



# A Comparative Study on the Strategic Environment of China-India Neighborhood Diplomacy

Nie Jiao

Yunnan University, Kunming, China, niejiao316@163.com.

**Abstract:** The formulation of a country's grand strategy and neighborhood diplomatic strategy is predicated upon the strategic environment in which great powers are emerging. The diplomatic approach concerning China and India is significantly shaped and constrained by its strategic context, encompassing both external and internal factors. This context is manifested through the assessment of the global situation and the understanding of the domestic environment. This study aims to analyze and evaluate the diplomatic strategic environments surrounding China and India, focusing on three key aspects: geographical environment, rival environment, and internal environment. Through deconstructing these environments, we will identify both the similarities and contrasts between the two countries. Based on an analysis of the geographical and diplomatic strategies of China and India, it can be observed that both countries own both land and sea territories, thereby exhibiting a dual nature encompassing both oceanic and terrestrial domains. However, it is noteworthy that India's surrounding nations are limited in number and comparatively less influential, so endowing India with a substantially superior geo-environmental position. Based on an analysis of the respective international environments, it can be observed that both China and India encounter similar challenges. However, China is presented with more pronounced geopolitical counter-measures. This discrepancy in the level of counter-measures may be attributed to the distinction between the current circumstances and future prospects in facing a shared strategic opponent environment. The internal environments of both countries exhibit distinct developmental strengths and advantages. However, it is worth noting that China has achieved a higher stage of development compared to India, and its developmental trajectory appears to be more promising.

**Keywords:** Neighborhood diplomacy; Strategic environment; Diplomatic strategy; Sino-Indian relations

## I. Dismantling the Strategic Diplomatic Environment Surrounding China

Over the past century, the global landscape has seen significant transformations, leading to China's increasing prominence on the international scene. This has had profound implications for China's approach to neighboring diplomacy, both in terms of international and internal factors. Within the context of these two circumstances, the adjacent regions serve as both the geostrategic foundation for the ascent of China, which has transitioned from a regional force to a global force, and the primary domain through which its influence is exerted and its responsibilities as a major power are assumed. Moreover, these areas represent a strategically significant location that necessitates efficient control.<sup>[1]</sup>

### 1.1 Dismantling the Geopolitical Framework of Diplomatic Strategy Surrounding China

*China is a nation characterized by its intricate land-sea geographical composition and its adjacency to numerous bordering countries. China's geographical landscape is distinguished by its "three-sided land and eastern sea" configuration, which therefore presents a diplomatic scenario where China's neighboring relations are influenced by its "land borders with influential nations and maritime confinement due to surrounding islands." This analysis aims to examine the geopolitical landscape of China's neighborhood diplomatic strategy, focusing on two dimensions: land and sea.*

#### 1.1.1 Land Scale: "Circular" Strategic Pressure Is Caused by China-Centered Asian Territory

From a geographical perspective, there has been a significant enhancement in the level of territorial integration among Asian countries, with China serving as the central hub.<sup>[2]</sup> It can be concluded that the predominant characteristic of the diplomatic

strategic landscape surrounding China is the concept of a "ring". Wang Jisi succinctly delineated China's geographical location as encompassing the cardinal directions of East, West, North, and South, with China situated centrally. In terms of its geopolitical and geo-economic positioning, China can be characterized as neither exclusively aligned with the East, West, South, nor North, yet simultaneously exhibiting elements of all four directions. Hence, China can be referred to as a legitimate "intermediate nation" and "central nation".<sup>[3]</sup> China's geographical location, as well as its geopolitical and economic standing, subject it to a complex network of strategic pressures.

China possesses the most extensive terrestrial boundary and boasts the highest count of terrestrial neighboring countries globally. China possesses a geographical boundary spanning a distance of approximately 22,000 kilometers, establishing connections with a total of 14 adjacent nations.<sup>[4]</sup> Ranked alongside Russia, this country holds the distinction of having the most number of neighboring countries globally. The unresolved territorial border disputes that China faces with neighboring countries have resulted in a complex land situation. These contentious issues have the potential to undermine regional stability and impede China's endeavors to maintain a peaceful environment for its own development. The geopolitical challenges in Northeast Asia are intricate and delicate in nature. In the Northeast Asian region, China encounters not only Japan, with which it has a historically rooted geographical rivalry, but also a range of pressing concerns such as the Korean Peninsula issue, the delineation of the continental shelf in the East China Sea, and the Diaoyu Islands dispute. These issues pose significant threats to the security of China's neighboring regions. The Southeast Asian region is currently embroiled in a territorial sovereignty conflict mostly centered around the South China Sea matter. The precarious geopolitical landscape in South Asia is a significant security concern for China. The security of China is jeopardized by the Kashmir conflict between India and Pakistan, as well as the Afghan crisis. These concerns are frequently interconnected with the border territory dispute between China and India, as well as the Xinjiang issue within China. Central Asia, situated in the direction of Central Asia, is characterized not only by its Muslim presence, but also by its status as an area where diverse civilizations intersect and clash, resulting in intricate ethnic and religious dynamics.<sup>[5]</sup> China's surrounding diplomacy in Central Asia encounters problems such as political turbulence in certain nations, the impact of Great Turkism, and the threat of terrorism.

### ***1.1.2 Ocean Scale: the "Indo-Pacific" Strategic Environment Under the Geographical Features of Land Dependency and Sea Dependency***

China's diplomatic strategy is characterized by its engagement in the marine environment, which may be succinctly described as the strategic environment of "India-Pacific." This environment is shaped by China's geographical characteristics, which include a strong focus on both land-based and sea-oriented activities. The term "two oceans" specifically refers to the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean, each of which holds significant importance in China's diplomatic endeavors. China is situated along the western coastline of the Pacific Ocean, being the sole oceanic expanse that directly borders the nation. Despite not being geographically located in the Indian Ocean, China exhibits significant interest in this region. In a similar vein, China has proposed the implementation of the "Two Oceans Strategy". The term "Two-Ocean Strategy" pertains to the maritime policy that has been developed by China in relation to the Pacific Ocean and the Indian Ocean, both of which hold significant importance for China's national interests. The promotion of the "maritime power" strategy and the construction of the "Maritime Silk Road in the 21st century" are deemed as an imperative strategic decision for China.<sup>[6]</sup> The "Two Oceans Strategy" posits that the Pacific Ocean holds significant strategic importance for China, while the Indian Ocean is identified as the focal point of China's forthcoming strategic endeavors.<sup>[7]</sup>

China, although a nation outside the Indian Ocean region, exhibits significant interest in the Indian Ocean due to its substantial reliance on energy resources and commercial activities inside this geographical area. China is recognized as the second largest global economy, with the highest volume of commodities trading, the largest foreign exchange reserves, and the second highest energy consumption levels. China's economy exhibits a significant reliance on foreign commerce, surpassing the threshold of 50%. Moreover, its economy is heavily reliant on imported oil, so rendering it highly dependent on global resources and trade. China's oil import and foreign trade are mostly focused on the Indian Ocean, establishing a significant connection between China and this region.<sup>[8]</sup> Of the four cardinal directions of China's maritime routes, the Indian Ocean pathway holds the utmost significance. One aspect of the project involves establishing a connection between China and Europe, which serves as a significant trade destination. Conversely, another aspect involves establishing a connection between China and the Middle East, which serves as the primary source of energy imports for China.<sup>[9]</sup> Hence, irrespective of international commerce or energy considerations, the Indian Ocean route has emerged as a significant maritime conduit for China. China, being a nation with significant interests beyond its geographical boundaries, it is not an overstatement to assert that the Indian Ocean plays a crucial role in China's political stability and long-term economic growth. China's foremost concerns in the Indian Ocean region pertain to the importation of energy resources and the safeguarding of trade and transportation routes.<sup>[10]</sup> Indeed, the strategic vulnerability of China in the Indian Ocean can be primarily attributed to geographical considerations. The Indian Ocean can be characterized as a predominantly enclosed body of water, featuring limited access points and significant distances between them. China's strategic vulnerability is exacerbated by the absence of adequate land transport connections between China and the Indian Ocean. The majority of China's trade with Europe and the Middle East necessitates traversing the Indian Ocean. To reach the Pacific port in China, this trade route must circumvent the Indian subcontinent and traverse Southeast Asia in an eastward direction.

## **1.2 Dismantling the Diplomatic and Strategic Environment around China**

The geographical vicinity of China is a region characterized by a high degree of intermingling and frequent interaction of interests among major global powers. In addition to the global superpower whose strategic priorities have shifted towards the Asia-Pacific region, there exists Japan as a regional core power, actively engaging in strategic maneuvers in Puckilo. Furthermore, Russia, a traditional power, endeavors to assert its geographical presence, while India, a significant country situated adjacent to East Asia, assumes a prominent position.<sup>[11]</sup> The presence of major powers in the neighboring regions of China contributes to the heightened intricacy of China's external environment in relation to its periphery diplomacy.

**1.2.1 China's Neighborhood Diplomatic Strategy Main Strategic Rival Is the United States**

The United States' perception and stance towards China have become progressively unfavorable, and there has been a notable concentration of American strategic efforts in the regions surrounding China, unlike ever before.<sup>[12]</sup> China's surrounding diplomacy has witnessed the emergence of the United States as its primary strategic adversary. The United States identified China as its primary strategic adversary and subsequently underwent a series of actions and developments. During the tenure of the Bush administration, namely in 1999, when President Bush was engaged in the presidential election, he adopted the perspective of China being a "strategic competitor."<sup>[13]</sup> In 2011, the Obama administration made a significant announcement regarding its renewed focus on the Asia-Pacific region. This involved the implementation of a strategy known as "rebalancing," which aimed to strengthen alliance relations and address maritime disputes in the East China Sea and the South China Sea. As a result, these issues became more multilateral and international in nature, transforming them into a geopolitical hotspot that posed challenges to China's development.<sup>[14]</sup> Following the inauguration of the Trump administration in 2016, a shift in policy towards China was observed, characterized by a more assertive and hostile stance. The Trump administration see China as a significant obstacle to the economic and national security of the United States, asserting that China aims to establish a global order that contradicts American principles and interests.<sup>[15]</sup> Against the backdrop of perceiving China as a significant strategic adversary, the Trump administration has implemented several alterations in its China policy. These include the imposition of substantial tariffs on a wide range of Chinese imports to the United States, the imposition of restrictions on China's acquisition of American technological components, and an escalation in the frequency of freedom of navigation operations in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait for security purposes. Following the inauguration of the Biden government in 2021, it maintained the firm stance against China established by the preceding Trump administration, designating China as the "primary strategic competitor". In contrast to the Trump administration's unilateral approach prioritizing American interests, the Biden administration's China strategy exhibits noticeable divergence. From a strategic perspective, the United States possesses a comprehensive comprehension of the contemporary nature of Sino-US relations. It maintains the belief that the competition between the two nations encompasses various dimensions, namely ideological, economic, military, and technological factors. Moreover, the United States perceives this competition as a significant contest between democracy and autocracy in the 21st century.<sup>[16]</sup> The United States has expedited the deployment of its military forces in the vicinity of China, following the identification of China as its primary strategic adversary. The United States has intensified its involvement in China by implementing various strategies, such as promoting the "Indo-Pacific" approach, bolstering alliances with Japan and South Korea, emphasizing matters like the South China Sea and the epidemic situation to gain support from ASEAN nations, and rallying multiple countries to challenge China on the Taiwan Province matter. These actions aim to establish an anti-China "encirclement circle" and exert containment efforts on China.<sup>[17]</sup> Furthermore, it is noteworthy that in recent years, there has been a significant advancement in the diplomatic ties between the United States and the bordering nations of China. A prominent feature of this development is the substantial intensification of connections with numerous countries in close proximity to China. (Refer to Table 1)

**Table 1: Political Ties of Various Kinds between China's Neighbors and the United States**

Type of Relationship	Alliance (Quasi-Alliance) Connection	An Abrupt (Continuous) Increase in Warmth	Typical Relationship	Adversary
Nation	Japan, Korea, Philippines, Afghanistan	India, Vietnam, Indonesia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan	Russia, Pakistan, Bhutan, Nepal, Laos, Malaysia, Brunei	Korea

*Source: Wang Junsheng: Reexamining the Trust Deficit between the United States and China: An Analysis from the Standpoint of the US Strategic Positioning Surrounding China, Teaching and Research, No.7, 2012, p.51.*

**1.2.2 China's Neighborhood Diplomatic Strategy Has Secondary Strategic Opponents in Japan and India**

China is geographically situated in close proximity to numerous bordering countries, as well as several prominent global powers, notably those possessing nuclear capabilities, such as the United States, Russia, India, North Korea, and Pakistan. In a more serious vein, several major nations perceive China as a strategic adversary, hence exacerbating the geopolitical landscape surrounding China. Japan and India serve as key strategic adversaries in China's periphery diplomatic strategy, exerting significant influence on China's surrounding geopolitical landscape. This analysis primarily focuses on the competition between Japan and China in the surrounding regions, as it pertains to the broader examination of the competition

between India and China.

