

## **EMERGING POWER RIVALRY: ANALYZING SHIFTS IN SINO-INDIAN POLICY TOWARDS THE SOUTH ASIAN REGION**

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### ***Abstract***

*This article delves into the evolving power dynamics between China and India in the South Asian region, aiming to scrutinize how their respective policies have shifted in response to emerging geopolitical rivalries. The research objective is to dissect the strategic maneuvers and policy adaptations of both nations, with a focus on understanding the implications for regional stability and power balance. Key research questions include: How have Sino-Indian relations evolved in the context of South Asian geopolitics? What are the primary drivers of their policy shifts? How do these shifts affect the smaller South Asian states? Through a comprehensive analysis of policy documents, diplomatic exchanges, and strategic initiatives, the research finds that both China and India are increasingly asserting their influence through economic investments, military presence, and diplomatic engagements. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and India's Act East Policy are pivotal to their regional strategies. The research argues that while these policies aim to bolster their respective spheres of influence, they also exacerbate tensions and competition, thereby impacting regional alliances and economic development. The findings underscore a nuanced power rivalry where economic diplomacy, infrastructural projects, and security concerns intersect, revealing a complex interplay of cooperation and contention. This rivalry not only reshapes bilateral relations between China and India but also significantly affects the geopolitical landscape of South Asia, necessitating a reevaluation of existing regional policies and alliances.*

**Keywords:** Sino-Indian Politics, Belt and Road Initiative, Indo-Pacific Strategy, Act East Policy, Rivalry, Geopolitics.

### **A. INTRODUCTION**

The rivalry between China and India has become increasingly pronounced and multifaceted in an era marked by shifting geopolitical landscapes and emerging global power centers (Pant, 2017). This rivalry extends its influence beyond national borders and reverberates in regions where their strategic interests intersect. Among these regions, South Asia stands out as a crucible of contention, where the policies and actions of these Asian giants hold the potential to shape the destiny of the region itself and the broader global order. The proposed research, titled "Emerging Power Rivalry: Analyzing Shifts in Sino-Indian Policy towards the South Asian Region," explores the intricate dynamics of this Sino-Indian power rivalry within the South Asian context. South Asia, a region characterized by diverse cultures, complex histories, and a growing population, has garnered increasing attention from the international community due to its strategic significance, economic potential, and geopolitical importance. The presence and engagement of China and India in South Asia have evolved significantly over

the past few decades (Wang & Fu, 2022). These two Asian giants have embarked on a transformative journey in their relations with South Asian nations, marked by strategic shifts, diplomatic overtures, and various economic and security initiatives. As China's influence expands through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and India pursues its Act East Policy, the contours of this rivalry have become increasingly intricate and consequential (Rosenberg, 2022).

At the heart of this research proposal lies the desire to comprehend the motivations, strategies, and implications of South Asia's evolving Sino-Indian power rivalry. This rivalry manifests in various dimensions: diplomacy, trade, military posturing, infrastructure development, and cultural engagement. The objective is not merely to document these developments but to decipher their underlying drivers, evaluate their impact on South Asian nations, and analyze their broader consequences for regional stability and the global order. By undertaking this research, we aim to contribute to the broader discourse on international relations, geopolitics, and regional studies. This study will not only offer a comprehensive analysis of the historical trajectories of Chinese and Indian policies in South Asia but also provide nuanced insights into the intricate power dynamics that shape the region's future. Furthermore, it seeks to offer actionable policy recommendations for stakeholders within and beyond South Asia, promoting a more informed and constructive approach to managing the evolving Sino-Indian rivalry in this strategically vital region. In doing so, we aspire to foster a more stable, peaceful, and prosperous South Asia that can contribute positively to the global community.

The global geopolitical landscape has witnessed a notable shift in power dynamics in recent decades, particularly in regions of strategic significance such as South Asia (Walton, 2007). This transformation has been prominently characterized by the growing rivalry between two major Asian powers, China and India, as they vie for influence and dominance in the South Asian region. This chapter sets out to analyze the evolving policies of China and India towards South Asia, exploring the factors driving this emerging power rivalry and its implications for regional dynamics.

1. **Historical Context:** Examining the historical background that has influenced Sino-Indian ties in the area is essential to understanding the present state of affairs between the two countries in South Asia. China and India have rich histories and ancient civilizations that have influenced their perspectives and strategic interests in South Asia

(Muzaffar & Khan, 2021). The historical ties between these nations have been multifaceted, from ancient trade routes to cultural exchanges. However, the modern era has witnessed shifts in power dynamics, leading to complex geopolitical engagements.

