

Navigating US Rebalancing and China's BRI: Prospects and Challenges for Pakistan

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Article Information		Abstract
Received:	October 15, 2024	This paper critically examines the geopolitical and geo-economic ramifications of the United States' Rebalancing Strategy and China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) for Pakistan. The US rebalancing approach is principally targeted at counterbalancing China's ascendancy as the world's second-largest economy. Through the recalibration of its foreign policy, the US seeks to reassert its influence within China's peripheral regions by leveraging military, economic, and diplomatic instruments of statecraft. This strategic maneuvering holds significant implications for Pakistan's foreign policy calculus, necessitating a nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between these competing geopolitical interests. China initiated BRI which is perceived by the US as a counterbalancing strategy to its rebalancing strategy, aiming to establish China's economic centrality in the region. BRI promotes regional economic connectivity and integration through transportation, communications, and energy corridors. For Pakistan, BRI presents geo-political challenges and opportunities, particularly through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Effective mechanisms are necessary to capitalize on BRI's opportunities, enhancing Pakistan's regional strategic relevance. This study aims to explore the possible outcomes of Sino-US competition, geopolitical motivations involving US rebalancing and BRI, and prospects and Challenges for Pakistan. The research employs an explanatory, descriptive, and analytical approach, offering policy recommendations for Pakistan and key regional stakeholders.
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1 Introduction

The Asia-Pacific region has become a center stage of geopolitical and geoeconomic competition along with multiple dividends for regional stakeholders. In 2013, China launched an internationally known strategy as the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (MSR) and One Belt One Road (OBOR) currently known as the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). BRI is perceived as a counterbalancing move to the US's Rebalancing Strategy. BRI based on political and economic tenets is aimed at China's economic centrality in Asia-Pacific while promoting regional economic connectivity and integration in terms of transportation, communications, and energy corridors. The US perceives the BRI as a strategic

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countermeasure to its rebalancing efforts, aimed at maintaining regional influence. China's BRI constitutes a multifaceted expansion strategy, seeking to establish comprehensive air, sea, and land connectivity across the Indo-Pacific and Eurasian regions, fostering economic development, extensive infrastructure networks, and political cooperation.

This paper explores the multiple and critical geo-political challenges arising out of BRI and CPEC for the region, especially for Pakistan. BRI equally brings several opportunities, if capitalized in the true sense of the word through effective mechanisms, which would enhance the strategic relevance of Pakistan in the region. The expansion of Pakistan's geostrategic potential prospectively improves its ties with major powers of the Asia-Pacific such as the US and China but it requires a proactive foreign policy formulation for diverse and enduring economic development goals for Pakistan. The set of rational policies based upon Pakistan's economic, political, and diplomatic interests with the major powers in the contemporary regional and global environment would demand a persistent foreign policy and strong internal support within Pakistan. Pakistan's foreign policy requires a delicate balancing act, navigating relationships with major powers while advancing its national interests. To achieve this, Pakistan must adopt a persistent foreign policy and secure strong internal support. The paper thus offers relevant policy recommendations for Pakistan and key regional stakeholders.

This paper investigates three key questions:

- (1) Why did the US rebalancing move influence the Chinese defensive security outlook to make it compete with its economic boost through BRI?
- (2) What are the prospects and challenges of BRI for Pakistan?
- (3) How will the growing regional and international milieu affect Pakistan?

The paper has been divided into four sections covering (1) US Rebalancing Strategy, (2) China's BRI, (3) Prospects of BRI/CPEC, (4) Challenges and Implications for Pakistan, and conclusion.

