The Chinese-Indian New Cold War

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About CommandEleven

CommandEleven is a research organization focused on Pakistan's national security aspects and enhancing global understanding and collaboration opportunities for the nation.

Founded in 2015, CommandEleven provides situational awareness to facilitate a better understanding of the key dynamics that effect Pakistan from a national security perspective, especially in relation to terrorism, insurgencies and extremism.

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Theoretical Background

Relations between China and India have been souring over the past year since New Delhi agreed to an unprecedented military-strategic partnership last summer with Washington through LEMOA. The US long planned to use India as its "**Lead from Behind**" proxy in countering China, hoping to set the two Asian Great Powers against one in the ultimate divide-and-rule strategy of the 21st century.
Just as Washington courted Beijing against Moscow in the Old Cold War, it has revised the strategy with New Delhi against Beijing in the New Cold War. This policy has been largely successful through the US exploiting the Modi-Doval-Hindutva Deep State's obsessive fear and paranoia over China and Pakistan turning India into the unipolar vanguard against the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), and accordingly, the rest of Beijing's One Belt One Road (OBOR) global vision of New Silk Road connectivity.

The Indian-Japanese Alliance Against China

India recently **announced** that it opposes both game-changing ventures on supposed sovereignty violations, relying on a maximalist approach to the Kashmir conflict to "justify" this position. This amounts a declaration of strategic war against China, which in turn can be seen in hindsight as formalizing the New Cold War between them. This indirect competition for influence **began to unfold in 2015** and was responsible for the dynamic events which occurred in Nepal, Myanmar, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives at that time, but it now takes a qualitatively different form because India is also teaming up with Japan in order to boost the effectiveness of its efforts.

The two anti-Chinese states have joined forces to develop the "**Freedom Corridor**," a Japanese-assisted expansion of India's proposed "**Cotton Road**" all across the Indo-Pacific Rimland of Afro-Eurasia, and rival China's New Silk Road. The name – the "Freedom Corridor" – evokes the type of language commonly employed by the US, further signifying this initiative is in reality an American-inspired proxy strategy for the 21st century. In fact, the Chinese-Indian New Cold War in Afro-Eurasia is a major part of the global New Cold War playing out between the multipolar and unipolar worlds, respectively, but instead of being fought over ideology like the previous one in the last century, this rivalry is over connectivity corridors.

The Significance Of CPEC

The multipolar forces want to break through the stranglehold the US and its allies have over trade routes, while the unipolar ones want to reinforce this state of affairs in order to perpetuate their global systemic dominance. CPEC is the spine of the **emerging Multipolar World Order**, precisely because it allows China to acquire a reliable non-Malacca access route to the Indian Ocean, and from there to the European, Mideast, and increasingly, African marketplaces. There are, of course, other Silk Roads being built, notably the overland routes that China wants to construct to the Mideast and EU by means of Central Asia and Russia, respectively, but these are very vulnerable to the **Hybrid War** **template** of externally provoked identity conflict in the geostrategic transit states.

With CPEC, however, there's only one transit state to go through and it's a nuclear-equipped and militarily powerful one, which single-handedly defeated terrorism through the legendary Operation Zarb-e-Azb, hence Beijing's focus most of its efforts on prioritizing this route above all others, making it the top target of the US' destabilization efforts against OBOR.
This part of the New Cold War and its related Chinese-Indian component were comprehensively examined by the author in a series of articles enumerated in his **2017 forecast** for South Asia and a **video interview** given late last year on this topic.

Readers should refer to these two sources, if they're interested in learning more about this.

Thalassocracy vs Tellurocracy

Concept

Before proceeding any further, we must present a broad theoretical understanding of the larger geopolitical themes playing out in the Chinese-Indian New Cold War, as the rest of the research will explore their specificities more in depth and explain their particular relevance in various regional theatres.
Renowned Russian thinker Alexander Dugin conceptualizes geopolitics by "the struggle between thalassocracies and tellurocracies," or sea-based and land-based powers, respectively. According to him, *thalassocracies have historically employed a combination of diplomatic, economic, and military force to keep the Eurasian supercontinent divided*, which therefore had the effect of weakening the tellurocracies and perpetuated the global dominance of the sea-based powers. The US understood as being the premier leader of the thalassocracies, by virtue of its "global island" geography, and its allies all across the Eurasian Rimland, including the UK, India, and Japan.

Russia, on the other hand, is the epitome of a tellurocracy, strengthening its geostrategic significance through revolutionary partnerships with China, Pakistan, Iran, and Turkey, all of which are fellow land-focused powers.
To simplify everything into the contemporary geostrategic parlance, the ***thalassocracies are generally unipolar and want to retain or mildly tweak the existing world system which works out to their real or perceived benefit***, while the ***tellurocracies are multipolar and want to fundamentally change the global balance of power in order to make it more equitable and thereby bestow other states with a fair chance to succeed***.

To channel the geopolitical-philosophical teachings of Professor Dugin, the New Cold War boils down to the *tellurocracies seeking to tighten their integration with one another through ground-breaking infrastructure projects and collaborative diplomacy*, while *the thalassocracies are working overtime to undermine the strategic consolidation of Eurasia*. The latter can skilfully employ the methods of Hybrid War disrupting mainland Eurasian integration (as witnessed through the **Wars on Syria and Ukraine**), the tellurocracies are forced to rely on unipolar-dominated maritime trade routes across the Strait of Malacca, the Indian Ocean, Bab-el-Mandeb, and the Suez Canals until all of their continental connectivity projects become a reality.

This forced China, the most economically powerful of the land powers, to improve its maritime capabilities, explaining Beijing's aggressive territorial defense of South China Sea over the past few years.

PRACTICE

In response, the US encouraged its two thalassocratic allies on China's flanks, India and Japan, to enhance their naval power in kind and enter into an anti-Chinese partnership, explaining their cooperative maritime efforts in the Bay of Bengal and South China Seas, on both sides of the Indo-Chinese Peninsula, as well as their recently unveiled "Freedom Corridor," aiming to reduce the attractiveness of China's New Silk Roads. The US keenly understands China's need to urgently develop new markets and associated transport corridors in order to offload its overproduction, as failure would lead to the closing of state-supported factories and a resultant economic slowdown inside the People's Republic. Correspondingly, this could prompt socio-political unrest which might threaten China's stability and undermine the emerging Multipolar World Order, right inside one of its core territories.

For these pressing reasons, the tellurocratic powers have no choice but to support China's OBOR efforts – especially its CPEC and other maritime-related components – until the time comes, if ever, that complete and dependable mainland trade corridors are constructed all across the Eurasian landmass. This translates into the tellurocracies being compelled to engage in a naval counteroffensive against the thalassocracies to counteract the latter's disruptive Hybrid War plans inside the supercontinent, without involving military dimensions. The 'counteroffensive', for all intents and purposes, takes the form of OBOR, especially its existing maritime manifestations, and thalassocracies also shrewdly understand that any conventional military attack against their rival's trading assets on the high seas could set in motion a chain reaction that also undermines the viability of their own sea-dependent routes.

Therefore, the most pragmatic response for the time being is to compete with China's Silk Roads through the "Freedom Corridor" initiative.

COMPETITIVE CONNECTIVITY

The nature of the Chinese-Indian New Cold War is that both actors are poised to engage in competitive connectivity projects across the Indo-Pacific region of Afro-Eurasia, essentially expanding their previous South Asian-focused rivalry across a broad swath of the Eastern Hemisphere. India is utterly incapable of remotely presenting any sort of challenge to China, without receiving immense assistance from its American and Japanese allies. As a counter-measure, Washington constructed the "Containment Triangle" between itself, New Delhi, and Tokyo and encouraged their underlings to unveil the "Freedom Corridor" as the soft power cover for their designs. While giving the impression this joint Indian-Japanese counterproposal is strictly relegated to the economic and soft power realms; however, there's no escaping the fact that both parties' American overseer is a master at military and hard power projection, suggesting that the "Freedom Corridor" will have an unstated Hybrid War component backing it up.

The remainder of the research examines the three geographic domains of competitive connectivity between China's OBOR and India-Japan's "Freedom Corridor," outlining the rival infrastructure projects and forecasting how the US could employ various forms of Hybrid Warfare, in select theatres, to decisively disrupt China's projects, giving the advantage to its allies'.

We will prove, through the remainder of the research, that the Indian Ocean Region at the center of "**Greater South Asia**," is becoming the focal point of rivalry in the New Cold War, as the American thalassocratic hegemon harnesses all of its capabilities in confronting the rising hemispherically-influential, tellurocratic Chinese power in this key part of the world. The implications of the US' Indo-Japanese proxy face-off against China are expected to reverberate throughout all of Afro-Eurasia, therefore being of heightened consequence for Russia, envisioning itself as the supreme super-continental balancer.

Understandably, this makes the research relevant not just for Russia, but also each of its partners in the Southeast-South Asian, Mideast-Central Asian, and East African realms of rivalry between the US and China.

The forthcoming sections will analyse each of these theatres individually within the New Silk Road and "Freedom Corridor" projects, as well as the Hybrid War scenarios, which could be hatched by the US.

Finally, the last part of the study will conclude with some key insights into the geo-economic convergences between these two camps, including forecasted consequences that this will have on each of the host countries, as well as other overall details about the wider New Cold War in general.

We believe that this work can serve as an enlightening guide to understanding the contours of the emerging Multipolar World Order and the unipolar challenges which will continue to afflict it for the foreseeable future.

Reference Sources

Going forward, readers should the additional sections rely heavily on the author's own Hybrid War research across the past year in **Southeast Asia**, the "**Greater Heartland**" of Iran and Central Asia, and **Africa**, containing a multitude of detailed analyses and maps, more poignantly outlining some of the deeper concepts that will be introduced in this present research series.

For the sake of brevity and scope, they all can't be individually expanded upon in each pertinent chapter, therefore, the reader must reference them at their own leisure at **www.orientalreview.org**, if they wish to learn more about them.
In addition, the basis for the "Freedom Corridor" rests in the author's own analysis of the "**Cotton Route**" and an article in the India-based **Economic Times** online news outlet, with the former laying out the genesis for the project and the latter authoritatively reporting on some of its confirmed geographic components of this initiative. As such, just as with the author's Hybrid War works, readers are strongly encouraged to reference these two aforementioned sources before embarking on the rest of the research.

The Chinese-Indian New Cold War – Southeast and South Asia

Introduction

The first realm of rivalry to be explored between China and India is the interconnected strategic space of Southeast and South Asia. While geopolitically separate and not yet functionally integrated with one another, India's "Act East" policy of ASEAN engagement seeks to unite the two through valuable Japanese backing. Tokyo takes an interest in this region for both historic-imperialist and contemporary anti-Chinese 'pivot' reasons. The latter mainly to expand its existing heavy economic influence in Southeast Asia to political proportions in order to craft the aggressive perception that it's surrounding/containing China in its own backyard. The geography of the Indo-Chinese Peninsula provides the perfect convergence point for Indo-Japanese interest, serving as a natural bridge for both.

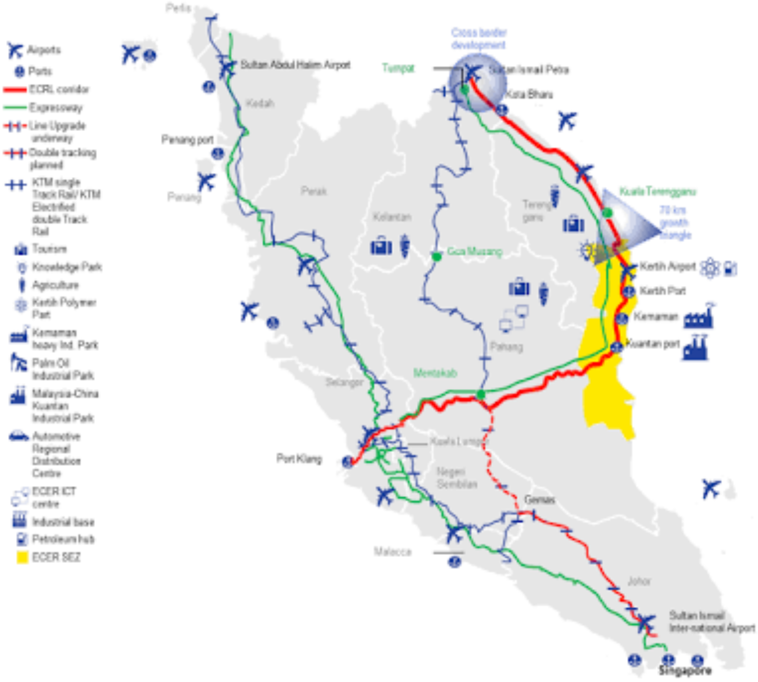
Therefore, Southeast Asia, particularly the Indochinese Peninsula, is a pivot space for joint Indo-Japanese interests in extending each respective member's influence beyond their traditional domains and into their allied neighbor's, with the intent of laying the strategic groundwork for developing a larger "China Containment Coalition" between middle-ground states in the future. This makes the mainland ASEAN states of Southeast Asia, Greater Mekong Sub-region, the immediate centerpiece of competition between China and the Indo-Japanese Axis. It also sets the stage for demonstrating the phased transition of strategic rivalry from this part of the supercontinent to South Asia. Geopolitically, Southeast Asia connects Japan to South Asia, which was the original starting point of the Chinese-Indian New Cold War, and both collectively form the South Eurasian Rimland zone of competition between the unipolar and multipolar worlds.

Moreover, this trans-regional space can also be reconceptualized as both the northern reaches of the Indian Ocean Region and the easternmost part of **Greater South Asia**, explained in a previous research work of the author's at the end of last year. It's important the readers understand the differing, albeit complementary, strategic perspectives for how the competitive connectivity projects in Southeast-South Asia can be perceived. This allows the expands their thought horizons and uncover different significances which might otherwise have remained hidden.

It will be proven how four projects in Myanmar, for example, actually serve as the infrastructure bridges connecting these two regions and their wider thematic concepts. It could be argued that Myanmar, and Thailand, maintain a certain leverage in dealing with both blocs of powers.

CHINESE PROJECTS

Beijing boasts three major New Silk Road projects in Southeast Asia.



ASEAN SILK ROAD

This high-speed rail corridor plans to connect the Yunnan capital of Kunming with Singapore via Laos and **Myanmar** (splitting into two separate sections at this juncture), Thailand, and Malaysia.

