



Parahyangan Catholic University
Faculty of Social and Political Sciences
Department of International Relations

Accredited A

SK BAN-PT NO: 3095/SK/BAN-PT/Akred/S/VIII/2019

**The Implication of Sino-Indian Competition: India's Response
towards the Rise of China in South Asia**

Final Thesis

By
Raynard Christian
6091801115

Bandung
2021



Parahyangan Catholic University
Faculty of Social and Political Sciences
Department of International Relations

Accredited A
SK BAN-PT NO: 3095/SK/BAN-PT/Akred/S/VIII/2019

**The Implication of Sino-Indian Competition: India's Response
towards the Rise of China in South Asia**

Final Thesis

By
Raynard Christian
6091801115

Thesis Advisor
Idil Syawfi, S.IP., M.Si.

Bandung
2021



Universitas Katolik Parahyangan
Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik
Program Studi Ilmu Hubungan Internasional

Akreditasi A
SK BAN-PT NO: 3095/SK/BAN-PT/Akred/S/VIII/2019

**Implikasi Kompetisi Tiongkok-India: Respon India terhadap
Peningkatan Presensi dan Aktivitas Tiongkok di Asia Selatan**

Skripsi Final

Oleh

Raynard Christian

6091801115

Dosen Pembimbing

Idil Syawfi, S.IP., M.Si.

Bandung

2021

HALAMAN PERSETUJUAN

**THE IMPLICATION OF SINO-INDIAN COMPETITION: INDIA'S RESPONSE
TOWARDS THE RISE OF CHINA IN SOUTH ASIA**



Oleh:

Raynard Christian

6091801115

Menyetujui untuk diajukan pada
Ujian Sidang Jenjang Sarjana
Bandung, 22 December 2021

Pembimbing,

Idil Syawfi, S.IP., M.Si.

Mengetahui

Ketua Program Studi Hubungan Internasional

Sukawarsini Djelantik, Dra., M.I.S., Ph.D.

Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik
Jurusan Hubungan Internasional
Program Studi Ilmu Hubungan Internasional



Tanda Pengesahan Skripsi


Nama : Raynard Christian
Nomor Pokok : 6091801115
Judul : The Implication of Sino-Indian Competition: India's Response
towards the Rise of China in South Asia

Telah diuji dalam Ujian Sidang jenjang Sarjana
Pada Rabu, 12 Januari 2022
Dan dinyatakan **LULUS**

Tim Penguji

Ketua sidang merangkap anggota

Putu Agung Nara Indra, S.IP., M.Sc.

: 

Sekretaris

I'dil Syawfi, S.IP., M.Si


: 

Anggota

Vrameswari Omega W., .SIP., M.Si.(Han)

: 

Mengesahkan,
Dekan Fakultas Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik


Dr. Pius Sugeng Prasetyo, M.Si

STATEMENT OF ORIGINALITY

I, who signed below:

Name : Raynard Christian

NPM : 6091801115

Department : International Relations

Title : The Implication of Sino-Indian Competition: India's Response
towards the Rise of China in South Asia

Hereby assert that this thesis is the product of my own work, and it has not been previously proposed nor published by and to any other parties in order to attain an academic degree. Any idea and information gained from other parties are officially cited in accordance with the valid scientific writing method.

I declare this statement with fully responsibility, and I am willing to take any consequences given by the prevailing rules if this statement was found to be untrue.

Jakarta, December 22th 2021,



Raynard Christian
6091801115

ABSTRACT

Name : Raynard Christian

Student ID : 6091801115

Title : The Implication of Sino-Indian Competition: India's Response
towards the Rise of China in South Asia

The main objective of this research is to analyse India behaviour towards China's growing presence in South Asia. China has been increasing their presence through their economic solutions for the countries in South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region. Although China is mainly doing economic activities, but India shows the tendency to response China by doing a more active political-military activities. The main puzzle that should be answered is why China's economic approach in South Asia-Indian Ocean region is responded by India through political-military acts. In analysing the puzzle, threat perception theory is used so that able to explain India's behaviour. This thesis found that China's economic activities were perceived by India as a threat for their national interests and weakens their status as great power in the region. India look themselves as the natural leader of South Asia and the Indian Ocean Region and want it to remain.

