

China's Geopolitical Advancement in South Asia and the Indian Response

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In light of its expansive Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), China has recently shown a greater interest in the countries of South Asia. China has also undertaken various projects in the region, including the China and Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and control over seaports. This has jeopardised India's geopolitical and security interests and challenged its long-standing dominance over the subcontinent. The debt trap diplomacy of China has dragged Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and other South Asian Countries into massive debt crises. The Buddhist diplomacy along the Himalayan frontiers, including Nepal, Bhutan, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh, and a few parts of Himachal Pradesh, has triggered a geopolitical falling and security threat to India and other South Asian countries. Consequently, South Asia has turned more vulnerable to power politics among the different regional and non-territorial actors. China's expansionist policies around the Himalayas, comprising of different border scuffles and deadlocks, have put more pressure on India, to which the latter has responded appropriately. The current paper investigates how China's presence in South Asia is becoming a geopolitical challenge and security issue to India, how an extra-regional actor has been impacting the power equations in South Asia, and India has recently registered its response to these developments.

Key Words: *India and China, South Asia, Geo-political interests, BRI, CPEC.*

With the global power shift, the regions of Asia have assumed greater geostrategic importance in the twenty-first century. South Asia, which has witnessed the conventional animosity between India and Pakistan, is undergoing important change as extra-regional powers are also making a significant impact on the intra-regional dynamics. Due to its strategic locations and abundance of natural energy resource reserves, the South Asian subcontinent has significant geopolitical and strategic importance. The region serves as a stage for both regional and non-regional forces to participate in the power politics. It also serves as a route for commerce and communication and has abundant natural resources, including natural oil (Husain, 1977, p. 27). Furthermore, the Indian Ocean area has emerged as a vital pathway for energy, trade, and industry. It is the region where more than 80% of all marine trade occurs. As a result, the Indian Ocean area is home to the busiest and most significant commercial routes in terms of geo-economics (Ghosh, 2020). South Asia is one of the least geopolitically linked sub-continent, and the extra-regional powers like the United States of America, Japan, and the People's Republic of China are seeking to strengthen their strategic weight in order to further their geopolitical and geo-

economic goals in the area (Rehman, Khatri & Brunner 2012).

Geopolitics is the study of how geography, economy, culture, demographics, and other variables affect a state's politics and foreign policy. Power politics and geopolitics are, in fact, pretty similar at first glance (Menon, 2021, p. 04). According to geopolitical and geostrategic studies expert Alfred Thayer Mahan, whoever rules the Indian Ocean will rule Asia. This represents the Indian Ocean Region's geopolitical significance to the greater globe (Rath, 2014, p. 77). India is a natural grand actor in the region of South Asia, and the increased extra-regional states' presence perturbs its position. With the growing rivalry between India and China, and other regional and extra-regional powers, the world is beginning to understand the true picture of the South Asian region. According to Butterfield, "Beijing's access to markets is also threatened by the PRC's neighbours, particularly India, with which China has a continuing poor relationship. The willingness of the United States to increase tariffs on Chinese imports over a range of grievances, such as the Trump administration did in January 2018, also creates a perceived threat to the Chinese economy" (2022, p.25). In many respects, as Sheldon and Elman observe, this is a return to the historical norm for both the countries. For much of the earlier period, India and China were the global leaders in a variety of ways (2018, II). However, the colonisation of the two and their consequent emergence as sovereign states has placed them in a critical situation as the two disagree on borders, an illegitimate legacy of the British. The escalating boundary dispute, China's debt-trap policy and the string of pearls strategy, its ever-growing military prowess, and its ambitious BRI Project have caused much alarm to India. India's tilt towards the US, its bold initiative of revoking Article 370, and refusing to be a signatory to the RCEP (Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership), have resulted in the deteriorating relations between the two powerful giants (Madhuri, 2021, 2). In light of China's growing influence and its geopolitical goals in the area, India needs to recalibrate its foreign policy. The current paper examines how China's geopolitical advancements in South Asia have impacted India's ties with its neighbours and other states. The article also examines how the Chinese presence has threatened Indian security interests in South Asia and how India has responded to the Chinese onslaught.

Methodology of the Study

The current paper relies both on primary and secondary data obtained from government reports and published material like books, journals, newspapers, articles, and websites. E-sources also constitute an important component of the study. While executing the study, an amalgam of historical, analytical, comparative and descriptive methodology has been used.