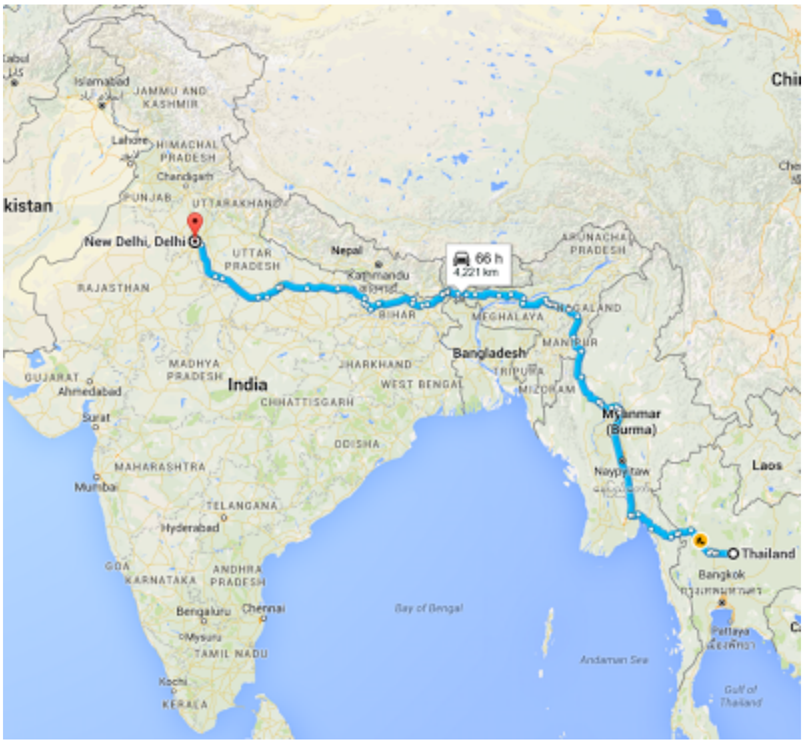
East Coast Rail Line

Instead of the long talked-about "Thai Canal", China has decided to build an **iron bridge** across the Malay Peninsula in connecting both coasts of continental Malaysia in order to get around the Strait of Malacca.

China-Myanmar Economic Corridor

Although the $20 billion rail plans for such an initiative were **scrapped** a few years ago by Myanmar's military government, it's still conceivable that the recently inaugurated Kyaukpyu-Kunming oil and gas pipelines could form the basis for a revived economic corridor sometime in the future.

INDO-JAPANESE PROJECTS (A.K.A. INDIA-MEKONG ECONOMIC CORRIDOR, IMEC)



TRILATERAL HIGHWAY

The embodiment of India's "Act East" policy is the construction of a highway from its Northeastern Provinces to Myanmar and Thailand, which New Delhi hopes will form a land bridge linking South Asia with ASEAN.

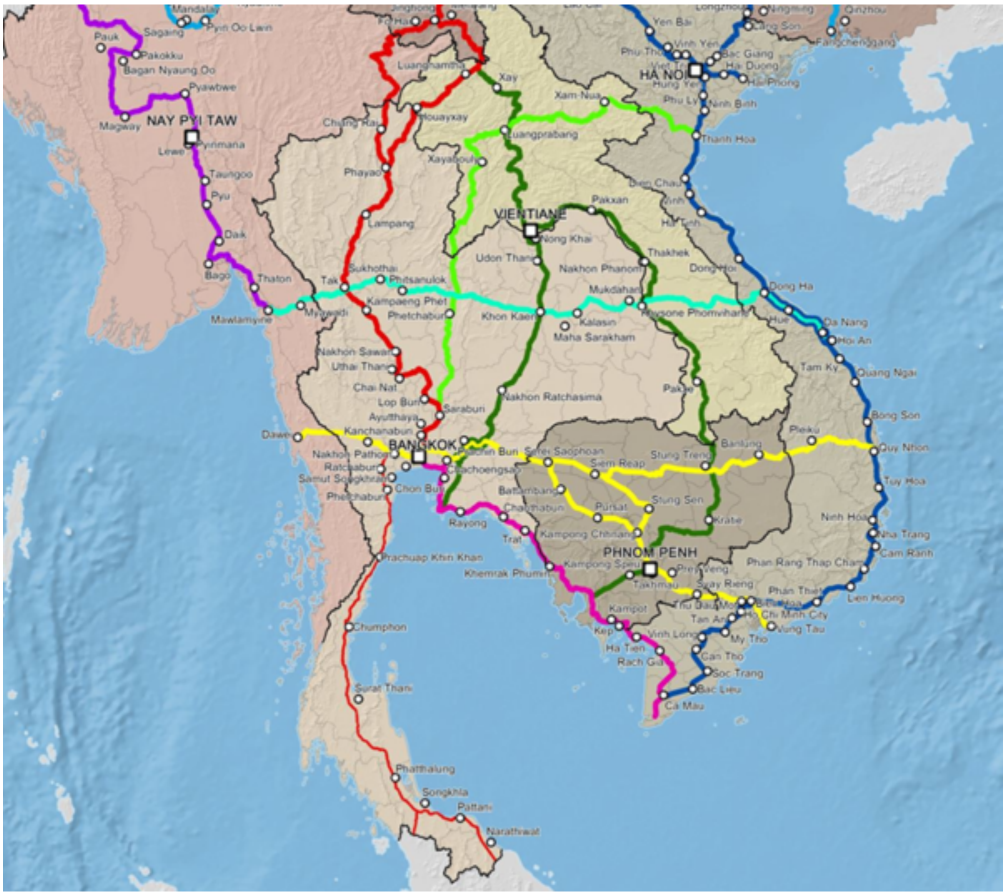
East-West & Southern Corridors

The website for the Region illustrates the East-West Corridor as running from the Myanmarese coastal city of Mawlamyine to the Vietnamese one of Da Nang by means of Thai and Laotian transit territory.

Alongside the abovementioned East-West Corridor, the Southern one links the Myanmarese port of Dawei with two Vietnamese ones, branching off in western Cambodia to form two distinct but complementary routes.

Cartographic Analysis

The below illustration is a rough depiction of the Silk and "Freedom" Corridors:



The map shows China's objective to facilitate non-Malacca access to the Indian Ocean, whether by two wholly overland routes of the ASEAN Silk Road and prospective China-Myanmar Economic Corridor, or the peninsular Malay bridge of the East Coast Rail Line. On the other hand, India wants to achieve mainland access to ASEAN via the Trilateral Highway and corresponding cross-regional expansion of the East-West Corridor, while Japan wants to use the same alongside its Southern Corridor counterpart to enable Indian-Japanese trade through the two trans-Indochinese routes.

While both sets of projects can peacefully coexist with each other due to the lack of actual competition when America's Lead from Behind strategy was initiated the potential for challenges coming in the Chinese initiatives is high, even if it hurts the interests of their regional allies.

The ideal situation would be the US turning a blind eye to China's Silk Roads in the greater interest of facilitating its own partners' projects in the shared transit states of Myanmar, Thailand, and Laos. However, a decision might be made by the permanent military, intelligence, and diplomatic bureaucracies, the Deep State, to foment, encourage, and/or guide domestic conflicts in each of these three in order to interfere with China's plans, despite the collateral damage that could be inflicted on India and Japan's.

Disruption Scenarios

Myanmar

Referencing the author's Hybrid War series, each of these three states has certain identity differences which make them vulnerable to violence. **Myanmar** is embroiled in the world's longest-running civil war, which is mostly active in the northern and eastern reaches of the country. Even in the event that the Bengali Muslim, Rohingya, succeed in carving out a South Asian **Kosovo** in Rakhine State, this could still be geographically contained and leave the centrally positioned Trilateral Highway unscathed, though inflicting tremendous damage on China's initiative(s).

Should Myanmar's Hybrid War heat up and interfere with India's land-based corridor, then this could be compensated by the multimodal sea-land-sea transport of the other two cross-regional projects of the *India-Mekong Economic Corridor (IMEC)*. Although they count the extreme vestiges of southeastern Myanmar as their terminal locations, this distant part of the country has been largely unaffected by the civil conflict and is easily defendable in any case, so it's unlikely that even the full-on collapse of the Myanmarese state would impact on their utility.

Thailand

Thailand is in a similar geostrategic position as Myanmar. Although the East-West Corridor is very promising and has the potential to more closely integrate the countries of Indo-China under a unipolar aegis. It is not indispensable and could be sacrificed by the US, if it thought the trade-off was necessary in order to sabotage China's ASEAN Silk Road. Even though the chances of this cynical strategy are low at the moment, there's a lot more that the US can gain by leaving Thailand alone than destabilizing it – a failed Color Revolution attempt to install a pro-American leadership to control China's projects by proxy might fail and give way to a regionally divisive Hybrid War.

Research shows that **Thailand** has a very strong identity-focused movement in the Laotian northeastern part of the country popularly known as Isan. The hyperlinked study speaks more thoroughly about the specifics, but the pro-American "red shirt" opposition, formerly the ruling party prior to the latest military coup in 2014, hails from this region and enjoys significant grassroots support. If the Kingdom ever descends into civil war, then both the ASEAN Silk Road and East-West Corridor might no longer be traversable or even capable of being constructed, though the Southern Corridor would probably be safe from any conventional threats.

Laos

This landlocked country isn't as strategic as the other two, though fulfils a much more substantial purpose for China than the Indo-Japanese Axis, as a much more stable transit alternative than Myanmar for the ASEAN Silk Road. **Laos**, however, is beset by a multitude of identity differences which in truth aren't even scientifically quantifiable because of the government's reluctance to individually classify them, instead opting to group the endemic population according to the three geographic categorizations of “lowland”, “midland”, or “upland”.

In any case, although the specifics of any potential destabilization might not be known at this moment, any developments which lead Laos in this direction would impact on China much more significantly than India-Japan because of the state’s irreplaceable role on the ASEAN Silk Road. Even in the worst-case scenario that a domestic conflict spread to the southeastern-most reaches of Laos hosting the East-West Corridor, then that project could be “sacrificed” because the Southern Corridor through Cambodia could easily take its place.

THE CHINESE-INDIAN NEW COLD WAR – SOUTHEAST AND SOUTH ASIA – PART II

INTRODUCTION

The two geostrategic bridges linking South and Southeast Asia are India's Trilateral Highway and a joint Indo-Japanese investment projects in India's Andaman and Nicobar Islands. The first one is ultimately dispensable if Myanmar's civil war either spiralled out of control or was deliberately aggravated by the US, while the second one remains the enduring focal point of the Indo-Japanese Axis' transregional connectivity plans.

This highly strategic location allows Japan to exert influence on the Bay of Bengal and protect the coastal Myanmarese termini points of the East-West and Southern Corridors if it so desired. These Indian-administered islands also allow New Delhi, and its Tokyo ally, to keep a watchful eye on the western reaches of the Strait of Malacca and China's Kyaukpyu project(s) to a limited extent, thereby giving it triple significance in view of the unipolar camp's strategy in the transregional Southeast-South Asian space.

As mentioned in the theoretical background of the Chinese-Indian New Cold War, India and Japan see Indochina as a landmass straddling the Indian Ocean and South China Sea, and therefore serving as a bridge connecting one unipolar Great Power with the other via their newfound partnership.

India is becoming more active on one side of Indochina in the South China Sea, as Japan is doing the same in the Bay of Bengal. It is interesting to note how this incipient process will impact South Asia, and potentially diminishing the Chinese merchant and military navy's strategic freedom in this part of Greater South Asia. In the maritime sense, OBOR envisions linking the Myanmarese and Malaysian (both East Coast Rail Line and conventional Strait of Malacca) points of access with Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and beyond, but the southern approach through Malaysia (whether multimodal [ECRL] or wholly sea-based) is entirely influenced by the Indo-Japanese Axis' presence in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

China wants to take the lead in establishing a quadrilateral trading arrangement in the Bay of Bengal between Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Myanmar, and Malaysia, preferably with its pertinent infrastructure projects playing the key role in this multipolar network, while India and Japan want to obstruct this or at the very least be able to completely monitor developments, maintaining a position of power to alter them if needed. Bangladesh, for **all** of the **promise** that it has to behave as a sovereign state in adroitly balancing between Beijing and New Delhi, has pretty much fallen under New Delhi's strategic sway, so the prospects are dim that Dhaka will be able to play a key role in China's arrangement. Sri Lanka is in no such position, as it's masterfully courting both unipolar and multipolar infrastructure projects in order to maximize its geostrategic position and ensure its long-term stability. The island is equally important to both camps as a way point in trans-Indian Oceanic trade and any destabilization there would be to the detriment of both parties. Having described the maritime connectivity competition in the Bay of Bengal, it's time to see what it actually looks like:

As can plainly be seen, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands allow the Indo-Japanese Axis to control access to and from the Bay of Bengal and the Strait of Malacca, as well as to protect the two coastal termini points for the East-West and Southern Corridors in Myanmar. However, the extent of their influence projection is limited and doesn't fully extend over the western part of the bay, which indicates that the successful completion of the proposed China-Myanmar Economic Corridor could still allow for the partial realization of this quadrilateral arrangement without fear of total maritime obstruction/surveillance by India and Japan. As important as this maritime component of OBOR is, it's not the only manifestation of China's connectivity plans in South Asia, as there are also three mainland elements, though only one is reliable.

China's South Asian Silk Roads

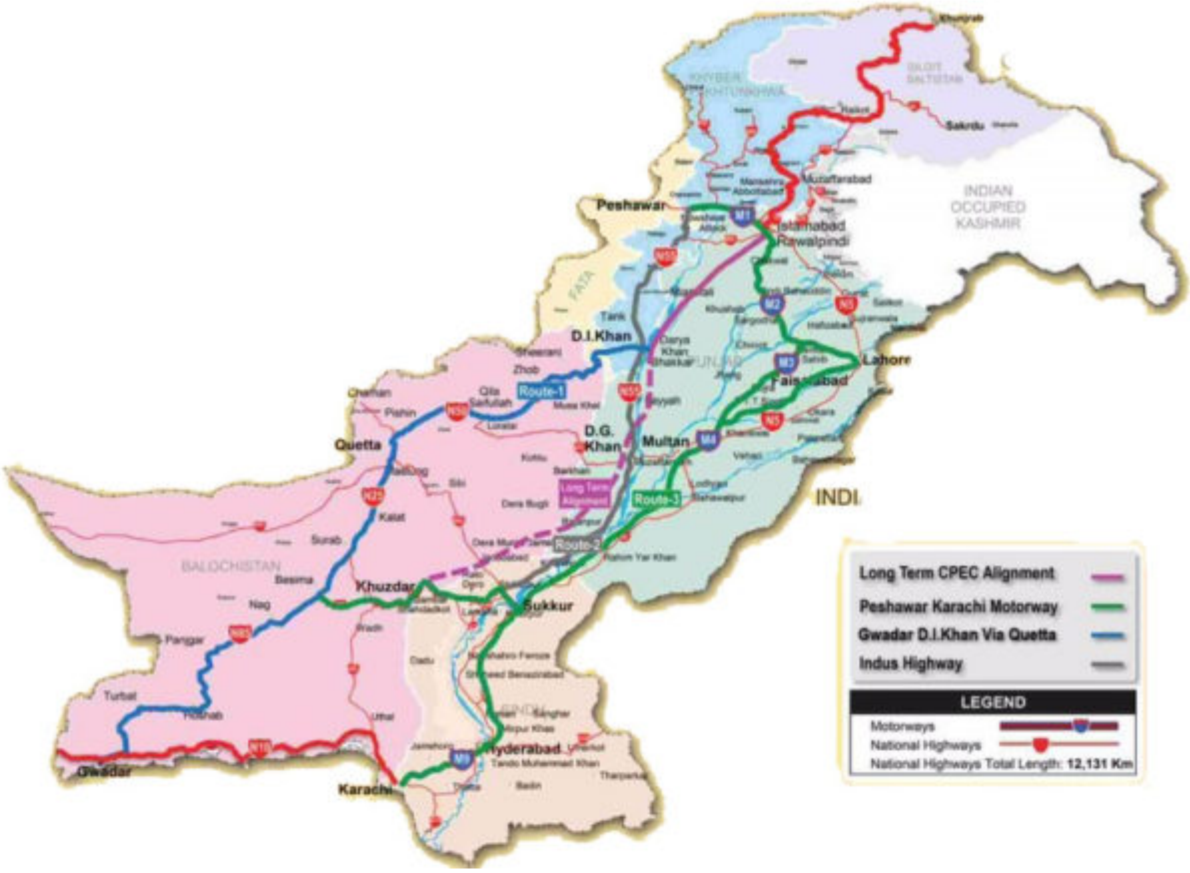
Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor

The BCIM was a proposed but long-stalled initiative to link some of the most underdeveloped regions of the four member countries together, and it also represents the only joint Chinese-Indian infrastructure project ever seriously considered.

