

SECURITY WITHOUT INSTITUTIONS: CHINA'S GLOBAL SECURITY INITIATIVE AND FRAGMENTING ORDER

Scott N. Romaniuk



China's Global Security Initiative (GSI), introduced in April 2022, is a norm-driven foreign policy framework through which Beijing seeks to reshape global security governance without building a formal collective security system. Anchored in sovereignty, regime stability, and "indivisible security," the GSI prioritizes state authority and non-intervention over conditionality and accountability, functioning less as a fixed doctrine than as a flexible instrument within China's "four-in-one" architecture linking development, governance, security, and civilizational narratives. Applied unevenly across regions and adapted to local political conditions, the GSI operates through bilateral mechanisms such as security training, arms transfers, intelligence cooperation, and digital surveillance infrastructure that extend Chinese governance practices without formal alliance commitments. Its significance lies less in institution-building than in diffusing alternative security norms. While the initiative may expand China's strategic influence, its reliance on ambiguity and discretionary cooperation has the potential to weaken institutional coherence and contribute to a more fragmented security environment characterized by overlapping frameworks, selective adaptation, and growing geopolitical competition.

Photo credit: Rawpixel.com / Shutterstock.com

Introduction

In 2026, China's Global Security Initiative (GSI, 全球安全倡议, *quanqiu anquan changyi*)—a foreign policy framework focused on enhancing global security governance, reducing conflict drivers, and promoting stability and long-term peace—marked its fourth anniversary. Introduced by President Xi Jinping at the Bo'ao

Forum for Asia in April 2022 and developed further in China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs' 2023 Concept Paper, the GSI has been Beijing's most explicit attempt to reshape the foundations of international security governance and influence an international order that has persisted for more than seven decades.¹ Framed as a response to an increasingly fragmented and alliance-driven

global system, the GSI presents a principle-based approach centered on sovereignty, regime stability, and opposition to bloc politics.

At its core, the GSI is grounded in Beijing's interpretation of "indivisible security" (安全不可分割, *anquan bu ke fen ge*), which holds that no state should enhance its own security at the expense of others.² Chinese officials promote the initiative as inclusive and non-interventionist (不干涉主义, *bu ganshe zhuyi*), contrasting it with liberal institutional models associated with alliances, conditionality, and external intervention.³ Yet the GSI is not a standalone or fixed doctrine. It forms part of China's "four-in-one" (四位一体, *si wei yi ti*) architecture that also includes the Global Development Initiative (GDI, 全球发展倡议, *quanqiu fazhan changyi*), the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI, 全球文明倡议, *quanqiu wenming changyi*), and the emerging Global Governance Initiative (GGI, 全球治理倡议, *quanqiu zhili changyi*).⁴ These initiatives integrate China's economic influence, governance agenda, cultural narratives, and security engagement into an overarching state-centric framework.

Within this architecture, the GSI serves as the security pillar intended to stabilize external environments while safeguarding China's global interests. Across Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, Southeast Asia, Latin America, and South Asia, however, the initiative operates less as a coherent or institutionalized doctrine than as a flexible framework selectively adapted to diverse political contexts and domestic conditions. Regional responses have therefore been uneven, particularly in South Asia. Pakistan, for instance, has aligned closely with the initiative's security framing, while other countries, notably Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka, have adopted more cautious and pragmatic forms of engagement.⁵ India, by contrast, has been skeptical, regarding the GSI as an instrument of strategic expansion rather than cooperative security.

The GSI is neither a formal doctrine nor a military alliance. It lacks membership criteria, collective defense obligations, and permanent institutions. Instead, it operates at the level of norms and political discourse, repackaging long-standing principles of Chinese foreign policy as an alternative to the U.S.-led security order.

Normative Order Without Institutionalization

As the GSI forms part of China's broader strategy to reshape global governance, it operates alongside the GDI, GCI, and GGI, and can be understood as reflecting Beijing's vision of building a "shared future for mankind" (人类命运共同体, *renlei mingyun gongtongti*). As part of this broader strategy, the GDI advances economic connectivity and development, the GCI fosters cultural and normative affinity, and the GGI seeks to shape global governance practices.