Keywords: China, India, Region, South Asia, Indian Ocean, Economic, Political-Military, Threat Perception.

ABSTRAK

Nama : Raynard Christian

NPM : 6091801115

Judul : The Implication of Sino-Indian Competition: India's Response
towards the Rise of China in South Asia

Tujuan utama dari riset ini adalah untuk menganalisa perilaku India terhadap perkembangan presensi Tiongkok di Asia Selatan. Tiongkok telah meningkatkan presensinya di Asia Selatan melalui berbagai solusi ekonomi bagi negara-negara kawasan Asia Selatan dan Samudera Hindia. Meskipun Tiongkok mengutamakan kegiatan ekonomi, namun India memberikan respon yang cenderung lebih aktif dalam sektor politik-militer. Pertanyaan utama yang perlu dijelaskan dalam riset ini adalah mengapa pendekatan ekonomi Tiongkok ke kawasan Asia Selatan-Samudera Hindia direspon melalui kegiatan politik-militer oleh India. Dalam melakukan analisa, teori persepsi ancaman digunakan agar dapat menjelaskan perilaku India. Penelitian ini menemukan bahwa aktivitas ekonomi Tiongkok dipersepsikan oleh India sebagai ancaman karena mengancam kepentingan nasional serta status India sebagai negara kuat dalam kawasan. India melihat dirinya sebagai pemimpin natural kawasan Asia Selatan dan Samudera Hindia dan hal tersebut merupakan hal yang harus dipertahankan.

Kata Kunci: Tiongkok, India, Kawasan, Asia Selatan, Samudera Hindia, Ekonomi, Politik-Militer, Persepsi Ancaman.

FOREWORD

Praise God Almighty, for the presence of plenty of mercy and His grace so that the writer can complete the thesis with the title *The Implication of Sino-Indian Competition: India's Response towards the Rise of China in South Asia*. This thesis is made to meet one of the conditions and completed studies in order to obtain a Bachelor Degree of International Relations, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Parahyangan Catholic University.

This writer also want to deliver his highest appreciation and thanks to everyone who was involved in the making process of this thesis:

- Mr. Didi Supandi and Mrs. Mei Shia, who always deliver full support for everything I've done
- Mrs. Lanny Sunarti, my beloved grandmother
- Mr. Idil Syawfi, S.IP., M.Si., as the supervisor of this thesis writing
- Mr. Putu Agung Nara Indra Prima Satya, S.IP., M.Sc and Ms. Vrameswari Omega Wati, S.IP., M.Si., as the examiners of this thesis
- All friends:
 - o Bernadeth Franchika
 - o William Nathanael
 - o Sharon Sebastian
 - o Vanessa Anthea
 - o Lunetta Purnama
 - o Ihsan Dhiya
 - o Renaldi Stevanus
 - o Jessica Angelique
 - o And others.

This thesis mainly address the dynamic of India and China in South Asia, focusing on the behaviour and response given by India towards the rise of China in the region. By using threat perception theory, this writer hopes the analyses could complement the previous discussion of the topic. Nonetheless, writer acknowledged many loopholes still exist in this thesis. Hence, writer highly encouraged for further discussion regarding the topic in the future which can deepen the analyses and understanding of the region dynamics. Lastly, this thesis is very open for critics and insights.