2 US Rebalancing Strategy in the Asia-Pacific

The Asia-Pacific region is a dynamic and rapidly evolving geopolitical hub. The Obama Administration was eager to pursue a significant national project for the reorientation of considerable elements of its foreign policy towards the Asia-Pacific region by engaging many of its regional and extra-regional partners for this purpose. The US Rebalancing strategy (Meijer, 2015) initially known as the Pivot strategy launched in 2011, aimed to gain tremendous benefits from the economic and political opportunities of the region. The US Rebalancing Strategy usually refers to broader efforts of harmonizing the geo-strategic positions and counterbalancing the power through the assistance of its allies engaging many other states that share common agendas and interests with the US. Countries like Japan, Australia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Vietnam are the stakeholders that benefit either through strategic means or economic interests. The central part of the strategic pivot inherited back to the US legacy as the sole Superpower in the Post Cold War era and the rebalancing strategy serves the purposes of the US global hegemon (Wang, 2015). The principal prerequisite always focuses on the step that ensures the conserving of its status as a dominant power whereas, the growing power flex in Asia-Pacific alarmed such motives and impelled to contain the emerging powers of the region, especially China. The US faces a challenge in Asia as China's economic and military influence expands. China's military modernization was the main US concern but the question of reinforcing the US role as a global leader never to be compromised. The Department of Defense report in 2010 revealed the Obama administration's disquiet over China in the challenging pattern asserting to counter the US posture and presence through enhanced political, economic, and military capability moreover, arrange the preventive initiatives for steadiness of any possible regional crisis (Nautiyal, 2017).

2.1 Background of the Rebalancing Strategy

The Rebalancing, initially the Asia-Pacific pivot strategy was launched in 2012 by the Obama administration as a regional strategy to strengthen its security alliances with regional partners. Further ensuring its broad military presence and safeguarding democracy and human rights (Sean Kay, 2013).

The US believes its enduring presence in the region through its hub of asymmetric alliances assures regional stability in the long run. Its presence in East Asia and Japan is the real factor behind the prevention of the great power rivalry. Besides such presence protects the interests of its allies but in real terms, the presence means the stability of the region under the US-led system however, for some other countries like China these intentions and designs are the major factor behind the de-stability of the current power equilibrium and otherwise it will further grow with a continuous pace.

The reaction to the pivot strategy is due to the notion and perception by the regional powers as a rebalancing effort by the US. For this reason, the strengthening of the US allies is the top priority agenda for the attainment of the sustainable policy goals of regional peace and security. This partnership will in turn bring assurance and confidence through lasting interactions and cooperation with each other. In this context, the US-Japan relations have been demonstrating the execution of the US 'Pivot' to both sides of the Asia Pacific.

Similarly, the US' association with South Korea is based on the notion of collaboration for embarking upon the arising security challenges surrounding the Korean Peninsula. The relationship between the US and Australia further aims for economic and military cooperation to expand beyond regional limitations and focus on tackling global challenges.

In the aftermath of the global financial recession, the exploration of manifold market opportunities for its military-industrial complex, and an ally that possesses similar interests viz-a-viz to the US in security and regional political arena, India becomes a natural choice for the US to cope with the growing economic and military challenges by China. Whereas the Sino-Indian rivalry and the Indian dream of outshining under the global spotlight as an emerging power brings enormous challenges along with a few opportunities for regional countries like Pakistan as its so-called frontline ally's role with the US pushes Pakistan to seek partners that also safeguard and address its regional security and economic concerns.

Most countries in the region like Thailand, the Philippines, and Malaysia only share common goals of pursuing their economic objectives and development goals through their partnership with the US. The onboarding of all the regional allies is a grand structural framework of the Obama administration's Asia rebalancing strategy by employing a considerable share of diplomatic, strategic, and economic investments through to sustaining the complex regional order for extracting long-term security and prosperity outcomes.

2.2 Importance of Asia-Pacific Region

The US policy shift is the result of the global financial crisis of 2008 as the Asia-Pacific region is considered a driving force of the international economic order that comprises 56% of the global economy and consists a bulk of more than half of the total US trade. The vibrant commercial and energy itineraries also appeal to the anticipated objectives of greater interests demanded employing almost all US national power elements to get the lion's due share in the largest militaries of the world.

The exceptional magnitude of the Asia-Pacific region for the US' future interests requires the deployment of the largest Pacific Command (PACOM) comprising almost 60% of the American troops under the fleet for the creation of a rebalance (Chari, 2013). The decision to rebalancing strategy by the time also encouraged the reality of ending Afghanistan and other Middle Eastern military expeditions. The swaying credence of overlook in the past demanded the renewal of the US strategic role as a Pacific power for the pursuance of the economic, security, and political rebalance of the region by ways of mutually beneficial partnership involving Japan, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, and Australia. The partnership also expands through engaging the regional power hubs like India, New Zealand, Indonesia, Brunei, Malaysia, Singapore, Vietnam, and the Pacific Islands moreover, investing in regional organizations like the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), Trans-Pacific Partnership, Asia Pacific Economic Cooperation and the East Asia Summit.