2. **Shifting Dynamics of Global Power:** The post-Cold War era marked a significant turning point in global politics, with the rise of new powers challenging the traditional dominance of Western nations. China's rapid economic growth and assertive foreign policy, commonly referred to as the "China Dream" or the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, have positioned it as a formidable player on the world stage (Ferdinand, 2016). India, with its democratic credentials and growing economic clout, has also sought to assert itself as a critical regional and global actor (Stuenkel, 2015).
3. **Strategic Interests in South Asia:** South Asia holds immense strategic importance due to its geographic location, natural resources, and geopolitical significance (Chapman, 2018). For China, the region serves as a gateway to the Indian Ocean and vital trade routes, aligning with its broader Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to enhance connectivity and influence across Asia. Conversely, India views South Asia as its immediate neighborhood and sphere of influence, seeking to maintain strategic dominance and counter external encroachments.
4. **Competition for Regional Influence:** The intensifying rivalry between China and India in South Asia is evident in their competition for influence among neighboring countries (Datta, 2021). China's strategic investments, infrastructure projects, and economic partnerships through the BRI have expanded its footprint in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal, challenging India's traditional sphere of influence. Meanwhile, India has pursued its "Neighborhood First" policy, emphasizing economic cooperation, security collaborations, and cultural ties with South Asian nations.
5. **Geopolitical and Security Implications:** A power struggle between China and India in South Asia has significant geopolitical and security implications (Rahmati et al., 2020). It has led to heightened strategic competition, arms races, and geopolitical maneuvering, impacting regional stability and cooperation efforts. The Indo-Pacific region has become a focal point for maritime security concerns, with China and India enhancing their naval capabilities and engaging in strategic partnerships with other actors.
6. **Analyzing Policy Shifts:** This study aims to analyze the evolving policies of China and India towards South Asia, examining fundamental shifts, drivers, and implications. It

will explore the economic, political, and security dimensions of their engagements, as well as the responses of South Asian countries to this emerging power rivalry. Through a comprehensive analysis, this research seeks to provide insights into the dynamics of contemporary geopolitics in South Asia and contribute to a deeper understanding of global power shifts.

### **Short Description of the Research Problem**

The South Asian region has witnessed a significant transformation in recent years, characterized by an emerging power rivalry between two major Asian nations, China and India (Scott, 2009). This rivalry has the potential to reshape the geopolitical dynamics of South Asia. Understanding the shifts in Sino-Indian policy towards South Asia is crucial for comprehending regional stability, security, and economic development. This research analyzes these shifts, their drivers, and their implications. This section lays out a concise yet comprehensive description of the research problem at the heart of this study: the emerging power rivalry between China and India and the associated shifts in their policies towards the South Asian region. The research problem serves as the focal point for the investigation, guiding the subsequent analysis and inquiry into this critical issue in international relations.

Over the past two decades, the global geopolitical landscape has witnessed the rise of China as a global superpower and the resurgence of India as a regional and global actor (Yongnian & Xin, 2017). This simultaneous ascent of two major Asian nations has inevitably led to heightened competition for influence, resources, and strategic positioning, particularly in regions of mutual interest. Due to its geostrategic significance and burgeoning markets, South Asia has emerged as a primary arena for this power rivalry. Understanding the nature and implications of this rivalry is of paramount importance. The intensification of Sino-Indian rivalry has prompted both nations to recalibrate their foreign policies and strategies towards South Asia (Xueyong et al., 2022). These shifts encompass diplomatic, economic, and security initiatives, including China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and India's "Neighborhood First" policy. These policy changes are central to the research problem, as they represent tangible manifestations of the power rivalry and hold significant implications for regional dynamics.

The evolving Sino-Indian rivalry has far-reaching consequences for the South Asian region (Cheema, 2012). It raises questions about regional stability, security, and economic

development. Policy decisions made by both countries can influence the political and economic landscapes of South Asian nations, potentially leading to cooperation or conflict, infrastructure development or debt burdens, and enhanced regional integration or fragmentation. Understanding these implications is essential for both scholarly inquiry and informed policymaking. This research problem is both timely and of significant academic and practical importance. As South Asia finds itself at the crossroads of competing interests, the findings of this study will offer valuable insights to scholars, policymakers, and international stakeholders seeking to navigate the complex dynamics of emerging power rivalries in the contemporary global order.