China's Advances in South Asia

After the 2008 depression, China got an opportunity to make its presence felt in South Asia. Consequently, it went for the signing of several MOUs and FTAs with South Asian states, which have caused concerns for India. This has also raised issues about the sovereignty and integrity of India (Upadhyay, 2022, p.88). With greater geopolitical and geostrategic goals to encircle India through forceful plans and projects, China has endeavoured to increase its own influence and become the dominant force in the region. China is attempting to carry out numerous forward-thinking projects in the area. "In order to further its short and long-term geopolitical

and geostrategic goals of exerting influence over the countries of South Asia, China might establish strongholds in the area” (Macaes, 2019, p. 5). China’s increased investments in Sri Lanka, Maldives, Bangladesh and Nepal have raised Indian eyebrows. China’s increased interest in the Indian Ocean and the maritime movements therein also signifies its greater plans as part of its BOI project. The increased Chinese presence in the area would definitely provide it the status of a regional power to the detriment of Indian interests.

Belt and Road Initiative and Its Implications

China’s BRI project has a wider spectrum of engagements and connectivity. China has planned to connect itself to the South Asian nations, the Middle East, Central Asia, West Asia, Europe, Eastern African nations, and South East Asia with this mega-infrastructure project (Karim, 2020, p. 486). The Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB), a land-based commerce route linking China with these regions of the world, is an offshoot project of the CPEC², and its estimated construction cost is over US\$ 46 billion (Ali, 2015, p. 3). The CPEC would employ a network of trains, roads, airports, and energy pipelines to connect Kashgar, a city in China’s northwest province of Xinjiang, to Pakistan’s Balochistan, where Gwadar port is situated at the country’s southern coast (Gil, 2019, p.337). Another benefit of the project is that it will lessen route distance since China imports 80 per cent of its oil through the Indian Ocean region, which will now be replaced by the CPEC-trading-way, which is backed by both China and Pakistan (Hussain, 2017, pp. 151-152). In addition to the China’s BRI project, China-Myanmar Economic Corridor (CMEC) is another strategic infrastructure plan to improve connectivity between China and Myanmar. The military coup in Myanmar last year against the democratic regime is also part of China’s increased presence in Myanmar which worries India. CMEC would ensure China establishes a foothold through Myanmar in the Indian Ocean region in order to further its geopolitical objectives against the IOR activities and the Indo-Pacific.

Pakistan and Myanmar are thought to be significantly impacted economically by the CPEC and CMEC. The long-term geopolitical and geostrategic objectives of China in the Indian Ocean region, however, will be reflected by these projects once they are completed, which might alter the region’s security environment and increase security worries for India (Blah, 2018, pp. 318-319). The Chinese aim is to contain India and create a network of ports to establish itself as a dominant force in the Indian Ocean region. A series of ports and commercial hubs along the coast is known as ‘The String of Pearls’. It is a network of Chinese military and commercial facilities and relationships along its sea lines of communication that extend from the South China Sea (Hainan Island) to the Port of Sudan in the North-Eastern region of the African Continent. China would describe this network as purely commercial (Thakur, 2016).

The Gwadar port is the one that connects China’s two land-based trading routes and sea-based trading routes, that is Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) and Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI). This is expected that the port will reduce China’s ‘Malacca Dilemma’⁴ and the challenges that it encounters around the strait during maritime activities. By 2016, China imported about 80 per cent of its oil through the Malacca Strait. The Marine Silk Road Initiative (MSRI), often known as China’s String of Pearls, is another infrastructure-related maritime initiative by China that aims to restrict India in the Indian Ocean region. Construction of maritime ports is being