Bandung, 16 January 2022

Raynard Christian

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<i>ABSTRACT</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>ABSTRAK</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>FOREWORD</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>TABLE OF CONTENTS</i>	<i>v</i>
<i>LIST OF TABLE</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>LIST OF FIGURES</i>	<i>viii</i>
<i>ABBREVIATIONS</i>	<i>ix</i>
<i>CHAPTER 1</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>1.1. Background</i>	<i>1</i>
<i>1.2. Problem Identification</i>	<i>4</i>
1.2.1 Problem Limitation	<i>8</i>
<i>1.3. Objective of Research and Practical Usage of Research</i>	<i>8</i>
1.3.1 Objective of Research	<i>8</i>
1.3.2. Practical Usage of Research	<i>9</i>
<i>1.4. Literature Review</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>1.5. Theoretical Framework</i>	<i>14</i>
<i>1.6. Research and Data Collecting Method</i>	<i>17</i>
<i>1.7. Research Structure</i>	<i>18</i>
<i>CHAPTER 2</i>	<i>19</i>
<i>2.1 China's Economic Activity</i>	<i>20</i>
<i>2.2 China's Naval Presence in Indian Ocean</i>	<i>27</i>
<i>2.3 India in Responding China's Rise</i>	<i>32</i>
2.3.1 Act East Policy	<i>33</i>
2.3.2 Neighbourhood First Policy	<i>35</i>
2.3.3 India's Defense Policy	<i>36</i>
2.3.4 The Quad	<i>39</i>
<i>CHAPTER 3</i>	<i>43</i>

<i>3.1. Changing Balance of Power in South Asia-Indian Ocean Region.....</i>	<i>43</i>
<i>3.2. China’s Credibility of Threat in India’s Perspective</i>	<i>47</i>
<i>3.3. Structural Attributes of The Indian Political System</i>	<i>52</i>
<i>3.4. India Government’s Identities and as a Country.....</i>	<i>55</i>
CHAPTER FOUR.....	62
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	65

LIST OF TABLE

Table 2.1	China's Total Investment and Construction Values Accumulated in 2005-2019 30
Table 2.2	China's Ports Investment in South Asia and The Indian Ocean 40

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1	Chinese Off Shore Naval Bases and Maritime Deployment Projects 39
Figure 2.2	Cooperation Between Quad Members After the Revival in 2017 48

ABBREVIATIONS

AEP	Act East Policy
AIIB	Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank
BJP	Bharatiya Janata Party
BRI	Belt and Road Initiatives
CPEC	China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
COMCASA	Communications, Compatibility, and Security Agreement
EEZ	Exclusive Economic Zone
FDI	Foreign Direct Investment
FTA	Free Trade Area
IOR	Indian Ocean Region
IONS	Indian Ocean Naval Symposium
LEMOA	Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement
LEP	Look East Policy
MEA	Ministry of External Affairs
MSRI	Maritime Silk Road Initiative
NER	North Eastern Region
NSA	National Security Advisor
RSS	Rashtriya Swamyamsevak Sangh
SAGAR	Security and Growth for All in the Region

SEA	Southeast Asia Countries
SREB	Silk Road Economic Belt
US	United States

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Since the 1962 border war, India has a deep-rooted relationship with China. Aside from economics, the quest for territory and resources had much characterized the rivalry of both countries. The 1962 war was an attempt by China to put India in its place once and for all. However, it was failed and India succeed to recover from the war and done a rapid economic and military growth in the last two decades.¹ It all stacked until the 21th century, in which China seeks to project and increase their financial muscle in South Asia to conquer the region. Not only aiming to keep improving their leverage through economic activity, but also to take control over many crucial ports in South Asia. As the leadership of President Xi Jinping began, People's Republic of China announced their mega-project to the world, known as the Maritime Silk Road Initiative (MSRI) and Silk Road Economic Belt (SREB) which then famously called Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). This initiative was inspired from the ancient maritime Silk Road which was purposely created to enable trade of goods and

¹ T. V. Paul ed., *The China-India Rivalry in the Globalization Era*, (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2008), pp. 7

services by embracing and strengthening the connectivity through the world.² Hence why BRI involves dozens of infrastructures construction investments both on the land and sea; airports, bridges, pipelines, power plants, railways, roads, and harbors. Moreover, China also seeks of soft infrastructure development as well such as people-to-people exchanges, institutions, trade links, and communication policy through BRI. In short, the Initiative is conducted in a political-economical approaches. Especially towards South Asia countries which is one of China's top priorities.