Japan considers China to be a direct geo-strategic adversary due to factors such as historical memory, realistic interests, ideology, and other pertinent considerations. Ever since the inception of the "Belt and Road Initiative," Japan has escalated its rivalry with China through actions such as abstaining from participation in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, enhancing collaboration with nations in the Greater Mekong region, establishing a "unrestricted passage" connecting Asia and Africa, ratifying the "Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement" (CPTPP), and advocating for a "Indo-Pacific Strategy."<sup>[18]</sup> Japan is currently enhancing its military alliance with the United States and engaging in active collaboration with the United States, India, and Australia in order to establish a strategic network aimed at containing China, sometimes referred to as the "diamond encirclement."<sup>[19]</sup> These steps are evidently designed to address the growing might of China and the more challenging diplomatic landscape surrounding the country.

The situation becomes increasingly concerning when considering the collaborative endeavors of the United States, Japan, and India, as well as the challenges China's neighborhood diplomacy encounters in managing the connections between strategic competitors led by the United States and smaller geographical rivals like Japan and India. The strategic containment of China's ascent has emerged as a significant component of the overarching strategic approach adopted by the United States, Japan, and other prominent neighboring nations.<sup>[20]</sup> The geopolitical landscape surrounding China has been further complicated by the deepening military alliance between the United States and Japan, as well as the growing proximity between the United States and India in recent years.

### **1.3 Dismantling of the Diplomatic Strategic Countries around China's Internal Environment**

The internal environment of a nation is shaped by its economic, political, military, and cultural capacities, which in turn influence the strategic distribution of resources within the country. China's capacity to govern the neighboring regions is primarily contingent upon its economic and military prowess. The allocation of economic and military resources will consequently shape and bolster China's utilization of strategies within the surrounding areas, thereby facilitating the achievement of China's neighborhood diplomatic strategic goals.

#### ***1.3.1 Financial Stability***

The increasing economic prowess of China has resulted in a greater availability of material resources, which in turn has facilitated the implementation of its periphery diplomatic strategy. The 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China emphasized the need to enhance the positive impact of China's growth on surrounding nations. However, it was acknowledged that the concept of "benefit" in this context may have limited dimensions. The underlying argument posits that for China to attain favorable outcomes, it is imperative to surpass neighboring nations in terms of development and possess a superior economic prowess. Failure to do so would render the attainment of advantageous outcomes unattainable.<sup>[21]</sup> China, as the second largest global economy, has significantly bolstered its surrounding diplomatic strategy and exerted substantial influence on the international stage. This may be attributed to China's robust economic prowess, which has played a pivotal part in enhancing its position and stature. In recent years, China's economy has experienced significant growth, surpassing Japan in terms of economic aggregate and emerging as the world's second-largest economy, trailing only the United States. China holds the distinction of being the foremost global exporter and the second-largest importer, occupying the top position in terms of aggregate exports and imports. Furthermore, the world economy is impacted by China's economic prowess, hence highlighting its significant significance. China is well recognized as a prominent global contributor of development loans and a significant supporter of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

China's robust economic prowess affords its neighboring diplomacy an increased capacity for diplomatic negotiations and a firm economic foundation to assume a more prominent position in global events. China has implemented an extensive array of infrastructure projects globally under the "Belt and Road Initiative" in order to facilitate regional trade and foster economic growth. These projects not only contribute to the economic development of other nations, but also serve to bolster China's global standing.

#### ***1.3.2 Military Power***

The military capabilities of China are experiencing a consistent upward trajectory. According to the 2021 data released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), China ranks as the second largest country in terms of military expenditure globally. In 2020, China's defense expenditure amounted to approximately US\$ 252 billion, placing it second only to the United States, which spent US\$ 778 billion.<sup>[22]</sup> Furthermore, it is imperative to consistently advocate for the advancement of national security and the development of military capabilities. China's military arsenal undergoes regular updates and enhancements, encompassing a spectrum of sophisticated weaponry and equipment, including Type 5 tanks, 052D destroyers, J-20 aircraft, Dongfeng-26 medium- and long-range ballistic missiles, and various other complex systems. Thirdly, it is imperative to engage in proactive involvement in military collaboration, exemplified by participation in United Nations peacekeeping endeavors, counter-piracy initiatives, and humanitarian assistance efforts.

#### ***1.3.3 Analysis of Strategic Transformation Capability***

The strategic transformation capability of China has shown notable enhancement throughout the course of recent decades. China, as a significant nation, assumes a crucial position in the realm of global affairs, with its conduct on the international platform serving as a manifestation of its adeptness in strategic adaptation. China has significantly contributed to numerous

international and regional organizations since the Cold War, as evidenced by its extensive involvement in various platforms. Notable examples include the Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation (GMS), the AsiaInfo Conference (CICA), the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF), collaborative efforts between ASEAN and China, Japan, and South Korea (10+3), the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), the Six-Party Talks, and the East Asia Summit (EAS), among others. (Refer to Table 2)

**Table 2: China's Participation in International and Regional Cooperation Mechanisms**

Name of Mechanism	Establishment Period	State Member	Mechanism Information
Greater Mekong Subregion Economic Cooperation (GMS)	1992	China, Myanmar, Laos, Viet Nam, Thailand and Cambodia.	Nine sectors are included in the cooperation's purview: trade, investment, agriculture, tourism, energy, transportation, human resources development, and environment.
CICA (AsiaInfo Conference)	1993	27 Member: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, China, Egypt, India, Iran, Israel, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Palestine, Russia, Tajikistan, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Thailand, South Korea, Jordan, United Arab Emirates, Vietnam, Iraq, Bahrain, Cambodia, Qatar, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka; 14 observers: Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Philippines, Ukraine, United States, Belarus, Laos, Turkmenistan, United Nations, OSCE, League of Arab States, Parliamentary Assembly of Turkic-speaking Countries and International Organization for Migration.	In order to boost security, economic, social, and cultural exchanges, as well as collaboration among member states, we will develop and put into action measures aimed at fostering confidence in five areas: military politics, new threats and challenges, the economy, the environment, and the humanities.
ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF)	1994	27 members: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Viet Nam, China, Japan, South Korea, North Korea, Mongolia, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Russia, the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste and the European Union.	Strategies for resolving conflicts, preventive diplomacy, and fostering confidence.
Cooperation between ASEAN and China, Japan and Korea (10+3)	1997	13 members: 10 ASEAN countries (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam) and China, Japan and South Korea.	A structure of collaboration wherein working groups are organized as the support and meetings of ministers, ambassadors (CPR+3), senior officials, and leaders serve as the core.
SCO (Shanghai Cooperation Organization)	2001	6 original participants: China, Russian Federation, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan Membership growth: India and Pakistan 4 observing nations: Afghanistan, Belarus, Iran, Mongolia 14 conversation partners: Azerbaijan, Armenia, Cambodia, Nepal, Turkey, Sri Lanka, Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Maldives, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Myanmar	Fighting transnational crimes such as drug trafficking, illicit arms trafficking, terrorism, separatism and extremism, and other crimes; cooperating in the areas of trade, economics, environmental protection, culture, science and technology, education, energy, transportation, and finance.
Six-party talks	2003	6 members: North Korea, South Korea, China, the United States, Russia and	Resolve the nuclear situation in North Korea

		Japan.	
East Asia Summit (EAS)	2005	At present, there are 18 participant nations: 10 ASEAN countries (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam), China, Japan, South Korea, India, Australia, New Zealand, Russia and the United States.	Energy and environmental protection, finance, education, public health, disaster management and ASEAN connectivity are significant areas of collaboration.

Source: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and associated websites provided the information that the author assembled.

## II. Dismantling the Diplomatic and Strategic Context Surrounding India

The geographical position of India exerts a significant influence on its strategic framework, hence playing a pivotal part in molding the nation's perspectives on security, national defense, and foreign policy. India's geostrategic expansion is primarily centered around the South Asian subcontinent and the Indian Ocean, leveraging its distinctive geographical advantages. It aims to secure support from neighboring regions in the east, west, and north directions, while also actively extending its influence in the Asia-Pacific area. This section analyzes the geo-strategic landscape of India's periphery diplomacy, focusing on three key aspects: the geographical environment, the strategic opponent environment, and the internal environment.

### 2.1 Dismantling India's Neighborhood Diplomatic Strategy's Geopolitical Setting

#### 2.1.1 Land Scale: Geostrategy of South Asia Predicated on South Asia Center

India is situated in the central region of South Asia and stands as the sole nation in this area that possesses both land and maritime boundaries with the majority of its neighboring countries. With the exception of Afghanistan, Sri Lanka, and Maldives, India is the only South Asian country that shares land borders with other nations in the region. In contrast, the remaining South Asian countries do not have direct land borders with each other, except for Pakistan and Afghanistan. Moreover, India is geographically next to China and Myanmar. Based on the official data published by India, it is evident that India shares a land border with seven bordering nations, spanning a cumulative length over 15,106.7 kilometers. This geographical positioning of India renders it a naturally significant hub (Refer to Table 3). It is important to acknowledge that the official data released by India indicates that the total length of the Sino-Indian border line is 3,488 kilometers. Consequently, India considers the territory in the unresolved Sino-Indian border issue as its own, despite this being inconsistent with the factual reality. China, on the other hand, does not recognize this claim.

**Table 3: The Formal Border between India and Its Neighbors**

Neighboring Nation	Limitation length (km)
Bangladesh	4096.7
China	3488.0
Pakistan	3323.0
Nepal	1751.0
Myanmar	1643.0
Bhutan	699.0
Afghanistan	106.0
total	15106.7

Source: Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), Government of India, "Annual Report-2018-2019," p.34. [https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/Annual\\_Report\\_18\\_19.pdf](https://www.mha.gov.in/sites/default/files/Annual_Report_18_19.pdf).

The closed geographical characteristics of South Asia contribute to its significant strategic worth in the field of geopolitics. The amalgamation of terrestrial and maritime topography renders South Asia a significant geopolitical conduit, enabling not just oceanic accessibility but also penetration into the core regions of Europe and Asia. By using the strategic location of the South Asian peninsula, India has the potential to establish a strong foothold in Central Asia and Europe, so exerting its influence over East Asia, West Asia, and even Europe.<sup>[23]</sup> South Asia's strategic significance stems from its proximity to vital shipping lanes connecting Asia, Oceania, Europe, and Africa. Additionally, its geographical proximity to the oil-rich Persian Gulf and its oversight of crucial oil routes in both the western and eastern regions further enhance its role as a launching pad for India's maritime expansion and the exercise of control over pivotal shipping routes.

Simultaneously, South Asia is a region with India at its heart, and the geographical characteristics concentrated around India give rise to a power structure known as "center-periphery" in South Asia. Consequently, India naturally assumes the role of a "regional core country". The physical location of this region automatically leads to an uneven distribution of power between India and the smaller countries in South Asia. Consequently, this has resulted in a perception of mutual threat among the South Asian countries and has further exacerbated the regional security challenge.<sup>[24]</sup> India is responsible for almost 75% of the aggregate population, territory, and GDP in the South Asian region, and has exceeded its neighboring countries in terms

of military spending. India possesses clear and significant asymmetric advantages within the South Asian region. Hence, India perceives itself as the dominant power in the South Asian region and has consistently viewed South Asia as an inherent "sphere of influence".

