

China's Belt and Road Initiative in South Asia and beyond: Apprehensions, Risks and Opportunities

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Abstract

Since its official launching in 2013, China's transcontinental Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) has remained under significant focus in media, policy think-tanks and academia around the world. While some countries view China as a major development partner under the BRI, others are apprehensive of the rising role of Beijing. Drawing on policy documents, reports of national and international organizations and available literature on the subject, this paper aims at unpacking two main aspects of the BRI; the socio-economic prospects as well as geopolitical implications of the BRI for major South Asian countries where China is emerging as an important development actor. Second, response of the major global powers and actors in Europe, Africa and Central Asia like key South Asian countries comprising Pakistan and India towards BRI, and are their key expectations as well as reservations. The paper argues that unprecedented Chinese investment under the BRI in these regions has not only have huge socio-economic potentials but it also has geopolitical and security implications (as in the case of Pakistan-India relations in South Asia). The paper concludes that for harvesting true potential of the BRI through new vistas of trade and connectivity for participating nations, China should work more closely with countries having antagonistic stance towards the BRI and should take measures to ensure international norms and inclusiveness of the initiative.

Keywords: BRI, China, Pakistan, India, South Asia

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