The initial goal of BRI is to boost China's economy through opening their existing or new markets; reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers, cutting transportation cost through improving connectivity, integrate trading activities, increase China's foreign direct investment (FDI), and many more. BRI may help China's economic by bolstering its participants economies.³ Therefore, many of them have crucial economic issues. For instance, poor economic connectivity and isolated market, terrific capital shortages, and weak infrastructure.⁴ To achieve that, warmer relations with various countries in South Asia such as Maldives, Pakistan and Sri Lanka through political and economic approaches has been one of China's main goals through the initiative. The reason is to enable China delivers their capacity and locking their participants' view so that sees China as their source of economic problems solutions.

² Berlie, Jean A., *China's Globalization and the Belt and Road Initiative*, Palgrave Macmillan: Switzerland, 2020, pp. 13

³ Blanchard, Jean-Marc F. ed., *China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative and South Asia* (California: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 81

⁴ Wang, *Closer Look: 'Experts Say Maritime Silk Road Will Stimulate Economic Potential of Developing Countries'*, Xinhuanet, February 9, 2015, https://www.chinadaily.com.cn/business/2015-02/10/content_19543786.htm (Accessed October 3 2021)

Other than countries in South Asia region, the surrounding of it also delivers strategic importance for China, which is the Indian Ocean. The ocean is one of international trade's main route which enclosed on three sides, making the entry point more valuable for countries that are able to gain control over the chokepoints hence has the capacity to deny their rivals access to ports in the region.⁵ As so, China is one of those country that highly value the strategic importance of Indian Ocean. Over the last decades, China's interest on the ocean has been growing, specifically in order to protect its trading routes across the northern Indian Ocean. Previously, China has little-to-no material naval presence in the region. However, its naval presence, particularly in connection with anti-piracy, has been growing as their amount of trade passing the route increasing in the last few decades. In addition to the last paragraph points, China also use their warmer relations with South Asian countries so that they gain access to increase their anti-piracy naval presence in the region. This is due to their geography disadvantage which has long distances from its home ports in the Pacific. Therefore, China shows their dependency towards the strategic importance of Indian Ocean to secure their plan in succeeding BRI initiative globally and economic interest domestically.

Even though China's activity in the region is not limited with economic sector, but connectivity and infrastructure projects are at the top of the wish list for all South

⁵ Ibid. *China's Maritime Silk Road Initiative and South Asia*, pp. 56

Asian countries and have become area of cooperation with China.⁶ This way, China is establishing and growing their presence in the region to fulfill their interests under the umbrella of BRI initiatives. It is true that China also conducted several military cooperation with South Asian countries such as nuclear agreement with Pakistan. However, economic approaches through BRI are the most influential one for countries in the area as it is aligned with the interest of the region.

1.2. Problem Identification

China's economic initiative has created numerous cooperation with South Asia countries. But not with India even when India's domestic infrastructure and economy has been far less successful than China and several other Asian countries. Therefore, the presence of MSRI in South Asia has opened more economic opportunities for Indian businesses and policymakers. Improving capacity and efficiency for major Indian ports could delivers huge economic impact for India, a state that is suffering from operational inefficiencies and capacity shortages, resulting market lost in various way. However, Indian decision makers view Chinese investment with skepticism. China's growing presence and capacity in the South Asia-Indian Ocean Region has been a major concern for India. Due to its geographic position, India considers itself as the leading Indian Ocean state and the natural leader of the region. It perceives the

⁶ Pal, Deep, *China's Influence in South Asia: Vulnerabilities and Resilience in Four Countries*, 21 October 2021, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, <https://carnegieendowment.org/2021/10/13/china-s-influence-in-south-asia-vulnerabilities-and-resilience-in-four-countries-pub-85552> [Accessed 15 January 2022]

presence of extra-regional naval powers, in particular China, as essentially illegitimate.⁷ Uniquely, China's activities in the region which mostly done for economic purposes have been responded by India in a different spectrum. In responding towards China's presence, New Delhi's has done several actions, particularly through diplomatic engagement with strategic countermeasures, military development, and policy. In short, India responding in a political-military spectrum for China's political-economic approaches to the region.