Official Chinese discourse presents the GSI through six commitments: promoting common and comprehensive security; respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity; adhering to the principles of the United Nations (UN) Charter; considering the legitimate security concerns of all states; resolving disputes through dialogue; and addressing both traditional and non-traditional security threats, including terrorism, cyber risks, climate insecurity, and biosecurity.⁶

Despite this expansive rhetoric, the GSI is neither a formal doctrine nor a military alliance. It lacks membership criteria, collective defense

obligations, and permanent institutions. Instead, it operates at the level of norms and political discourse, repackaging long-standing principles of Chinese foreign policy as an alternative to the United States (U.S.)-led security order. At its core, the initiative advances a sovereignty–stability logic that prioritizes regime resilience, domestic control, and political order over accountability and external oversight. Consequently, security is framed less as the cooperative management of shared risks through interoperable institutions than as the assertion of sovereign authority and preemptive stabilization. The most striking aspect of this feature is how closely it mirrors China’s domestic governance approach.

From a legal perspective, the GSI occupies an ambiguous position within the existing international order. Although Chinese officials frequently invoke the UN Charter, their emphasis on non-interference and sovereign discretion sidelines evolving international norms that increas-

“The absence of binding commitments gives Beijing marked flexibility because it neither constrains Chinese behavior nor requires security guarantees in return. Instead, cooperation in areas such as arms sales, intelligence sharing, police training, and internal security assistance can be presented as part of a broader vision of global stability.”

ingly condition state authority on responsibility. This is particularly the case in relation to human rights and civilian protection. Rather than replacing international law outright, the GSI selectively reinterprets it in ways that privilege political discretion over legal obligation.

Exporting Security Without Institutional Constraints

The GSI stems from Beijing’s long-standing unease with alliance politics and intervention-prone security arrangements. By criticizing the “Cold War mentality” (冷战思维, *lengzhan si wei*) and military blocs, China has attempted to position itself as a defender of strategic autonomy. This framing resonates with many developing states increasingly wary of great-power rivalry and even the U.S.-led West. One of the most recent examples of this rhetorical framing is Li Song’s reference to AUKUS at the 69th International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) General Conference in Vienna and what Beijing views as a Western revival of great-power politics in the Asia-Pacific.⁷ The absence of binding commitments gives Beijing marked flexibility because it neither constrains Chinese behavior nor requires security guarantees in return. This allows Beijing to present cooperation in areas such as arms sales, intelligence sharing, police training, and internal security assistance as part of a broader vision of global stability.

This approach departs from prevailing security frameworks. Whereas the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) institutionalizes reciprocity, interoperability, and shared political commitments,⁸ the GSI relies on discretionary, largely bilateral engagement. The Responsibility to Protect (R2P) doctrine—increasingly constrained in practice though still normatively alive—conditions sovereignty on civilian protection, whereas the GSI prioritizes regime authority and treats external intervention as destabilizing. Compared with United Nations (UN) peacekeeping, which supports ceasefires,

stabilization, and political processes, the GSI places greater weight on internal security capacity and technological control, including digital surveillance tools. However, its long-term sustainability remains uncertain. Expanding security training, arms transfers, and digital infrastructure across many different regions requires substantial financial and technical capacity, and as China faces domestic economic pressures and growing external commitments, practical constraints could limit the initiative's scale and durability.⁹

Implementation in Practice: Instruments and Mechanisms

The GSI moves beyond abstract normative framing through practical mechanisms that embed Chinese security practices within partner-states. One major component is security-sector capacity building. China has expanded training programs for police, paramilitary, and intelligence personnel in South Asia, often focusing on counterterrorism, urban surveillance, and crisis response. Presented as technical cooperation rather than strategic alignment, these initiatives strengthen domestic control capacities without requiring formal alliance commitments.

China's arms transfers, ranging from small arms to advanced systems like drones and naval platforms, reinforce this. Because Chinese security assistance carries fewer political conditions than Western alternatives,¹⁰ Beijing has become an attractive partner for governments facing internal unrest or external pressure. Equally important is the export of digital security infrastructure, including surveillance systems, data-management platforms, and so-called "Safe City" (平安城市, *ping'an chengshi*) technologies.¹¹ Huawei's "Safe City" solutions have included facial recognition, license plate recognition, social media monitoring, intelligent video surveillance, among other tools.

According to open-source research by the CSIS Reconnecting Asia Project, Huawei's "Safe City" agreements had reached 73 across 52 countries,

The GSI moves beyond abstract normative framing through practical mechanisms that embed Chinese security practices in partner-states. One major component is security-sector capacity building. China has expanded training programs for police, paramilitary, and intelligence personnel in South Asia, often focusing on counterterrorism, urban surveillance, and crisis response.

with many concentrated in Asia, Africa, and middle-income states.¹² "Safe City" projects illustrate how China's surveillance-oriented model of security governance can be exported and embedded within the domestic security systems of partner states, extending surveillance, predictive policing, and preventive control and reinforcing the initiative's emphasis on social management for regime stability.