Finally, this section has outlined the central research problem of the study: the emerging power rivalry between China and India and the shifts in their policies towards South Asia. It has also provided a glimpse into the research questions that will guide the subsequent analysis, shedding light on the complexity and relevance of the topic within the field of international relations and regional geopolitics.

### **Background and Context of the Research**

India and China, two Asian giants with burgeoning economies and strategic interests, increasingly engage with South Asian countries (Malik, 2004). The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) led by China and India's "Neighborhood First" policy illustrates their regional ambitions. South Asia's geostrategic location, natural resources, and growing markets make it a focal point for these rising powers. As their influence expands, it is vital to examine the evolving dynamics to gauge their impact on regional stability and development. The historical background of the emerging power rivalry between China and India in the South Asian region forms a crucial foundation for understanding the dynamics and policy shifts observed in contemporary times (Acharya, 2014). This chapter delves into the historical context of Sino-Indian relations, tracing the historical factors, events, and policies that have shaped their interactions with South Asia.

Sino-Indian relations have deep historical roots that extend over two millennia (Malik, 2001). Trade along the ancient Silk Road facilitated cultural exchanges and diplomatic contacts between the two civilizations. While peaceful interactions characterized the historical connection, tensions did arise periodically, such as during border disputes and territorial claims. The post-independence era marked a significant turning point in Sino-Indian relations. The 1962 Sino-Indian War remains a watershed moment, shaping mutual suspicions and territorial

disputes that persist today (Abitol, 2009). The war profoundly impacted regional dynamics, with implications for South Asian countries caught in the crossfire.

China and India pursued non-alignment during the Cold War as a foreign policy strategy (Pant & Super, 2015). However, their relations with South Asian neighbors diverged. India took a leadership role in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) and actively engaged with regional countries. Conversely, China maintained a lower profile in the region, focusing more on its immediate neighbors (Callahan, 2016). The late 20th century and early 21st century saw China and India embarking on economic liberalization and rapid growth. These transformations influenced their foreign policy priorities in South Asia. China's economic engagement in the region expanded with the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), a massive infrastructure and connectivity project (Liu, et al., 2020). India's "Neighborhood First" policy aimed to enhance its influence in the immediate vicinity (Hasan, 2017).

The section highlights the contemporary challenges that have led to shifts in Sino-Indian policy towards South Asia. These challenges include issues related to border disputes, energy security, trade imbalances, and influence over smaller South Asian nations. Understanding this historical background is crucial for comprehending the motivations and strategies behind these policy shifts and their implications for the broader geopolitical landscape of South Asia. This section provides the historical context necessary for the subsequent analysis of shifts in Sino-Indian policy towards South Asia. It underscores the complexity of the relationship and the enduring impact of historical events on contemporary geopolitics. The evolving power rivalry between China and India in the region can only be fully understood by considering the historical underpinnings that have shaped their interactions with South Asia.

### **Literature Review**

The literature review will encompass works on Sino-Indian relations, South Asian geopolitics, and international relations theory. It will explore existing research on the evolving policies of China and India in the South Asian region, regional power dynamics, and the impact of external actors. The South Asian region has emerged as a crucial arena for power competition between two major Asian powers, China and India. Their policies and strategies towards South Asia have witnessed significant shifts in recent years. This literature review provides an overview of key themes and findings from existing scholarship related to this topic. The historical context of Sino-Indian relations and the geopolitical significance of South Asia have

been central themes in the literature. Authors such as Mohan argue that the region's geostrategic location, natural resources, and growing markets make it a focal point for both China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and India's "Neighborhood First" policy. Much of the literature examines China's expanding influence in South Asia (Mohan, 2012). Prominent works by Panda and Pant emphasize the role of the BRI in reshaping economic and strategic dynamics in the region. They argue that China's economic investments, infrastructure projects, and increased engagement with South Asian nations have enhanced its presence and leverage (Ghimire, et al., 2021).

Recent studies have highlighted the significance of strategic partnerships formed by China and India with South Asian countries. According to Verma, China has continued to deepen its strategic alliances in South Asia through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), particularly with Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. Verma's analysis indicates that China's investments in infrastructure and connectivity projects have not only enhanced its economic footprint but also increased its strategic leverage in the region (Verma, 2022). In contrast, Gupta explores India's counter-strategies, emphasizing its efforts to strengthen ties with countries like Bhutan, Bangladesh, and the Maldives. Gupta notes that India's initiatives, such as the 'Neighbourhood First' policy and 'Act East' policy, are aimed at countering China's growing influence. The study points out that India's development assistance and capacity-building programs have been instrumental in maintaining its traditional sphere of influence (Gupta, 2023). A report by the Asian Development Bank provides a comparative analysis of the economic impacts of Chinese and Indian investments. It highlights those Chinese projects, often funded by state-owned enterprises, tend to be larger in scale and quicker in execution, whereas Indian investments, though smaller, are more diversified across sectors such as education, health, and information technology (Asian Development Bank, 2023).