Himalayan Silk Road

China **plans** to construct an $8 billion railway under the Himalayas in connecting its Tibet Autonomous Region with Nepal, which could then see the People's Republic make clever use of the Indian-Nepali Free Trade Agreement to transship its goods into India.

CPEC



This game-changing economic corridor is the **Zipper of Pan-Eurasian Integration** and could ultimately function as the **Convergence Point of Civilizations**, and it's suggested that the reader review those two cited works to become more familiar with these interlinked concepts.

CARTOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

Here's what China's South Asian Silk Roads look like:

There are three different avenues of mainland approach, each beginning in a separate autonomous region or province. The Autonomous Regions of Xinjiang and Tibet are the points of contact with Pakistan and Nepal, respectively, while the Province of Yunnan is the starting point for engagement with Myanmar. The last two projects – the Himalayan Silk Road and BCIM – hold the potential of **converging** in the West Bengal capital of Kolkata and forming a development loop if India ever decided to join, though that probably won't happen as the ruling Modi-Doval-Hindutva Deep State remains in power. As for CPEC, India is absolutely opposed to the project on all counts, and is even using terrorists against it, conclusively proven through the conviction of seasoned Hybrid War operative, Kulbhushan Jadhav.

India's intransigent attitude towards China's New Silk Roads stems both from the hyper-nationalist jingoism of its leadership, which in turn feeds off of an obsessive paranoia about China and Pakistan, and a deep fear that the People's Republic will flood the subcontinent's markets with all of its overcapacity and decimate local businesses. Pursuant to the Hindutva jingoism preached by the BJP, India's leadership truly believes that its historic moment has arrived and that the country can seriously compete with China all across the board, which is why it's pushing so hard for the *Make in India* program, Freedom Corridor, and other such development initiatives. At the same time, India has no qualms about using Chinese investment to achieve its objectives, while opposing any large-scale and direct commercial relations with its neighbor.

Not only is India against China establishing any reliable trade corridors with it, but as the aspiring regional hegemon, per the geopolitical manifestation of the Hindutva ideology, New Delhi is bullying its neighbors to prevent Beijing from doing the same with them. This is why India has taken an active role in courting Sri Lanka lately, for example, as well as pushing the advance of the neo-colonization of Bangladesh. New Delhi is also very suspicious of Naypyidaw's efforts to deepen ties with Beijing, especially since de-facto ruler Suu Kyi was thought to have been vehemently anti-Chinese before she entered into power. What irks India the most, however, is the rapid progress made in Nepali-Chinese relations over the past two years. New Delhi senses its greatest regional vulnerability here due to the possible Chinese exploitation of the Indian-Nepali Free Trade Agreement to access the neighboring 220 million-large Uttar Pradesh marketplace and from there the rest of the country.

Disruption Scenarios

Just like in Southeast Asia, there are also several Hybrid War vulnerabilities which could be triggered – whether deliberately or through their 'natural occurrence' – to scuttle China's Silk Road plans, which would lead to a relative victory for the Modi-Doval-Hindutva Deep State, at the predictable expense of the Indian masses' socio-economic development.

In brief, here are the scenarios which could feasibly transpire or are already unfolding in the region:

BCIM

Every one of the member countries, except China, has a serious identity-centric vulnerability, which could be lead to the destruction of this project, if it was ever revived. Myanmar's civil war is the most obvious obstacle in that country's case, while the **complicated situation** in India's Northeastern Provinces, especially as it relates to the Nagalim cause of Naga unification, poses a very real risk to the transnational economic corridor. As for Bangladesh, the upsurge in militant Islamic terrorism over the past two years gave credence to the author's late-2015 appellation of the country as "**Bangla-Daesh**", and a worsening security situation in the country could spell doom for any integration projects crossing through its territory.

None of these scenarios are coveted by India, since each of them could directly blow back and destabilize the situation within its own borders. If anything, India is expected to exploit its self-proclaimed role in furtherance of its own hegemony in the northeastern reaches of the Bay of Bengal region. From the reverse perspective, however, these conflict variables could be manipulated by another power, like the US, who has an interest in undermining any possible Chinese-Indian rapprochement in the event that both sides overcome their present New Cold War contradictions. For this reason, it's important that outside observers keep an eye on these factors in order to monitor their development and attempt to figure out whether any signs of conflict are "naturally occurring" or externally encouraged.

Himalayan Silk Road

Nepal is a country dangerously teetering on the edge of civil war, still recovering from the late 2015 crippling blockade, which was supported by India. The Indian-born, and –descended, Madhesi borderland community in the southern Terai plains are supported by New Delhi, and their ancestral homeland enacted the embargo against its northern neighbor in support of its proxies' violent riots against Nepal's new federal constitution. The crisis narrowly avoided spilling over into a second civil war due to Kathmandu entering into a political compromise with the agitators, but the identity tensions still remain unresolved in this sharply divided country, and could easily be exploited by India again to destabilize the Nepali government.

This could lead to a situation where the Chinese opt against building the Himalayan Silk Road through a conflict-prone country, and/or a pro-Indian/or outright Indian-descended leader coming to power after the present authorities are deposed by a Hybrid War and eliminates the project altogether. The one thing likely disinclining India away from immediately pursuing this scenario is there's no telling whether or not the expected chaos in Nepal could be managed, meaning that arms and fighters could possibly ferry back and forth across the Indian-Nepali border, inadvertently leading to the destabilization of the country's largest province of Uttar Pradesh. It should be assumed that all sorts of anti-state riffraff are already running around this state of 220 million people, but they could receive a fresh impetus in their criminal activities, if a deteriorating situation in neighboring Nepal presented fresh physical and situational opportunities for them.

CPEC

This project is the centerpiece of the emerging Multipolar World Order and geographically in the middle arc of the Indian Ocean Region, so its geostrategic importance in the 21st century shouldn't be underestimated in any regards. India and the US are hell bent on either destroying CPEC, or increasing the physical and security costs of doing business along it so the route becomes commercially unviable. To this end, they're attacking the project on 3 fronts via various proxy mechanisms. The first one is more 'traditional' and has to do with Afghan-originating terrorists which have either infiltrated across the border into the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) or are activated sleeper cells. There's nothing historically unique in this method, but it led to the desired Indian results in the 2000s, which is why New Delhi is once more relying on this tried-and-tested approach.

The second one is less visible than the first, and much more difficult to attribute to the US and India, but it's nonetheless very effective, and might serve to be the most destabilizing approach in the long run. This is the information war that's being waged inside of Pakistan by irresponsible *useful idiot* media outlets/journalists, which suck up the foreign-originating propaganda against CPEC and disseminate it to the masses through indigenous voices. There are legitimate concerns against this, and any other project, but there's a distinct difference between opposing certain aspects of CPEC because of possible environmental consequences and outright condemning the entire initiative as a *"Sinofied neocolonial version of the UK's notorious East India Company"*, for instance.

The weaponized fomenting of popular discontent might not be enough alone to damage the project. The more concerning is the renewed federalism discourse that has emerged in some circles. Argued on the basis that each province should be able to regulate CPEC tariffs across their internal borders however they see fit, it is a disastrous scheme, which relies on the manipulation of uneducated, though seemingly attractive, populist sentiment to craft an unworkable political-economic framework. The bitter intra-provincial competition over tariffs would instantly diminish CPEC's attractiveness and create problems with China on the state-to-state level. After all, China presumed that all of its CPEC-related dealings would be conducted directly with Pakistan, not with each individual provincial capital, as the latter could attempt to counteract previous state agreements.

Finally, the last Hybrid War scenario being directed against CPEC, the use of terrorism to throw Baluchistan into bedlam, has been operational throughout 2016-17. The arrest and conviction of seasoned Indian Hybrid War veteran, Kulbhushan Jadhav, testifies to the amount of attention New Delhi is placing in destabilizing this province, as does Modi's **provocative statement** about Baluchistan in August 2016 during the commemoration of his country's independence. Apart from that, India supports cross-border terrorism involving Pakistani Baluchistan, with the intent of sparking a regional state-to-state conflict, as was the intention behind the late-April killing of 10 Iranian border guards by what were presumed to be Pakistan-originating, but Indian-backed, terrorists. Similar tactics are also being applied against Afghanistan for the same purposes.

Overall, however, the Baluchistan factor is the one which serves as an introduction to the Mideast and Central Asia.

When referring to the Mideast, we meant Iran, in this case, which is poised to host competitive connectivity projects from both China and India. The Islamic Republic also serves as India's gateway to Central Asia and New Delhi's Afghan ally, and as it's Beijing's largest partner beyond the Central Asian states. What is directly pertinent to the present discourse is that the easternmost Iranian province is Sistani Balochistan, one of the three components of transnational Baluchistan, with the first being in Pakistan, and the last being in southern Afghanistan, though without its own political-administrative territory.

India's destabilization of Pakistani Baluchistan will inevitably spill over the border into Iranian Baluchistan, though it'll be revealed how adverse consequences are surprisingly manageable in the cynical sense.

THE CHINESE-INDIAN NEW COLD WAR – MIDDLE EAST & CENTRAL ASIA

INTRODUCTION

The next section of the study looks at the transregional Mideast-Central Asian space, commonly known as West-Central Asian, similar in a structural connectivity sense to Southeast-South Asia, since both China and India have large-scale plans to link these two regions together via their signature projects. China must pass through Central Asia en route to the Mideast, while India must go through the Mideast to reach Central Asia. Iran, Central Asia, and Afghanistan all act as pivot points for both countries, but only if they succeed in moving beyond the aforementioned primary points of entry and connecting to the other areas.

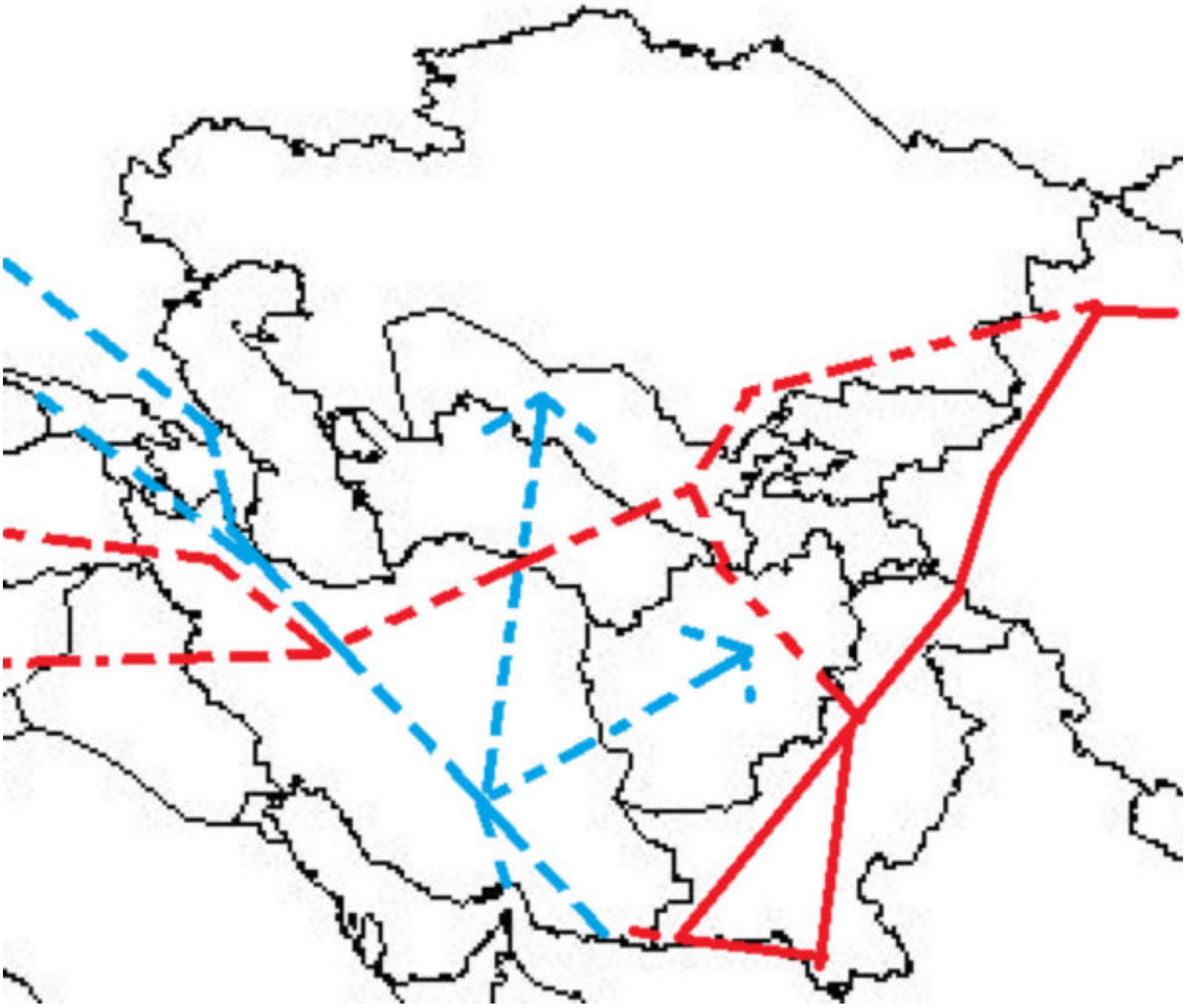
It's possible that all of the connectivity projects in the West-Central Asian space could be integrated with one another in forming a unified series of Eurasian trade routes, though this prospect is increasingly dim as the Chinese-Indian New Cold War heats up. Additionally, there's a very real chance that some of the projects will be offset by the outbreak of Hybrid War in one, some, or all of the host domains, further decreasing the odds this ideal scenario will ever transpire. At the end of the last section, we suggested that the transnational region of Baluchistan could provide the most workable starting point for any cooperative venture, as there has already been talk of connecting CPEC's terminal port of Gwadar with the North-South Corridor's one of Chabahar, although joint US-Indian destabilization efforts in the Pakistani province could very well spill across the border and disrupt New Delhi's prized project.

Ironically, this might not be as immediately disastrous to India, nor Iran, as one would initially expect.

While considering the connectivity routes in the cartographic analysis, readers should bear in mind, the easternmost province of Sistani-e-Baluchestan is scarcely populated and largely cut off from the rest of the country. On one hand, this indicates an area craving development and would do well integrated in the larger regional and global economies. On the other hand, however, it also means that any collateral damage from the Hybrid War on CPEC is also more easily managed than if it spilled across elsewhere.

CARTOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS

In order to aid the reader's understanding of this issue and the many others which pertain to the West-Central Asian space, below is a representation of China and India's connectivity projects in this theatre:



The map shows the Chinese (red) and Indian (blue) projects, both planned (hashed) and actual (solid). China has sent rail cargo to Afghanistan and Iran via Central Asia, but those two routes have been excluded from the above illustration, because they consist of already-built infrastructure and aren't directly related to the China's competitive connectivity projects. Rather, the only project entering into operation is CPEC, which has two sub-integrational spokes and one major one.

CPEC's Two Spokes

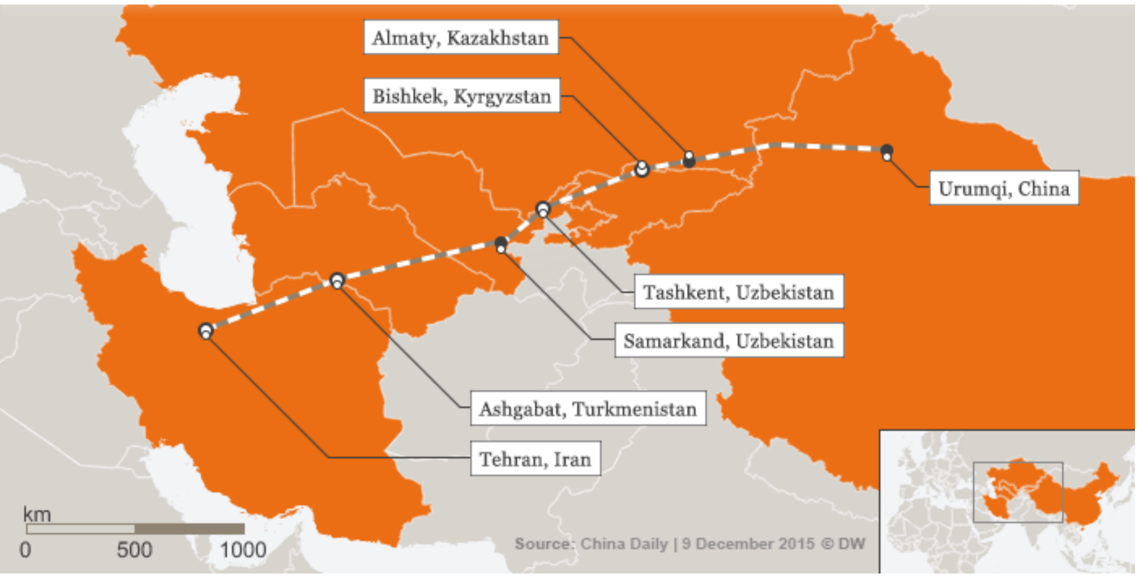
The first potential expansion of CPEC could be from Gwadar to Chabahar, the Indian-financed port being built in the southeastern-most corner of Iran's Sistani-e-Baluchestan, as the access point for New Delhi's North-South Transportation Corridor (NSTC). Tehran has signalled its willingness for this linkage to happen, though New Delhi has expectedly been against it, making it's unclear whether the two megaprojects will ever unite. This will be covered in more detail later in this section when discussing the consequences that could result from India's destabilization operations in Pakistan's Baluchistan spilling over the Iranian border.

The other most realistic extension of CPEC is to forge an Islamabad-Peshawar-Jalalabad-Kabul-Mazar-i-Sharif Corridor, the AfPak Corridor, which would eventually reach the Uzbek city of Samarkand. This Central Asian city is expected to be a key juncture on the China-Central Asia-Mideast Economic Corridor, the China-Iran Silk Road. The AfPak Corridor, while perfect on paper, is unfeasible in practice due to Kabul being fully influenced by jointly US-India, which prevents the landlocked country from pursuing an independent and pragmatic foreign policy.

Both external actors have convinced their Afghan leadership proxies that Pakistan is their enemy, meaning that as this ruling clique is in power, no progress can be expected on this route. This is unfortunate because Afghanistan's Chinese-supported connectivity to Pakistan and Central Asia could lift millions of its war-beleaguered citizenry out of poverty and rebuild the country. For the time being, this will be the state of affairs, which can clearly be understood as deliberately manufactured in order to perpetuate AfPak tensions and therefore exploit Kabul as a Hybrid War proxy against Islamabad, in terms of the broader picture.

For the reader to better understand the overall symbolism and the objective importance of the AfPak corridor to Pakistan's leadership, they need an understanding of regional history. Pakistan and Central Asia, which includes Afghanistan, have had prolonged and intense civilizational exchanges since the arrival of Babur from Uzbekistan and Durrani from Afghanistan many centuries ago to today's Pakistan. There is a lingering historical memory, which pervades Pakistan and inspires a strategic vision of reconnecting these two regions. China's New Silk Roads provide the vehicle for actualizing these ambitions, helping Pakistan pivot towards the northern reaches of *Greater South Asia*, in response to India's sabotage of the traditional SAARC-format late last year.

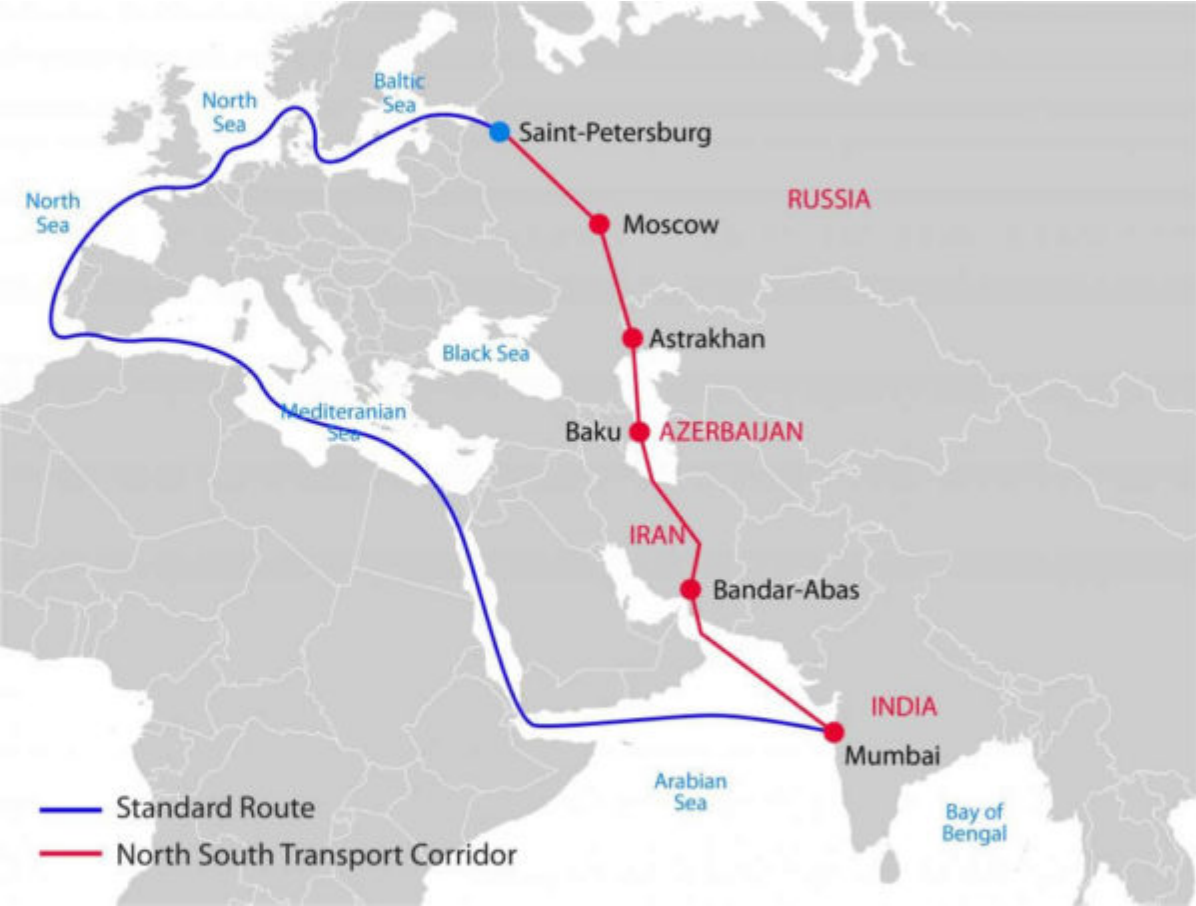
CHINA-IRAN SILK ROAD



The third spoke of CPEC is a stand-alone project, though it's connected with the Pakistani one via shared connectivity points in the Chinese Autonomous Province of Xinjiang and perhaps one day through the AfPak Corridor's terminal point in the Uzbek city of

Samarkand. The guiding idea is to connect China and Iran by means of Central Asia, and expand the project to Turkey and the EU, but also Iraq and Syria, with the latter looking ever less likely due to each state's politically fragmented status in the present day. The China-Iran Silk Road would also increase Tehran's influence in the former Soviet Republics, something which has made Moscow very sensitive in the past, but might eventually come to reconsider at Beijing's suggestion.

THE NORTH-SOUTH TRANSPORT CORRIDOR (NSTC)



The Indian-led NSTC project aims to develop a multimodal transport route linking the subcontinent with the EU by means of Iran, Azerbaijan, and Russia. That is the main purpose of the project, though there are three sub-motivations, which are equally important for New Delhi and Tehran.

The first two are directly related to Central Asia and Afghanistan, and why India wants to use Chabahar as a platform for reaching these two areas, countering Chinese influence. Iran's interests are organically seeing its influence expanding in neighboring regions, which had been part of its imperial realm, if it can serve as India's gateway to these destinations. Unlike the past, Iran doesn't want to directly control them, rather contributing to their socio-economic development, potentially with an unstated desire to peacefully export its Islamic Republic model of governance.
The remaining branch of the NSTC is interestingly driven by Iran, not India, though New Delhi would also benefit from it. Tehran recently **announced** it wants to streamline a

corridor to the Black Sea, implying that the NSTC could be expanded to Armenia and Georgia in order to do so. This would result in both Iran and India being able to trade directly with the EU via the Black Sea-abutting Balkan countries of Romania and Bulgaria, completely cutting Russia out of the equation. It's not that these two states aren't serious about using the NSTC as a platform for deepening their ties with Moscow, but they want to diversify the route to not become solely dependent in the event a future intensification of the New Cold War results in more stringent sanctions against Russia, deterring third-party traders (Iran and India) from transiting across it en route to the EU.

On the other hand, from the perspective of realpolitik, Iran and India might have some ulterior motives in advancing the Black Sea leg of the NSTC. If one or both of these two Great Powers ever has a falling out with Russia – for example, Iran comes to believe that Russia "outwitted" it or "sold it out" in Syria and/or India makes an unheeded ultimatum to Russia to cut off ties with Pakistan and downgrade them with China – then it wouldn't necessarily mean that their dreams of EU connectivity are forever shattered. Instead of forced reliance on Russia as an irreplaceable transit state, India and Iran would have the choice to avoid it altogether by means of their Black Sea detour, while putting implicit economic pressure along Russia's sensitive southern periphery.

Considering the future strategic possibilities of an Iranian-Indian fallout with Russia and the former's desire to avoid the latter, it's possible to conceive a scenario where Iran and India cooperate on the NSTC with the deliberate intention of undermining Moscow, without affect Beijing, since Tehran recognizes the potential gain from pragmatic cooperation with China, in spite of its passive support of India's Hybrid War on CPEC from its territory, as per Kulbhushan Jadhav's case. It's in Iran's best interests to function as a stable geo-economic bridge between its Russian, Chinese, and Indian Great Power partners, which eventually lead to a consensus in the future to admit the Islamic Republic into the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO).

DESTABILIZATION SCENARIOS

It should be noted in advance that each of the following scenarios could very easily spread cross-border in destabilizing the target state's neighbors and thereby prompting a chain reaction which could lead to a (trans-)regional crisis:

CENTRAL ASIA

UZBEKISTAN

The former Soviet transit states linking China with Iran can easily be destabilized by Daesh and other related/allied terrorist groups, especially those directly targeting the centrally positioned pivot state of Uzbekistan, which importantly abuts each of the other four Central Asian Republics. The previous fears of political uncertainty due to the death of former long-serving President Islam Karimov appear to have been misplaced, though that's not to fault the analysts making such predictions. The opacity of the Uzbek *Deep State* (permanent military, intelligence, and diplomatic bureaucracies) understandably prompted a lot of speculation about clannish and ministerial infighting, though whether such risks are still present or not, the fact remains that they were crucially surmounted in the immediate aftermath of Karimov's passing. The Uzbek *Deep State's* display of unity during this crucial moment was the main reason why the country avoided the dire scenarios which were previously forecasted.

TAJIKISTAN

The same **deep state unity or commonality of purpose** isn't present in neighboring, and much weaker, Tajikistan, which will sooner or later have to confront the inevitable passing of aging long-term leader Emomali Rakhmon. Tajikistan emerged from a five-year civil war in 1997, which is recognized as being the bloodiest post-Soviet conflict by far, and the past couple of years have seen the country troubled by an upsurge in terrorist threats emanating from Afghanistan. Russia is more actively involved in monitoring the Tajik-Afghan border than it was during the mid-2000s, when Dushanbe said it no longer needed Moscow's assistance in this regard, so Russia's proactive engagement in Tajikistan should be able to mitigate the worst scenarios. Moreover, the Central Asian country is also a member of the CSTO mutual defense organization alongside Russia, and Moscow has a powerful motivation to protect its ally, not least because so many migrant workers come from this country and it's imperative that no sleeper cells infiltrate Russia under this cover.

TURKMENISTAN

Turkmenistan, however, isn't a member of the CSTO, nor of the SCO, so it's doubly unable to defend itself in the event that Daesh crosses the Afghan border. Although this eventuality appears minimal for the time being, it could be counteracted through the de-facto imposition of "buffer zones" along the frontier manned by Turkmen and other Central Asian peoples native to northern Afghanistan.

In the event that is unsuccessful in thwarting any potential attack, Turkmenistan – the key transit state between China and Iran – could be totally destabilized because most of its copious natural gas reserves are located within relatively close proximity to Afghanistan, meaning that a blitzkrieg-like offensive along the nearby river oases might be enough to repeat the *Syraq* scenario of 2014, which saw the collapse of law and order in that particular borderland region.

FERGANA VALLEY

The last feasible destabilization scenario, which could unfold in Central Asia, is the most likely of the four mentioned ones – another outbreak of violence in the ethnically and geopolitically divided Fergana Valley. Split across Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan, the Fergana Valley is the most densely and largely populated part of the region, meaning the most probable conflict template could end up being clashes between Uzbeks and Kyrgyz, like Kyrgyzstan's 2010 Color Revolution, giving a brief and bloody descent into Hybrid War.
Due to the presence of several ethnic enclaves within the territory of the neighboring states, what would ordinarily start as isolated local incidents could very quickly escalate into bitter state-to-state tensions, and perhaps even shift into a regional crisis. This dangerously presents a plethora of Hybrid War scenarios in Central Asia, which will require deep state coordination and trust between all sides to prevent, as well as the diligent and responsible oversight of Russia, China, and even Iran, the three most directly interested Great Power stakeholders in the Eurasian Heartland.