The emphasis on social management is particularly concerning in security governance because it reframes insecurity primarily as a domestic and behavioral issue. This orientation steers security away from it being treated as an external threat. It encourages pre-emptive forms of control. While there is the potential for states to strengthen their capacities as international units and perhaps respond to crises in more efficient ways, they also shift the balance of security provision towards greater executive discretion and expanded monitoring authority.

Why South Asia Matters

The strategic relevance of South Asia to China stems from its geostrategic position, fragmented political landscape, and persistent interstate tensions. The region borders sensitive Chinese territories, including Tibet and the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (XUAR); provides access to the Indian Ocean; and contains critical maritime and energy routes. Most significantly, it includes India—the only regional power capable of simultaneously challenging China on land, at sea, and in the realm of normative influence. Regional fragmentation further increases South Asia’s strategic value for Beijing, as weak institutions, uneven state capacity, civil–military imbalances, corruption, and recurring political volatility can make governments receptive to external partners that are both willing and able to provide investment and security cooperation without political conditionality.¹³ This environment creates opportunities for China to expand its influence through development

“Although treated as separate initiatives, the GSI and the Belt and Road Initiative are closely intertwined. This is reflected in large-scale Chinese investments in infrastructure, logistics, and energy projects that have created extensive overseas assets needing protection, especially in politically fragile environments characterized by governance gaps and limited security capacity.

assistance, infrastructure investment, and security engagement, while avoiding the formal institutional constraints of traditional alliance systems.

The Political Economy of Security: Linking the GSI and BRI

Although treated as separate initiatives, the GSI and the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI, 一帶一路, *yidai yilu*) are closely intertwined. This is reflected in large-scale Chinese investments in infrastructure, logistics, and energy projects that have created extensive overseas assets needing protection, especially in politically fragile environments characterized by governance gaps and limited security provision capabilities. Projects such as the China–Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC, 中巴经济走廊, *zhong ba jingji zoulang*) expose Beijing to risks ranging from political instability to insurgent violence. The GSI provides a framework for justifying a more active security role abroad by linking security engagement to the protection of development and connectivity projects. This produces a reinforcing security–economic dynamic in which greater economic exposure drives demand for deeper security cooperation, which in turn helps stabilize political relationships and sustain further integration.

For recipient states, this integration creates both opportunities and vulnerabilities. Chinese engagement can strengthen infrastructure resilience and internal stability, but it can also deepen dependency as economic leverage and security cooperation become mutually reinforcing.

At the same time, the expansion of Chinese involvement into sensitive areas such as surveillance, digital governance, and internal security raises concerns over sovereignty, transparency, and long-term political influence, particularly in politically competitive systems where shifts in

leadership or public sentiment may alter existing arrangements.

Regional Variation in GSI Implementation

Although South Asia provides the clearest illustration of the GSI's operational logic, similar patterns are visible across other regions. In Africa, the initiative is embedded within broader security–development cooperation involving peacekeeping training, policing partnerships, and African Union engagement. In the Middle East, it operates mainly as a diplomatic positioning tool through which China projects neutrality and promotes dialogue while avoiding binding security commitments.

In Central Asia, the GSI reinforces structures that are already in place, notably the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO, 上海合作组织, *Shanghai hezuo zuzhi*), and aligns closely with Beijing's domestic concerns regarding Xinjiang. In Southeast Asia, it complements Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)-centered diplomacy by emphasizing non-interference amid territorial disputes in the South China Sea. In Latin America and the Caribbean, the initiative remains more discursive than operational but increasingly intersects with policing cooperation, cyber governance, and surveillance-related infrastructure.

Within South Asia, the initiative operates through differentiated bilateral relationships. Pakistan represents the deepest level of alignment, underpinned by long-standing military and intelligence cooperation that is increasingly framed through the GSI as part of a shared vision of regional stability, with both sides frequently characterizing the relationship as an “All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership” or “iron brotherhood” (铁杆兄弟, *tiegan xiongdi*).¹⁴

“The strategic relevance of South Asia to China stems from its geostrategic position, fragmented political landscape, and persistent interstate tensions. This environment creates opportunities for China to expand its influence through development assistance, infrastructure investment, and security engagement, while avoiding the formal institutional constraints of traditional alliance systems.”