Since 1975, the characterization of the US foreign policy towards Southeast Asia has mainly lacked importance and interrupted consideration (Shen, 2007). These policies were mainly to address the regional conflicts connected to the interests of the US allies in the Asia-Pacific region. However, the region was of greater importance due to its immense economic and trade potential but the foresight in the policy formulation so long had been ignoring the region.

The US policy elite drew its due attention when it felt the national interests were at stake due to China’s rise as a regional economic and military power by capitalizing the China’s opportunity for its expanded influence that would further challenge the US supremacy in the international political discourse and other intra-state dealings.

3 BRI- a Counterbalancing Move to US Rebalancing Strategy

China’s ambitions for dominating the region and marching to the global arena and its soaring trade and investment activities already had been a source of development for many nations including those of the ASEAN members. The unease caused by the US in the wake of China’s bilateral and multilateral engagements with its allies and partners seemingly shuns its influence and role as a Pacific Power (Callistus & Vincent, 2023).

China responded to the US rebalancing strategy through its BRI which is likely to revive its traditional Silk Road, through the Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) and Maritime Silk Road (MSR), connecting China through Asia, the Middle East, Africa, and Europe (Ohashi, 2018). This included energy, trade, transportation, and network projects in Southeast and Central Asia.

BRI is a massive infrastructure project connecting 70 countries across four continents. China has committed \$40 billion to support rail, road, and trade projects through the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). BRI aims to boost economic ties, cultural exchange, and Chinese influence (Sarker et al., 2018) BRI consists of six corridors i.e., Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor, China-Central Asia-West Africa Economic Corridor, China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, New Eurasian Land Bridge Economic Corridor (Cheung & Hong, 2018).



Source: <https://www.foxnews.com/world/what-is-chinas-belt-roadinitiative> China’s planned Belt and Road Initiative.

3.1 CPEC as Pivot to Regional Economic Integration

CPEC being the flagship project of BRI serves as a pivot to regional economic integration. The closer strategic, economic, and military relationship between Pakistan and China insists on each other to term them both as “all weathered friends”. Historically, political and strategic cooperation between the two countries has significantly grown to remarkable levels to assist each other amidst the crises and conflicts in the varying dynamics of the international milieu. The bilateral cooperation between China and Pakistan almost covers every field of life, particularly realizing the fact that only economic progress guarantees the enduring survival of nations and a better living standard for their people, the particular emphasis is essentially paid for the enhanced trade and investment cooperating between the two countries.

In April 2015, President Xi Jinping’s visit to Pakistan concluded with a \$46 billion pact. The two countries signed 51 pacts ranging from security to economic stability goals and the infrastructural development of Pakistan to connect its port city of Gwadar with the region for better transportation and market accessibility objectives. The purpose of the two countries signing the mega project of the CPEC was their endorsement of persisting commitments for an ever-strengthened partnership. Expanding its benefits beyond its precincts only for the two countries moderately, the CPEC project encompasses enormous trade and economic opportunities through better connectivity and transportation facilities throughout the region (Small, 2015).

4 Prospects of Belt and Road Initiative/CPEC

BRI aims to establish a strategic network of interconnectedness across Asia, Europe, and Africa while fostering regional economic integration (Schneider et al., 2021) in South, East, West, and Central Asia. Pakistan's integration into BRI through the CPEC is poised to generate significant economic benefits for Pakistan and the broader South Asian region. The CPEC connects the whole region from Kashgar in China to Gwadar in Pakistan and holds a remarkable magnitude for alternatively supporting the unstable economic conditions of Pakistan ranging from the manifold areas of China-Pakistan partnership in the fields of infrastructural, trade, transportation, energy, and industrial cooperation (Javaid, 2016). In addition, the landlocked Afghanistan and the Central Asian states become able to access the shortest possible route to connect them with the international marketplace. Given the CPEC project’s opportunities, the region has huge potential to get its due share of international resources and the advantage, as almost the whole region possesses enormous raw materials, natural resources, and agricultural, industrial, and household productions.

Alternatively, in the course of the US strategic pivot to the Asia-Pacific, China gets the chance to flout its encirclement (Bader, 2012) and create a counterweight against the US policies of containment. The CPEC provides an alternative route to China’s oil supplies via the Malacca Strait. Since the prospective uncertainty of the disputed Strait China has a concern regarding the antagonism by Southeast-Asian nations. The CPEC has a varying role in affecting the extra-regional hegemonic designs for Asia. China views the US rebalancing strategy as a tool designed merely against China’s core national interests and sternly hampers its economic and military rise. The rebalance has been the means of US plans of empowering India, South Korea, and Japan (Ali, 2017) with additional US meddling with Taiwan.