In 2014, as Prime Minister Modi Narendra came into power, India began to project their brand new foreign policy, Act East Policy (AEP). AEP is an upgraded form of Look East Policy (LEP), which India was not only looking to east, but starting to take concrete actions. AEP focuses in the Asia-Pacific region, with the goals to establish and strengthen India's strategic partnership with countries in the targeted region. Even though the expectation of many countries in Asia-Pacific region has fallen short towards India's role due to the result of LEP, Prime Minister Modi has addressed India's commitment to assure countries in the region that India would improve its role and performance.⁸ Despite AEP's five main policy directions which include economic agenda and soft power, AEP's implementation has dominantly coloured with political and military activity. By doing so, India pursues to strengthen its ties with Indo-Pacific and North Eastern Region (NER) countries, increasing connectivity between countries.

⁷ David Brewster ed., (2018), *India and China at Sea*, (New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 46.

⁸ *Act East Policy*, pp. 205

By strengthening and increasing the connectivity, India creates an opening to pursue another area of focus in the AEP, which is defence and security. This can be shown through MEA Annual Report 2014-15, stating that connectivity, security, and regional integration is the priority.⁹ Under AEP, India also improve its strategic partnerships with numerous countries, including Australia, Japan, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Singapore. Moreover, India also shifted its stance in defence policy hence show its commitment towards ASEAN countries to help them improve their defence capacity. While helping ASEAN countries to modernize their military, India also became bolder on its stance in South China Sea issue, expressing its concern towards Chinese aggressive behaviour. Previously, India never shows bold stance towards the issue, playing safe between edges. Under the AEP, many of India's gaps in the previous policy have been advanced, such as upgrading bilateral relations, integration regional and multilateral forum, visits, and engagement.

India's relationship with the region regarding defence and security has been significantly enhanced during Prime Minister Modi's first period of leadership. The quadrilateral (Quad) strategic cooperation between India, Japan, United States, and Australia have been revived in November 2017. For India, this is not only delivers advantages in building its capabilities, but also provide more options in handling its challenges. New Delhi's activity are way more powerful now in influencing and shaping its eastward engagement than in the past. The difference is that, even though

⁹ Ibid. pp. 218

India was taking many positive initiatives, the result was not showing India's stance nor its opposition. But now, India bravely showing its concerns and expressions, taking more bold and risky decision. As the result, US clearly expressed that now they welcome India as an emerging global power leader and is US strong strategic and defence partner.

Other than its foreign activities that put much attention towards connectivity, security, and regional integration, India have been reforming its domestic military and security. In 2014, Prime Minister Modi stated that India now will abandon its "anything goes" approach and move India's defence sector to become more competent, agile, and competitive.¹⁰ In achieving that, Modi's government established three new committees to put focus on reshaping defence spending allocation, galvanizing defence procurement, and five sub-committees to evaluate and engage more in the private sectors.¹¹ Lastly, India in 2015 decided to publish a new maritime strategy. Within that new policy, India has made several changes such as weaponized and train Indian fishermen as well as making private Indian firms as priority in sourcing India's defence needs, so that 40% of local needs must be coming from India itself.¹² In doing so, India significantly enhanced their defence capability both in land and sea. Hence, even

¹⁰ "Waking the Beast: India's Defense Reforms Under Modi", The Diplomat, 16 December 2016, <https://thediplomat.com/2016/12/waking-the-beast-indias-defense-reforms-under-modi/> [Accessed on 5 October 2021]

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Ibid.

though India also conducted several economic initiative, cooperation, and activity, but the main nuance of India's foreign affairs is coloured by political-security approach.