Sri Lanka's engagement is shaped primarily by infrastructure investment and debt exposure, especially in relation to port development and logistics corridors.¹⁵ Bangladesh, Nepal, and the Maldives have pursued more cautious forms of cooperation centered on policing, training, and digital infrastructure while continuing to hedge between China, India, and other external actors.

Local Agency and Selective Adaptation

South Asian states are not passive recipients of Chinese influence, and their engagement with the GSI reflects selective adaptation shaped by domestic priorities and strategic considerations. Governments often embrace forms of cooperation that strengthen internal security, policing capacity, or infrastructure protection while avoiding explicit alignment with China's broader geopolitical agenda, allowing them to secure ma-

terial and political benefits without entering formal strategic commitments. These patterns are strongly shaped by domestic political conditions: states facing instability or legitimacy pressures tend to be more receptive to the initiative's emphasis on regime security and sovereign control while those with greater institutional capacity or strategic autonomy engage more cautiously.

Security institutions and governing elites may welcome Chinese assistance where it enhances state capacity, whereas opposition parties, civil society groups, and segments of the public often raise concerns about surveillance, sovereignty, transparency, and economic dependence. These tensions are visible across the region: Chinese-linked infrastructure projects in Sri Lanka and Nepal have sparked debates over sovereignty and dependency, concerns over external influence are heightened in India by broader geopolitical rivalry, and even in Pakistan—despite strong state-level alignment—parts of civil society express unease about economic dependence and

surveillance-capable infrastructure.¹⁶ The GSI's effectiveness depends heavily on local political acceptance, making many forms of engagement contingent, uneven, and potentially reversible.

The GSI Through India's Lens

India views the GSI less as a cooperative framework and more as an instrument for expanding Chinese influence and constraining its regional position. The initiative's rhetoric of "indivisible security" is widely seen in New Delhi as inconsistent with China's behavior along the Line of Actual Control (LAC; 中印边境实际控制线, *zhong-yin bianjing shiji kongzhi xian*), infrastructure development in disputed territories, and its strategic ties with Pakistan.¹⁷ In response, India has pursued a range of balancing strategies to offset China's regional influence, including strengthening the Quad through expanded defense cooperation and joint exercises, while also deepening engagement across Southeast Asia, the Persian Gulf, and Europe. Policy initiatives such as India and the United Arab Emirates' Comprehensive Security Partnership (signed in 2017) and Narendra Modi's "Link and Act West" (向西连接与行动, *xiang xi lian jie yu xing dong*) policy, which evolved from the earlier "Look West" policy, are indicative of a broader hedging strategy that seeks to diversify partnerships, reinforce India's regional role, and sustain support for a rules-based order.¹⁸

Beyond strategic balancing, India also challenges the GSI at the normative level. Indian policymakers and analysts criticize the weight it places on sovereignty and regime stability at the expense of accountability and institutional transparency, viewing it as a framework that may legitimize selective intervention aligned with Chinese interests. More broadly, the GSI operates in a contested regional environment shaped by competing external actors. The U.S., Japan, and European partners continue to promote alternative frameworks emphasizing transparency, institutionalization, and rules-based governance through

The GSI also challenges liberal approaches that link security governance to democratic accountability and human rights, with the potential to shift security practice toward more adaptable norms, discretionary cooperation, and regime-centered stability rather than institutional commitments and collective responsibility.

infrastructure development, maritime cooperation, and capacity-building initiatives. These competing models constrain the GSI's appeal in contexts where China is viewed primarily as a strategic rival rather than a cooperative partner.

Power and Order Implications

South Asia is one of many regions that serve as a testing ground for the GSI. At the regional level, it contributes to increasingly multipolarized forms of security cooperation that have the potential to weaken already fragile multilateral institutions like the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC).¹⁹ The GSI also challenges liberal approaches that link security governance to democratic accountability and human rights, with the potential to shift security practice toward more adaptable norms, discretionary cooperation, and regime-centered stability rather than institutional commitments and collective responsibility.