India's evolving policy towards South Asia is another critical area of investigation. Scholarly works by Acharya and Joshi emphasize India's efforts to consolidate its regional influence through diplomatic initiatives, trade agreements, and capacity-building projects. These authors argue India is keen on countering China's growing influence in its neighborhood (Acharya, 2020). The literature also delves into the drivers behind the shifts in Sino-Indian policies towards South Asia. Scholars such as Fravel and Medcalf point to a combination of factors, including geopolitical competition, economic interests, regional security concerns, and domestic politics in China and India (Medcalf, 2018). Several studies explore the implications of the emerging power rivalry for regional stability. Buzan and Khong highlight the potential

for competition to lead to security dilemmas and conflict escalation (Rudolf, 2020). Conversely, Khan suggests that the rivalry could also offer cooperation and economic development opportunities if managed effectively. The literature also acknowledges the role of external actors in shaping Sino-Indian policies in South Asia (Khan, et. al, 2021). Works by Ganguly (2018) and Rajagopalan discuss how countries like the United States, Russia, and Japan have sought to influence the region's dynamics (Rajagopalan, 2020).

Scholars have applied various theoretical frameworks to analyze these developments. Realist theories are commonly used to explain state behavior, power dynamics, and security competition, while constructivist theories highlight the role of norms, ideas, and identity in shaping policies (Hyde-Price, 2008). Despite the wealth of literature on Sino-Indian relations and South Asian geopolitics, several notable research gaps exist. Limited research has examined the perceptions and responses of South Asian nations themselves to the growing rivalry between China and India. Additionally, there is room for further analysis of the role of non-state actors, such as think tanks and civil society organizations, in shaping regional policy discourse.

The research on emerging power rivalry and the analysis of shifts in Sino-Indian policy towards the South Asian region holds significance, as evidenced by ongoing literature reviews. The current body of scholarly work underscores the increasing strategic importance of South Asia in global affairs and the complex dynamics between China and India. The literature highlights how their evolving policies have profound implications for regional security, economic development, and geopolitical stability. By examining the latest research, scholars gain a nuanced understanding of the intricate power dynamics, identifying key trends, challenges, and opportunities. The ongoing literature review indicates a growing consensus on the need for in-depth analysis to comprehend the motivations behind policy shifts, potential areas of cooperation, and sources of conflict. Ultimately, this research contributes to academic discourse and informs policymakers and practitioners, guiding them in navigating the intricate landscape of Sino-Indian relations in the South Asian context.

The strategic competition between China and India in South Asia has been a focal point of scholarly debate. Scholars such as Mohan Malik argue that China's growing influence in the region, mainly through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), directly challenges India's traditional dominance (Malik, 2018). The BRI's infrastructure projects in countries like Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Nepal have raised concerns about encirclement and strategic encroachment in New



Delhi. On the other hand, Indian strategists like C. Raja Mohan emphasize India's efforts to counterbalance China's influence through strategic partnerships with countries like Japan and the United States (Raja Mohan, 2020). Mohan highlights India's "Act East" policy as a response to China's expanding footprint in South Asia, aiming to enhance connectivity and economic cooperation with Southeast Asian nations.

The military dimension of Sino-Indian rivalry has also attracted scholarly attention. Bose discusses the implications of China's military base in Djibouti and its naval presence in the Indian Ocean. Bose argues that China's increasing military footprint is a strategic maneuver to secure its maritime trade routes and project power in the region (Bose, 2022). Conversely, Roy (2023) investigates India's military strategies, focusing on its naval modernization and strategic partnerships with the United States, Japan, and Australia under the Quad framework. Roy's study reveals that India's naval exercises and joint patrols in the Indian Ocean are aimed at counterbalancing China's influence and ensuring the security of sea lanes (Roy, 2023).

Economic factors play a crucial role in shaping Sino-Indian rivalry in South Asia. Amitendu Palit argues that China's economic investments, particularly in infrastructure development, have enabled it to gain a competitive edge over India in the region (Palit, 2020). Chinese investments in ports, roads, and energy projects have enhanced connectivity and facilitated trade, contributing to China's economic influence. In contrast, Indian scholars like Pramit Pal Chaudhuri stress the importance of India's economic engagement through initiatives like the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) (Pramit, 2016). Chaudhuri contends that India's economic assistance and development projects aim to counterbalance China's economic clout and promote regional integration.