Undoubtedly, the significance of geographical positioning has presented numerous complexities for India. The unresolved border problem has introduced an additional level of intricacy to the bilateral relations between India and its neighboring countries. The delineation of borders between India and its neighboring countries is a subject of contention in numerous instances, serving as a persistent issue that intermittently impacts India's diplomatic relations with its neighbors. Furthermore, the geo-environment of South Asia, with India at its core, gives rise to varying perceptions of threats among the countries in the region. Historically, India has adhered to the perspective that its primary security concern emanates from external sources beyond the subcontinent. Consequently, it has embraced a strategic approach that encompasses the entirety of the subcontinent as its rightful domain for security considerations. Nevertheless, it is widely held by the neighboring countries of India that the aforementioned security strategy is the primary catalyst for their sense of vulnerability and poses a significant danger to their autonomy.<sup>[25]</sup> Consequently, neighboring countries of India frequently endeavor to secure the backing of major nations beyond the region in order to counterbalance India's perceived hegemonic position and safeguard their autonomy. The varying perceptions of threat between India and its neighboring countries have intensified the tension and mutual animosity, hence exacerbating the regional security challenge. Furthermore, the geographical configuration of South Asia, with India serving as the central entity, frequently entangles India in the dynamics of power politics inside its neighboring nations. India's robust linguistic, historical, and geopolitical connections with its neighboring nations render it susceptible to security risks. This vulnerability arises from India's consistent engagement with the evolving domestic political dynamics of numerous adjacent countries. The act of provoking anti-India sentiment has consistently been a favored strategy employed by influential individuals in neighboring nations who seek to gain political influence. Throughout the course of time, smaller nations in the region have frequently propagated anti-Indian sentiment among their populace, so integrating it into the dynamics of electoral politics, driven by entrenched interests. In the elections of several nations, including Nepal, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Nepal, political leaders frequently exhibit their resolve and bravery in "opposing India" as a means to secure electoral support and garner public attention.<sup>[26]</sup> The dissemination of negative propaganda targeting India has resulted in the emergence of a voter base publicly expressing opposition towards the country. Concurrently, this has compelled India to adopt countermeasures, so contributing to the intricacy of the regional security landscape.

### ***2.1.2 Ocean Scale: Worldwide Geopolitics on the Indian Ocean Center***

From a geographical perspective, it is noteworthy that India possesses a lengthy peninsula coastline that stretches into the Indian Ocean. Additionally, its island holdings located in the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal are strategically positioned to intersect significant marine transportation routes. From a geostrategic perspective, India occupies a crucial position in a significant maritime chokepoint inside the Indian Ocean. The Strait of Hormuz, Suez Canal, Red Sea, Mandeb Strait, and Horn of Africa are located in the western region, while the Malacca Strait, Lombok Strait, and Sunda Strait are situated in the eastern region. Additionally, the Indian coastline is bordered by six straits in the west and nine straits in the east. These geographical features have prompted India to aspire towards naval power.<sup>[27]</sup> India's strategic location at the core of global maritime power and its geographical positioning in the middle of the Indian Ocean necessitate India's recognition of the Indian Ocean as a crucial gateway for safeguarding its national security.<sup>[28]</sup>

The maintenance of a secure and stable Indian Ocean region is of utmost importance for India's security landscape. The Indian government holds the perspective that the Indian Ocean holds significant strategic and economic value, serving as a crucial arena for its diplomatic, military, and regional engagements. Throughout history, the Indian Ocean has consistently held significant importance for India in terms of contact and interest. This is due to the fact that it not only borders India directly, but also serves as an extended neighborhood that significantly influences its national security environment. Nevertheless, India's focus on the Indian Ocean has undergone a transformation from disregard to prominence.

The historical origins of India's strategic neglect of the Indian Ocean can be attributed to the period preceding British colonial authority. The leaders of the Indian independence movement exhibited less concern towards the affairs transpiring within the Indian Ocean. During that period, their primary objective was to expel the British colonial presence from the South Asian subcontinent and achieve self-governance in their homeland.<sup>[29]</sup> Since achieving independence in 1947, India has mostly directed its attention towards the land border challenges presented by Pakistan and China, demonstrating a limited aspiration and capacity to extend its influence beyond its immediate neighboring countries.<sup>[30]</sup> The ocean was purposefully or accidentally disregarded as a result of the land-oriented security strategy, but this circumstance began to shift in the 1970s.<sup>[31]</sup> Following the 1970s, India's perception, engagement, and comprehension of the Indian Ocean have remained relatively constrained, despite the recognition of its significance. This restricted engagement may mostly be attributed to India's strategic inertia, which arises from the absence of direct rivalry in the Indian Ocean. Following the conclusion of the Cold War, the United States underwent a strategic realignment, which involved endorsing and fostering India's prominent involvement in the Indian Ocean. Consequently, India redirected its focus towards the Indian Ocean. In 2009, Robert Gates, the former United States Secretary of Defense, proposed the idea of India assuming the role of a "net security provider" inside the Indian Ocean region.<sup>[32]</sup> Hence, the notion of India assuming the role of a "net security provider" might be attributed to American influence. The strategic concerns of India have begun to recognize the significance of the Indian Ocean due to the escalating involvement of foreign powers, particularly the expanding influence of China in the region.<sup>[33]</sup> Undoubtedly, the geographical environment characterized by the coexistence of land and sea exerts a dual influence on India.

The Indian subcontinent is commonly referred to as a geographically cohesive region due to its natural boundaries, including the Himalayas and Hindu Kush mountains in the north, the Arabian Sea in the west, and the Bay of Bengal in the east. The geographical environment of India, characterized by its natural boundaries and limited access points, offers a perceived shield against external incursions, fostering a sense of security among its inhabitants. However, it is important to acknowledge that this perception is not always grounded in reality, as historical instances of foreign invasions, particularly from the northwest border, such as European maritime incursions into the subcontinent, have demonstrated the limitations of this geographical safeguard. Indeed, it can be argued that these natural barriers exhibit a greater efficacy in confining the Indian population within the subcontinent rather than effectively deterring potential invaders.<sup>[34]</sup> The natural feature under consideration has engendered a complex interplay of security and vulnerability, hence exerting a profound influence on the mindset of individuals in India. This influence not only shapes the strategic approach adopted by the nation, but also exerts a significant psychological impact on India's strategic behavior and thinking.<sup>[35]</sup>

## 2.2 Deconstruction of the Diplomatic and Strategic Environment Surrounding India's Opponent

India considers China and Pakistan to be its primary strategic adversaries in the context of its periphery diplomatic policy. China and Pakistan pose significant foreign policy concerns for India in the neighboring regions. India expresses special concern regarding the strategic links between China and Pakistan, as well as China's expanding influence in the area. According to David Scott, India's neighborhood diplomacy faces two notable contenders. Firstly, Pakistan, a longstanding neighboring country, has contributed to the prevailing adversarial India-Pakistan relationship in South Asia, which has extended its influence to encompass a broader array of neighboring regions such as Central Asia, West Asia, the Indian Ocean, and Southeast Asia. Secondly, China represents another significant competitor in this context. India expresses concerns about the potential encirclement by China in South Asia through strategic alliances with neighboring countries such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Nepal. Additionally, India apprehends that China's influence may extend beyond South Asia, encompassing regions such as West Asia, Southeast Asia, Central Asia, as well as the Indian Ocean and Pacific Ocean, so posing a threat to India.<sup>[36]</sup>

The ascent of India occurred against the backdrop of the considerably more remarkable ascent of China. Following the Sino-Indian border conflict in 1962, India subsequently perceived China as its primary danger and a possible rival. During the latter part of the 1980s, Sino-Indian relations underwent a process of normalization, subsequently leading to significant advancements in the bilateral ties between the two nations. Nevertheless, the Donglang crisis in 2017 and the Gallowan Valley incident in 2020 served as poignant reminders of the delicate nature of the bilateral relations between the two nations.<sup>[37]</sup> In the context of neighborhood diplomacy, India holds the view that China's security stature and influence in India's periphery regions are undergoing expansion, hence presenting a potential challenge to India's neighborhood security landscape. The aforementioned qualities are evident in the following manner: The escalating nature of China-Pakistan relations poses an increasing concern to India. Pakistan has emerged as a significant component of China's global strategy, indicative of its crucial role within China's "the Belt and Road Initiative" endeavor. China has demonstrated a heightened dedication to Pakistan by means of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), resulting in escalated expenses for India in its efforts to counter Pakistan's antagonistic actions. Secondly, the ascendance of the Taliban in Afghanistan has bolstered the sway of China and Pakistan in the nations adjoining India. Thirdly, Nepal has recently asserted its sovereignty over a significant portion of Indian Territory and has implemented corresponding actions. The authors of the publication titled "India's Path to Power: Strategy in a World Adrift," affiliated with the Centre for Policy Research and The Takshashila Institution, conducted their research and presented their findings on October 2, 2021. The reference to page 8 is provided for more contextualization. India perceives the aforementioned developments in its neighboring countries as being linked to China's growing influence in the surrounding regions. Consequently, the balance of power in India's vicinity has evidently shifted, tilting in favor of China.<sup>[38]</sup>

In addition to China, India has consistently viewed Pakistan as a significant strategic adversary. India considers Pakistan to be a significant security concern due to historical factors related to the partition, as well as the recent demarcation of Pakistan's territorial boundary. This demarcation has resulted in the Hindu Kush mountain range and Afghanistan, which previously served as natural barriers protecting India, no longer being situated along India's borders. The enduring problem confronting India pertains to the strategic transformation of Pakistan into a buffer zone, hence fostering a cooperative relationship with India as its neighboring state.<sup>[39]</sup> Nevertheless, it is evident that this proposition is unattainable. India has the viewpoint that the worldwide isolation of Pakistan will have limited results as long as Pakistan maintains robust backing from China in the form of asylum and the United States needs Pakistan's assistance in its exit from Afghanistan.<sup>[40]</sup>

In the context of India, the strategic partnership between China and Pakistan presents a more formidable challenge, in addition to the individual challenges posed by these two neighboring countries. In recent times, India has expressed growing concerns on the potential establishment of enhanced political and economic relations between China and neighboring countries, which might potentially result in a strategic encirclement of India. India perceives that China's transfer of nuclear missile technology to Pakistan, as well as the development of Gwadar Port and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, present numerous significant challenges to India.<sup>[41]</sup> Hence, in practical terms, India's approach of "granting precedence to neighboring nations" effectively omits China and Pakistan, signifying the exclusion of these two countries whom India perceives as highly probable strategic adversaries.