The GSI's principal advantage, its adaptability, is also a structural limitation. China can project a consistent normative vision while tailoring engagement to diverse political environments, as seen in this region. However, this comes at the cost of institutional depth and long-term coherence, given the absence of enforcement mechanisms, formal obligations, and standardized practices. This tension between adaptability and institutional weakness lies at the core of the initiative's uneven impact, as states selectively adopt, reinterpret, or resist its principles based on domestic and geopolitical interests. A further contradiction affecting its appeal lies in the disparity between China's advocacy of "indivisible security" and conduct that undermines the very stability the concept purports to support, particularly in the context of border disputes, coercive diplomacy, and asymmetric economic relations.

In this regard, developing countries' exposure to coercive diplomacy is often shaped by structural constraints, including economic dependence, limited access to alternative financing, and uneven institutional capacity, which can create asymmetric bargaining positions vis-à-vis China. In South Asia and beyond, these conditions may enhance the effectiveness of Chinese leverage in certain issue areas, particularly where urgent development needs or fiscal pressures narrow policy choices.

Conclusion: Projection Without Consolidation

The GSI can be interpreted less as an emergent collective security system than as a mechanism for projecting China's preferred security norms in the absence of binding institutionalisation. It affords Beijing considerable latitude to advance its security interests through a flexible, low-commitment framework that prioritises sovereignty, regime stability, and political order over conditionality, transparency, accountability, or institutional constraint. Embedded within the broader "four-in-one" architecture, it fuses security with development, governance, and cultural narratives, enabling cross-domain coordination without producing standardized rules or enforceable obligations. This structural ambiguity underpins both its adaptability and its limits: while the GSI can be selectively embedded in contexts such as infrastructure protection, capacity-building, and diplomatic signalling, it does not generate institutional convergence or durable security governance.

The initiative's future trajectory is likely to remain uneven and structurally constrained. It will continue to be shaped by intensifying China-India competition, the resilience of U.S.-led and regional security architectures, and divergent domestic conditions among partner states, including variations in stability, strategic autonomy, and receptiveness to Chinese-led frameworks. Rather than consolidating into

a coherent system, the GSI is more plausibly evolving into a fragmented layer of global security governance—expanding China’s discursive and diplomatic influence while simultaneously deepening institutional pluralism and strategic contestation in the international order.

At the same time, several features of the initiative generate significant limitations. Its normative ambiguity, emphasis on regime security, and reliance on discretionary cooperation risk undermining trust among partners and reinforcing perceptions of strategic opacity. These dynamics may, in turn, stimulate balancing behaviour, accelerate hedging strategies, and intensify concerns over sovereignty erosion, political dependence, and surveillance potential. In doing so, the initiative may inadvertently generate outcomes that are the inverse of its stated objectives, fostering strategic distrust and competitive balancing rather than consolidating a cooperative security order. Far from producing stability, the GSI’s flexible architecture may therefore contribute to the very fragmentation it seeks to mitigate. In this sense, its defining strength—elasticity—also constitutes its principal constraint, limiting its capacity to generate durable legitimacy, institutional authority, or sustained collective commitment.

This issue brief is a part of the ISDP SCSA-IPA research project, “The Silk Noose: China’s Power Architecture in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region”.

Author –

Dr. Scott N. Romaniuk is a Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Contemporary Asia Studies, Corvinus Institute for Advanced Studies (CIAS), and the Department of International Relations, Institute of Global Studies, Corvinus University of Budapest. He is also a Senior Researcher at Óbuda University and a Non-Resident Fellow at The Dialogue, India. His research focuses on international relations, geopolitics, and critical security studies, with particular emphasis on the Indo-Pacific (including East and Southeast Asia), Africa, and the Middle East.
Email: scott.romaniuk@uni-corvinus.hu

© The Institute for Security and Development Policy, 2026. This Policy Brief can be freely reproduced provided that ISDP is informed.

ABOUT ISDP

The Institute for Security and Development Policy is a Stockholm-based independent and non-profit research and policy institute. The Institute is dedicated to expanding understanding of international affairs, particularly the interrelationship between the issue areas of conflict, security and development. The Institute’s primary areas of geographic focus are Asia and Europe’s neighborhood.