Gwadar, a deep-sea port in the Baluchistan province of Pakistan, is the major destination throughout the CPEC. The location of Gwadar on the shores of the Arabian Sea connects the Persian Gulf and the Straits of Hormuz (Khan et al., 2020) significantly enhances the geo-strategic importance, and greatly fulfils Pakistan and China's trade and economic needs.

The Port administered under the state-owned Gwadar Port Authority and the operational control managed by the China Overseas Port Holding Company (COPHC), is the energy transshipment accessing the Strip passing through the Arabian Sea and connecting the mega-cities of the region (Rolland, 2017). The port enables China and Pakistan to dominate regional economic and trade activities. It also convincingly moderates the chances of many regional and extra-regional powers’ hegemonic ambitions to dominate the regions throughout the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. Such

a distinguished position allows China and Pakistan to control the strategic hubs and take over the energy sea lanes across the Persian Gulf.

Apart from its economic effectiveness, the Gwadar Port is a great source of lessening the importance of the other ports in the region such as the Chahbahar Port of Iran. Before the development of Gwadar, the Chahbahar Port served for the Indo-Iran trade and economic activities and remained an instrumental part of exercising a noticeable level of economic influence in the region. The advent of the Gwadar Port brought rampant frustrations and strategic implications, particularly for India which considered Chahbahar as a source of dominating the regional waterway (Small, 2015).

The foremost transitional purpose of China's view of the CPEC is through the obvious relevance of the objectives. Central Asian Republics of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan along with regional countries like Iran and Afghanistan are eagerly waiting to join the CPEC project. Particularly, Iran despite its Chahbahar Port, keenly participates in seeking free trade opportunities across the Gwadar Port. It has announced to investment in building a \$4 billion oil refinery in Gwadar to meet the fuel needs of the harboring ships at the port (Benvenuti et al., 2022). However, for India, such issues have enduring implications since its dreams to emerge as a regional dominant power through US support.

Gwadar has the outstanding perspective to obtain the central position as a gateway across the Straits of Hormuz and viably connects the existing links to smoothly access the energy-rich areas around the Caspian region. The coastline of Gwadar is also a decisive enactment of China's campaign to impersonate and enhance its naval power to meet the challenges of the US naval fleet posture and increase its influence in the South China Sea, the Pacific Ocean, the Persian Gulf, and the Arabian Sea. Gwadar Port is also strategically important for China (Duarte et al., 2023) because it enables China to carry out its trade shipments swiftly and reliably. In the present scenario, a 60% ratio of China's oil transportation takes place via the Persian Gulf to its mega-city of Shanghai which costs a huge amount of resources and is a time-consuming process whereas, through Gwadar it would become able to get all the desired means with spending much lesser than the current level of time and resources.

The integration of Iran and India in BRI/CPEC would pave the way for the diffusion of geopolitical rivalries in the South Asian Region. It will give leverage to geoeconomics over geopolitics. The growing demands for energy resources are the compelling occasions ranging between the imports of gas pipelines across Iran, Turkmenistan, Iran, Pakistan, and India. The Chinese view of energy diplomacy combines the goals of interdependence, interconnectivity, and peaceful existence just focusing on the goals of economic and infrastructural developments. The Russian energy giant Gazprom exceptionally facilitates the purpose and increases the benefits of the pipeline projects to better exploit the oil and natural gas resources of the Caspian and Central Asia (Aryal, 2021).

The benign relationship between Pakistan and Japan is the consequent reward of the economic assistance for Pakistan that has virtually demonstrated as a central tenet for the social, educational, cultural, and infrastructural developments of Pakistan (Malik, 2008). Currently, Japan enthusiastically views the CPEC as a source of greater regional economic development. Enhancing Pakistan-Japan relations can unlock new opportunities for cooperation in trade, investment, and regional security in the Asia-Pacific. Japan employs a cautious foreign policy towards Pakistan due to its strategic partnership with India (Malik, 2008).