1.2.1 Problem Limitation

The main issues that will be discussed in this research are India's behaviour and response towards China's approach in South Asia and Indian Ocean Region. As China and India's rivalry to get the status of Asia's great power has begun since 19th century, this research mainly focuses on the timeframe when Narendra Modi, India's elected Prime Minister, first period of leadership.

1.2.2 Research Question

In international relations dynamics, hard power often responded by hard power, and soft power usually responded by soft power. However, it seems that India's react China's economic approach in South Asia-Indian Ocean region through political-military behaviour. Hence, the main question that will be answered throughout this thesis is "*why China's economic approach in South Asia-Indian Ocean region is responded by India through political-military acts?*".

1.3. Objective of Research and Practical Usage of Research

1.3.1 Objective of Research

The objective of this research is to analyse India's behaviour in responding China's approach in order to maintain their status in the region. The hypothesis of this

research assume that India do political-military response towards China because India seek to be one of Asia's great power and China's activity in South Asia give threat towards India's ambition. By analysing India's perception, it can helps us to see what kind of threat that China's posed towards India and how India perceive it. Finally, we can see what kind of factors that affect India's decision maker and see why India decide so.

1.3.2. Practical Usage of Research

Writer hopes that this research would be able to understand India's behaviour as a country that perceive itself as rising power in the Asia region, especially in IOR. Moreover, the writer hopes this research will be able to contribute towards the discussion of India-China dynamics, as both India and China has a long history of relationship. With the result of this research, this writer hopes to give more perspective about the development of Asia politics, security, and activities in regards to great power dynamics, so that further assessment towards the region's security issues could be more comprehensive.

1.4. Literature Review

The analyse of this research is highly influenced and benefitted from the previous analyses done by different scholars with different points of view that assess India's policy in responding China's activity in South Asia-Indian Ocean region. Hence, this subchapter will contain those analyses that have become part of the

foundation of this research. The debate within this discussion is that some of scholars believed that India's issues with China is the factor that influenced India's behaviour in conducting their foreign affairs, while others believe that the quest of becoming great power is the main factor.

First, Manjeet S. Pardesi argued that India's policy towards China is mainly influenced by a combination of systemic and domestic-level factors. In his text titled *India's China Policy*, written that India would prefer to deal with China as an 'independent' great power and hence why building-up its own economic and military capability.¹³ Even though India and China has a better commercial relationship since 1988, but it is not clear whether their growing ties will end up as peaceful relations between Asia's rising powers or not. Manjeet sees that their border disputes and China's massive investment in the region have made the relationship becomes more complicated than ever. Moreover, Pakistan also becomes the factor that affects China-India relations. Its growing military capability that came from China's support has shaped India's military doctrine, that will prepare for a 'two-front war' against China and Pakistan and or either Pakistan or China for the border disputes.¹⁴ Lastly, India is highly worry about China's growing naval presence in Indian Ocean Region. Despite of all China's ports are currently for commercial purposes, but India sees that China's presence may soon become a threat for India's naval status in the region. Therefore,

¹³ Ganguly, Sumit ed., *Engaging the World: Indian Foreign Policy Since 1947*, (Oxford University Press: New Delhi, 2016), pp. 155

¹⁴ Ibid. pp. 169

India's policy towards China now is more driven by structural factors rather than economic considerations.