www.isdp.eu

Endnotes

- 1 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Wang Wenbin's Regular Press Conference on April 21, 2022," April 21, 2022, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/eng/zy/jj/2020zt/kjgzbdffyq/202204/t20220421_10671083.html; Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "The Global Security Initiative Concept Paper," May 31, 2024, https://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/zy/gb/202405/t20240531_11367484.html.
- 2 African Center for Strategic Studies, "Africa and China's Global Security Initiative," August 4, 2025, <https://africacenter.org/spotlight/africa-china-global-security-initiative/>.
- 3 Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, "Xi Jinping Attends Opening Ceremony of the 10th Ministerial Conference of the China-Arab States Cooperation Forum and Delivers Keynote Speech," May 30, 2024, https://www.mfa.gov.cn/mfa_eng/xw/wjbxw/202405/t20240530_11343977.html.
- 4 "China Calls for Greater Global Security Cooperation Amid Rising Uncertainties," *Global Times*, January 2026, <https://www.globaltimes.cn/page/202601/1352342.shtml>.
- 5 China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Secretariat, *Action Plan to Foster an Even Closer China-Pakistan Community with a Shared Future in the New Era (2025-2029)* (Islamabad: Government of Pakistan & People's Republic of China, 2025), <https://cpec.gov.pk/brain/public/uploads/documents/ActionPlan2025-2029.pdf>; Md Nahiyan Shajid Khan, "China's GSI: Implications for Bangladesh," *BISS Journal* 45, no. 4 (October 1, 2024), <https://www.biiss.org/public/index.php/article/chinas-gsi-implications-for-bangladesh>.
- 6 "Global Security Initiative – Core Concepts and Principles," China Diplomacy, May 12, 2026, https://en.chinadiplomacy.org.cn/gsi/node_9007042.shtml.
- 7 Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations and Other International Organizations in Vienna, "H.E. Ambassador Li Song's Keynote Remarks under the Item on AUKUS at the 69th IAEA General Conference," October 28, 2025, https://vienna.china-mission.gov.cn/eng/hyyfy/202510/t20251028_11742762.htm.
- 8 Bann Seng Tan, "The Revenge of 'Democratic Peace,'" *International Political Science Review* 45, no. 2 (2024): 149–69, <https://doi.org/10.1177/01925121231200122>.
- 9 Yukun Zhang and Liz Lee, "China's April Producer Inflation Surges to 45-Month High on Energy Price Shock," *Reuters*, May 11, 2026, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/china-april-producer-inflation-surges-to-45-month-high-2026-05-11/>.
- 10 Bann Seng Tan, *International Aid and Democracy Promotion: Liberalization at the Margins* (London: Routledge, 2021).
- 11 Jason Warner and Toyosi Ajibade, "China's Smart Cities in Africa: Should the United States Be Concerned?" Center for Strategic and International Studies, November 18, 2024, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/chinas-smart-cities-africa-should-united-states-be-concerned>.
- 12 Jonathan E. Hillman and Maesea McCalpin, "Watching Huawei's 'Safe Cities,'" Center for Strategic and International Studies, November 4, 2019, <https://www.csis.org/analysis/watching-huaweis-safe-cities>.
- 13 Deep Pal, "China's Influence in South Asia: Vulnerabilities and Resilience in Four Countries," Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, October 13, 2021, <https://carnegieendowment.org/research/2021/10/chinas-influence-in-south-asia-vulnerabilities-and-resilience-in-four-countries>.
- 14 Abid Hussain, "'Iron brothers': How China and Pakistan built an unlikely 75-year bond," *Al Jazeera*, May 21, 2026, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2026/5/21/iron-brothers-how-china-and-pakistan-built-an-unlikely-75-year-bond>.
- 15 Rahul Karan Reddy, "India and China's Economic Roles in Sri Lanka," ORCA Asia, <https://orcasia.org/article/1679/india-and-chinas-economic-roles-in-sri-lanka>.

-
- 16 M. Adhikari and A. Acharya, “Navigating Infrastructural Rivalries in Global Politics: The MCC, the BRI, and Nepal’s Domestic Agency,” *Asian Studies Review* 50, no. 2 (2026): 357–378, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10357823.2025.2562515>.
 - 17 China often avoids treating the LAC as a formally agreed or clearly defined boundary. In diplomatic language, it tends to describe “the situation on the ground along the Line of Actual Control” or use similarly descriptive phrasing, rather than characterizing it as a legally demarcated international border.
 - 18 Pradeep V. Kamat, “India’s West Asia Policy under Modi Regime – Shifting Sands, Dynamic Perspectives,” *FINS India*, December 16, 2022, <https://www.fnsindia.org/indias-west-asia-policy-under-modi-regime-shifting-sands-dynamic-perspectives.html>.
 - 19 Madhavi Bhasin, “SAARC III – Challenges and Prospects,” Foreign Policy Association, <https://fpa.org/saarc-iii-challenges-and-prospects/>.