5 Challenges and Implications for Pakistan

The escalating US-China geopolitical and strategic competition poses a significant threat to regional stability, potentially militarizing the entire area. Despite this, China has exercised restraint in its military responses to the US rebalancing strategy, instead opting for a soft approach by reviving the ancient Silk Road through BRI. In contrast, the US has taken a firm stance against China, strengthening security ties with its allies. This regional dynamic has significant implications for South Asia, particularly the two-

bloc coalition (Rashid, 2017) formed by India and the US on one side, and China and Pakistan on the other.

The US-China competition in Southeast Asia is characterized by a complex interplay of diplomatic, economic, and military strategies. While China's BRI aims to promote economic integration and cooperation, the US has responded with its Indo-Pacific strategy (Shaheen, 2022) focusing on promoting a free and open region. The India-US-China triangle in South Asia adds another layer of complexity to this dynamic. India's growing strategic cooperation with the US is being watched closely by China, which is seeking to expand its influence in the region through investments in infrastructure and economy. Ultimately, the US-China competition in South Asia has significant implications for regional stability and security. As the competition intensifies, it is essential for regional countries to maintain their agency and autonomy, while also promoting cooperation and dialogue to mitigate the risks of conflict.

The current US role in the Asia Pacific region is passing through gradual transitions. The US policies of containing China have equivalent implications and cause unease in Pakistan, while the focal point of US interests demands a deliberate creation of a balance of power based upon the offensive realist paradigm by having fewer concerns about the growing militarization and conflicts within the regional states and containment of China by rendering a hand of its likeminded partners such as Japan, South Korea, India and some members countries of the ASEAN (Ali, 2017).

The United States for its part desires to empower India through enhanced economic and military cooperation to contain its biggest rival in the region but the India-Pakistan rivalry hampers the US efforts of China containment therefore, the normalization of the relationship between the two countries has been a major US policy agenda set for the South Asian region. The US wants India to remain a concentrated check over China; hence, the US rebalancing strategy holds serious implications for Pakistan.

China considers Gwadar as a potential opportunity essential for maintaining its naval power and preserving its regional influence. The level of support that China extends to Pakistan greatly enables it to counter-weight India. The Sino-Pak successfully rebalances India's escalation at the challenging levels and even such nexus forces the engagement of Indian men and material deployment on its western front (Rashid, 2017). The perception of India's distract is essential for China and Pakistan otherwise; the military, political, and strategic energies of India could be used for the containment of China.

BRI can disrupt the weak balance of power between India and Pakistan. The structural imbalance between India and Pakistan merely led to the pursuance of diverse security policies. India aspires to uphold a hierarchical regional order based on the notion of big and small powers, but Pakistan does not accord to such a status quo, contributing to a security dilemma in the region. Such factors greatly contributed to the historical arms race between India and Pakistan. Since its very inception, Pakistan's regional policy has revolved around the objectives of counterbalancing the Indian power and resolving the Kashmir issue.

The prolonged dispute between India and Pakistan has caused three major wars and yet the hostility is persistent. The critical issue of Kashmir often termed the region as a nuclear flashpoint having a focal point of Kashmir (Khan, 2016) as a "bone of contention" between the two belligerent neighbors India and Pakistan. Despite India's relative victory in two major wars over Kashmir in 1948 and 1965 respectively, Pakistan mainly managed to challenge the Indian preponderance in the region through military and economic support from China, Turkey, and the US.

The pressing issue of Kashmir prevails as a nightmare between the two sides and the indispensable political solution is need of hour. However, historically, Pakistan and India accepted the UN-brokered transformation of the line of control since 1949, but there is still a growing need for commitment by the two countries for a bilateral resolution of all outstanding disputes (Khan, 2016) ever since then the threats of Indian aggression and the internal chaos, Pakistan has been principally relying on China

particularly, for its security issues and economic needs. China is Pakistan's major source of defense supplies and the largest economic partner. The BRI/CPEC and Sino-Pak strategic partnership has always caused unease to India and it views the extended assistance of China for the developmental projects in Pakistan suspiciously.

The economic rise of China and the Indian purpose of acting as a US proxy merely for the containment of China is the pressing factor for the ever-enhanced cooperation between China and Pakistan. Through BRI/CPEC, Pakistan keeps the bilateral and multilateral economic and security agendas at the top of its foreign policy objectives.