Next, C. Raja Mohan argues in his book titled *Modi's World: Expanding India's Sphere of Influence* chapter five, that there are three factors that shaped India's policy towards China's approach. First is China's growing presence and capability in the region.¹⁵ By the time Modi took charge, India's GDP and annual defence spending were nearly four times lower of Beijing's. Clearly this situation indicates that the military balance and leverage is in Beijing's favour. Hence China have more resource to shape new dynamics in the region so that in favor for them, putting India's centrality on the line. Second is geographical location of players in the region.¹⁶ In recent years, India just has finally woken up to the implication of China's development projects in the subcontinent and hence, India must discard any residual notion to be able to build a deterrence mechanism against China's influence in its neighbourhood. Third is a new dynamism in great power relations.¹⁷ In the middle of last decade, China has successfully becomes the world's foremost trading nation with incredibly more powerful navy that can redefine India's maritime environment. At the same time, China's warmer relations with US and Japan has put India to be marginalized on the Asian balance of power. However, India foresee themselves to be one of Asia's great power and seek for the capability to do so. In doing so, New Delhi's transformed its

¹⁵ Mohan, C. Raja, *Modi's World: Expanding India's Sphere of Influence*, (HarperCollins Publishers India: India, 2015), Pp. 97

¹⁶ Ibid. pp. 100

¹⁷ Ibid. pp. 99

approach to China and the region to be able turn it to India's advantage and maintain as well as improve its centrality in Asia.

On the other hand, Harsh V. Pant argues in his text titled *India Foreign Policy: An Overview*, that India's foreign policy is aimed to significantly increase its regional profile.¹⁸ As of now, China is too big and powerful to be ignored by countries in the region. Due to that fact, many states also expecting India to act as a balancer for China's growing influence. In order to live up to that expectation, India are now seeking to expand their strategic space by reaching out to their 'east neighboring countries' to establish more strategic partnership.¹⁹ By actively promoting and participating in regional and multilateral initiatives, New Delhi is developing strong security linkages with the region, creating more room for them to maintain its regional status or even improving it. Even though India has implemented its 'east policy' for a long time, their foreign policy tended to ignore East and Southeast Asia region. Previously, India didn't even express their stance towards South China Sea border disputes. However, since Narendra Modi's government took charge, they have made it clear that his government will prioritized East and Southeast Asia more than ever, making China and India more engaged in the regional status contestation.²⁰ Therefore, India has made deeper engagement in with countries such as Japan, South Korea, Vietnam, Indonesia, and

¹⁸ Pant, Harsh V., *India Foreign Policy: An Overview*, (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 2016), pp. 147

¹⁹ Ibid. pp. 146

²⁰ Ibid. pp. 137

other countries in the region to live up to its full potential and the region's expectation on them as China's balancer.

Lastly, Manjeet S. Pardesi through his text titled *India's China strategy under Modi continuity in the management of an asymmetric rivalry* argued that India has adopted a mixed strategy toward its asymmetric rival China which includes cooperation at multilateral level, competition at the regional level, rejection towards China's unilateral initiative, and deterrence.²¹ He further said, the ultimate aim of India is not to promote American primacy, but instead to enable its own transformation into a great power in a multipolar Asia.²² Hence why, India has been avoiding to issue any formal matters towards China so that not provoking China and put India's core interests on the edge. India even seems ready to cooperate with China wherever needed. Even, India still has a considerable cooperative relation in bilateral trade with China during Narendra Modi Era. In 2018-2019, China is India's biggest trading partner, reaching a total trade of \$11.8,06 billion.²³ However, this amount of trade shows the asymmetric commercial relation between these two countries. For China, India is only their tenth-largest trade partner. Due to the asymmetrical relations, power capability, and China's rising presence, India conducts a policy that helps them do balancing as a survival mechanism.

²¹ Pardesi, Manjeet S., *India's China Strategy Under Modi Continuity in the Management of an Asymmetric Rivalry*, International Politics Journal no. 41311, 27 April 2021, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1057/s41311-021-00287-3> [Accessed 22 October 2021]

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

This research supports the argument that India's behavior is mainly driven by India's ambition to be regional great power and next, global great power. International status is the most prominent factor that shaped India's foreign diplomacy. But then, some scholars in the literature review argued that India is avoiding China to reach its purposes, this thesis argues that India took a more assertive approach to contest China in seeking the status of great power. Moreover, other literatures haven't highlighted the form of response given by India towards China's presence in the region. Hence, this thesis filled the loophole given by other literatures by focusing on India's political-military response towards China's approaches that dominated by economic activities to the region.