done by Policy³ through China in various South Asian nations (Brewster, 2010, pp. 5-6). The SREB and MSRI, which connect China's two land-based and sea-based trade routes, are connected by the Gwadar port; hence it is anticipated that the port would play a key role in both the initiatives (Jaybhay & Gambhir, 2020). Another important port is Sri Lanka's 'Hambantota port' which China has purchased on a 99-year lease basis. This will also help it feel less hesitant to use its influence in the region due to the 'Malacca Dilemma' (Kapoor, 2017, p. 2). By helping Bangladesh establish two important ports and gaining its own access to them, Bangladesh's third 'Chittagong port' strengthens China's hold (Belt and Road Diplomacy) and limits India's strategic reach (Marantidou, 2014, pp. 6-8). It also puts pressure on India's north-east and its relations with the smaller neighbours like Nepal and Bhutan. However, in order to complete its 'String of Pearls' plan, China has extended its influence beyond South Asian countries to encompass other countries in the Indo-Pacific, such as Myanmar's Kyaukpyu port and military facilities in the Indian Ocean (Poling, 2018, pp. 2-3). Two trade routes that are components of the BRI project and represent the ambitious Chinese aspirations for the ensuing decades are the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road Initiative (Haderiansyah, Habibah, Setiawan & Hayat, 2020, p. 170). All the current infrastructure projects are being funded by businesses and investment banks owned by China which have in turn tightened their noose on the smaller states of the subcontinent by using its 'debt trap diplomacy'. Sri Lanka has received billions of dollars in loans from China to build its internal infrastructure (Nayak, 2021, p. 27). For the construction of the Hambantota port project, the nation borrowed US\$ 301 million at a 6.3% interest rate, as opposed to 0.25-3% on loans from the World Bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB). As a result of its failure to repay the loan, it exemplifies how China is suffocating or burying the country in debt (Haderiansyah, Habibah, Setiawan, & Hayat 2020, p. 173). According to the Central Bank of Sri Lanka and the IMF, Sri Lanka had a foreign debt of US\$ 46.4 billion, or 57% of GDP, at the end of 2016, with around 10% of this debt owed to China (Brautigam, 2019, p. 10).

CPEC, a geopolitical and strategic alliance between China and Pakistan, will see the construction of a 3,218-kilometer route over the following five years. It also includes building roads, railroads, and pipelines (Shah, 2021, p. 9). The undertaking has been designed to give China and Pakistan economic and strategic clout. Despite this, many analysts estimate that it would take Pakistan 40 years to pay off its debt. This reflects the fact that China has supported infrastructure projects in South Asian, African, and other nations around the world with a view to exercising greater control over them by forcing them into debt traps. As a result, the People's Republic of China will use debtor countries' infrastructure for political leverage (Kumar, 2019, pp. 32-33).

Major Boundary Issues between India and China

After both countries came into existence in 1947 and 1949 till 1956, their relations were in a decent time zone. However, after that, things started to go downhill between India and China. The McMahon Line, a boundary between Tibet and Assam in British India that was created between Tibet and Great Britain during the Shimla Conference between October 1913 and July 1914, was rejected by China (Rowland, 1967, pp. 41-50). A few boundary conflicts and disagreements between the two countries have occurred since 1956. It ultimately led to the 1962 war between India and China, in

which China invaded 38,000 square kilometers of Indian territory. Since then, numerous brief military standoffs have occurred (Anwar, 2020, p. 167). Despite this, the India-China War was caused by boundary disputes and brief military clashes in the Himalayan Frontier Region after the 'Tibet Insurgency' for which India granted the Dalai Lama shelter. In the 1960s, India implemented the 'Defensive Forward' doctrine to stop Chinese military patrols and planning along the Himalayan Frontier Region (Jain, 1960, pp. 126-27). Since the 1962 war and the Indian defeat, there have been several border clashes and standoffs along the Line of Actual Control (LAC), including the current events of the Doklam in 2017 and the Galwan in 2020. As a result of expansionist China's ambitions throughout the significant geostrategic areas of the Himalayan Frontier Region, India and China are currently primarily encountering and experiencing considerable boundary disputes (Krishnan, 2020, pp.184-200). Trijunction military standoffs between India, China, and Pakistan might occur at any time as a result of the CPEC's passage through Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (POK), a disputed region between India and Pakistan. The 'Doklam Crisis-2017' is the name given to the 2017 military border standoff between the Indian armed forces and the People's Liberation Army of China (PLA) over China's construction of a road at Doklam, which is near to the trijunction border area between India, Bhutan, and China. China's objective to increase its military presence in the area is evident in this fight, which also reflects its desire to increase its geopolitical might in the region in order to dominate the Democratic Republic of India. Additionally, the 'Galwan Crisis-2020' and Chinese military patrols near Pangong Lake in eastern Ladakh are examples of this (Tarapore, 2021, p. 3).

