proxy. It therefore, continues to maintain bilateral actions on separate tracks.⁶⁵ During February 2016, India and China inaugurated, and institutionalized a mid-level official Maritime Affairs Dialogue that will allow both sides to broach these and related issues of common interest.⁶⁶ Yet, as stated by Nitika Srivastava, "increasing Chinese activity, especially its ambitious One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative through the Indian Ocean Region and Russia's interest in joining the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) may have threatened India's interests".⁶⁷

From economic perspective, Asia Pacific remains an emerging centre of gravity. The findings of Goldman Sachs report clearly indicate that the economic activities will be shifted decisively to the Asia Pacific by 2050.⁶⁸ Thus, any kind of confrontation in this region would not be a preferred option by the stakeholders. Hence, to find whether or not the ASC has the prospect of moving from conflict formation to security community, it needs to be analysed from Joseph Nye's theory of 'complex economic interdependence'.

The future discourse of the great powers is also linked with their respective economic goals and stability which depends on trade balance among the actors directly influencing the region. India, being the fastest-growing economy in the world, is ranked as the 18th largest export market for the US good.⁶⁹ The US remains the largest trading partner of India.⁷⁰ With regards to Pakistan, the US has been a major

destination for its exports.⁷¹ With regards to China, it has become the largest trading partner of 16 Asian countries including Pakistan.⁷² The data shared by Ministry of Foreign Trade and Economic Co-operation of China reflects that the countries like Malaysia, Pakistan, Singapore, South Korea and Vietnam are among China's top ten trading partners.⁷³

Though, Japan remains a close US ally, still by January 2017, China had been Japan's second export destination and largest source of imports.⁷⁴ With respect to China and the US, their trade balance is around \$636 billion, heavily tilted in China's favour. Donald Trump has blamed his predecessors for bad trade deals with China.⁷⁵ As for as Indo-China trade is concerned, despite their differences, India's export to China has surged by 39 percent. The trade balance is tilted in China's favour.⁷⁶

A detailed analysis of trade/business among the states of ASC region reveals that there is a complex economic interdependency. None of the states of this region could claim to have capacity to survive alone. Hence, it is less likely that the two great powers would cross the 'redlines'. In author's views, except Japan, South Korea and to a lesser extent Vietnam, US might not succeed in getting close cooperation from ASEAN countries in case of serious tension between China and the US. Thus, one could safely draw the conclusion that due to complex economic interdependency, the possibility of a conflict between the two Great Powers in near future is quite negligible.

Besides, US would like to preserve its sole superpower status by exploring all options peacefully, and if needed so it would also achieve its economic objectives through power projection, coercion as well as threat of use of military might. By using multiple approaches, US would like to maintain a new set of priorities towards China to contain it military and political powers to engage it economically through 'Engaged-Containment Policy' by applying both 'soft and hard' power.⁷⁷

In the ASC region, all is not good. There is less likely that the security situation in South Asian part of the region would remain well within the manageable level. As indicated earlier, since the beginning of 21st century, India is spending billions of dollars on defence sector. It is already involved in coercive diplomacy against Pakistan.⁷⁸ The author believes that the infringement and coercion could be accepted by Islamabad to a certain extent but any pressure beyond limits would not be tolerated by Pakistan. Thus, in South Asia, a catastrophic that is possibly waiting, if not checked at the lower level.

Possible Suggestions and Conclusion

If US wish to maintain a stable security and economic order in ASC region, it would need to keep its wish list and expectations from its allies limited and realistic. Likewise, US allies especially that of India should also be watchful of what US can deliver in case there is a crises situation between China and India.

The US policymakers and its Pentagon must analyse India's power sensibly and resist the temptation to view India as more capable and committed than it actually is. An over reliance on India's military capabilities could lead to disastrous consequences

in actual crises because the correlation of forces in Asia would fail to balance out coalition against China. Though, India is an important player in Asia, but it would take considerable time to emerge as an equalizer to challenge China. Therefore, the US needs to maintain a clear-eyed understanding of India's likely trajectory in medium to long term.

Despite its tall claims and the US unconditional backing, India has been unable to seal off the domestic politics of the Kashmir conflict and its co-relation with Pakistan. For their freedom, Kashmiri youth has emerged as a new force with more vigour and enthusiasm to fight back the occupation forces. Though, for a brief period, Indian occupied Kashmir (IoK) remained isolated but the issue has come back on the world screen. Even the pro-India Kashmiri leadership including Dr Farooq Abdulla continues to emphasize the need to engage with Pakistan on the question of Kashmir.

The sheer footprint of force structure that India is compelled to devote inside the IoK and along the Pakistan border, shows the limits of de-hyphenation. It is therefore, suggested that for the long term peace and economic prosperity of the region, both India and Pakistan along with all other stakeholders should sit across the table under the UN sponsorship. China and US must encourage them to resolve the long pending issue of Kashmir.

Although, the old security concept based on 'zero sum game' still enjoys considerable value while dealing with the global issues but as pointed out in the detailed analysis, this approach in changed geo-economic scenario would not lead towards win-lose situation. It would rather lead only towards 'lose-lose' situation, both at the regional as well as the global level. The author sincerely opines that Nye's complex economic interdependence theory has become extremely important in the global arena that would lead towards win-win situation, a factor which is vital for survival of over 6 billion people.

As per Chinese assessment, "to solve new problems new visions are required". Thus, as suggested by the Chinese Foreign Office, in the new circumstances, "all countries should keep up with the times, strengthen solidarity and cooperation with openness and inclusiveness, make security vision innovative, work to improve regional security systems and explore a new path for Asian security including its economic security".⁷⁹

Finally, it is also vital that the hotspots and sensitive issues pertaining to Asia Pacific region should be handled carefully by the regional countries, following the "tradition of mutual respect, seeking common ground while reserving differences, and peaceful coexistence, and preventing conflicts from escalation, so as to jointly safeguard peace and stability in the region. Lastly, India and China should also resolve their border disputes and jointly promote OBOR initiative through the Indian Ocean region which is important for the collective economic prosperity of ASC region as a whole."⁸⁰

NOTES

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