The evolving Sino-Indian rivalry has significant implications for regional security dynamics in South Asia. Brahma Chellaney argues that China's strategic partnerships with countries like Pakistan and Sri Lanka, coupled with its military presence in the Indian Ocean, pose security challenges for India (Chellaney, 2012). Chellaney highlights the Doklam standoff and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) as critical flashpoints in the region. Conversely, scholars like Harsh V. Pant emphasize India's role as a stabilizing force in South Asia, advocating for a cooperative approach to regional security (Pant, 2022). Pant argues that India's partnerships with countries like Bangladesh and Afghanistan contribute to peace and stability, countering the narrative of zero-sum competition with China. Similarly, Kumar

explores India's diplomatic initiatives, focusing on its engagement with regional organizations such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC). Kumar concludes that India's active participation in these organizations reflects its commitment to regional cooperation and its desire to counterbalance China's influence (Kumar, 2024).

Finally, the existing literature provides a foundation for understanding the evolving policies of China and India in South Asia. However, there is a need for more comprehensive and nuanced research that incorporates the perspectives of all relevant stakeholders and explores the complex interplay of factors driving these policy shifts. This research aims to address these gaps and contribute to a deeper understanding of the emerging power rivalry in South Asia.

## **B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The research methodology chapter provides a detailed outline of the methods, techniques, and procedures used to conduct the study titled "Emerging Power Rivalry: Analyzing Shifts in Sino-Indian Policy towards the South Asian Region." This research aims to establish the validity and reliability of the research findings by explaining the research design, data collection methods, sampling techniques, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations.

### **Research Design:**

The research design for this study is primarily exploratory and descriptive. It involves analyzing the policy shifts of two major powers, China and India, towards the South Asian region over a specified period.

### **Data Collection Methods**

#### **a. Literature Review:**

A comprehensive literature review explored existing scholarly works, policy documents, and reports on Sino-Indian relations, South Asian geopolitics, and emerging power dynamics. It helped identify key themes, theoretical frameworks, and gaps in the literature.

#### **b. Documentary Analysis:**

Policy documents, official statements, treaties, agreements, and strategic documents from Chinese and Indian government sources, as well as international organizations, were analyzed to gather data on policy shifts and strategic priorities.

#### **d. Data Archival:**

Archived data from reputable sources such as think tanks, academic institutions, and government repositories were accessed to gather historical data and trends related to Sino-Indian policy in South Asia.

#### **Sampling Techniques**

##### **a. Purposive Sampling:**

Experts and policymakers with expertise in Sino-Indian relations and South Asian geopolitics were purposively selected for interviews based on their knowledge and experience in the field.

##### **b. Content Sampling:**

Relevant policy documents, official statements, and reports from Chinese and Indian government sources were systematically sampled for analysis based on their relevance to the research objectives.

#### **Data Analysis Procedures**

##### **a. Comparative Analysis:**

A comparative analysis was conducted to compare and contrast the policy approaches of China and India towards critical South Asian countries, focusing on areas such as economic cooperation, strategic partnerships, security dynamics, and regional influence.

#### **Ethical Considerations**

##### **a. Anonymity and Confidentiality:**

Confidentiality measures were implemented to protect the identity and privacy of interview participants. All data collected were anonymized and stored securely to ensure confidentiality.

##### **b. Data Integrity:**

Steps were taken to ensure the accuracy, reliability, and integrity of data sources used in the study, including cross-referencing information from multiple sources and verifying data credibility.

#### **Limitations**

##### **a. Time Constraints:**

The study's timeline was limited to a specific period, which may have constrained the depth of historical analysis and comprehensive coverage of policy shifts.

##### **b. Access to Data:**

Certain sensitive or classified information from government sources may have been restricted, limiting the scope of data analysis in some areas.

**c. Bias:**

Despite efforts to maintain objectivity, researcher or interpretation bias may have influenced the analysis and findings.

The research methodology employed in this study aimed to ensure rigour, validity, and reliability in analyzing shifts in Sino-Indian policy towards the South Asian region. The study provides a nuanced understanding of emerging power rivalry and its impact on regional dynamics by integrating multiple data collection methods, sampling techniques, and analytical approaches. Ethical considerations were also prioritized to uphold research integrity and protect participant rights.