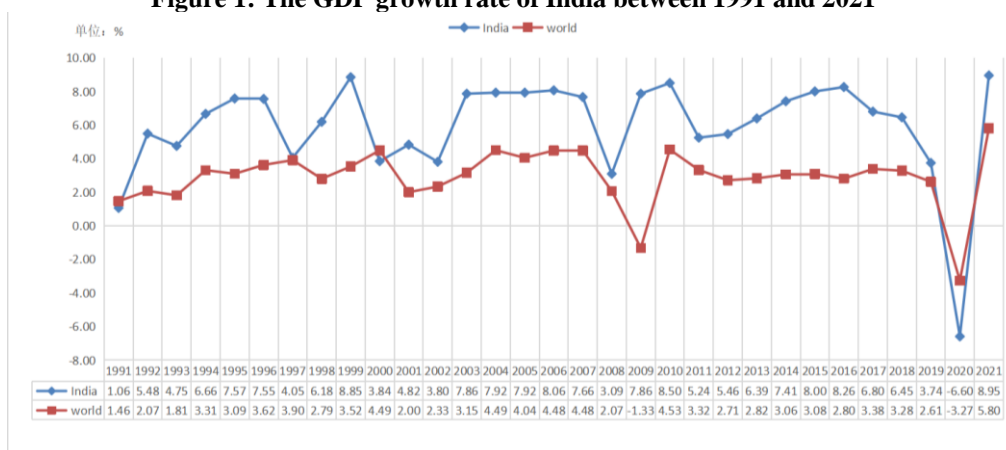
## 2.3 Deconstruction of the Diplomatic and Strategic Surrounding Countries' Internal Environments in India



### 2.3.1. Financial Stability

From an economic growth standpoint, India saw a notable upturn in the late 1990s, characterized by fast expansion. This growth can be attributed to a combination of domestic economic reforms and the country's integration into the global economy. Figure 1 illustrates that India's annual growth rate predominantly above the global average between 1991 and 2021. In the year 2016, India experienced a notable increase in its Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth rate, reaching 8.26%. This achievement positioned India as the leading big economy in terms of growth rate globally. Between the years 2005 and 2016, India consistently held the position of either the world's fastest expanding economy or the second fastest growing economy, occasionally overtaking China in certain years.<sup>[42]</sup> Despite experiencing a deceleration in economic growth since 2017 and encountering many obstacles in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, India's growth trajectory continues to exhibit resilience. In the year 2019, India achieved the distinction of surpassing both Britain and France, so ascending to the position of the fifth largest economy globally. In 2019, Indian Prime Minister Modi expressed his vision for India to achieve the status of the world's third largest economy by the year 2030. The Indian economy has consistently been recognized as one of the two significant drivers that parallel China's economy in shaping the global economy and global governance. The economic ascent of both China and India in the 21st century is widely acknowledged as an inexorable phenomenon.<sup>[43]</sup>

**Figure 1: The GDP growth rate of India between 1991 and 2021**



Source: The author's drawings are based on World Bank data.

### 2.3.2. Military Power

In recent years, there has been a consistent enhancement of India's military capability. In these regards, it is noteworthy that India's military expenditure has shown a concurrent increase with its growing economic might. India has experienced a significant increase in its military budget, positioning it as a prominent global importer of conventional weapons, mostly due to the implementation of a large-scale import plan. According to the recently published data by SIPRI (2021), India's defense expenditure in 2020 amounted to approximately 72.9 billion US dollars, positioning it as the third highest spender on military affairs globally. This ranking places India behind the United States, which allocated 778 billion US dollars, and China, which allocated 252 billion US dollars, respectively.<sup>[44]</sup> Based on the statistics provided by the Arms Control Association in 2022, it is evident that India possesses a total of 156 nuclear weapons, which is significantly fewer in comparison to China's 350 and the United States' 5550. However, it is noteworthy that India holds the seventh position globally in terms of nuclear weapon stockpiles.<sup>[45]</sup>

Furthermore, India stands out as one of the few nations globally that uphold strong strategic and military alliances with both the United States and Russia, despite their adversarial positions in matters of security. In July 2017, the United States designated India as a "first-level strategic trade licensing status," granting it comparable privileges to those enjoyed by the United States' "NATO allies" as well as its allies in Asia, namely Japan and South Korea. Consequently, India gained the ability to procure advanced and sensitive military science and technology weaponry from the United States.<sup>[46]</sup> The primary focus lies in India's participation in the Quadripartite Mechanism (QUAD), under the leadership of the United States. However, it is noteworthy that India's engagement in QUAD has not deterred its acquisition of sophisticated missile technology from Russia, which is aimed at addressing external security challenges posed by China and Pakistan. Despite the potential consequences of US sanctions, the purchase deal between India and Russia persists. The Act on Combating American Opponents via Sanctions (CAATSA) was enacted by the United States Congress in 2017 with the objective of imposing penalties on nations that engage in the procurement of Russian military equipment. Nevertheless, India proceeded with the endeavor, recognizing the strategic interest of the United States in leveraging its position as a counterbalance to China. This calculation led India to reasonably anticipate a reduced likelihood of encountering sanctions under the Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA).<sup>[47]</sup>

### 2.3.3. Analysis of Strategic Transformation Capability

Based on an analysis of India's engagement with international and regional organizations, it is evident that the country has actively participated in three distinct categories of regional organizations in its neighboring regions during the Cold War.

The South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), the Initiative for Cooperation around Bangladesh (BIMSTEC), the Mekong-Ganges Cooperation (MGC), and the Bangladesh-Indonesia Cooperation (BBIN) are among the regional organizations in South Asia and Southeast Asia. Additionally, regional cooperation is fostered through entities like the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) and the East Asia Summit (EAS). Furthermore, it is important to consider regional collaborations such as the Indian Ocean Rim Association for Regional Cooperation (IOR-ARC) and the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) in the context of oceanic affairs. Another strategy is to participate in cross-regional collaborations, such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and the BRICS Cooperation Organization. Nevertheless, India's approach to regional cooperation is primarily focused on the "quantity" rather than the "quality" of such collaborations.

### *III. Comparing and Contrasting the Diplomatic and Strategic Environments Surrounding China and India*

#### **3.1 Comparison of Environmental Factors by Region**

##### ***3.1.1 Both Have the Dualities of Land and Ocean, but India Has Greater Advantages in Terms of the Environment***

China and India are countries that possess both land and sea complexities. China, situated in the heart of Asia with its expansive landmass and strategic positioning along the Pacific Ocean, possesses the unique advantage of being both a formidable force on land and a maritime power. India is considered a significant regional power because to its strategic geographical position in South Asia. It benefits from both land and water advantages, as it is centrally positioned and possesses a distinctive land formation that extends into the Indian Ocean, resembling a "dagger" shape.

China possesses distinct geo-environmental disadvantages when juxtaposed with India. According to Mackinder, a prominent British geopolitical scholar, there exists a correlation between the number of bordering nations and the level of disadvantage in international competition.<sup>[48]</sup> China shares borders with 14 countries at the land level, each characterized by distinct national conditions. Consequently, territorial disputes, religious conflicts, drug smuggling, and instances of terrorism frequently arise inside these border regions.<sup>[49]</sup> From an oceanic standpoint, China encounters the challenge of navigating through narrow and hazardous bottlenecks, while simultaneously grappling with unpredictable logistics support. China's geopolitical environment holds a unique position among the global powers. In contrast to Britain, the British Isles are geographically secluded within the Atlantic Ocean, rendering Britain a prototypical maritime nation. China possesses both land power and marine might. In contrast, the United States is geographically bordered by only two countries, notably Canada to the north and Mexico to the south. The geographical environment of the two countries under discussion is relatively straightforward, and their respective capabilities cannot be equated to that of the United States. Consequently, both nations are reliant on the United States for their developmental needs. In contrast, China finds itself geographically surrounded by over a dozen countries, including Russia, Japan, and India.<sup>[50]</sup>

In contrast, India's adjacent nations are limited in number and exhibit relatively lower levels of strength, while the encompassing geographical setting is comparatively more favorable. The Indian geographical environment exhibits greater dominance compared to China due to its self-contained geographical structure. The South Asian subcontinent is situated at the heart of the Indian Ocean, serving as a meeting point for Southeast Asia, West Asia, and Central Asia. Within this subcontinent, India has a central position within South Asia, establishing itself as a distinct and relatively autonomous geographical entity.<sup>[51]</sup> In the domain of maritime affairs, in contrast to the strategic rivalry observed between China and India in other spheres, the Indian Ocean stands out as a region where India possesses discernible military superiority vis-à-vis China. From a geopolitical perspective, it can be argued that the Indian Ocean serves as a significant boundary for China, referred to as its "outside line," while for India, it functions as an internal boundary, known as its "inside line."<sup>[52]</sup> India benefits from a heightened sense of security and a deterrent against external aggression due to the presence of the Himalayas and Hindu Kush mountains in the northern region, as well as the Indian Ocean in the southern region. The triangular shape of the Indian subcontinent, extending southwards from Eurasia, encompasses the entirety of the North Indian Ocean, therefore positioning India as the inherent focal point of the surrounding area. The geographical location of India affords it significant military advantages in the Indian Ocean, primarily due to the relatively short communication lines between its bases and resources.

##### ***3.1.2 The Relationship between Shaping and Being Shaped Is the Same, yet Active and Passive Are Not the Same***

The neighborhood of a country typically refers to the geographic context in which the country is naturally situated, without any inherent selectivity. The interplay between China, India, and their neighboring regions is characterized by a reciprocal process of mutual influence and transformation. China and India are aggressively exerting influence on the strategic landscape in their respective regions, while simultaneously being influenced by the strategic dynamics of their surroundings. In contrast to India's passive attitude, China exhibits a proactive approach in actively shaping its surrounding environment. The business perimeter in China involves the dialectical approach of both acquiring and distributing resources. In order to establish confidence and garner respect from neighborhood regions, it is imperative to prioritize the provision of stability and opportunities for development.<sup>[53]</sup> According to Zhang Yunling, the prevailing dynamic environmental conditions do not present a significant risk to the national security of China. Contrarily, the contemporary state of China's surrounding environment exhibits notable improvements compared to previous eras, owing to China's enhanced capacity to effectively govern and regulate the prevailing circumstances.<sup>[54]</sup> Upon retrospective analysis of historical records, it becomes evident that China's engagement with its surrounding environment has undergone a transformative progression, transitioning from a state of passive reaction to one of proactive influence. Following the establishment of China, the neighboring regions

emerged as the primary origins of security challenges within the nascent Chinese state. Consequently, since its establishment, China maintained a defensive and passive stance towards security challenges as a means to protect national security and ensure the continuity of the government. Following the implementation of reform and opening up policies, China has proactively undertaken efforts to establish a harmonious global milieu that supports economic progress, while concurrently fostering favorable circumstances for enhancing relations with neighboring countries. Since that time, China has not only forged diplomatic ties with all of its bordering nations, but has also effectively cultivated strategic alliances with certain neighboring countries, such as Russia and Pakistan.<sup>[55]</sup>

In contrast, India's foreign policy exhibits a tendency towards transitory and responsive approaches. In recent years, particularly following the introduction of the India-Pacific strategy, India has increasingly recognized the significance of its neighboring regions and has commenced a gradual process of influencing the dynamics of its surrounding relationships. The Indo-Pacific region's strategic context, the strategic maneuvers of major powers in the region, and China's growing influence in the area have collectively presented India with a range of geopolitical difficulties. India was compelled to reassess its diplomatic ties with neighboring nations, prompting an acknowledgment of the profound discontent harbored by both its mainland and marine neighbors towards India. India has emerged as the primary security supplier and strategic partner for several smaller neighboring countries, including Maldives, Mauritius, Seychelles, and Sri Lanka. This development has led to a sense of complacency within India regarding its role in the Indian Ocean and has resulted in the neglect of its maritime area.<sup>[56]</sup> In 2015, Prime Minister Modi embarked on a significant diplomatic tour to Mauritius, Seychelles, and Sri Lanka. This visit was a notable milestone as it represented the inaugural trip by an Indian head of government to these island nations in a span exceeding two decades. India has always recognized the significance of these islands; nonetheless, its strategic role in relation to them has reached a state of immobility. India's focus on the neighboring island countries was prompted by China's alteration of the security dynamics in the Indian Ocean. Based on the impact of India's influence on its neighboring surroundings, it is evident that the anticipated advantages of the long-term bilateral relationship between India and the island countries have not materialized. For several decades, India has exhibited a tendency to overlook the island nations in question. However, there has been a recent shift in India's stance, as it now recognizes the significance of the historical and cultural connections shared with these countries. Nevertheless, India's comprehension and subsequent response to the various issues encountered by its neighboring island nations remain incomplete. Hence, the actions undertaken by India in these nations throughout recent years are perceived as being unilaterally focused on bolstering its own interests rather than addressing the broader issues of the entire region.