Despite the bitter realities of India's hostility with China and Pakistan, the multilateral setups are the rays of hope that will combine together under the single setup to come up with a common agenda of resolution effectively through bilateral and multilateral interactions and collectively promote the improved economic, cultural, scientific, environmental, communication and educational cooperation.

The issues of terrorism and extremism remain a great concern for China, Russia, Central Asian countries, and the members of South Asia as well. The SCO greatly addresses the issue through its security mechanism of the Regional Anti-Terrorism Structure (RATS) that remarkably demonstrated its capabilities and yet the occasional military and naval drills by its members keep them readily responding to any emergent threat through better and effective military and naval powers.

Similarly, Pakistan and India's permanent membership in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization would be the game changer for the relationship between the two countries. The pessimist views about the entry of two countries into the multilateral setup of the SCO would disrupt the overall objectivity of commonly shared goals of economic development and the mutual response against the extra-regional dominance and involvement in the region. The prevalent regional political discourse and the rising opportunities in the multilateral frameworks are chances to resolve the bone of the contention- the Kashmir between Pakistan and India (Acharya, 2014) otherwise after the membership in SCO, the bilateral relationship between the two countries would only become a chaotic organizational structure.

6 Conclusion and Recommendations

The US strategy of rebalancing Asia and alterations of East Asian power equilibrium have broad areas encompassing the prospects of opportunities to attain the goals and national interests and likewise, the US strategic role has outstanding levels of implications for many other states rather than merely for Pakistan. With China's support, Pakistan has the potential capability to maximize its economic and strategic powers out of means such as the Gwadar Port and CPEC projects. The Gwadar Port greatly enhances China's counter-balancing aspirations to overcome the posed challenges by the US and its allies through the Asia-Pivot strategy and traverse out of the encircled boundaries drawn by the Pacific Fleet of the US.

The set of US foreign policy for the century pays great importance to its partnership and the collective creation of a balance of power in the Pacific through the economic and military emergence and dominance of the US-Japan nexus. The alliance also holds particular roles for South Korea, India, Australia, Taiwan, and many other members of the ASEAN regional forum.

The US overruling apprehension is the creation of a stable and enduring balance of power in the region but the economic setbacks and the inter-regional bilateral relationship between many states make it difficult to some extent to smoothly follow and get the outcomes out of the rebalancing strategy.

The US is concerned about China's growing influence, which challenges US global leadership. To avoid a Cold War-style confrontation, the US should prioritize cooperation with China, focusing on shared

interests and mutual benefits. Unlike the Soviet Union, China's power and capabilities spread throughout the world, and US economic interests are also closely linked to China; therefore, the political settlement of the issues and peaceful coexistence are the only viable options for the progress of the region.

Pakistan on its part is suffering as being pressed from each side mainly due to its partnership and the closer relationship with China as well as the US. Interestingly, the two countries hardly provide alternatives to each other; the strategic and military interests of Pakistan are closely interlinked with its relationship with the US whereas, the hopes of economic progress are greatly stuck with the Chinese side. The hard-to-replace rule always keeps Pakistan from interacting with these powers with ever-enhanced eagerness.

Pakistan in the long run has yet to chalk out a strategy based on the notion similar to China only based upon the objectives of cooperation rather than competition. Pakistan under the Shanghai Cooperation Organization framework can settle its long-standing disputes over Kashmir. Likewise, the cooperation with Japan is essentially near to materializing after the proper functioning of the CPEC project.

Having a particular place for its trust and all-weather friend China; Pakistan must increase the ratio of Chinese trade and investment and seek Chinese support for the strongly required industrialization of its mega-cities. The infrastructural development and the means of CPEC are the tools that Pakistan greatly can employ for the attainment of greater economic strength, but the factors of globalization and the regional free-trade engagements would increasingly demand better industrial production within Pakistan. Trade and investment through multilateral engagements with a special focus on the need for cooperation and peaceful coexistence are the only possible ways for Pakistan to overcome its current economic and political setbacks.

Pakistan needs to revitalize its Vision East policy to counter India's US-backed balancing act against China and Pakistan. Pakistan through its integration into BRI should work to build a confident environment for the entire regional stakeholders. The strive for domestic stability and national integrity is strongly in favor of Pakistan's current status as a growingly important country in the region in addition, such moves will also harmonize its society, and the prospective opportunity for a sound relationship with regional and international powers is on the way to welcome Pakistan.

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