**The Get-China Syndrome**

[**Imran Malik**](https://nation.com.pk/Columnist/imran-malik)

June 20, 2021

The BRI can be considered the centre of gravity of China’s current policy of engaging the world. It aims at regional interconnectivity, mutually supporting and beneficial economic interdependence for all involved. It gives China a continuously evolving sphere of influence and most importantly a concomitant strategic reach into all the regions it connects. The mere fact that about a hundred and twenty countries (including Italy and Greece) have signed up for it reflects its universal appeal.

The US and its allies might want to disrupt, delay and destroy the BRI to cause a cascading effect that might unravel China’s economic juggernaut, immediately stem and circumscribe its sphere of influence and strategic reach and ruin its credibility and stature of an emerging global power. It would arguably delay and/or neutralise the Chinese challenge to US hegemony at the global level, too.

Is it doable?

The Chinese have clearly beaten the US and its allies in the time and space dimensions at the geopolitical, geostrategic and geoeconomic levels.

[UN chief calls for action toward affordable, clean energy](https://nation.com.pk/22-Jun-2021/un-chief-calls-for-action-toward-affordable-clean-energy)

While the US and its allies were busy in neutralising all existentialist threats to Israel in the GMER and fighting so-called Islamic fundamentalism and the GWOT, China continued its progress in all fields—economic, political, diplomatic, technological and military. President Xi Jinping announced the BRI in 2013. Since then, regional interconnectivity and economic interdependence has grown steadily in all the regions the BRI has touched. The BRI thus has a head start of at least eight years on all efforts that may henceforth be made to scuttle it or compete with it. The apparently utopian B3W is still in the conceptual stage. There is no roadmap, no timelines available and no indicators of where the reported US $ 40 trillion will come from. What will the modus operandi be and what will the recipient countries have to concede? Will it be any better than the BRI or are the recipient countries just looking at different masters only? Will they have any freedom of choice between the BRI and B3W? How much time will it take to crystallise the B3W into a competing initiative with the BRI? Tellingly, how far will the BRI have already progressed further by the time the B3W gets rolling? Can the B3W ever catch up? Clearly, the US and its allies have been squarely beaten in the time factor.

[Cuban banks stop accepting US dollar cash deposits](https://nation.com.pk/22-Jun-2021/cuban-banks-stop-accepting-us-dollar-cash-deposits)

Furthermore, the BRI is already connecting China with Russia, Eastern and Western Europe. It is moving into the CARs and has already made massive inroads in the South Asian region especially Myanmar, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal etc. In Pakistan, the BRI manifests itself in the shape of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Iran has already signed up for a USD 400 billion twenty-five-year Comprehensive Strategic Cooperation Agreement and an Afghanistan free of foreign occupation troops, is likely to join up too. Pakistan-Iran will provide the launchpad to the Chinese to move further into the GMER, Africa and through the Suez Canal-Mediterranean Sea into Europe. Concurrently, it will get into Europe by land too through Iran, Iraq, Turkey, Russia and perhaps the Caucasus. The BRI is already spread so far and wide that it will be nigh impossible for the US and its allies to contain it and force it to recoil. By the time the US and its allies take practical steps to stem the BRI’s further ingresses it will have moved further into the GMER, Africa and Europe. Thus, the Chinese have beaten the US and its allies in the space dimension as well.

[Pakistan reports 663 coronavirus cases in one day](https://nation.com.pk/22-Jun-2021/pakistan-reports-663-coronavirus-cases-in-one-day)

Furthermore still, the US and its allies just do not have the economic clout to outbid the Chinese as the BRI expands even more. The costs of militarily engaging the Chinese are too prohibitive for the US and its allies to even consider. Politically, the Chinese are asserting themselves proactively particularly in the South China Sea, over Hong Kong and Taiwan, North Korea, India (Ladakh) and the BRI as a whole. They are least likely to be browbeaten by the US and its allies on anything, anymore.

The CPEC is arguably the flagship project of the BRI. Scuttling it would have a disastrous impact on the BRI as a whole and would tarnish China’s credibility and reputation. The US can either try to wean Pakistan away from China or destroy the CPEC directly or indirectly. As the US and its forlorn allies egress the region, the US seeks to retain an intimate strategic reach into Afghanistan. It has asked Pakistan for a base in Balochistan. It will have two objectives in mind. One, to retain the capacity to carry out airstrikes, reconnaissance sorties inside Afghanistan, and two to acquire an intrusive oversight into the BRI-CPEC, its progress and further expansion into Iran, Afghanistan and the GMER, Africa and Europe. Such a base, a la Shamsi Airbase of yore, will ominously place it bang in the middle of the CPEC. However, now the strategic environment is vastly changed. Pakistan can ill afford to let an unreliable US have a base that commands decisive oversight on its future economic lifeline. Such a base will be ostensibly used by the US to keep Afghanistan on the boil. A destabilised Afghanistan means a destabilised Afghanistan-Pakistan Region, a CPEC under persistent terrorist threats and multitudes of refugees. Pakistan cannot take its eyes off this and the threat posed by Terrorism Central ominously ensconced in the badlands of eastern and north-eastern Afghanistan, either.

[Cuba says homegrown COVID vaccine shows 92% efficacy](https://nation.com.pk/22-Jun-2021/cuba-says-homegrown-covid-vaccine-shows-92-percent-efficacy)

Pakistan and China must consider the CPEC a joint vital interest and secure it against disruptive actions by hostile forces. Like its nuclear programme, CPEC too has universal support within Pakistan.

The US-led West must recognise the changed geopolitical environment and the compulsions that emanate from it. It must acknowledge the reality of China at the global level. It must accept that the world is entering a multipolar era and that its exceptionalism is coming to an end. Henceforth, it will have to share the global apex with China! Period. The earlier it accepts this reality, the better it will be for the whole world.