### ***3.1.3 There are Territorial Disputes with Neighboring Nations, and India Has More Complicated Disputes with Neighboring Nations***

China shares its borders with a total of 14 countries, whereas India shares its borders with 7 countries. Both China and India are engaged in territorial disputes with their bordering countries; however, it can be argued that India's territorial disputes with its neighbors are more intricate in nature. Following the conclusion of the Cold War, China has effectively resolved the majority of its land territorial issues with neighboring nations through diplomatic means. The demarcation process of the Sino-Russian border was finalized in 1997 and 1998 for the eastern and western sections respectively, following extensive negotiations. Subsequently, in November 1998, the "Joint Statement on Sino-Russian Border Issues" was signed, effectively resolving the longstanding border disputes that have persisted between China and Russia over the course of centuries.<sup>[57]</sup> However, there are still two unsolved issues that need to be addressed, specifically pertaining to India and Bhutan. The conflict with India is also interconnected with the Tibet matter to a certain degree. Despite being a relatively minor issue, Bhutan has failed to resolve its diplomatic relations with China, making it the sole country that shares a border with China yet has not established formal diplomatic ties.<sup>[58]</sup> In contrast to land-based territorial disputes, China encounters significant obstacles in effectively addressing marine territorial issues with neighboring countries. The ongoing territorial dispute over the Diaoyu Islands between China and Japan has a significant impact on the bilateral relations between the two countries. The ongoing territorial disputes in the South China Sea involving China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Brunei have added complexity to China's bilateral relations with these nations as well as its overall engagement with Southeast Asia. The participation of Western nations, mostly spearheaded by the United States, in maritime conflicts further exacerbates the complexities surrounding these matters.

In contrast, India encounters border challenges with nearly all of its neighboring countries, hence rendering the regional dynamics far more intricate than those of China. One noteworthy geographical characteristic is to India's bordering of nearly all South Asian nations, with the exception of Afghanistan and Pakistan, which are the only two countries in the region that share a common border. Simultaneously, India stands as the sole major global force entangled in border disputes with nearly all of its neighboring nations.<sup>[59]</sup>

### ***3.1.4 The Surrounding Area Is Seen As A "Backyard" by India, but as A "Member" by China***

China adopts a comprehensive approach in perceiving the neighboring regions, whereas India is distinguished by the dichotomy of "self" and "the other". In essence, China is progressively positioning itself as a significant actor within its neighboring regions, actively engaging with its surroundings. Conversely, India adopts a more detached stance, distancing itself from the surrounding areas.

The adoption of a holistic perspective, as opposed to dualism, has emerged as the predominant approach for China in examining its surrounding regions. This signifies that China has become intricately interconnected with the entirety of its

neighboring areas, and the nature of China's relationships with these neighboring countries has likewise transitioned from a focus on individual bilateral interactions to a more comprehensive and interconnected framework.<sup>[60]</sup> China considers it to be part of its periphery, as evidenced by a range of policies associated with the concept of the "neighborhood destiny community" put forth by China. China does not possess any aim to transform its surrounding regions into a solely "exclusive sphere of influence" under its control. China's perception of surrounding countries is influenced by its "world view," a cognitive framework in geographical space that is shaped by China's self-centeredness. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) serves to integrate adjacent regions and China into a cohesive geographical entity, while also exemplifying China's comprehensive and wide-ranging perspective on the interconnections between itself and the surrounding global community.<sup>[61]</sup> President Xi Jinping has put out the notion that when examining neighboring countries, it is essential to use a comprehensive approach. This approach entails considering surrounding concerns and conducting diplomatic relations with neighboring nations from a multifaceted perspective that encompasses three dimensions, pluralism, and a long-term outlook.

In contrast to India, the dominant perspective for examining its surrounding areas is dualism, which encompasses a dual style of imagination characterized by the conflict between the concepts of "self" and "other." India's geopolitical perspective of "own backyard" leads it to perceive South Asia and the Indian Ocean as regions within its sphere of influence. Following its independence, India developed a strategic approach aimed at exerting influence over the South Asian region, establishing dominance over the Indian Ocean, and ultimately positioning itself as a global force. The focal point of this strategic approach lies on the South Asian subcontinent and the Indian Ocean, regions that have consistently been perceived by Indians as their primary sphere of influence and territorial extension.<sup>[62]</sup> Within India's strategic circle, there exists a prevailing conventional perspective that perceives the Indian Ocean as being inherently affiliated with India, therefore designating it as "India's ocean". India has consistently considered the Indian Ocean as its exclusive maritime domain. According to Kavalam Panikkar, a renowned historian and diplomat, the Indian Ocean holds paramount significance for India, distinguishing it from other nations for whom it is merely one among several significant oceanic regions. Consequently, Panikkar asserts that preserving the Indian Ocean's distinctively Indian character is imperative, thereby emphasizing the ocean's association with India.<sup>[63]</sup> According to an American expert, India perceives the Indian Ocean as its sphere of influence due to the unique distinction of being the only region and ocean named after a specific country. Consequently, it is anticipated that India will assume a leadership role in the Indian Ocean in due course.<sup>[64]</sup>

### 3.2 Comparing the Environment of the Opponent

According to Yang Jiemian, there exist certain parallels in the trajectories of China and India's ascent. However, in contrast to China's path to prominence, India's journey towards becoming a major global power appears to be relatively more seamless, particularly in light of China's own ascent. Consequently, India's strategic approach to achieving great power status also exhibits distinct characteristics when compared to China's.<sup>[65]</sup> The term "external stumbling block" in this context pertains to the disparities in the competitive landscape between China and India, to some degree. The opponent environment of China-India periphery diplomatic strategy exhibits several distinct distinctions.

#### ***3.2.1 India Is in a Relatively Good Position despite the Uncertain International Environment***

China and India are facing an unpredictable worldwide pattern and a tough rival environment. This uncertainty is manifested as follows: first, the dispute between "unipolar" and "multipolar" in the international pattern continues; second, the epidemic situation intensifies the uncertainty of global economic development; Third, Indo-Pacific is a big environment, and the variability of the environment intensifies the uncertainty of the regional environment. General Secretary Xi Jinping's greatest judgment on the surrounding areas is that the world today is in a huge shift that has never happened in a century, and the biggest aspect of the situation in the surrounding areas is that it is full of uncertainties.<sup>[66]</sup> For example, General Secretary Xi Jinping underlined that "to fully estimate the uncertainty in China's surrounding environment, we must also see that the overall prosperity and stability of the Asia-Pacific region will not change."<sup>[67]</sup> Indian Foreign Minister Su Jiesheng also pointed out in his book "India's Way: Strategy in an Uncertain World" published in 2020 that in the past few years, the world has become different from the past, the United States has become more and more uncertain, China has become more "tough", Europe is busy with internal affairs, and Japan has become more active.<sup>[68]</sup> However, although both China and India are significant countries in the Asia-Pacific area and face an uncertain international climate, China is challenged with greater geopolitical counter-measures.

China's encounter with geo-countermeasures is considerably bigger, which can be observed from the location of China and India in the "Indo-Pacific" strategies of other countries. The rapid increase of the economic strength of rising economies in Asia, represented by China and India, makes the enormous area from the Pacific Ocean to the Indian Ocean display an evident upward trend in geopolitics and geopolitics, and the notion of "Indo-Pacific" rises appropriately.<sup>[69]</sup> As countries have put up their "Indo-Pacific strategies" (see Table 4), one of the major contents is to cooperatively repress China. Take America's Indo-Pacific policy as an example. As the leading country in the current international system, the United States considers China and India as the emerging countries in the current international system and the likely rising countries in the medium and long term respectively. At the present stage, due to their differing international status and national power, the two countries pose various dangers to the United States.<sup>[70]</sup>

**Table 4: Important Declarations and Texts from a Number of Nations about the Indo-Pacific Area**

Time	Country	Publication
May 2013	Australia	Australia released a white paper concerning national security, whereby it designated the Indo-Pacific region as a novel theater of conflict and underscored the strategic realignment towards the Indian Ocean-Pacific.
September 2013	China	The project known as "the belt and road initiative" was introduced by President Xi Jinping of China.
December 2015	India, Japan	During the meeting, India and Japan jointly released a declaration titled "Japan-India Outlook 2025, Special Global Strategic Partnership," wherein they introduced the term "Indo-Pacific" for the first time in a statement at the summit level.
October 2015	India	The Indian Navy has released a document titled "Ensuring Maritime Safety: Indian Navy Security Strategy," which affirms the shift towards the Indo-Pacific area.
August 2016	Japan	The Indo-Pacific concept was introduced by Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe during the 6th Tokyo International Conference on African Development.
December 2017	United States of America	The National Security Strategy (NSS) report of the United States emphasized the Indo-Pacific area as a primary regional focus.
May 2018	United States of America	The Pacific Command of the United States has been officially redesignated as the Indo-Pacific Command.
June 2018	India	Prime Minister Narendra Modi presented India's "Indo-Pacific Vision" during his address at the Shangri-La Dialogue Conference.
June 2019	ASEAN (Association of Southeast Asian Nations)	The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) has recently published the "ASEAN Indo-Pacific Outlook".
May 2019	France	The paper titled "France-India-Pacific Defence Strategy" was produced by France.

Source: Darshana M. Baruah, "India in the Indo-Pacific: New Delhi's theater of opportunity," *Carnegie endorsement for international peace*, June 30, 2020, p.7. [https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Baruah\\_UnderstandingIndia\\_final1.pdf](https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Baruah_UnderstandingIndia_final1.pdf).

However, it should be noted that India is currently encountering a multifaceted international milieu. Nevertheless, it is worth acknowledging that India finds itself in an advantageous situation and is able to derive certain advantages from the prevailing state of global disorder. Following the conclusion of the Cold War, India's strategic outlook has expanded beyond its conventional emphasis on South Asia. In the realm of foreign relations, India's approach to foreign forces has evolved over time, transitioning from a stance of opposition to their presence to one of strategic utilization. In contrast to India's historically steadfast resistance against the presence of external forces in its neighboring regions, there appears to be a shift in India's perspective with the increasing integration between India and the United States. India now exhibits a relatively diminished opposition to the existence of external forces and views these nations as a potential alternative in addressing the expanding influence of China.<sup>[71]</sup> Certain researchers argue that there is a growing sense of uncertainty in global development, stemming from factors such as shifts in global power dynamics and a potential decrease in American dedication to the international order. However, in contrast to several other major nations, India is anticipated to potentially reap advantages from the prevailing state of disorder.<sup>[72]</sup>

### 3.2.2 While China and India Are Both Given Significant Importance, the Level of Attention that They Receive Varies

China and India, as neighboring countries, represent significant external environmental factors for one another. The progress of a nation can exert a beneficial influence on another nation, while the regression or instability of a nation can inherently result in adverse consequences for another nation. Specifically, China and India, neighboring countries, form an inherent interconnectedness and interdependence, constituting a natural community of shared destiny. Consequently, the existence of one cannot be disregarded or overlooked by the other.<sup>[73]</sup> Despite the leaders of China and India emphasizing the significance of Sino-Indian relations as one of the most significant bilateral relationships, there exists a disparity in the influence wielded by the two countries within their respective diplomatic spheres. In the context of mutual cognition, it may be observed that India exhibits a proclivity for "geographical determinism" by placing significant emphasis on China, while China, in contrast, demonstrates a predisposition for "super-geography" by providing insufficient attention to India.<sup>[74]</sup>

China does not perceive India as a significant security concern. In contrast, a significant segment of the Indian population see China as the primary source of threat. Hence, it might be argued that Sino-Indian relations continue to exhibit elements of a "unilateral competition" to a certain degree. At the international level, China's perception of India has shifted towards

viewing it as a possible global partner rather than a significant threat. From the perspective of China, it is evident that India continues to present certain obstacles. However, it is important to acknowledge that these challenges may be effectively addressed and resolved through a pragmatic approach. In contrast, China holds the belief that the United States may present a more substantial challenge to China's standing and national interests. The existing power disparity between China and India precludes China from perceiving India as a significant threat. However, this power imbalance renders India more susceptible to China's actions, while simultaneously diminishing China's responsiveness to India's apprehensions. India frequently raises concerns on border issues, while China's focus on enhancing its international standing sometimes results in insufficient attention being paid to India. Conversely, China occasionally expresses dissatisfaction with India's perceived exaggerated response to its actions.<sup>[75]</sup>

### ***3.2.3 The Only Thing Separating the Present from the Future Is that Both Are Facing the Same Strategic Opponent Environment***