IRAN - BALUCHISTAN

The Islamic Republic is wrought with multiple Hybrid War vulnerabilities owing to its ethno-religiously diverse civilizational heritage.

Beginning with the southeastern province of Sistani-e-Baluchestan inevitably get sucked into the Hybrid War on CPEC, as the Indian-backed destabilization of Pakistani Baluchistan spills over the border. One would ordinarily expect this would be something that Iran's leadership wants to avoid at all costs, and truth be told, it's not exactly a scenario the country wants, but that's not to say that Tehran wouldn't be able to manage this eventuality either.

Iran has a very ambiguous relationship with Pakistan, due to lingering distrust from the post-revolutionary (1979) period. Although relations have visibly improved, the late-April killing of 10 Iranian border guards by presumably Pakistan-originating Indian Hybrid War terrorists caused Tehran to engage in some hostile saber-rattling against Islamabad, thereby showing how **easily misled/deceived Iran can be by India's clandestine manipulations** and demonstrating the delicate nature of bilateral relations with Pakistan. However, if a larger scenario unfolds whereby India either succeeds in totally conning Iran into its own Cold War with Pakistan or getting it to implicitly go along with New Delhi's, then it's possible that Tehran might accept that the most far-flung part of its territory could become embroiled in a low-intensity blowback conflict to a certain degree.

The greatest concern that observers have previously expressed is this would **undermine India's own NSTC** because of Chabahar's vulnerable location, though that doesn't exactly have to be the case. This Indian-developed port city is important solely because of its maritime and mainland geographic convenience in having direct non-Hormuz/-bottlenecked access to the high seas and being within close proximity to Afghanistan and Central Asia (which India wants to penetrate). In the event that Chabahar becomes undesirable of blowback from India's Hybrid War on CPEC, then it's possible for the project to be relocated to the already developed port of Bandar Abbas, though with the trade-off being that it's now susceptible to the Strait of Hormuz's bottlenecked geopolitics and further away from Central Asia and Afghanistan.

While these might seem like undesirable strategic conditions, they don't mean that India and Iran's NSTC dreams (whether to connect with Russia and/or utilize the Black Sea 'detour') are finished. Since a low likelihood exists that the US and its GCC allies would interfere with Indian-EU trade via Iran, however distasteful and troublesome they may find it, especially if either party enters into a serious disagreement with Russia that they rely on the Black Sea detour as the NSTC's main access route, thereby avoiding Washington's chief adversary and inadvertently fulfilling one of the US' unipolar grand strategic objectives of isolating Russia.

As for how this would relate to both parties' prospects for further integrating with the Central Asian Republics and Afghanistan, all that the relocation of their project's starting point would mean is that longer and more expensive transport corridors would have to be built and modernized to reach them. Other than that, nothing of serious consequence has changed, and plans can still proceed as expected, though with an additional financial burden which might delay their implementation. Therefore, in terms of the larger perspective, Iran could withstand any collateral damage from its indirect participation in the Hybrid War on CPEC (whether in being tricked by India to worsen relations with Pakistan or passively accepting the blowback from New Delhi's operations).

Azeris

The second main front where Iran's connectivity projects could be destabilized from is Azerbaijan, which shares a land border with the Islamic Republic and whose ethnic nationals are estimated to comprise roughly 25% of the country's population. Right now, both states are experiencing a renaissance of relations with one another which could mostly be attributed to Russia's discrete peacemaking efforts as the Balancer of Eurasia, but the state of affairs were never this peaceful. Throughout most of the century thus far, ties between the two were quite tense, owing largely to Baku's relations with Washington and Tel Aviv, which Tehran understandably viewed with suspicion. Any return, for whatever reason and under whichever pretexts, to those geopolitical circumstances would completely ruin the prospects for the NSTC's transit through Azerbaijan and thenceforth Russia, and prompt the project's redirection through Baku's Armenian rival and Georgia en route to directly reaching the EU instead.

Furthermore, in reference to the fact that approximately a quarter of Iran's population is ethnically Azeri, there's also the lingering possibility in the minds of the country's decision makers that Baku – whether acting on its own or on behalf of its (former?) American and

Israeli patrons – could try to encourage a Southern Azerbaijan separatist movement in order to *"right the historical wrongs of Greater Azerbaijan's division" between the Russian Empire and Persia*. Anecdotal information indicates that most Azeris are complacent living in Iran and have totally integrated into the country's socio-political life, but there always remains the chance that this powerful identity factor could be exploited in order to spark a Hybrid War crisis. In addition, it could also be that a third party manipulates this scenario in order to fan the flames of separatism and/or falsely implicate Baku for having such designs, which could end up achieving the same result in getting Iran to seriously consider redirecting the NSTC away from Azerbaijan and Russia and wholly in the direction of the Black Sea detour through Armenia and Georgia.
Of critical importance, it's not forecasted that the onset of this particular scenario would automatically lead to terrorist attacks against the newly rerouted NSTC, since the US would probably want to facilitate multimodal Indian-EU trade circumventing Russia despite the distastefulness of relying on Iran as the irreplaceable transit state, which means that the detour will probably remain a safe alternative for New Delhi.

"Green" Color Revolution

The last scenario that could occur to disrupt, control, or influence the competitive connectivity routes running through Iran would be a "Green Revolution 2.0," which could lead to the installation of a pro-American government. This eventuality is the most improbable of the aforementioned but still deserves to be commented upon because of the large-scale impact that it would have.

The existing authorities don't even have to be completely replaced, as all that's really needed is for the Western-friendly reformists/moderates to command enough influence that they obtain control of Iran's foreign and economic policies. This would provide the US with *Lead from Behind* proxy control over China and India's projects, though it wouldn't instantly translate into Washington putting a stop to Beijing's. Rather, just as it unsuccessfully sought to do as one of its partial goals following the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the US might be angling to obtain influence over China's energy and trade routes in order to exert domineering blackmail influence over the policies of the People's Republic.

If this comes to pass, then it could effectively nullify the sovereignty-supporting motivations behind China's One Belt One Road global vision of New Silk Road connectivity and deal a heavy blow to the emerging Multipolar World Order. It remains to be seen exactly which destabilization scenario is most dedicatedly pursued by the US and its allies, though it can be assumed that it will probably see at least some slight shades of the previously extrapolated possibilities. Regardless of what eventually transpires, it's indisputable that Iran is destined to play a crucial role in the 21st century and more specifically in the context of the Chinese-Indian New Cold War, and the research will return to this topic in the last chapter.

THE CHINESE-INDIAN NEW COLD WAR – EAST AFRICA

INTRODUCTION

The last of the three geographic regions to be examined in the context of the Chinese-Indian New Cold War is East Africa, which usually escapes most observers' attention. East Africa, meaning the entire eastern section of the African continent and not just the East African Community (EAC), is probably one of the most important areas of the world right now and will continue acquiring even more strategic significance with each passing year of this century. The reason why Africa itself is a big deal is because China needs access to new markets in order to offload its overproduction, which was explained in the introductory section.

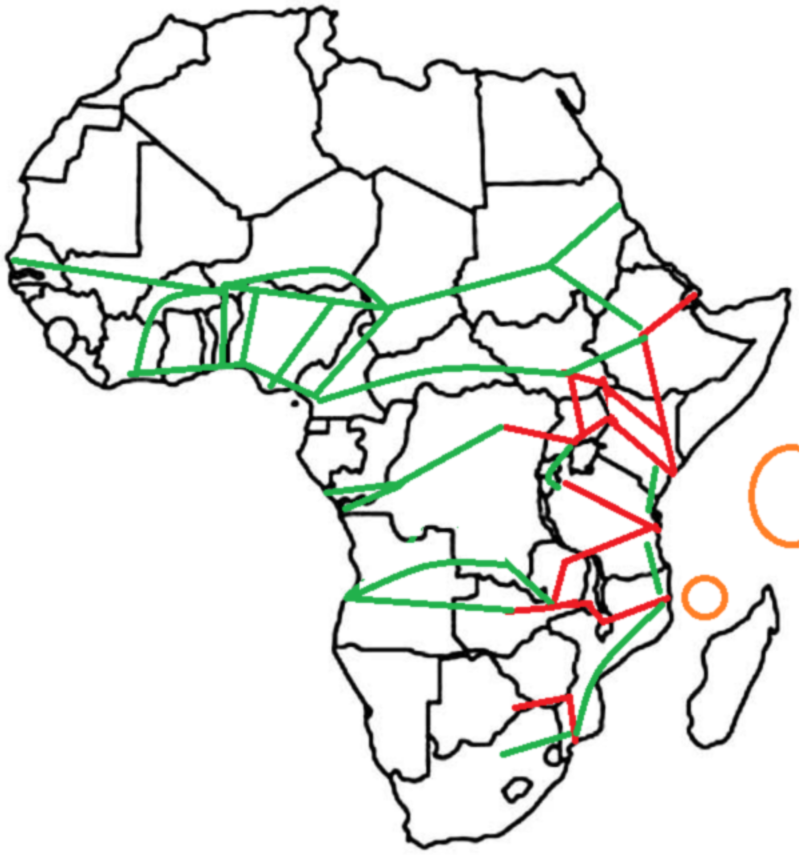
Unlike the stereotypes which pervaded across the past two decades, China isn't solely interested in African resources anymore, but is more concerned with giving regional partners' the capability to build sustainable economies, which could become reliable consumers of Chinese products. In addition, China also wants to offshore some of its own domestic production to Africa, where wages are much lower and will probably remain so for the coming years. All in all, it is absolutely imperative that China acquires reliable access to the burgeoning African marketplaces in order to maintain its own domestic growth, which is why the overall naval activity in the Indian Ocean Region will correspondingly increase to the point where this body of water becomes just as, if not more, significant as the Pacific presently is.

China, as the leading economic engine of the tellurocratic multipolar Eurasian powers, is compelled to improve its naval capabilities in order to secure its sea lines of communication (SLOC). Their success will have game-changing implications for the rest of its continental allies in their world-changing quest to equalize international relations. Therefore, it's the chief objective of the thalassocratic, unipolar Atlanticist powers – led by the US, India, and Japan in the case of the Indian Ocean Region and *Greater South Asia* – to thwart this from happening, both in the sense of obstructing, or entering into a position to potentially obstruct, China's SLOC, and also decreasing the effectiveness of its African New Silk Road outreach efforts through Hybrid War, and unveiling competitive projects.

It will be further explained in this section, how China is pursuing a complex series of interconnected Silk Roads all along the East African coast, including the long-term possibility of cross-continental connectivity with the Atlantic coast. Furthermore, the Indo-Japanese Axis' plans will be proven to be nothing more than a clever piggybacking strategy capitalizing off Chinese infrastructure gains in the central coastal corridor of Kenya-Tanzania-Mozambique. The concluding analysis will elaborate on how the US will probably target Ethiopia and Central African countries, while probably leaving the mid-East African ones largely untouched, or at least their coastal regions so long as China's *strategic depth* is countered in the interior and the Indo-Japanese Axis can still profit off of Beijing's existing projects.

Cartographic Analysis

The eastern portion of the African continent contains a multitude of Chinese-funded connectivity projects, though as of late-May 2017, no similarly ambitious Indo-Japanese ones have been announced:



Officially proclaimed or already completed connectivity projects which China is building and/or funding in Africa are in red, while prospective or tentative ones are in green. In some cases, a few of the "green" projects have already received some mild Chinese assistance (such as rail or road modernization, or promises of funding), but they're still categorized as they are in order to more clearly demonstrate Beijing's East-West connectivity vision and emphasize how the center of China's New Silk Road gravity in Africa runs all across the Indian Ocean coast.

Starting with the official "red" projects and going from north to south, these are:

Djibouti-Addis Ababa Railway

Finished at the end of last year, this is the largest connectivity project that China has completed thus far in Africa, connecting the continent's second-largest country and one of its most promising and fastest-growing economies to the Red Sea, which finally alleviates Ethiopia of its post-Cold War (post-Eritrean) landlocked challenge.

LAPSSET Corridor

Officially, the Lamu Port South Sudan-Ethiopia Corridor (LAPSSET) begins in the northeastern Kenyan port of Lamu and aims to connect the EAC country with its landlocked and much larger Ethiopian neighbor to the north, as well as energy-rich fellow organizational partner South Sudan.

Standard Gauge Railway (SGR)

The SGR begins in the primary Kenyan port of Mombasa and passes through the capital of Nairobi on the way to Uganda, from where it plans to branch out to the South Sudanese capital of Juba, the northeastern Congolese riparian city of Kisangani, and Rwanda, though Kampala has noticeably cooled to this project over the past year, making SGR's transnational future uncertain at this moment.

Central Corridor

Essentially, Tanzania's version of the SGR, the Central Corridor cuts through the length of the country to connect its westernmost extremities with the Indian Ocean and the global (Indo-Pacific) economy at large, with tentative plans being considered for involving Rwanda, Burundi, and even Uganda in this initiative.

TAZARA

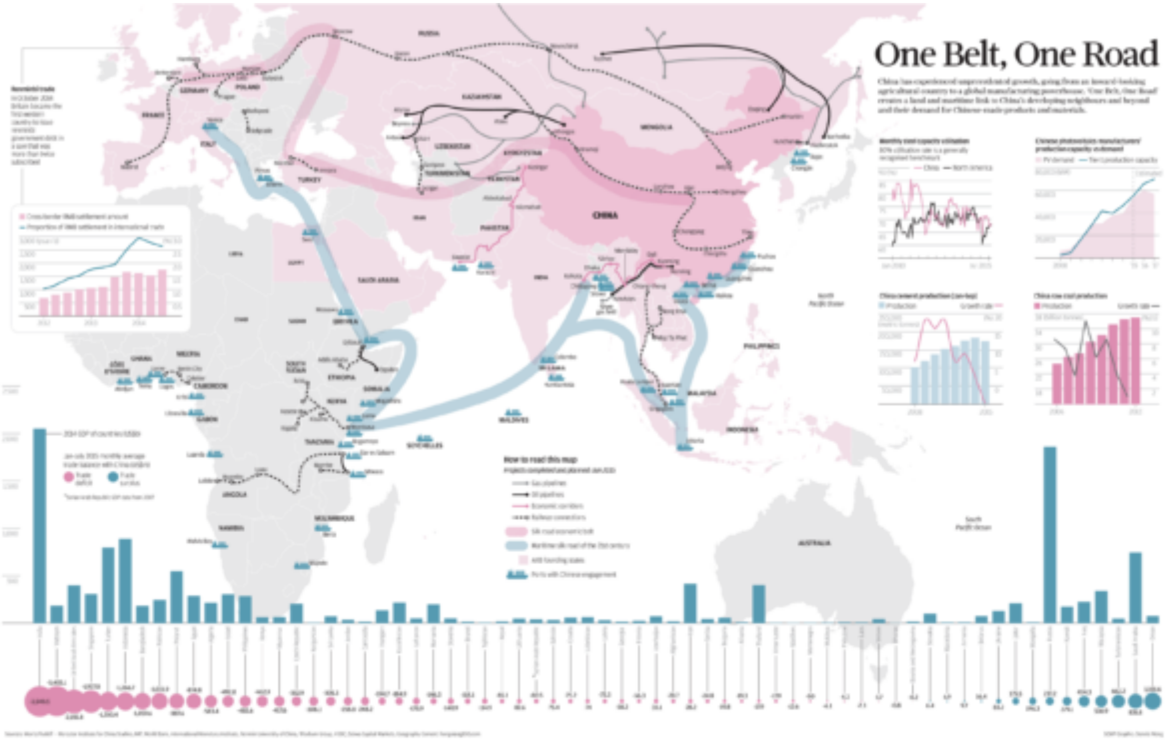
Built in the 1970s and representing China's first New Silk Road connectivity investment in the modern era, the Tanzania-Zambia Railway reaches into the latter South-Central African copper-rich country and forms the basis for the most feasible future cross-continental project which will be touched upon shortly.