In the meantime, China has also been using water diplomacy to exude undue pressure on India. As the two states contest the Brahmaputra River waters as China's hydroelectric projects under construction challenge the prospects of the life and culture of the people of Brahmaputra valley. China is planning to harness the lower reaches of the Brahmaputra River, commonly known as Yarlung Tsangpo, in China. It has already completed Zangmu (510 MW), Dagu (640MW) and Jiacha (320 MW) projects by 2015. China formally approved the outline of its 14th Five-Year Plan(2021-2025), which highlights a number of key strategic projects to be pursued as a priority. A number of projects listed under China's new five-year plan are going to be built very close to the border of the two nations. This has raised more questions about China's intention behind building water projects so close to national boundaries (Journals of India, 2021). What bothers India more is the fact that since the river passes through the high seismic instability zone, the dams pose a serious threat to the low-lying areas. Being an upper riparian state, an all-time danger also lingers in India on account of misuse of water in times of conflicting situations.

China has embraced 'Belt and Road Diplomacy' and 'Buddhist Diplomacy' to eclipse India in the geopolitical and geo-strategic spheres, where it intends to strategically expand in the Himalayan frontier (Stobdan, 2019). The construction of infrastructure projects in Nepal and river Brahmaputra and along the Ladakh frontier is posing geopolitical loss and a water-security threat to India in the area. The construction of various dams in the Brahmaputra River caused the Diversion of water flow and rendered the riparian states' areas to an avalanche of natural calamities (Arpi, 2003) and giving birth to water insecurity in the Indian states of Arunachal Pradesh and Assam. Consequently, it can embark on a water war between India and China in times to come. China's soft power strategy rests on 'harmony', through which it seeks to

promote peaceful rise and development. Through soft power investment, China is increasing its sphere of influence in the South Asian countries to make its own geopolitical and geostrategic weight. For instance, Nepal has joined the Belt and Road Initiative in 2017, and Bangladesh and other South Asian countries are entering into the ambit of Chinese soft power politics (Hazarika & Mishra, 2016). As a result, from the 1960s till the present, the unresolved boundary disputes as well as the actual military conflicts and brief military skirmishes have been points of friction between India and China. China is India's top trading partner, and the two countries cooperate in the fields of business, culture, education, and technology. However, due to boundary disputes (Aksai Chin, CPEC passing through POK, illegal claim of Arunachal Pradesh, etc.), the Galwan issue, the Doklam-like issues, and other geostrategic and geo-political programmes and projects, India's sovereignty and geostrategic advantages in the Himalayan frontier region and South Asian region are severely jeopardized (Campbell & Kronstadt, 2020).

Therefore, the increased Chinese presence in the subcontinent has challenged the traditional Indian role of regional dominant force and threatened its security interests. Because of certain factors and pressing difficulties, and China's pressure techniques employed through its various projects and understandings with Indian neighbours, India is becoming increasingly concerned about how to improve its geopolitical and geostrategic performance in the region (Reddy, 2022, pp. 64-65). China has disturbed not only India's traditional clout but also its trade and geostrategic relations with South Asian neighbours. Through its BRI initiative, the projects like CPEC, SOP, and FTAs have placed many states under tremendous debt pressure. Sri Lanka is today under massive debt and states like Pakistan, Maldives and Bangladesh are following the trail (Thakur, 2021).

India has been responding steadily to these developments now by entering into different bilateral and multilateral projects with south Asian states. It has strongly reacted to the Chinese misadventure at Doklam in 2017 and Galwan in 2021, and Tawang in 2022. On the economic front, India took strong measures by banning several Chinese apps. From a trade deficit of \$53.57 billion in 2018 the USA surpassed China in 2020 as India's largest trade partner. Ironically, in the same year, India's imports from China dropped 13%, whereas, exports went up by 16% (Singh, 2020).