When considering the viewpoints of other parties, particularly strategic adversaries, both China and India are perceived as possible obstacles to the progress of these adversaries. This assessment is made by looking beyond the specific contexts of China and India. American scholars have undertaken an assessment of the potential threat that the ascent of China and India poses to the United States. They have raised the question of whether dominant nations, in a global landscape characterized by diverse interests and threats, should concentrate their attention on a solitary prospective adversary or if they should also remain vigilant against potential challenges from other emerging nations concurrently.<sup>[76]</sup>

It is generally believed that the rise of India is not regarded as a threat by the United States, but in fact, both China and India are regarded as threats by the United States. China is a threat at present and India is a threat in the future.<sup>[77]</sup> According to the perspective of George J. Gilboy, an esteemed American academic, as well as other scholars, it is posited that China and India, two nations experiencing rapid development, possess the potential to emerge as global superpowers during the 21st century. There exist some notable parallels between the two nations, encompassing significant population sizes, possession of nuclear armaments, escalating economic and military prowess, domestic security predicaments, domestic disparities, and ongoing economic reform initiatives that remain unfinished. The United States has expressed concerns on the emergence of China and India, particularly with regards to China's increasing relative power, notwithstanding the uncertainties faced by both countries. Certain American political leaders and strategists espouse divergent policy approaches towards China and India, wherein China is perceived as a potential adversary rather than a potential ally, while the situation with India is characterized by contrasting dynamics. Consequently, in an effort to adopt a hedging strategy towards China, the United States aims to enhance India's capabilities and foster its alignment as a strategic partner in countering China's influence. Nevertheless, the selection of the United States as a strategic partner is not solely contingent upon the categorization of nations as adversaries or friends. It is imperative to acknowledge that both China and India possess the potential to emerge as future challenges to the United States.<sup>[78]</sup> Based on the aforementioned analysis, it is plausible for the United States to consider implementing a policy known as "differentiated containment" between China and India. This approach entails the pursuit of "double containment" by means of two distinct paths: explicitly, by fostering closer ties with India to counterbalance China's influence, and implicitly, by leveraging China's influence to exert control over India.<sup>[79]</sup>

The complexity of America's accommodation towards India is not easily discernible, as it entails a certain degree of encouragement for India to align its policies with the objective of jointly restraining China's ascent. The United States appears to be actively promoting India's role as a strategic counterweight to the growing influence of China, employing a traditional approach rooted in the principles of balance of power politics.<sup>[80]</sup> It might be argued that the ongoing shift in American policy towards China, as well as any potential diplomatic settlement between China and the United States, may result in a diminished strategic significance of India to the United States. In the event that American authorities come to the realization that India's inclination towards balancing China has diminished or is no longer feasible, or if the United States identifies a better appropriate entity to assume the role of balancing China, the future outlook for India would be characterized by a lack of promise.<sup>[81]</sup> Hence, while India has garnered much attention and backing from the United States within the Sino-US confrontation, Indian policymakers in the realm of foreign policy also express concerns regarding American policies in the neighboring regions of South Asia and East Asia, particularly with respect to India. The strategic approach adopted by the United States in South Asia and East Asia has been perceived as diminishing the significance of India as a prominent regional force. Simultaneously, the United States' presence in this region has engendered the potential for India's isolation in the surrounding territories, as neighboring countries grapple with internal challenges.<sup>[82]</sup> It is evident that a socioeconomically disadvantaged and vulnerable community does not align with the national interests of India.

### **3.3 A Comparison of the Interior Surroundings**

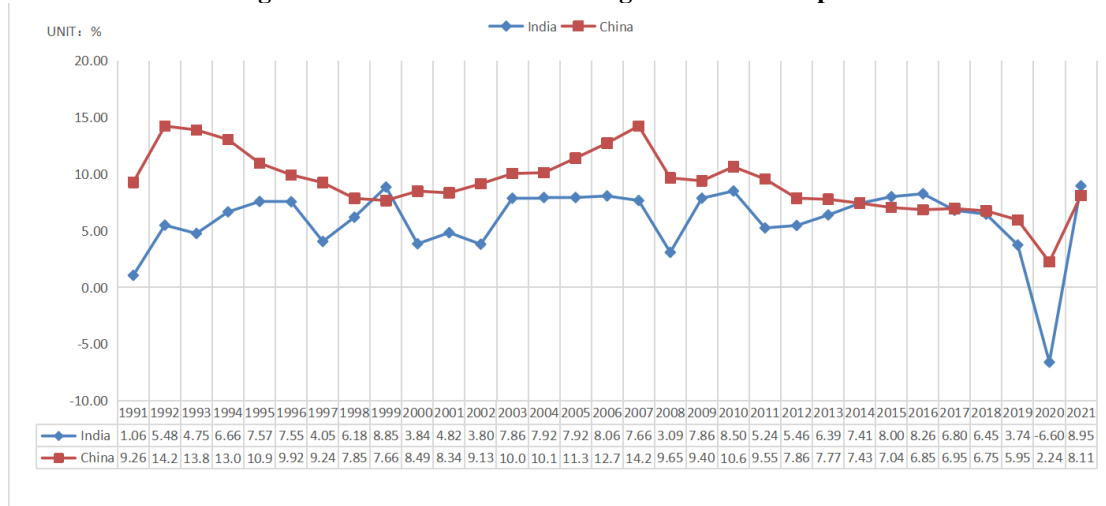
Based on an analysis of the internal dynamics shaping diplomatic growth in China and India, it is evident that both nations possess distinct developmental strengths and advantages. However, it is noteworthy that China has attained a more advanced stage of development compared to India, and its trajectory of progress appears to be more promising. However, it is important to note that India maintains a robust belief in the future trajectory of the balance of power between the two nations. The imbalance of power and the divergence in India's optimistic

outlook on the future trajectory of the gap between China and India have resulted in a range of implications. One notable consequence is that India exhibits heightened sensitivity towards China's activities, hence diminishing China's responsiveness towards India's concerns and anxieties.

### 3.3.1 The Disparity between the Economic might of China and India Is Evident

China and India exhibit a significant disparity in economic strength, which can be characterized as a fundamental asymmetry. The initiation of economic reform in India took place during the early 1990s, which was over a decade subsequent to China's implementation of similar measures. As depicted in Figure 2, the implementation of economic reforms since 1991 has facilitated the Indian economy in sustaining a comparatively elevated annual growth rate of 6% over the course of the last two decades. Conversely, China's growth rate has exhibited a reasonably consistent pattern. Notwithstanding the swift ascent of India, there persists a substantial disparity in strength between the two nations. In order for India to bridge the gap with China within a span of 20 to 30 years, it is imperative for India to achieve a minimum annual growth rate of 9%.<sup>[83]</sup>

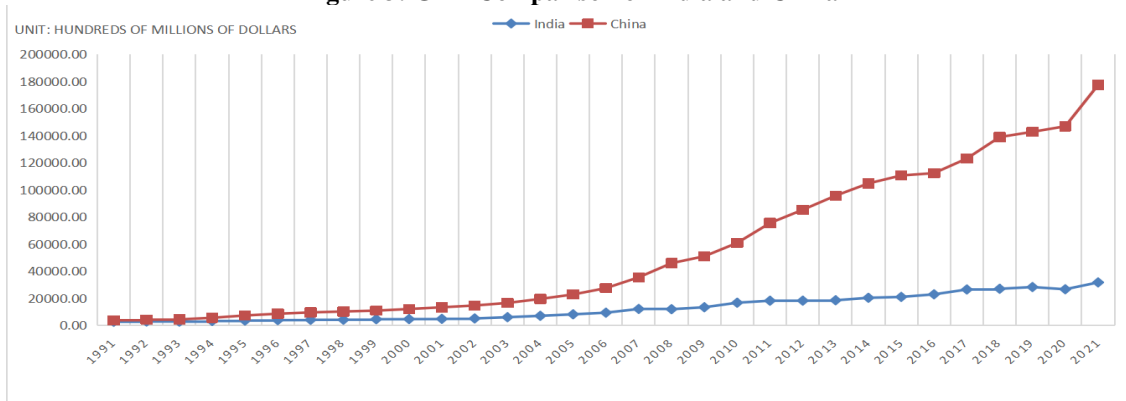
**Figure 2: China and India's GDP growth rates compared.**



Source: The World Bank provided the data that the author assembled.

Based on an analysis of the overall Gross Domestic Product (GDP), it is evident that despite the comparable population sizes of China and India, there has been a widening disparity in their respective economic capacities. China's gross domestic product (GDP) surpasses that of India by a factor of almost five, with this disparity consistently widening. The strength comparison between India and China exhibits evident weaknesses. (Refer to Figure 3)

**Figure 3: GDP Comparison of India and China**



Source: The author's drawings are based on World Bank data.

In broad terms, while India's economy has experienced notable advancements in recent decades and is considered an emerging power based on several indices, its progress in comparison to China's economic growth is comparatively less significant. There is growing apprehension among individuals regarding the disparity between India's relative income and its absolute income. Specifically, there is a belief that while Sino-Indian cooperation yields advantages for both nations, China stands to gain more than India. Furthermore, the persisting unresolved border dispute in the Himalayan region exacerbates India's concerns. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has not only facilitated closer ties between China and India, but has also fostered the development of an interconnected network including the Indian mainland through various

infrastructural and interconnection projects. India expresses concerns on the potential militaristic implications of some projects associated with the Belt and Road Initiative, suspecting them to be Trojan horses for China's military expansion.<sup>[84]</sup> According to Shyam Saran, a former Indian Foreign Secretary, it is evident that China surpasses India in various domains of state power, including but not limited to the economy, military, science, and technology. This stark truth presents a disheartening situation that the present Indian administration must confront. India's capacity to navigate in relation to China is progressively diminishing, as China is gradually encroaching upon India's neighboring regions by means of economic leverage. Additionally, the enduring partnership between China and Pakistan is expected to wield an even more formidable effect, hence posing a significant challenge to India's diplomatic efforts.<sup>[85]</sup>

### 3.3.2 The Disparity in Military might between China and India Is Evident

There exists a discernible disparity in military capabilities between the nations of China and India. Based on the 2022 global military rating released by Global Firepower, a reputable source for assessing global military capabilities, China occupies the third position while India holds the fourth position.<sup>[86]</sup> Among the 46 projects featured on this page, China has exhibited a superior performance in 42 projects, thereby surpassing India. Notably, there exists a substantial disparity between India and China in numerous projects. (Refer to Table 5)

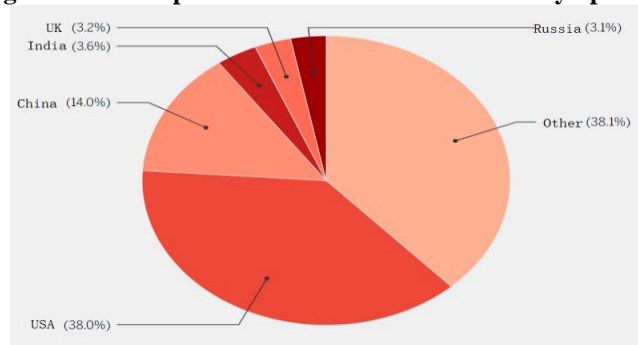
**Table 5: US media website Global Firepower's comparison of China's and India's military might in 2022.**

	China	India
Military Grade	Rank 3 (142)	Ranked 4 (142)
Whole Population	1,398 billion	1,339 billion
Manpower Available	754 million	629 million
Appropriate for the Servicing Public	619 million	497 million
People Achieving Service Age	19.57 million	227.7 billion
Budget for National Defense	230 billion	49.6 billion
Total Aircraft Number	3285	2182
Total Combatant Count	1200	564
Attacker	371	130
Total Army Tanks in Service	5250	4614
Entire Count of Naval Vessels	777	295

Source: The author compiles information from the "Global Fire Power" American media website.