Nacala Development Corridor

One of China's latest projects is a push to connect landlocked Zambia and Malawi with neighboring Mozambique's northeastern port of Nacala, strategically positioned near the country's enormous Ravuma Basin offshore gas reserves.

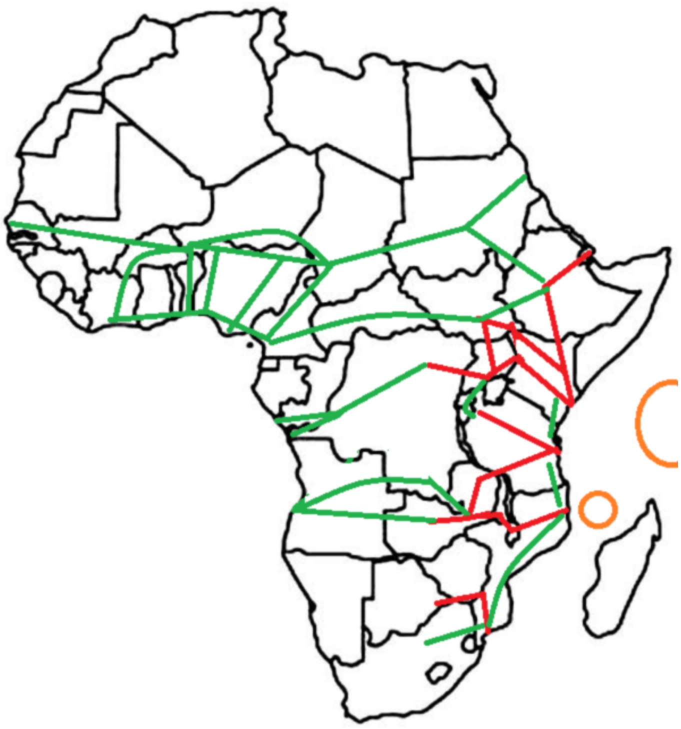
Ponta Techobanine Railway

The last major Chinese-involved project is a plan to build a railway from the mines of eastern Botswana through southern Zimbabwe and eventually to the Mozambican capital port of Maputo, which will eventually make both landlocked countries less dependent on South Africa and its infrastructure for economic engagement with the outside world.



The map also shows China's future Silk Road plans, relying both on previously identified projects and the author's own prognoses, to demonstrate how Beijing has the potential for connecting the entire length of the continent and historically linking each of its coastal regions with overland transport routes.

From north to south, these are:



The Saharan-Sahelian Silk Road

The author wrote more extensively about this ambitious possibility in a February **article** which also included a custom map detailing how multiple stand-alone projects could be integrated together in ultimately connecting the Atlantic port of Dakar with its Red Sea counterpart of Djibouti, relying heavily on the West African Rail Loop, **Cameroon-Chad-Sudan (CCS) Silk Road** ,and **several Nigerian projects** to achieve this.

Cameroonian-Kenyan Silk Road

This route has the potential to be one of the most efficient cross-continental passages in a theoretical-geographical sense, but it probably won't see any progress whatsoever for the indefinite future owing to its dependence on the (now-)**Failed State Belt** of South Sudan and the Central African Republic.

Congolese-Kenyan Silk Road

Although still risky in the geostrategic sense, owing to the very real **Hybrid War scenario** which has expectedly unfolded in the Congo over the past year, the SGR could become an intermodal gateway to the Atlantic, if it uses Congolese River barges to reach the country's capital of Kinshasa, and thenceforth, utilizes rail routes either from there to the Atlantic port of Matadi, or from its sister capital city of Brazzaville in the Republic of the Congo onwards to coastal city of Pointe Noire.

South-Central African Silk Road

This route envisions linking Angola's recently modernized Benguela Railway with TAZARA, the Nacala Corridor through refurbished Congolese rail lines, and the to-be-constructed Northwest Railway in Zambia in order to spearhead the most viable cross-continental Silk Road. Most of it is already in place and there are minimal Hybrid War scenarios to offset it.

Ethiopian-South African Silk Road

Provided that several interconnectors can be built and the Chinese-backed African Renaissance Pipeline in Mozambique develops a parallel economic corridor alongside its route, it's technically possible for the enormous economies and rising continental powers of Ethiopia and South Africa to be directly connected with one another by means of Beijing's New Silk Roads stretching across the North-South length of the **Tripartite Free Trade area**, which could also broaden to incorporate Egypt if Cairo makes use of the maritime portion of OBOR to link up with the Djibouti-Addis Ababa Railroad.

Unipolar Countermeasures

The Indo-Japanese Axis recognizes the strategic economic significance that Africa holds for China, and that these two Great Powers also need pragmatic cooperation with the continent for the very same reasons.

Because China is so far ahead of both of them in spearheading all types of African connectivity projects, there's very little that they can do to uniquely carve out their own niches, aside from helping to construct some of the interconnectors touched upon in the above description for the Ethiopian-South African Silk Road. Even this, however, is woefully insufficient for either to compete with China, which is why a completely different strategy has been unveiled for Africa. Instead of trying to undermine China's many projects or actively build their own competitive routes, the Indo-Japanese Axis will instead seek to piggyback off Beijing's successes to employ the same economic corridors that China's constructing.

It might seem odd at first thought, but there's technically nothing preventing any third-party from utilizing China's Silk Roads, and the truth of the matter is that China exuberantly encourages this in order to strengthen the economic capabilities of its partners; thereby make them better marketplaces for Chinese exports and outsourcing. China is comfortable enough with its own economic competitiveness to not fret too much about India and/or Japan displacing it from the region, especially once its multiple New Silk Roads are completed, its two rivals can, and will, end up using them to boost their own regional profiles. New Delhi and Tokyo's joint engagement in East Africa won't be haphazard, since they plan to focus mostly on the "Kenya-Tanzania-Mozambique growth zone" (KTM), which as can be seen from the earlier map, is positioned right in the center of the Ethiopian/Egyptian-South African Silk Road.

Another factor behind why **these three countries** were chosen as the areas of joint Indian-Japanese strategic concentration is that each of them are already trading a lot with New Delhi, and it's expected that Tokyo's physical and capital involvement with give the

Axis the necessary boost to beat out China. India's impressive trade with KTM was already occurring even before most of China's Silk Road projects are completed in each of the examined states, so it's predicted that this dynamic will only strengthen as more of these countries' territories become accessible to the global (Indo-Pacific) marketplace. Furthermore, the Axis could make asymmetrical moves in building more bases in the Seychelles (the larger orange half-circle on the far-right side of the map) or making efforts to connect with the Comoros (the tiny orange circle off the Mozambican coast). India already has a **military base** in the Seychelles, the much more geostrategically important of the two island nations, and the **US drone facility** there could also host Japanese "anti-piracy" assets such as the ones that Tokyo has already **deployed** to Djibouti.

On the topic of Djibouti, it's important to stress that this country already hosts multiple military bases, whether it's the aforementioned Japanese one, American, French, Chinese, and even **forthcoming Saudi** facilities, so it shouldn't be seen as an entirely pro-Beijing state in spite of the game-changing railway to Ethiopia. Nevertheless, each of the country's military partners has a significant stake to allow anyone to destabilize the situation in this tiny state, and potentially risk losing their presence in this important location afterwards; thus, it's unlikely that the Djibouti-Addis Ababa Railroad would be undermined at this terminal location. At the same time, however, the presence of so many unipolar military forces in this country, specifically the US and Japan, means that China's chief strategic adversaries can monitor its activity, and in principle, retain some sort of influence over the route. The same can said for the Indo-Japanese Axis' plans regarding Kenya, which forms part of the KTM growth zone, since this could eventually give them sway over China's southern LAPSSET access route to the landlocked Ethiopian giant.

Taken together, a clear strategy is beginning to take shape with respect to the Indo-Japanese Axis' countermeasures against China in East Africa.
The first phase is that they plan to 'piggyback' off of its infrastructure projects, capitalizing on the fact that they're open to all parties (though accepting that Chinese and host country companies would obviously have preferential treatment). This engagement will be concentrated in the KTM growth zone centrally positioned between Egypt and South Africa, and thereby allowing the Axis to influence and easily partake in any potential cross-continental North-South Silk Road route along the **Tripartite Free Trade area** which takes up most of the continent.

The second phase of competitive engagement in this region is to focus on Japan and India's military and surveillance capabilities in Djibouti and the Seychelles respectively, as well as joining together to make some sort of power play in Kenya. Altogether, the two first-mentioned locations give the Indo-Japanese Axis important standing along the East African SLOCs, while the last prospective one in Kenya augments the existing Japanese presence in Djibouti to exert a degree of control over both of China's access routes to its pivotal strategic-economic partner Ethiopia.

DESTABILIZATION SCENARIOS

Just because the Indo-Japanese Axis doesn't have anything to gain from destabilizing China's East African plans shouldn't be taken to mean that its *Lead from Behind* American overseer wouldn't have anything to gain from this.
The American strategic perspective that it's beneficial for China to finance and construct infrastructure projects that its Indo-Japanese allies could easily 'piggyback' off afterwards, but that there should be a certain geographic limit to New Silk Road connectivity so that it doesn't get too out of hand and lend China the competitive advantage that it needs to sustain the creation of the emerging Multipolar World Order. What this translates to is the US probably won't interfere with infrastructure projects of indirect shared interests such as in the KTM growth zone, but that it wouldn't hesitate to unleash Hybrid War against the other initiatives where its Indo-Japanese allies don't have any vested designs such as Ethiopia and the Central African countries.

The US wants to ensure that China fails in its quest to reliably extract the continental hinterland's natural resources and pioneer the first-ever cross-continental access routes, yet, simultaneously doesn't want to make all of China's New Silk Road projects unviable because India and Japan should be able to piggyback off them, which places the US in a quandary.

The dynamics of Hybrid War, especially in the identity-diverse continent of Africa, are that it's almost impossible to wield controlled/managed chaos, and even what might seemingly appear to be a localized and contained, conflict could quickly spiral into a regional war, just like Rwanda's ethnic clashes eventually gave way to the two civil wars in the Congo ultimately killed over 5 million people.
The US would willingly risk the adverse blowback that limited Hybrid Wars in Ethiopia, the Central African countries, and perhaps even the interior/peripheral parts of the KTM growth zone could have on its Indo-Japanese *Lead from Behind* underlings, which is why it's important to point out the most realistic naturally occurring and/or manufactured scenarios that could conceivably arise.

From north to south, these are:

HYBRID WAR ON ETHIOPIA

Ethiopia, China's top partner in Africa, is inseparably linked to Beijing's continental grand strategy, so the destabilization of this pivotal country would adversely impact on China's overall plans. The challenge, however, is Ethiopia is inherently prone to instability due to the incongruences of its inter-ethnic relations and complicated political arrangement (a de-facto centralized state in de-jure "federation"), which gave rise to the Oromia insurgency in late 2016 and subsequent state of emergency that was necessary to quell it. It can't be forecast with any degree of certainty that this measure will sustainably succeed in preventing any further provocations, and to the contrary, there have always been active efforts underway to foment a **Hybrid War on Ethiopia**. This makes it likely the country will experience additional unrest in the future as external actors, spearheaded by the US, exploit certain dissatisfied domestic elements in order to amplify the strategic risks to

China's New Silk Road investments in Ethiopia and thereby attempt to partially (if not wholly) offset its African grand strategy.

Kenyan-Tanzanian Tribal Tensions

The coastal states of Kenya and Tanzania form the access points for China and the Indo-Japanese Axis' commercial engagement with the most promising parts of East Africa, as well as the chance to expand deeper into its Heartland, but they each run the risk of being afflicted by tribal tensions which could impede their overall connectivity plans. **Kenya** is much more prone to this than **Tanzania** at the moment since it already has a history of violent Color Revolution unrest, though the latter is poised to be **one of the fastest-growing countries in the world**this century and could thus experience tremendous socio-political tensions if the central authorities become overwhelmed and eventually lose some of their control over managing this process.

Moreover, both Kenya and Tanzania could see a *Swahili Coast* separatist movement arise among their minority Muslim populations along the Indian Ocean, which could dangerously prompt a simplistic *Clash of Civilizations* that could serve as an excuse for larger turmoil. This would, however, be the least desirable option for all the pertinent external actors since it would cut off the mainland territories and their corresponding economic capabilities, thus being extremely counterproductive for China and the Indo-Japanese Axis. However, if an ***Identity Federalism*** *solution* could be found, whereby this region acquires quasi-independence, it would become a new geopolitical chess piece for the two sides to compete over, with the 'victor' obtaining control over all trade into the interior of the region.

Black Hole of Chaos In The Heart of Africa

The entire Central African Heartland – defined by the author as the two Congos and the Central African Republic, with South Sudan, Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi forming its transregional periphery – is primed for large-scale destabilization in the future. The trigger for this unfolding conflict is once more the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which has been mired in Hybrid War unrest ever since President Kabila postponed what was expected to be his country's first-ever peaceful transfer of power since independence, and it's since been taken full advantage of by a myriad of **non-state transnational groups** that are totally undermining the prospects for regional stability. It's very likely that the Congo will continue to sink into lawlessness and internally fracture into distinct semi-integrated regions, and this fragmentation process will inevitably suck in the surrounding states of **Uganda**, **Rwanda, Burundi**, and to a lesser extent **Tanzania**, **Zambia**, and **Angola**, potentially collapsing any chance that transcontinental infrastructure projects will ever pass through this broader region.

This vision of the future becomes frighteningly real when one takes into consideration how Uganda is **becoming overwhelmed** with South Sudanese ***Weapons of Mass Migration***, Burundi is pushed to the breaking point by hostile foreign actors, and Rwanda remains enduringly divided (in spite of its Mainstream Media reputation and the heavy hand of its minority Tutsi-led "deep state"), all of which are potential catalysts for a chain reaction of conflict, to say nothing of how these interconnected scenarios could be exacerbated by the total collapse of the Congo.

The black hole of chaos which could be created in the African Heartland, and its East African periphery, is very troubling, and it would stop China's New Silk Roads from reaching into the continental interior. Provided that the turmoil doesn't spill too deeply into Kenya and Tanzania, it's possible for China to be cut down a notch and placed on equal strategic footing with the Indo-Japanese Axis, if all three can only compete in the same KTM growth zone and Beijing is blocked from the market-resource benefits which it reaps from Central Africa.