In response to China's SOP and BRI project India has been forwarding its 'Necklace of Diamonds' strategy of China's encirclement. The strategy involves the development of air fields, military basis, naval bases and connecting corridors. This will not only help India to build a strong infrastructural network against China but also expand its trade activities. To counter CPEC, India has been building road projects. It has also been investing \$8 billion in the Chabahar sea port in Iran to have access to Afghanistan, and Central Asia states to meet its energy needs. In 2016, India signed a deal with Iran entailing Chabahar port and industries in Chabahar Special Economic Zone, including an aluminium smelter and a urea-making facility, at Chabahar port is being developed was a transit route to Afghanistan and central Asia. ["On a railroad from Russia to Iran.", *The Hindu*, 13 July 2016.] India has also been working on India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway (IMT Highway), a 1,360 km long route, as part of its Look East policy. The highway will connect the Indian city of Moreh with Mae Sot of Thailand through Myanmar. India has been an active member of QUAD with Japan, Australia and the US and is working jointly with the US over Indo-Pacific Command. The Quadrilateral Security Dialogue was introduced in 2004, which

remained dormant due to Malabar Exercises and Chinese protests, and was later revived in 2016 due to increased Chinese activism in the South China Sea and Indian borders. It has been interpreted as containing China's efforts by analysts too. "With India's partaking, the Quad has been upgraded to a cooperation platform on global issues and has held regular ministerial meetings. For instance, in November 2019, India hosted a Quad 'CT-TTX' (counter-terrorism table-top exercise) in Delhi. Senior military leaders also appeared on Quad-plus panels at India's flagship geopolitical conference, the Raisina Dialogue of 2018, 2019, and 2020" (Pant, 2022). Therefore QUAD can be useful to India so far as it helps it check Chinese misadventures by garnering the support of US, Japan and Australia.

China's Buddhist Diplomacy around the Himalayas

The states of Sri Lanka, Myanmar, Thailand and Bhutan are Buddhist majority states and keep Buddhism at the centre of their political engagements. Given the situation, China views Tibetan Buddhism as an essential component of Chinese culture and that Tibet is a location where China and India's borders converge. In 2011 Xiao Wunan, Vice President of the Asia Pacific Exchange and Cooperation Foundation (APECF), also stressed the need to bring all the Buddhist practices together (Basnayak, 2020). A broad plan was conceived to have access to the inner lands of Nepal. There are three facets to this initiative: First, it is an extension of President Hu Jintao's ideology to the international arena, with a focus on international peace and cooperation by promoting a 'harmonious society'; second, through a cross-border 72.25-km railway line worth US \$2.25 billion through the Himalayas linking Tibetan border town to Kathmandu and tourist towns to Pokhara and Lumbini is a noteworthy development, questions arise on the basis of the feasibility, rise of cost, debt trap, and geopolitical concerns. Finally, the cognitive dissonance is that it could also be a part of the communist ideology as an extension of its soft power (Basnayak, 2022).

China's geopolitical goals are reflected in its focus on Nepal and Bhutan through Buddhist diplomacy (Joshi, 2021). Ladakh, Arunachal Pradesh, and Sikkim in the Indian Himalayas, which have substantial Buddhist populations, are also susceptible to Chinese influence. Furthermore, China is influencing the geopolitics of the Himalayas to its benefit through exploiting Tibetan resources. And by looking at the areas of the Himalayas that are just as susceptible to an increase in Chinese influence as those areas are, it is clear how severe the process of Tibetanization is in these areas (Stobdan, 2019, p. 10).

India has responded too to the Chinese moves. For instance, with the support of the exile government in Dharamshala, the Tibetan Lamas' control over the majority of Indian monasteries and the inclusion of Bhoti in the VIII schedule of the Indian Constitution may have unintended consequences for India's geopolitical interests in the Himalayan frontier belt (Stobdan, 2019, pp. x-xi). His Highness the Dalai Lama is also frequently invited to different cultural and academic functions by the government of India to show solidarity with the Tibetans and Buddhists. Prime Minister Modi also visited Lumbini on Buddha Purnima in May 2022 and inaugurated the India International Centre for Buddhist Culture and Heritage to showcase India's soft power diplomacy and China's increased investments in Nepal alarms India. Nepal has been using this connection dexterously as a buffer between India and China. After assuming power Prime Minister Modi realised the significance of the soft power and wisely used the policy of increasing Indian access to primary Buddhist centres of the world

through the instrumentality of Buddhism. Apart from countries like Nepal, Bhutan, Japan, Sri Lanka, South Korea, Mongolia and others, he even struck a direct chord with China to revive India-China ties. He visited China's ancient temples in Xi'an and made an offering in front of massive golden statues of the Buddha amidst monks chanting *sutras*. Moreover, the Modi government undertook several diplomatic measures, mainly organising Buddhist cultural festivals – gathering Buddhist leaders and experts from Asian countries to attend conferences, conventions and shows. But two years down the line, these efforts show no mark of desired progress on the ground (Stobadan, 2018).