Based on the data published by SIPRI, it is projected that India will maintain its position as the third largest spender on military expenditures globally in 2021, surpassing Russia and Britain. However, India's military expenditure remains significantly lower than that of China, which is four times higher, and the United States, whose defense budget is ten times larger.<sup>[87]</sup> The top five nations in terms of military expenditure include the United States, which allocates \$801 billion, constituting 38% of the global military spending. China follows with \$293 billion, while India allocates \$77 billion. Britain and Russia allocate \$68 billion and \$66 billion, respectively. Pakistan ranks 23rd globally, with a military expenditure of \$11 billion.<sup>[88]</sup> (Refer to Figure 4)

**Figure 4: The Top Five Nations in 2021 for Military Spending**



Source: "India Third-largest military spender in the world after us & China," *The Times of India*, April 25, 2022, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-third-largest-military-spender-in-the-world-after-us-china/articleshow/91078839.cms>

### 3.3.3 In Terms of Strategic Transformation Capability, China and India Differ Much More

When considering the strategic transformation capabilities, it becomes evident that the disparity between China and India is even more pronounced. In the realm of international relations, China is commonly perceived as undergoing a transition from a regional power to a global power, whereas India is currently undergoing a transition from a sub-regional nation to a regional nation.<sup>[89]</sup> Despite sharing many similarities as developing and emerging nations, China exhibits characteristics that align it more closely with a mature country due to its superior material capability and prominent position within key international organizations.



Upon examining the aforementioned capabilities of China and India, it becomes evident that both countries possess distinct areas of expertise. China possesses a greater overall strength, while India enjoys a notable advantage as a latecomer in several domains. Based on the prevailing trajectory, it can be argued that China and India possess varying degrees of advantage in their respective surrounding regions. Specifically, China appears to enjoy a more favorable domestic climate for its periphery diplomatic strategy compared to India. China continues to provide the most significant obstacle to Indian foreign policy, with an increasing disparity in economic and military capabilities between the two Asian nations, which is growing rather than diminishing.

#### IV. Conclusion

The neighborhood of a country typically refers to the geographical context in which the country is naturally situated, without any inherent selectivity. Based on the aforementioned examination of the strategic landscape surrounding China-India neighborhood diplomacy, encompassing the geographical, rivalrous, and internal dimensions, it becomes evident that the strategic environment of China-India neighborhood diplomacy exhibits distinct attributes. The diplomatic strategic environment surrounding China exhibits the following distinctive attributes. The geographical environment is characterized by a high degree of complexity. The geographical environment around China is characterized by a high degree of complexity, particularly in comparison to other global powers. The surrounding areas of China encompass numerous countries and regions, with a diverse mix of large, medium, and small nations. China's land and maritime frontiers are predominantly surrounded by formidable neighboring nations, politically unstable states, or possibly adversarial international coalitions. Furthermore, China finds itself situated amidst a multitude of highly contentious conflicts and disagreements among various nations. Currently, there exist ongoing conflicts between China and Japan in the East China Sea, as well as with the Philippines and Vietnam in the South China Sea. Additionally, the border between China and India remains undelineated. The North Korean nuclear crisis, the deployment of Sade by the United States in South Korea, the conflict between Myanmar and North Korea, and the issues surrounding "Taiwan independence," "Hong Kong independence," and "Xinjiang independence" pose significant challenges to China's relations with its neighboring countries, as they have the potential to escalate and create latent risks.<sup>[90]</sup> Thirdly, the surrounding environment of China exhibits dual characteristics. China is situated among a complex web of contradictions and potential conflicts, encompassing significant geopolitical rivalries, concerns regarding the spread of nuclear weapons, disagreements over territory claims, the presence of terrorist separatist groups, and the imperative of safeguarding energy and water resources. Simultaneously, the surrounding territories of China exhibit the highest rates of world economic growth and possess the most vibrant regional economy. This dichotomy is also evident in an additional aspect. The current state of affairs pertaining to China is characterized by the concept of "land stability and sea movement," which refers to the relatively stable relationship between China and its neighboring countries on land, while conflicts primarily arise in the maritime domain.<sup>[91]</sup>

The diplomatic strategic environment surrounding India exhibits the following features. Firstly, the region under consideration is characterized by its geographical self-containment and its prominent spatial location. India possesses a geographical setting characterized by the presence of mountains encircling the ocean. Specifically, it is situated adjacent to the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and is bordered by water on three sides, namely the Indian Ocean to the south, the Bay of Bengal to the east, and the Arabian Sea to the west. This natural configuration serves as a demarcation between India and Eurasia, granting India a prominent position within this relatively enclosed geographical entity. Furthermore, the surrounding nations are dispersed and lack adjacency to one another. Following its independence, India is geographically situated at the heart of the Indian subcontinent, encompassing around 67% of the entire land area of the subcontinent. It is bordered by neighboring countries that are characterized by relative geopolitical fragility. This geographical feature has historically contributed to the development of complacency and arrogance among Indians.<sup>[92]</sup> Furthermore, it occupies a strategic location as a transportation hub at the intersection of various geographical routes. India is geographically positioned in the central region of the arc zone on the outer periphery of Eurasia, as observed from the vantage point of Eurasia, the Indian Ocean, and the Western Pacific. The geographical convergence in question situates India in a pivotal position within the transportation network known as the "lifeline of the sea," hence granting it significant influence over worldwide strategic objectives.<sup>[93]</sup>

Through an examination of the interplay between the "from inside to outside" and "from outside to inside" dynamics within the China-India neighborhood diplomatic strategic environment, it has been observed that the strategic landscape of China-India neighborhood diplomacy exhibits both areas of convergence and divergence. Based on an analysis of the geographical and diplomatic strategies of China and India, it can be observed that both nations possess a combination of land and sea territories, thereby exhibiting a dualistic nature in terms of their geographic characteristics. However, it is noteworthy that India's bordering countries are limited in number and exhibit somewhat weaker geopolitical positions, thereby providing India with a greater set of benefits in terms of its geo-environmental context. Based on an analysis of the respective international environments of China and India, it can be observed that both countries encounter similar challenges. However, China is presented with more significant geopolitical counter-measures. This discrepancy in the level of counter-measures may be attributed to the distinction between the current circumstances and future prospects faced by these nations, despite their shared strategic opponent environment. The internal environments of both countries exhibit distinct developmental strengths and advantages. However, it is noteworthy that China has reached a more advanced stage of development compared to India, and its trajectory of development appears to be more promising.

The convergence of geo-strategic factors in the regions shared by China and India has led to an escalation in strategic rivalry between the two nations, encompassing both terrestrial and maritime domains. During the Cold War and its early stages, China and India primarily focused their strategic vision on their respective geographical regions, namely East Asia and South Asia. In addition to the territorial conflict and the matter involving Pakistan, the two nations did not exhibit significant strategic overlap.<sup>[94]</sup> Nevertheless, as the economies of China and India have experienced significant growth, their respective economic and strategic interests have expanded considerably. Consequently, these two nations have started to encroach upon each other's strategic domains. At the terrestrial level, the "Silk Road Economic Belt" initiative of China intersected with India's "eastward advancement" policy. At the maritime level, China's "Maritime Silk Road" initiative extended into the Indian Ocean, where it encountered India's strategic presence in the region. The issue of geopolitical tensions arising from overlapping strategic settings has emerged as an inevitable subject in the context of Sino-Indian relations.

## References

- [1] Ding Gong: Middle Powers and China-Related Diplomacy, *World Economy and Politics*, No.7, 2014, p.24.
- [2] Zhang Wenmu: "Paradise is far away, but China is very close" The——Guidelines and Features of China's Geopolitical Relations with its Neighboring Nations and Areas, *World Economy and Politics*, No.1, 2013, p.5.
- [3] Wang Jisi: East, West, North and South, with China in the Center —— Thoughts on an Epic Strategic Chess Match, *World Knowledge*, No.21, 2013, p.21.
- [4] Li Xiaoling, Liu Zhigao, Tan Shuang, Xiu Chunliang and He Hongshi: Development of the Cross-Border Economic Cooperation Model of Spatial Organization between the Russian Far East and Heilongjiang Province of China, *Journal of Geography*, No.8, 2022, p.2084.
- [5] Mao Hanying: China's geopolitical and geoeconomic trends and countermeasures, *Progress of Geographical Sciences*, No.3, 2014, p.294.
- [6] Cao Wenzhen and Huang Weizi: An examination of the Building of Thailand's Kela Canal from China's Strategic Standpoint as A Saritime Power, *Asia-Pacific Security and Ocean Research*, No.5, 2015, p.76.
- [7] Cao Wenzhen and Huang Weizi: An examination of the Building of Thailand's Kela Canal from China's Strategic Standpoint as A Saritime Power, *Asia-Pacific Security and Ocean Research*, No.5, 2015, p.76.
- [8] Cuiping Zhu, *India's Ocean Can China and India Coexist?* Singapore: Springer, 2017, p.16.
- [9] Abhay Kumar Singh, *India-China Rivalry: Asymmetric No Longer an Assessment of China's Evolving Perceptions of India*, New Delhi: KW Publishers Pvt Ltd, 2021, p.91.
- [10] Li Hongmei: An Examination of the Current Circumstances and the Reasons for the Security Structure's Evolution in the Indian Ocean Region, *International Forum*, No.1, 2017, p.21.
- [11] Ding Gong: Middle Powers and China-Related Diplomacy, *World Economy and Politics*, No.7, 2014, p.34.
- [12] Wang Jian: The Recent Shifts in China's Adjacent Situation and the Development of the Adjacent Destiny Community, *International Outlook*, No.1, 2022, p.24.
- [13] Wang Chuanjian and Wei Xin: An Analysis of ASEAN, China, and the US Trilateral Security Relationships in the Context of Strategic Competition, *World Economy and Politics*, No.4, 2022, p.100.
- [14] Xiong Chenran, Wang Limao, Qu Qiushi, Fang Yebing, Xiang Ning: China's Perspective on Geopolitical Scenario Analysis, *World Geography Research*, No.3, 2019, p.5.
- [15] Hoo Tiang Boon, Sarah Teo, Caught in the Middle? Middle Powers amid U.S.-China Competition, *Asia Policy*, Vol.17, No.4, 2022, p.64.
- [16] Hoo Tiang Boon, Sarah Teo, Caught in the Middle? Middle Powers amid U.S.-China Competition, *Asia Policy*, Vol.17, No.4, 2022, p.65.
- [17] Wang Jian: The Recent Shifts in China's Adjacent Situation and the Development of the Adjacent Destiny Community, *International Outlook*, No.1, 2022, pp.25-27.
- [18] Zhou Yongsheng: The Belt and Road Initiative, as well as China and Japan's Competition and Cooperation, *Journal of Northeast Asia*, No.3, 2021, pp.20-24.
- [19] Xiong Chenran, Wang Limao, Qu Qiushi, Fang Yebing, Xiang Ning: China's Perspective on Geopolitical Scenario Analysis, *World Geography Research*, No.3, 2019, p.5.
- [20] Zhai Kun: Overcoming the Peripheral Restraints on China's Development, *International Outlook*, No.2, 2014, p.8.
- [21] Qi Chen, Guan Chuanjing: Modification of Policies and Novel Concepts in China's Peripheral Diplomacy, *Contemporary Asia-Pacific*, No.3, 2014, p.12.
- [22] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, World military spending rises to almost \$2 trillion in 2020, April 26, 2021, <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2021/world-military-spending-rises-almost-2-trillion-2020>.
- [23] Abhay Kumar Singh, *India-China Rivalry: Asymmetric No Longer an Assessment of China's Evolving Perceptions of India*, New Delhi: KW Publishers Pvt Ltd, 2021, p.89.
- [24] Bhumitra Chakma, Liberal Peace and South Asia, *India Quarterly*, Vol.70, No.3, 2014, p.190.
- [25] Bhumitra Chakma, Liberal Peace and South Asia, *India Quarterly*, Vol.70, No.3, 2014, p.191.