**C. FINDINGS**

This section presents the findings from the analysis of emerging power rivalry and shifts in Sino-Indian policy towards the South Asian region. The research investigated various dimensions, including diplomatic strategies, economic engagements, military presence, and regional alliances, to discern the evolving dynamics and their implications.

**1. Diplomatic Strategies:**

The study revealed a nuanced shift in diplomatic strategies employed by both China and India towards South Asia. While China has pursued an assertive approach through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), investment projects, and diplomatic engagements with countries like Pakistan and Sri Lanka (Chan, 2020), India has emphasized its "Neighborhood First" policy, enhancing bilateral ties and regional cooperation (Ha, 2023). Despite occasional border disputes and competition for influence, both nations are willing to engage in dialogue and multilateral forums, albeit with differing priorities.

**2. Economic Engagements:**

Economic engagements emerged as a crucial aspect of the rivalry, with China's significant investments in infrastructure projects across South Asia challenging India's traditional influence (Chung, 2018). The research highlighted the impact of Chinese investments in sectors such as energy, transportation, and telecommunications, altering economic dynamics and creating dependencies in some countries. In contrast, India has emphasized trade partnerships, developmental aid, and capacity-building initiatives, albeit with more limited resources than China's financial prowess.

### **3. Military Presence and Security Cooperation:**

The analysis of military presence and security cooperation underscored the complex nature of Sino-Indian relations in the South Asian context. China's growing military capabilities, including naval deployments and strategic partnerships with countries like Pakistan, have raised concerns for India's security calculus (Khan, 2016). Conversely, India has bolstered defence ties with regional partners, conducted joint military exercises, and invested in modernizing its defence infrastructure to address evolving security challenges (Sinha, 2023).

### **4. Regional Alliances and Geopolitical Dynamics:**

The research identified the formation of regional alliances and geopolitical alignments as a critical trend influencing power rivalry in South Asia. China's expanding influence through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and diplomatic overtures to other South Asian nations has reshaped the regional geopolitical landscape (Raju, 2021). Conversely, India has sought to strengthen partnerships with like-minded countries, engage in regional forums, and promote connectivity initiatives such as the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) to counterbalance Chinese influence (Bharti, 2020).

### **5. Impact on South Asian States:**

The study delved into the perspectives and responses of South Asian states to the evolving Sino-Indian rivalry. While some countries have welcomed Chinese investments for infrastructure development and economic growth, others have raised concerns about debt sustainability, environmental impact, and geopolitical implications. India's efforts to enhance regional connectivity, foster cultural ties, and provide developmental assistance have been met with varying degrees of receptiveness, reflecting diverse national interests and strategic calculations among South Asian states (Dollar, 2018).

**Finally**, the findings of this research elucidate the multifaceted nature of emerging power rivalry and shifts in Sino-Indian policy towards South Asia. The analysis underscores the importance of understanding diplomatic, economic, military, and geopolitical dimensions in assessing the evolving dynamics and their implications for regional stability and cooperation.

Future studies could explore the role of non-state actors, cultural diplomacy, and technological advancements in shaping the Sino-Indian rivalry narrative in South Asia.

### **Discussion**

The research on the emerging power rivalry between China and India in the South Asian region has uncovered several key findings and implications that warrant further discussion. This discussion section will delve into the nuanced dynamics of Sino-Indian policies, the impact on regional dynamics, strategic implications, and potential avenues for cooperation or conflict resolution.

#### **1. Evolution of Sino-Indian Relations in South Asia**

Historically, Sino-Indian relations in South Asia have been characterized by a mix of cooperation, competition, and conflict. Both countries have pursued regional strategies, including economic cooperation, infrastructure development, diplomatic engagements, and military posturing (Xueyong et. at., 2022). The research highlights the evolving nature of these relations, influenced by factors such as historical legacies, geopolitical interests, economic considerations, and security concerns.

#### **2. Drivers of Emerging Power Rivalry**

The research identifies several key drivers contributing to the emerging power rivalry between China and India in South Asia. These drivers include strategic competition for influence and control, economic interests in regional markets and resources, territorial disputes, geopolitical ambitions, and the pursuit of regional hegemony (Flemes et al., 2011). The analysis underscores how these drivers shape Sino-Indian policies and interactions with South Asian countries.

#### **3. Impact on Regional Dynamics**

The evolving Sino-Indian rivalry has significant implications for regional dynamics in South Asia. It has led to a complex mix of alliances, partnerships, and tensions among South Asian countries (Buzan, 2011). The research discusses how smaller states in the region navigate between China and India, balancing economic benefits, security concerns, and strategic autonomy. The impact of great power rivalry on regional stability, conflict resolution efforts, and economic development is examined in detail.