Southern Africa Shake-Up

The political situation in the **southern cone** of Africa is on pace to be violently shaken up in the future. The strategically interconnected Zimbabwean-South African space is already experiencing low-intensity Color Revolution unrest, whether it's the periodic protests, in reality, riots, against aging leader Mugabe or escalating xenophobic violence and anti-state activity in South Africa against unpopular President Zuma. In addition, while Mozambique has plenty of potential to turn into the **multipolar gateway** to the South-Central African region, it's besought by its own **Hybrid War problems** with respect to the unresolved second bout of near-civil war. All that needs to happen to cut off the developed South African marketplace from future Chinese-facilitated overland access to the rest of the Tripartite Free Trade area states is uncontrollable disturbances in the northeastern part of the country and its Zimbabwean and Mozambican neighbors. South Africa could still reach any of its northern partners via maritime connectivity, but its overall integrational effect would be diminished and the country would probably opt in that case to prioritize trade with its extra-regional partners as opposed to concentrating on the continent.

One of the supplementary goals of China's New Silk Roads is to encourage intra-African trade, which Beijing believes is a prerequisite to forming sustainable economies in the continent that could robustly assist China's own, whether as outsourced producers or reliable consumers. The Ethiopian-South African Silk Road, and its eventual maritime connection to Egypt's northern and most economically relevant coastal region, forms the essential spine of the Chinese-backed continental integration project, aided to a large degree by the Tripartite Free Trade area which it encompasses.

The key to success lies in achieving overland connectivity between key regional economies (hence the need for China's New Silk Roads), which will collectively contribute to the envisioned East African integrational area, the central corridor of which will be the KTM growth zone over which the Indo-Japanese Axis intends to compete with China. South Africa's connectivity to Tanzania will be very important in both of their successes and forms the first of three integrational chains between Africa's rising powers, the other two being between Tanzania and Ethiopia, and Ethiopia and Egypt (the latter of which is experiencing political obstacles due to the hydro-geopolitics of the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam).

Seeing as how Ethiopian-Egyptian commercial integration will probably remain a persistently difficult challenge, meaning that priority should be given to preserving the rest of the integrational chain's connectivity, specifically between South Africa and Tanzania, and preventing the emergence of Hybrid War scenarios which could offset it in Zimbabwe, Zambia, and Mozambique.

As for Ethiopian-Tanzanian infrastructural integration, this presents the least challenging of the three links as long as LAPSSET succeeds and Kenyan-Tanzanian relations remain stable, despite their mutual suspicion and intra-organizational EAC rivalry.

It's here where the Indo-Japanese Axis could take the initiative by proposing the necessary interconnectors to link together China's various New Silk Roads into a unified transport corridor, thereby acquiring strategic value in the grand scheme of things and stepping out a bit from China's shadow.

In addition, given the propensity for mainland Mozambique to slide back into civil war if the present instability isn't properly dealt with this time around (and excluding the offshore and easily accessible LNG promise that the country has), it might one day be better for India and Japan to amend their KTM growth zone to EKT in swapping out Mozambique for Ethiopia and attempting to compete with China where it most counts.

The Chinese-Indian New Cold War – Conclusions

With the geographic scope of the study completed, we must review the most important strategic concepts, with a few additions, based on the readers understanding of the Chinese-Indian New Cold War.

This section is organized in three categories of concentration – background dynamics, strategic contours, and forward-focused analysis – going over the initial conditions of these two Great Powers' competition, their influencing factors, forecasted trajectories, respectively, and bullet point summaries of each relevant concept:

Background Dynamics

Thalassocracy vs Tellurocracy

The sea-faring Atlanticist powers are unipolar and in favor of preserving the existing world system, while the land-based Continental ones are multipolar and actively striving to change the existing balance of global power.

Connectivity as The Solution to Containment

The pan-Eurasian containment noose that the US and its allies have set up against Russia, China, and Iran can be overcome through enhanced mainland and maritime connectivity all across the supercontinent, more broadly throughout the Indo-Pacific and entire Eastern Hemisphere via the inclusion of Africa, explaining the guiding motivation behind China's One Belt One Road global vision of New Silk Roads.

Lead from Behind

Sensing that connectivity is an unstoppable eventuality, the US sought to offset the odds that China can monopolize this process by recruiting two of its most loyal allies, India and Japan, into a unipolar Rimland coalition, which shares the same interests as Washington in countering Beijing's initiatives to transform the global system.

Competitive Connectivity

The US and its Indo-Japanese "Lead from Behind" subordinates are attempting to compete with China by building various connectivity projects of their own in Southeast-South Asia, West-Central Asia, and East Africa, though they need an asymmetrical behind-the-scenes boost in order to edge out Beijing.

Hybrid War

Hybrid War is understood in this context as the American-backed encouragement of identity conflicts in geostrategic transit states located along China's New Silk Roads, in order to disrupt Beijing's plans; though it's a double-edged sword, which might in some cases, also damage the Indo-Japanese Axis' connectivity projects if the targeted country is hosting this camp's investments too.

Strategic Contours

Connectivity Overlaps

The research revealed that China and the Indo-Japanese Axis' connectivity projects have a substantial geographic overlap, in terms of the Southeast-South Asian states of Thailand, Myanmar, and Nepal; the Mideast-Central Asian ones of Iran, Afghanistan, and the former Soviet Central Asian Republics; and the East African countries of Kenya, Tanzania, and Mozambique.

Geographic Divergences

Despite the connectivity overlap in the aforementioned countries, China and the Indo-Japanese Axis have different geographic priorities in each of them:

Southeast Asia

Beijing is pursuing north-south connectivity in the mainland countries of ASEAN, also known as the "Greater Mekong Subregion," whereas New Delhi and Tokyo are streamlining east-west integration. This makes China dependent on stability in the northern reaches of its regional partners, while India and Japan are more concerned with the state of affairs in the central parts of the countries through which their planned projects will transit. Ultimately, though, each camp's initiatives are perpendicular to one another and therefore intersect on two occasions in the geographic heartlands of Myanmar and Thailand.

South Asia

As for South Asia, India is moving ahead with east-west connectivity along Nepal's southern Terai plains, while China is trying to break through the Himalayas, connecting Lhasa to Kathmandu potentially as far south as Kolkata, if New Delhi agrees to come on board. However, India is very suspicious of China's intentions in Nepal and might use its sway over the Indian-descended "Madhesi" community in the Terai to politically paralyze the country and make the Himalayan Silk Road an unfeasible political fantasy.

Mideast (Iran)

Looking westwards at the Mideast (chiefly Iran in this context) and Central Asia, India-Japan and China have different access routes to this interconnected region. The Axis approaches it from the south through Chabahar, but the terminal entrance could be relocated to Bandar Abbas if Hybrid War circumstances prevented the former from being used. From Iran, India (and to a lesser extent, Japan) plans to construct a corridor to the EU via Azerbaijan and Russia (the North-South Transport Corridor, NSTC), though it could potentially branch off through Armenia and Georgia in establishing direct connectivity with the Black Sea, too.

Central Asia

India also wants to use Iran as a stepping stone for entering the Central Asian Republics and Afghanistan. China, however, must first pass through Central Asia in order to reach Iran, from where it would ideally like to eventually connect to Turkey en route to the EU (by means of the Balkans). This makes China's Mideast (Iranian) overland connectivity strategy dependent on Central Asia, whereas India has no such regional strategic vulnerabilities to its vision and could still relatively succeed even if it only reaches the EU and never penetrates what might one day become a conflict-strewn Central Asia.

East Africa

China's goal is to build dependable transport infrastructure which reaches and eventually passes through the landlocked central areas of the continent in order to integrate all of Africa into the emerging Multipolar World Order, while India and Japan's objective is comparatively milder and seeks only to compete with China for utilization of Kenya, Tanzania, and Mozambique's coastal assets and nearby markets. This means that China's grand plans could be curtailed if it were cut off from accessing the continental hinterland (or even the interior reaches of its coastal partners), whereby it would then have to more fiercely compete with India and Japan for the coasts.

Hybrid War Vulnerabilities

Each of the convergence states are fraught with their own Hybrid War vulnerabilities, which could be triggered or encouraged by the US in order to offset China's plans, to the comparative advantage of its Indo-Japanese allies, as per the geographic divergences between both camps:

Southeast Asia

China is dependent on northern access routes through Myanmar and Thailand, so an aggravation of the civil war in the former and/or the encouragement of one in the latter could decisively interfere with Beijing's projects. For example, the existing pipelines and prospective corridor through Myanmar must pass through the civil war battleground of Shan State and end in the "Rohingya"-troubled Rakhine State, so they're not exactly on secure footing.

As for Thailand, the pro-American "red shirt" opposition counts the northeastern *Isan* region as their bastion of support, and any pronounced anti-state civil strife in this region could put a stop to the important Vientiane-Bangkok track of the ASEAN Silk Road. It's still possible for the back-up route through comparatively less commercially attractive western Laos and northern Thailand to compensate for this, though that too could expectedly be disturbed through any forthcoming unrest in the Southeast Asian kingdom.

SOUTH ASIA

Nepal survived the intense civil war scare of late 2015, but its people are still as fractured between the native highlanders and the Indian-descended “Madhesis” of the southern Terai plains. It’s very possible that India might – whether deliberately or unintentionally – spark an actual civil war in the country through its proxy use of its “Madhesi” compatriots to stop the Himalayan Silk Road, though it would prefer at this moment for them to use their recently acquired “federal” tools to stonewall this initiative as opposed to resorting to violence like last time.

An area of connectivity convergence with India should be remarked in regards to regional conflict vulnerabilities that Pakistan is being targeted through the Hybrid War on CPEC, which sees among its most relevant ongoing scenarios the utilization of terrorism in the transnational area of Baluchistan. This is particularly pertinent to Iran because of the risk that it has to spill over its borders and embroil its own province of Sistani-e-Baluchestan in conflict, though interestingly without much serious consequence to India’s NSTC

CENTRAL ASIA

China can’t reach Iran if Central Asia is destabilized, and the most vulnerable part of this region is the divided Fergana Valley, which has already seen Uzbek-Kyrgyz clashes in the recent past and has a history of Tajik-Uzbek mutual antagonism. These violent variables could be triggered into action if a few well-thought-out Afghan-originating terrorist attacks succeed in provoking some of their less-disciplined representatives.

Although it’s already been proven that Chinese freight containers can reach Iran by train via a circuitous detour along northern Kazakhstan and the eastern edges of the Caspian Sea, this route misses out on the commercial opportunities of the region’s densely populated Fergana interior and therefore isn’t prioritized, nor would it have the same New Silk Road connectivity impact if it ever entered into full-scale operation.

MIDEAST (IRAN)

The destabilization of Central Asia would already preclude any real chances of China spearheading an overland connectivity route to Iran, but there are nevertheless two relevant conflict factors which could still damage China’s, and also Russia’s, remaining influences in the country. It was earlier explained on several occasions how Indian-backed terrorism in Pakistani Baluchistan could blow back into the Iranian province of Sistani-e-Baluchestan, though this doesn’t mean that New Delhi’s prized NSTC would necessarily be impacted.

If worst came to worst, India could rely on Bandar Abbas to reach Russia and afterwards the EU, and while it would be more expensive, it could also build transport routes to Central Asia and Afghanistan from there if a Baloch insurgency around Chabahar inadvertently became unmanageable. However, there's another Hybrid War factor which could be activated to harm Russia's interests, and it's if a series of provocations were commenced to destroy the Azeri-Iranian relationship and therefore prevent the NSTC from transiting through its territory and on the way to Russia and the EU.

In that case, Iran and India could proceed with Tehran's planned Black Sea 'detour' through Armenia and Georgia in order to bypass Russia entirely. This scenario could also unfold if Moscow's ties with either of its two Great Power NSTC partners begin to fray for whatever the reason may be, whether it's the perception that Russia is "stepping on Iran's toes" in Syria or India issuing a failed ultimatum to Russia to stop its rapprochement with Pakistan and/or back away from its high-level comprehensive strategic partnership with China.

East Africa

China's top partner in Africa, Ethiopia, is beset with a multitude of Hybrid War vulnerabilities, though it's confronting them in a very effective way. Still, it'll probably remain a persistent struggle to keep these threats solidly under control, and it can't be discounted that the rising Great Power giant will once again be targeted by a more severe destabilization campaign sometime in the future. Should that happen and the prospective threats succeed in sowing widespread unrest all across the state, then it would powerfully damage China's standing in the continent and therefore work out to the Indo-Japanese Axis' relative benefit, even if they had nothing to do with this and it was either American-provoked or 'naturally occurring'.

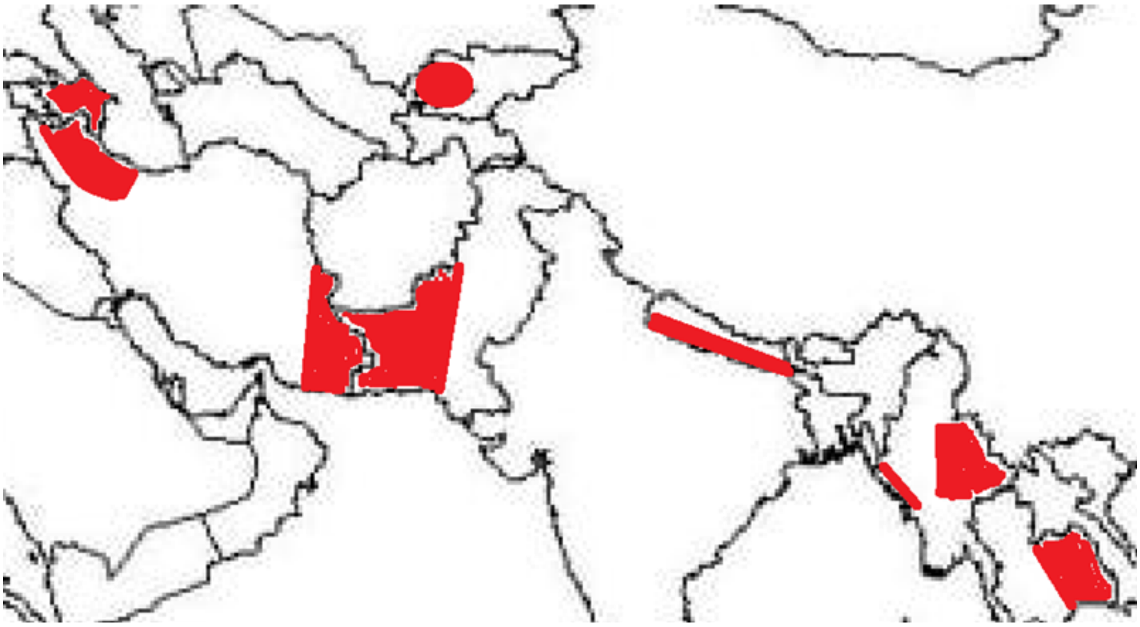
As for the Central African Heartland, the Congo is already a failing state which will probably continue its descent into chaos in the coming months, even if Kabila goes forward with next year's elections. This is because the state fragmentation dynamics have already proceeded quite far and acquired a dangerous pace, so it'll be hard for any leader to contain these threats in the future when there's hardly a functioning state to enforce law and order all across its territory in the first place. Coupled with the transnational threats emanating from South Sudan and potentially Burundi, then there's a very real (but not inevitable) possibility that another large-scale war might break out in this part of the Africa and therefore cut off most of China and other players' access to this mineral-rich region.