- [26] Anshuman Behera, *Sitakanta Mishra, Varying Dimensions of India's National Security: Emerging Perspectives*, Springer, 2022, pp.41-42.
- [27] Shi Zhihong: An analysis of the Indian Ocean's Maritime Security Strategy between the United States and India, Ph.D. Thesis of Nanjing University, 2016, p.63.
- [28] Zhang Wenmu: Great Power Politics in the World Geopolitical System's Central Region: Additionally, on the Strategic Complementary Significance of Security Cooperation between India and China, *Journal of the Pacific*, No.3, 2010, p.41.
- [29] Song Dexing: Combined Great Power Seeking and National Security: India's Perspective on International Order and Its Fundamental Strategic Orientation, *Nantah Asia-Pacific Review*, No.1, 2018, p.126.
- [30] Harry I. Hannah, The Great Game Moves to Sea: Tripolar Competition in the Indian Ocean Region, *War on the Rocks*, April 1, 2019, <https://warontherocks.com/2019/04/the-great-game-moves-to-sea-tripolar-competition-in-the-indian-ocean-region/>
- [31] Song Dexing: Combined Great Power Seeking and National Security: India's Perspective on International Order and Its Fundamental Strategic Orientation, *Nantah Asia-Pacific Review*, No.1, 2018, p.127.
- [32] India as a Net Security Provider: Concept and Impediments, *RSIS*, August 2014, [https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/PB\\_140903\\_India-Net-Security.pdf](https://www.rsis.edu.sg/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/PB_140903_India-Net-Security.pdf).
- [33] Darshana M. Baruah, Maritime Competition in the Indian Ocean, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, May 12, 2022, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2022/05/12/maritime-competition-in-indian-ocean-pub-87093>.
- [34] George Tanham, Indian Strategic Culture, *Washington Quarterly*, Vol.15, No.1, 1992, p.130.
- [35] George Tanham, Indian Strategic Culture, *Washington Quarterly*, Vol.15, No.1, 1992, p.130.
- [36] David Scott, India's 'Extended Neighborhood' Concept: Power Projection for a Rising Power, *India Review*, Vol.8, No.2, 2009, p.113.
- [37] He Ping and Xiao Jie: Regarding Foreign Policy and Contemporary Indian Diplomatic Thought, *South Asian Studies Quarterly*, No.4, 2020, p.9.
- [38] Yamini Aiyar, Sunil Khilnani, Prakash Menon, Shivshankar Menon, Nitin Pai, Srinath Raghavan, Ajit Ranade, Shyam Saran, India's Path to Power: Strategy in a World Adrift, *Centre for Policy Research and The Takshashila Institution*, October 2, 2021, p.8.
- [39] Zorawar Daulet Singh, Thinking about an Indian Grand Strategy, *Strategic Analysis*, Vol.35, No.2, 2010, p.54.
- [40] Shyam Saran, A Tough Neighbourhood, *India Today*, May 25, 2019, <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/cover-story/story/20190603-a-tough-neighbourhood-foreign-policy-1534289-2019-05-25>.
- [41] Veena Kukreja, India in the Emergent Multipolar World Order: Dynamics and Strategic Challenges, *India Quarterly*, Vol.76, No.1, 2020, p.13.
- [42] Aseema Sinha, India and Global Governance across International Regimes and Time, *Contemporary South Asia*, Vol.30, No.2, 2022, p.210.
- [43] Li Yanfang, Yang Yishuang, Lv Jiabin and Wu Yuying: An Account of the Symposium Titled the Indian Ocean Situation and Sino-Indian Relations, *Indian Ocean Economic Research*, No.1, 2021, p.149.
- [44] Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, World military spending rises to almost \$2 trillion in 2020, April 26, 2021, <https://www.sipri.org/media/press-release/2021/world-military-spending-rises-almost-2-trillion-2020>.
- [45] Arms Control Association, Nuclear Weapons: Who Has What at a Glance, January 2022, <https://www.armscontrol.org/factsheets/Nuclearweaponswhohaswhat>.
- [46] Zhang Guihong: An Evaluation of the Indo-Pacific Strategic Concept and the Belt and Road Initiative in Comparison, *Modern International Relations*, No.2, 2019, p.34.
- [47] Damien Ng, Assess the Proposition That India Will Become the Next Superpower, *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 2022, pp.8-9.
- [48] Wang Junsheng: Reexamining the Trust Deficit between the United States and China: An Analysis from the Standpoint of the US Strategic Positioning Surrounding China, *Teaching and Research*, No.7, 2012, p.48.
- [49] Men Honghua. An Overview of China's Foreign Policy, *Beijing: Tsinghua University Publishing House*, 2009, p.106.
- [50] Zheng Yongnian and Zhang Chi: the Grand Diplomacy of China and the Belt and Road Initiative, *Contemporary World*, No.2, 2016, p.9.
- [51] Zhu Cuiping and Colin Flint: "Security Dilemma" and India's Approach to China Strategically, *Contemporary Asia-Pacific*, No.6, 2019, p.38.
- [52] David Brewster, An Indian Ocean Dilemma, *Journal of the Indian Ocean Region*, Vol.11, No.1, 2015, p.50.
- [53] Zhai Kun: Overcoming the Peripheral Restraints on China's Development, *International Outlook*, No.2, 2014, p.2.
- [54] YunLing Zhang, China and its Neighbourhood: Transformation, Challenges and Grand Strategy, *International Affairs*, Vol.92, No.4, 2016, p.841.

- [55] YunLing Zhang, China and its Neighbourhood: Transformation, Challenges and Grand Strategy, *International Affairs*, Vol.92, No.4, 2016, p.841.
- [56] Darshana M. Baruah, India in the Indo-Pacific: New Delhi's Theater of Opportunity, *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*, June 30, 2020, p.10.
- [57] Mao Hanying: China's Geopolitical and Geoeconomic Trends and Countermeasures, *Progress of Geographical Sciences*, No.3, 2014, p.293.
- [58] Zhimin Chen, Zhongqi Pan, China in its Neighbourhood: A 'Middle Kingdom' not necessarily at the Centre of Power, *The International Spectator*, Vol.46, No.4, 2011, pp.80-81.
- [59] India Applauds the fall of the "Berlin Wall in South Asia" and Bangladesh's Exchange of Enclaves, *Global Times Network*, June 9, 2015, <https://world.huanqiu.com/article/9CaKrnJLPoa>.
- [60] Zhang Yunling: Peripheral Diplomacy, The New China Diplomacy's Long-Term Priority, *World Knowledge*, No.19, 2019, p.31.
- [61] Chen Ya: Research on Shanghai Cooperation Organization's Community of Destiny Building, Ph.D. Thesis of Lanzhou University, 2020, p.74.
- [62] Li Bo: The Impact of Modern India's Peripheral Diplomacy on Sino-Indian Relations, *Journal of Yangzhou University (Humanities and Social Sciences Edition)*, No.3, 2018, p.6.
- [63] K. Panikkar, *India and the Indian Ocean. An Essay on the Influence of Sea Power on Indian History*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1945, p.84.
- [64] Donald L. Berlin, India in the Indian Ocean, *Naval War College Review*, Vol.59, No.2, 2006, p.60 .
- [65] Yang Jiemian: *Theoretical Groundwork for the Emergence of Major Powers*, Beijing: Current Affairs Press, 2014, pp.256-257.
- [66] Zhao Kejin: Xi Jinping's Thoughts on Neighborhood Diplomacy: Establishing a Community of Neighborhood Destiny, *World Knowledge*, No.3, 2020, p.18.
- [67] Xi Jinping: *Xi Jinping's Address on National Governance (Volume 2)*, Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 2017, p.442.
- [68] Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, *The India Way: Strategies for an Uncertain World*, New Delhi: Harper Collins, 2020.
- [69] Ge Tengfei: Conflicts over the Indo-Pacific Security Order and China's View of the Regional Order, *Foreign Affairs Review*, No.3, 2021, p.74.
- [70] Li Yanfang, Yang Yishuang, Lv Jiaxin and Wu Yuying: An Account of the Symposium Titled "The Indian Ocean Situation and Sino-Indian Relations", *Indian Ocean Economic Research*, No.1, 2021, p.142.
- [71] Smruti S Pattanaik, India's 'Neighbourhood First' Policy: the Primacy of Geoeconomics, *The Round Table*, Vol.111, No.3, 2022, p.450.
- [72] Rohan Mukherjee, Chaos as Opportunity: the United States and World Order in India's Grand Strategy, *Contemporary Politics*, Vol.26, No.4, 2020, p.420.
- [73] Zhang Li: Modifications and Reactions to the China-Indian Security Dilemma in the Context of "the Belt and Road Initiative", *South Asian Studies*, No.3, 2020, p.83.
- [74] Tan Zhong: Encouraging the Growth of Sino-Indian Relations within the Geo-Civilization Framework, *South Asian Studies Quarterly*, No.2, 2008, p.2.
- [75] John Garver, Asymmetrical Indian and Chinese threat perceptions, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol.25, No.4, 2002, pp.109-134; XiaoYu Pu, Ambivalent Accommodation: Status Signalling of a Rising India and China's Response, *International Affairs*, Vol.93, No.1, 2017, p.156.
- [76] George J. Gilboy, Eric Heginbotham, *Chinese and Indian Strategic Behavior: Growing Power and Alarm*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012, p.2.
- [77] Lian Bo: The Rocking Wedge: Examining India's Strategic Approaches in Light of the US Indo-Pacific Strategy, *South Asian Studies*, No.1, 2021, p.1.
- [78] George J. Gilboy, Eric Heginbotham, *Chinese and Indian Strategic Behavior: Growing Power and Alarm*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012, p.xv.
- [79] Lian Bo: The Rocking Wedge: Examining India's Strategic Approaches in Light of the US Indo-Pacific Strategy, *South Asian Studies*, No.1, 2021, p.1.
- [80] Young-Chan Kim, *China-India Relations: Geo-political Competition, Economic Cooperation, Cultural Exchange and Business Ties*, London: Spring, 2020, p.10.
- [81] Vikash Chandra, India's Accommodation in the Emerging International Order: Challenges and Prospects, *India Quarterly*, Vol.74, No.4, 2018, p.427.
- [82] Young-Chan Kim, *China-India Relations: Geo-political Competition, Economic Cooperation, Cultural Exchange and Business Ties*, London: Spring, 2020, p.9.
- [83] Ashley J. Tellis, Bibek Debroy, C. Raja Mohan, *Grasping Greatness: Making India a Leading Power*, New Delhi: Penguin India, 2022, p.37.
- [84] Amitendu Palit, Preety Bhogal, Fighting monopolies: the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative, India, and the competition for the marketplace of international development, *Asia Pacific Business Review*, 2022, p.9.

- [85] Shyam Saran, A Tough Neighbourhood, *India Today*, May 25, 2019, <https://www.indiatoday.in/magazine/cover-story/story/20190603-a-tough-neighbourhood-foreign-policy-1534289-2019-05-25>.
- [86] Global Fire power, 2022 Military Strength Ranking, <https://www.globalfirepower.com/countries-listing.php>.
- [87] India Third-largest Military Spender in the World after US & China, *The Times of India*, April 25, 2022, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-third-largest-military-spender-in-the-world-after-us-china/articleshow/91078839.cms>
- [88] India Third-largest Military Spender in the World after US & China, *The Times of India*, April 25, 2022, <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-third-largest-military-spender-in-the-world-after-us-china/articleshow/91078839.cms>
- [89] Qi Huaigao: *Peripheral Diplomacy and Security in the Context of China's Rising Power*, Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 2014, p.176.
- [90] Hu Zhiding, Ge Yuejing, Luo Huasong: Fundamentals of Geostrategy Development and Chinese Geostrategy, *World Geographic Research*, No.5, 2018, p.6.
- [91] Jianwei Wang, Tiang Boon Hoo, *China's Omnidirectional Peripheral Diplomacy*, Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Company, 2017, p.22.
- [92] Ren Fei: Indian Strategic Culture's Impact on National Security Strategy, *South Asian Studies*, No.2, 2009, p.15.
- [93] Ren Fei: Indian Strategic Culture's Impact on National Security Strategy, *South Asian Studies*, No.2, 2009, p.15.
- [94] Liu Fugui: The Indo-Pacific Strategy of the Trump Administration, *International Studies Reference*, No.6, 2018, p.33.