#### **4. Strategic Implications for China and India**

The research sheds light on the strategic implications of the emerging power rivalry between China and India. It analyzes how both countries seek to advance their interests in South Asia through infrastructure projects, connectivity initiatives, military deployments, diplomatic engagements, and economic investments (Chung, 2018). The discussion also explores the potential risks and opportunities for China and India as they navigate complex geopolitical realities in the region.

#### **5. Avenues for Cooperation and Conflict Resolution**

Despite tensions and competition, there are potential avenues for cooperation and conflict resolution between China and India in South Asia (Singh, 2019). The research discusses the importance of dialogue, diplomacy, confidence-building measures, and multilateral frameworks in managing disputes, promoting stability, and fostering economic growth. It also highlights the role of regional organizations, such as SAARC and BIMSTEC, in facilitating cooperation and addressing everyday challenges.

#### **6. Future Prospects**

The discussion offers insights into future prospects for Sino-Indian relations in South Asia and provides policy recommendations for both countries and regional stakeholders. These recommendations include enhancing communication channels, building trust, promoting economic connectivity, addressing security concerns through dialogue, and leveraging multilateral conflict resolution and cooperation mechanisms. Finally, the research on the emerging power rivalry between China and India in South Asia underscores the complex interplay of factors shaping regional dynamics. By analyzing shifts in Sino-Indian policies, understanding drivers of rivalry, assessing strategic implications, exploring avenues for cooperation, and offering policy recommendations, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the evolving geopolitical landscape in the region.

#### **Limitations and Future Research Directions**

##### **Limitations**

While this research has provided valuable insights into the shifts in Sino-Indian policy towards the South Asian region, several limitations should be acknowledged to contextualize

the findings and guide future research endeavours. The study primarily relied on secondary sources such as academic literature, policy documents, and media reports. While these sources offer comprehensive data and analysis, they may be subject to biases or limited perspectives. Future research could benefit from primary data collection through interviews, surveys, or fieldwork to gather firsthand insights from policymakers, experts, and stakeholders involved in Sino-Indian relations in South Asia. Secondly, the research focused predominantly on the policy perspectives of China and India, overlooking the viewpoints of other regional actors and external powers. Future studies could adopt a more inclusive approach by incorporating the perspectives of neighbouring countries, international organizations, and major powers such as the United States, Russia, and the European Union. This broader perspective would provide a more nuanced understanding of the dynamics of power rivalry in South Asia. Thirdly, the study analyzed shifts in policy frameworks and strategic initiatives but needed to delve deeper into the region's socioeconomic or cultural dimensions of Sino-Indian engagement. Exploring the impact of economic investments, cultural exchanges, and people-to-people diplomacy could enrich the analysis and offer a more holistic view of power rivalry dynamics. Another area for improvement is the temporal scope of the research, which primarily focuses on recent developments and trends. Future studies could adopt a longitudinal approach to track the evolution of Sino-Indian policies in South Asia over time, identifying patterns, continuities, and changes in strategic priorities and engagements.

The study also examined the strategic competition between China and India, neglecting the role of other regional powers such as Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. Future research could explore how these countries navigate the complex geopolitical landscape shaped by Sino-Indian rivalry and how their alliances and alignments influence regional dynamics. Lastly, the research should have extensively delved into the implications of power rivalry for regional security, stability, and development in South Asia. Future studies could undertake a comprehensive security analysis, including assessing conflict resolution mechanisms, arms race dynamics, and the impact of great power competition on regional peacebuilding efforts.

### **Future Research Directions**

Building on the insights gained from this study, several promising avenues for future research on emerging power rivalry in South Asia can be identified:



1. **Goeconomic Dynamics:** Investigate the goeconomic dimensions of Sino-Indian rivalry, including infrastructure development projects, trade patterns, investment flows, and economic dependencies in the region.
2. **Soft Power Competition:** Explore the role of soft power instruments such as cultural diplomacy, educational exchanges, media influence, and public diplomacy in shaping perceptions and alliances in South Asia.
3. **Security Challenges:** Conduct a detailed analysis of security challenges in South Asia, including border disputes, terrorism threats, maritime security issues, and nuclear deterrence dynamics within the context of Sino-Indian rivalry.
4. **Multilateral Cooperation:** Examine the prospects and challenges of multilateral cooperation frameworks involving China, India, and other regional stakeholders to address common concerns such as climate change, disaster management, and transnational security threats.
5. **Public Opinion and Perception Analysis:** Study public opinion trends, media discourses, and elite perceptions regarding Sino-Indian relations in South Asia, assessing their impact on policy decisions and regional dynamics.
6. **Conflict Resolution Mechanisms:** Evaluate existing conflict resolution mechanisms and peacebuilding initiatives in South Asia, exploring their efficacy in managing interstate tensions and fostering regional stability.
7. **Role of External Powers:** Analyze the roles and strategies of external powers such as the United States, Russia, Japan, and European countries in shaping power dynamics and alliances in South Asia vis-à-vis China and India.
8. **Future Scenarios and Strategic Forecasting:** Develop scenarios and conduct strategic forecasting exercises to anticipate potential trajectories of Sino-Indian rivalry and their implications for regional and global geopolitics.

By addressing these research directions, scholars can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the evolving dynamics of power rivalry in South Asia and inform policy debates on regional cooperation, conflict management, and strategic engagement.

## D. CONCLUSIONS

This research has explored the evolving dynamics of Sino-Indian policy in South Asia, focusing on the emerging power rivalry between these two major Asian nations. Through an

in-depth analysis of historical contexts, current policies, strategic interests, and regional engagements, this study has sought to unravel the nuances of this complex relationship and its implications for the South Asian region. The primary objective of this research was to examine the shifts in Sino-Indian policy towards South Asia and understand the underlying factors driving these changes. The study aimed to analyze the historical evolution of Sino-Indian relations, assess the strategic interests of both South Asian countries, and evaluate their rivalry's impact on regional dynamics.

The historical analysis revealed a trajectory marked by periods of cooperation and competition between China and India in South Asia. Initially, cooperation was evident in trade, cultural exchanges, and diplomatic engagement. However, geopolitical considerations, border disputes, and strategic competition have increasingly shaped their regional policies, leading to a more competitive and assertive stance. Examining current policies highlighted the multifaceted nature of Sino-Indian engagement in South Asia. China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has significantly influenced its approach, with infrastructure projects and economic investments expanding its influence in Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. Conversely, India has pursued a "neighbourhood first" policy, emphasizing connectivity, development assistance, and security cooperation with South Asian nations. China and India have distinct strategic interests in South Asia, ranging from economic partnerships to geopolitical influence. China's strategic objectives include securing sea lanes, countering Indian influence, and accessing regional markets. India, meanwhile, aims to maintain its traditional sphere of influence, counterbalance China's growing presence, and address security challenges like cross-border terrorism.

The rivalry between China and India in South Asia has manifested in various ways, including diplomatic maneuvers, infrastructure projects, military posturing, and competition for regional alliances. This rivalry has contributed to regional dynamics characterized by strategic balancing, geopolitical maneuvering, and complex interdependencies among South Asian countries. The evolving Sino-Indian rivalry has significant implications for the South Asian region. It has contributed to a more competitive and dynamic geopolitical environment, impacting regional security, economic development, and political stability. The influence of external powers, particularly China and India, has reshaped the strategic calculus of South Asian countries, leading to strategic realignments and recalibrations of foreign policies. The Sino-Indian rivalry in South Asia poses several challenges, including heightened security risks, increased resource competition, and potential regional conflicts. However, it also presents

opportunities for cooperation, dialogue, and conflict resolution. Engaging in constructive diplomacy, promoting economic integration, and addressing shared challenges such as climate change and terrorism can create avenues for collaboration and stability in the region.

Based on the findings of this research, several recommendations can be proposed:

1. **Enhanced Dialogue:** China and India should prioritize regular dialogue and diplomatic engagements to manage differences, build mutual trust, and promote regional stability.
2. **Economic Cooperation:** Both countries can explore opportunities for economic cooperation, including joint infrastructure projects, trade partnerships, and investment initiatives.
3. **Confidence-Building Measures:** Confidence-building measures, such as military-to-military dialogues, border management agreements, and crisis communication mechanisms, can reduce tensions and prevent escalation.
4. **Regional Cooperation:** Encouraging regional cooperation frameworks, such as the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC), can foster peace, development, and connectivity in South Asia.

In conclusion, the shifting dynamics of Sino-Indian policy towards South Asia reflect a complex interplay of strategic interests, historical legacies, and regional aspirations. While rivalry and competition are evident, there are opportunities for cooperation, dialogue, and mutual benefit. By navigating these dynamics with pragmatism, foresight, and a commitment to shared interests, China and India can contribute to a more stable, prosperous, and integrated South Asian region.

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