The next part of Africa which could be beset by Hybrid War is its southern cone, and it's here where many Color Revolution scenarios could unfold in overthrowing the governments of South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique. These three states are strategically connected to one another, and events in one could cascade over the border in catalyzing copy-cat occurrences, especially as it relates to the potential weakening of central authority in Zimbabwe and South Africa and the encouragement that this gives to incipient Color Revolutions in the other. The Unconventional War in Mozambique also poses quite a few challenges as well, though its immediate fallout would be mostly limited to the country's own borders, albeit with the possible consequence of impeding South African-Tanzanian connectivity.

Finally, the last Hybrid War vulnerability in Africa is the tribal situation in the Kenyan and Tanzanian interiors, since this could become aggravated during times of regional turmoil and therefore endanger coastal connectivity with the hinterland regions. It was already explained how this could negatively affect all competing Great Powers in these two states, but the US might find it 'acceptable' to have its Indo-Japanese allies deal with this fallout if it's required to resolutely stop China's plans dead in their tracks. Still, it can't be confidently assessed either way whether these scenarios have a chance of unfolding or not, though if they do, they'd work much more to China's detriment than to India or Japan's, since the People's Republic needs Africa's markets in order to sustain its growth while its two rivals have no such pressing imperative right now.

Conclusion and Analysis

Here's a rough approximation of the predicted Hybrid War battlegrounds in Eurasia which could be unleashed to stop China's New Silk Roads, with Africa being left out of the picture for the sake of redundancy since all of it is vulnerable to identity-driven destabilization:



Forward-Focused Analysis

Given what was discussed in the previous two sections and the research as a whole, it's possible to provide forward-focused analysis about the Chinese-Indian New Cold War:

Convergence States Could Still Be Partially Sacrificed

The four most important connectivity convergence states for China and India are Thailand, Iran, Kenya, and Tanzania, and each of them could still undergo limited degrees of Hybrid War destabilization in order to disrupt Beijing's projects while theoretically leaving India's undamaged.

Although not likely at the moment, separatist or civil strife in Thailand's northeastern region of could stop China's ASEAN Silk Road and the Indo-Japanese Axis' East-West Corridor, but would still leave the latter's Southern Corridor intact.
Any blowback in Iranian Baluchestan from India's Hybrid War on CPEC could be mitigated by replacing Chabahar with Bandar Abbas as the terminal point for the NSTC, just as any (provoked/manufactured) antagonism from Azerbaijan or the northwestern Iranian Azeri community could be mitigated by detouring the NSTC through Armenia and Georgia instead of Azerbaijan and Russia en route to the EU.
Kenya and Tanzania are important at this stage mostly for the role that their respective ports could play in boosting commerce with India and Japan, and neither of these two

Great Powers has much of a need for now in ensuring security into those African states' interior and safeguarding their connectivity prospects with the continental Heartland, unlike China which can't afford being cut off from this part of Africa for long.

Indonesia Is Indispensable

The author wrote a book-length article series last year on "**The Meaning Of Multipolarity**", which analyzed the strategic state of affairs and possible trajectory of **Indonesia** as part of the research. The conclusion was that the archipelago country is still "**contested**" in the sense of remaining uncommitted to either the unipolar or multipolar camps, not necessarily because it's "balancing" but because its "deep state" has yet to decide which way to go. It might wrongly believe that it's possible to indefinitely remain "non-aligned", though it'll sooner or later be forced by the unipolar world (probably through **Hybrid War**) to choose or reverse its decision, at which time it'll have lost the strategic initiative and will be in a relatively weaker position to advance its national interests.

Indonesia sits at the crossroads of the Pacific and Indian Oceans, and its growing economic might and leading role in ASEAN gives it the chance to become a Great Power in its own right in the future. If it sided with China by retaining pragmatic relations with Beijing in spite of whatever intimidation it experiences from the unipolar world as a result, then it could help to stabilize the situation in the South China Sea by pressuring its troublesome American-influenced ASEAN members and therefore helping this crucial maritime artery remain a secure route in China's OBOR. However, if Jakarta throws its hat in the ring with New Delhi and Tokyo by joining their "China Containment Coalition", then it could decisively shift the balance of power all along the Eurasian Rimland and add qualitative value to the Axis' outreach efforts in the "Greater Mekong Subregion".

It's understandably of premier global strategic significance which 'side' Indonesia decides to partner with, since it'll soon be impossible for it to continue its fence-sitting much longer. It'll eventually be pressured by the US and its "Lead from Behind" underlings through institutional, economic, and perhaps even Hybrid War means to assist the unipolar forces in constructing a durable "China Containment Coalition" linking the Indian and Pacific Oceans. From the reverse perspective, if Indonesia decided to continue cultivating pragmatic relations with China and avoided being drawn into the US' Indo-Japanese "Lead from Behind" Axis, then it could aid China's 'breakout' manoeuvre in the Pacific by guaranteeing it more reliable access to the Indian Ocean, to say nothing of the win-win New Silk Road benefits that both would reap as a result of their growing multipolar partnership.

Island Hopping in The Indian Ocean

The importance of several Indian Ocean islands and chains thereof can't be overestimated in the Chinese-Indian New Cold War, and a heated competition is already taking place for most of their loyalties. The Andaman and Nicobar Islands are obviously within India's sovereign realm, hence why New Delhi decided to invite Japan to play a role in them for the unstated but inferable sake of rattling China's nerves by giving it a dependable presence in the Bay of Bengal. As for Sri Lanka, the other focus of rivalry in this part of the ocean, it's been playing its cards well and is poised to play off China, India, and Japan in receiving enormous infrastructure investments from each one.

Moving along, the Maldives are more closely aligned with China than they are with India, though this hasn't stopped New Delhi from seeking to exert its influence over the island chain, whether through direct engagement or indirectly encouraging its political opposition. At the end of the day, whichever of the two Great Powers has a better relationship with Saudi Arabia will probably be the one which prevails in this competition, since the Kingdom has tremendous soft power and financial sway over the country's Muslims and could push them to side with one or the other Asian Powers. China seems to be **closer with Saudi Arabia** than India is, though New Delhi will certainly try to change that in the years ahead.

The other two island chains of significance are the Seychelles and Comoros which lay off the coast of East Africa. The first one is already the site of American and Indian bases, though **rumors** have persisted for the past years that China is interested in setting up one there as well. If Beijing is successful with this, then it could help the Seychelles 'balance' between the unipolar and multipolar worlds and seek to become a sort of 'maritime Djibouti' in the sense of being an African state hosting several (somewhat competing) military bases at once. The Comoros, though, are presently beyond the direct influence of either China or India despite the two economically competing for its loyalty. As with the Maldives, it might come down to Saudi Arabia to be the 'tie-breaker' in shifting the balance of influence one way or another in this Muslim-majority country.

Last but by no means strategically least is the UK-controlled island of Diego Garcia which hosts one of the most important American bases in the world. Located near the center of the Indian Ocean, this small territory allows the unipolar forces to monitor most of the traffic transiting this large body of water, and it'll only become more pivotal throughout the Indo-Pacific Century as China's economic partnerships blossom in Africa. There is no realistic scenario by which the US or UK would cede control over this island, and if anything, they'll retrench and expand their military forces here. In fact, there's a high chance that India could be allowed to join them too, seeing as how the mid-2016 Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) signed between the US and India allows both of them to use each other's military facilities on a case-by-case basis, and it's to the US' grand strategic benefit to see India become its "Lead from Behind" hegemon in the country's namesake ocean.

THE US' 8TH FLEET

The US only has 7 fleets thus far, but none of them are solely responsible for the Indian Ocean, which is divided between the 5th, 6th, and 7thFleets. Given the changing center of strategic gravity in the world, it would make sense for the US to optimize its naval operations through the creation of a separate fleet dedicated to this area of operations. It's possible for it to be based in the UK overseas territory of Diego Garcia, but it would give off a strong statement if the US chose India instead, expanding upon the provisions included in LEMOA to seal a more formal and long-lasting deal. This would fully align with the US' strategic vision for the Indo-Pacific Century and increase pressure on China in an unparalleled way.

The Indian-Pakistani Naval Race

Seeing as how the US has chosen India as its preferred regional partner through LEMOA and China has done the same with Pakistan through CPEC, it's only natural that each of these competing Great Powers will aid in the build-up of their partner's naval capabilities so as to secure their shared interests in the Indian Ocean Region. The US and India have the initial advantage here, though, because China doesn't have any Diego Garcia-like permanent naval presence in the area, nor are its maritime forces anywhere up to the level of the US'. Moreover, China is cut off from Pakistan's Arabian Sea by the South China Sea, Strait of Malacca, and Bay of Bengal, all of which are becoming ever more contentious by the day. It would therefore help if China was granted basing rights in Gwadar, though this would only be a first step in a lengthy process of what needs to be done.
China would be depending on a naval partnership with Pakistan to defend Gwadar, the southern terminal of CPEC, but also to legitimize Beijing's maritime military presence in the Indian Ocean which would be deployed to protect its Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC), no matter if the publicly presentable pretext ends up having to do with "anti-piracy". The end goal in the distant future would be for joint Chinese-Pakistani patrols to keep an eye on the trade routes between Gwadar and China's East African Silk Road ports, as well as between Gwadar and other Chinese-developed ports in Myanmar and Malaysia. India would of course take serious issue with this, but it's expected by that time that it and the US would already have been regularly conducting their own joint patrols in the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal. The intersection between both camp's forecasted naval routes could lead to a lot of tension depending upon the New Cold War context at the time.

Russian Interests

The study wouldn't be complete without analyzing Russia's interests in the developing New Cold War between China and India. Moscow would preferably like to maintain a balance between Beijing and New Delhi, though India will probably (per American incitement) enact pressure on Russia to pull away from its high-level and comprehensive strategic partnership with China. There's no way that Russia would ever do this, and inferring that it should behave this way will probably prompt Moscow to immediately look at New Delhi with the worst of suspicions and begin instantly contemplating how to accelerate its rapprochement with Pakistan even faster in response to the Indian-American military-strategic partnership. It's not in India's best interests to treat Russia this way, but the combination of its highly 'self-confident' Modi-Doval Hindutva "deep state", as well as the US' own interests in replacing Russia's military- energy influence in India, could be enough to convince New Delhi to do what Washington wants.

Accordingly, Russia should also question the long-term feasibility of the NSTC, since it already looks like Iran is thinking about redirecting the entire route through the Black Sea detour that it's discussing with Armenia and Georgia. Although this branch corridor isn't openly being considered because of Russia, it's possible that any deterioration in ties between Moscow and Tehran, Moscow and New Delhi, or even Baku and Tehran could lead to the Islamic Republic opting to prioritize this much more direct route to the EU instead of the Azerbaijan-Russia one. This possibility should always remain in the back of Russian decision makers' minds because the US might be willing to turn a blind eye to Iran serving as the transit state for EU-Indian trade so long as this deprives Russia of that opportunity and contributes to the optics of "isolating" it (whether stated or not).

It's true that Russia would be wise to diversify its strategic relations all across the breadth of Eurasia in order to be the most effective balancing force in the supercontinent, but it must be cautious in placing too much trust in the Indian-Iranian NSTC due to the many scenarios which could unfold in stopping this project's completion or resulting in its redirection to Armenia and Georgia. For as long as it's possible, Russia should continue to vie for India's economic, nuclear and conventional energy, and military marketplaces, though understanding that New Delhi will probably only remain a political ally in name only so long as Moscow continues its partnerships with Beijing and Islamabad. Russia shouldn't be cowed by Indian inferences that it could be replaced by the US, Japan, France, and "Israel" in any of its respective military-energy spheres since it would still take some time for New Delhi to physically make the strategic reorientations necessary to accommodate new partners in these fields to the level that Russia presently is, though that being said, it's by no means impossible, and the early indications of such a prolonged shift are already visible.

In light of this, Russia should continue rebalancing its South Asian priorities between India and Pakistan, including through the possibility of selling more anti-terrorist weaponry to Islamabad and increasing connectivity with CPEC. Russia could develop an "**Altai Alley**" corridor to connect its namesake autonomous republic with China's Xinjiang, and from there to CPEC, though taking care not to formalize its cooperation on this project in order to not unnecessarily provoke India into making sudden "multi-alignment" hostile moves against it vis-a-vis the unipolar camp. CPEC is undoubtedly a part of Russia's future since it will help the North Eurasian Great Power with its multipolar outreach to the Global South, including in the future to the African economies which China is presently helping to develop. Russia will eventually seek to restore its Soviet-era presence in the Indian Ocean, though it might naturally feel uncomfortable docking in India if New Delhi prospectively hosts a future US 8th Fleet, so it could instead set its sights on Gwadar just like China is doing.

This doesn't mean that Russia is doing anything counter to India's direct interests, just as India cooperating with the US isn't necessarily "anti-Russian", and if Moscow was wise, then it could try to play off such a move as helping its "decades-long and trusted Indian ally" "balance" the Chinese presence in Gwadar through a "friendly presence" alongside Beijing's there. Taking it even further, Russia should work with China to help develop Pakistan's navy, and Moscow should balance its erstwhile maritime military cooperation with New Delhi by developing similar cooperation projects with Islamabad as well. If, as the author forecasts, India continues to drift away from Russia by replacing its military-energy services with US, "Israeli", French, and Japanese companies, then it would do Russia well to take the initiative in carving out new markets in Pakistan, which could also help it eventually penetrate Islamabad's close GCC partners sometime down the line too as part of a future rapprochement deal with them.

From its newfound position in the Indian Ocean through economic cooperation on CPEC and a naval base in Gwadar, Russia will be well equipped to deal with the challenges and opportunities of the Indo-Pacific Century. The world is presently experiencing a series of paradigm shifts in almost every sphere, but one of the most powerful driving forces which is expected to endure all across the Eastern Hemisphere throughout the coming decades is the Chinese-Indian New Cold War, and Moscow would do best to take this irrefutably unfolding development very seriously by actively advancing its interests in this context. What's required from Russia at this crucial time is the foresight to accurately predict the trajectory of this rivalry, the strategic flexibility to adapt to ever-changing and unpredictable conditions amidst these planet-wide paradigm shifts, and the ambition to equally (key word) balance between India and Pakistan, the two fulcrum states of "Greater South Asia" and therefore the forecasted naval powers of this century in the unprecedentedly important Indian Ocean Region.

About the Author

Andrew Korybko is a political analyst, journalist and a regular contributor to several online journals, as well as a member of the expert council for the Institute of Strategic Studies and Predictions at the People's Friendship University of Russia. He specializes in Russian affairs and geopolitics, specifically the US strategy in Eurasia. His other areas of focus include tactics of regime change, color revolutions and unconventional warfare used across the world. His book, "Hybrid Wars: The Indirect Adaptive Approach To Regime Change", extensively analyzes the situations in Syria and Ukraine and claims to prove that they represent a new model of strategic warfare being waged by the US.

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