

An Analysis of America's Vigilant Strategy on China in South Asia**Dr. Dinesh Sharma****Prof- department of Political Science****Pandit Lalit Mohan Sharma Campus Rishikesh Uttarakhand****Ram Kumar****PhD Scholar Department of Political Science S.B.S College, Rudrapur, Uttarakhand****Abstract**

In South Asia, the United States has employed a watchful strategy toward China, primarily determined by economic, geopolitical, and security matter. This strategy encompasses diplomatic, economic, and military components aimed at curbing China's growing influence in the region, particularly through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and strategic partnerships with countries like Pakistan and Sri Lanka. The U.S. has focused on strengthening alliances with regional powers, such as India and Japan, and enhancing its military presence in the Indian Ocean. Additionally, Washington has actively engaged in multilateral forums to counter China's assertiveness. The analysis explores the key elements of America's strategy in South Asia, examining the challenges in balancing competition with China and fostering regional stability. The strategic rivalry between the two powers, particularly in the context of China's Belt and Road Initiative, the Indo-Pacific region's security, and the U.S.-China trade war, has further complicated the dynamics of South Asian geopolitics.

Keywords: Counterweight, Strategy, Security, Intervention, Partnership, Investment

Introduction:

China's rising influence in South Asia has been a subject of increasing concern for the United States, especially in light of China's economic expansion and military assertiveness. As part of its global strategy, China has made substantial investments in South Asia, particularly through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which seeks to create a vast infrastructure network connecting China with the rest of the world, including key countries in South Asia such as Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. In response, the United States has developed a vigilant strategy to counter China's growing influence, while maintaining a balance between cooperation and competition in the region.

The U.S. strategy toward China in South Asia is multi-faceted, involving diplomatic initiatives, economic pressures, and military cooperation with regional actors. This strategy not only reflects the broader geopolitical contest between the U.S. and China but also speaks to the intricate dynamics of South Asia, where the U.S. seeks to enhance its partnerships with India, strengthen its military presence, and leverage multilateral institutions to challenge China's influence.

Diplomatic and Economic Maneuvers:

A range of responses have been developed by US while countering the rising influence of China in South Asia and developing diplomatic relation with key regional players, particularly India is one of the key pillars of America's strategy in South Asia. Over the years, the partnership of US and India has grown in meaningful way, driven by common concern over the increasing

domination of China in South Asia. The US views India as the perfect partner to counterweight the rising footprints of China and has been actively involved in strengthening trade relations, defense cooperation, economic relation and strategic relation with India.

In terms of the economy, the United States has endeavored to offset China's influence by fostering greater economic connection with South Asia. This has been accomplished through projects such as the New Silk Road plan, which intends to integrate Central and South Asia through investments in infrastructure and commercial ties. The United States of America has continued to voice worries on the financial implications of the projects initiated by China in South Asia through Belt and Road Initiative, underlining the possibility that China may engage in debt-trap diplomacy and lack of transparency associated with these projects. The United States of America places an emphasis on the Blue Dot Network (BDN), alternative to China's BRI, which works to provide transparent and sustainable infrastructure investment in South Asia.

Security Strategy:

In response to counter the growing the naval presence of China in the region, the United States has been increasingly focused on maintaining On the security front, the United States has been increasingly focused on maintaining a healthy military presence in the Indian Ocean which is a critical maritime area through which vital trade routes passes. Through the joint military exercise, such as the Malabar naval exercise, which involves India, US, Japan and Australia, the U.S has embraced defense cooperation with India.

Additionally, the U.S. has been providing training, military equipment and security assistance to the other players in the region such as Sri Lanka, Maldives and Bangladesh for

keeping close associations with them. Furthermore, the U.S strategy in the context of Pakistan, a close ally of China in South Asia, includes efforts to balance relation with Pakistan, while encouraging Pakistan to take a more active role in countering terrorism and supporting regional stability.

Multilateral approaches:

Finally, the United States has stated its commitment to multilateralism as a means of controlling China's economic expansion. Initiatives like the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), which brings together the US, India, Japan and Australia to coordinate security, economic, and diplomatic strategies for an open and free Indo-Pacific, directly counter China's regional ambition and influence.

Indo-Pacific strategy:

The Free and Open Indo- Pacific (FOIP) strategy is a US foreign policy based on Barack Obama's "Pivot to Asia" policy. It was first mentioned by US president Donald Trump in 2017 and later by vice president Mike Pence in 2018. The essence of this policy is "Free" and "open." By free, it emphasis the nations of the region should be free from international compulsion. By open, it advocates that open sea lines of communication and open airways for the region. It is a counterstrategy by US to the rising influence of China in South Asia through its open and transparent logistics, infrastructure, investment and regulatory structure and also through the open, free, fair and reciprocal trade in the South Asia region.

Quadrilateral Security Dialogue:

Quadrilateral Security Dialogue first established in 2007-2008. It comprised the four nations India, Japan, Australia and United States. Quad members maintain that the group is meant to deepen the economic, diplomatic and military ties among the four countries. One of the most significant objectives of the Quad members is to contain the influence of China in Indo-Pacific region. China itself believes that the Quad mechanism is only a tool to contain the power of China and it is only a deliberate initiative to counter the military and economic power of China.

Challenges:

The U.S. faces several challenges in executing its strategy in South Asia. One of the most significant is managing the delicate relationship with Pakistan. Pakistan's close ties to China, particularly through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), complicate the U.S.'s efforts to counter China's influence in the region. Additionally, the U.S. must navigate tensions between India and Pakistan, particularly in the context of Kashmir, as any instability in this region could undermine U.S. efforts to foster regional stability.

Another challenge is China's growing influence in Sri Lanka, where Chinese investments have raised concerns about the potential for debt traps and the strategic control of key infrastructure such as the Hambantota Port. The U.S. has expressed its support for Sri Lanka's sovereignty and has offered alternatives to Chinese investments in the region.

Conclusion:

America's vigilant strategy toward China in South Asia is a complex and evolving response to the increasing geopolitical competition in the region. By enhancing its partnerships with key regional actors, particularly India, and bolstering its military presence, the U.S. aims to

counterbalance China's influence in South Asia. While challenges remain, such as managing Pakistan's relations with China and addressing China's growing investments in the region, the U.S. strategy provides significant opportunities for fostering a free and open Indo-Pacific, ensuring regional stability, and protecting its strategic interests in the region.

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