Therefore, China could use Buddhist diplomacy to entangle this region in its favour in the near future. At the moment, China is asserting such intentions by claiming that Arunachal Pradesh is a Southern part of Tibet and gaining influence in other regions like Nepal and Bhutan through Buddhist affinity (cultural proximity) to further geopolitical interests in the region and obscure Indian historical significance (Goswami, 2012, pp. 3-4). However, the Indian response has been quite vital as it has increased its foothold in Nepal and the Dalai world through different diplomatic and constitutional means.

Conclusions

The geopolitical scenario in South Asia has transformed significantly in the twenty-first century. The recent advances of China in South Asia have endangered Indian sovereignty and security interests in the region. China's geopolitical expansion through its ambitious BRI project and several bilateral and multilateral understandings, CPEC, Free Trade Agreements, SOP, 'Buddhist diplomacy', and 'debt trap diplomacy'⁵ have put tremendous pressure on India and challenged its hegemony in the region. India's geopolitical interests are at risk due to China's growing geostrategic and commercial relations with South Asian nations. China has been using various pressure tactics at the border with India, Nepal, and Bhutan to keep the issues of conflict alive and secure geostrategic gains in the region. The presence of this extra-territorial power in the region has forced the members of South Asia in general and India, in particular, to recalibrate their foreign policies and protect their national security interests. The traditional Indian influence over the region has significantly diluted and shrunk. The recent fall of Sri Lanka under the debt trap of China and the sad plight of Pakistan, Maldives, and Bangladesh omen are bad times for South Asia ahead. Hereby, various geopolitics experts are saying that China's ambition in the 21st century is to create a 'Chinese world order, where China will control world politics. Through various massive infrastructure projects like BRI, CPEC, and CMEC, the construction of numerous marine ports, and financial institutions like the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), Asian Development Bank (ADB), and others-banks where China is the largest shareholder-we can see hints of the Chinese world order. "No doubt, Sino-Indian relations have been far from smooth, but keeping the diplomatic channels open and improving strategic communication is very essential. This, however, cannot be at the cost of India playing second fiddle to China" (Madhuri, 2021, p.no.8). Keeping in view the Indian interests, the Modi government has been dealing sternly with China's misadventures through reviving QUAD, joining the Indo-Pacific joint Command with the US and countering China's moves of SOP through its Chabahar project, IMT project and several other bilateral and multilateral understandings. It is, therefore, the need of the time that

India should further strategize to protect its own geo-political interests and traditional influence in the region by opting for more realistic alternatives and plans.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

Note

1. By “Belt and Road Initiative,” we mean China’s geopolitical and economic agenda. In order to stimulate geopolitical and commercial activity, China aspires to establish its own land- and maritime-based connections with Asian, African, and European nations.
2. The People’s Republic of China is engaged in a significant infrastructure project called the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). The project, which Pakistan and China can both benefit from, was started by China in 2013 and initially cost US\$47 billion to complete.
3. In 2004, US political academics put up the geopolitical theory known as ‘String of Pearls’ The phrase describes a network of many ports China built and used to access the Indian Ocean region for its own geopolitical and geostrategic gains.
4. ‘Malacca Dilemma’ is a term that Chinese President Hu Jintao coined. The phrase alludes to potential factors that may endanger China’s economic development and the movement of oil imports across the Malacca Strait.
5. The phrase ‘Debt Trap Diplomacy’ refers to an idea in international finance whereby a government lends debt to a borrowing country under terms and conditions that are workable for the debt lending party.
6. China’s Buddhist diplomacy refers to that how China is endeavouring to influence Buddhist populous areas of the Himalayan frontier, including Nepal, Bhutan, Ladakh, Sikkim, Arunachal Pradesh and a few parts of Himachal Pradesh into Chinese favour to gain strategic mileage citing a cultural proximity to the Tibetan Buddhist culture, which China maintains as an integral part of Chinese culture.

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