1.5. Theoretical Framework

Threat perception has been central to war, deterrence, alliances, and conflict resolution theories because it helps us understanding countries behavior. In understanding threat, scholars are not only equating it to military power, but also considering intention as a source of threat independent of military capabilities. Before continue the explanation about threat perception, it is important to understand two key terms within this theory, threat and perception. Threats can be divided into two forms, verbal and physical. Verbal threats are delivered through statements that designed to signal the capacity and intention which able to inflict harm if interest is not fulfilled. The other form of threat is physical, which can be in a form of economic and military power that may be perceive as threatening for others. While perception is

understanding, recognizing, and interpreting process. However, this thesis will only focus on the nonpsychological side of analyses since the writer majoring in international relations.

There are five variables used to help our understanding of threat perception from nonpsychological context.²⁴ First, changing balance of power. Many scholars such as Mearsheimer and Elman suggest that a rising power may challenge the existing dominant power due to the possibility of shifting balance of power.²⁵ When shift of distribution of capabilities happens, it has high possibilities to bypass the signaling towards the existing power. Means that one's increasing capabilities happen without giving clear intention for others. Moreover, scholars see the equivalence between rising power and the likelihood of aggressive behavior and may perceived as threat for the existing power. As perception always recognized the sender and receiver, the argument would always be if the sender's commitment is not credible for the receiver, the receiver may not perceive their meaning and consequently choose an inappropriate course of action.²⁶

Second, signaling and threat perception can be hard to read when intentions are not clear. Hence, threat credibility comes play to role. Credibility is importance in foreseeing the future, assessing the situation and threat, and lastly in making decisions,

²⁴ Stein, Janice Gross, *Threat Perception in International Relations*, The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology, September 2013, DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199760107.013.0012 [Accessed 20 September 2021]

²⁵ Elman, C., *Extending Offensive Realism: The Louisiana Purchase and America's Rise to Regional Hegemony*, American Political Science Review: 98, 2004, pp. 563-576

²⁶ Ibid. Janice Gross, *Threat Perception in International Relations*

because security dilemma always take a part in international relations dynamics. This is a mutual process that can cause a possibility of misperception from both sides. For example, when sovereignty is contested, defense movement can be seen as aggressive, especially when it put the other side on disadvantage. Similar to the concept of security dilemma, threat perception takes into account “status dilemma” which exist in a competitive behavior among countries.²⁷ In a status dilemma states value not only security, but also their status in international stage. Third are structural attributes of the political system. Organization structure and bureaucracy can affect threat assessment, which make a decision to push forward their institutional interests. For instance, a division that hold the responsible to manage security and preventing threat are tend to push for lower threat assessments.

The fourth variables that give impact to threat perception is sociocultural, or in short can be said as identities. Since identities always accompany a person everywhere he goes, it influences the decision makers’ threat perception. State’s decision-makers are no exception. Identity conditions threat assessments so strongly that the material balance of power becomes less important.²⁸ If a country promote militarism and hypernationalism, they tend to defensive and thinking for worst-case scenario. Hence have the tendency to be distrustful with outsiders and heightened perception of threat from other countries. Finally, the last variables from nonpsychological side on threat perception is norms. Assessment upon threat can be elevated if the threat considered

²⁷ Ibid. *Threat Perception in International Relations*.

²⁸ Rousseau, D. L., *Identifying Threats and Threatening Identities*, (Stanford University Press: 2006)

violate widely-accepted norms, such as genocide and nuclear possession. However, due to the focus of this thesis, the final variable would not be used as the writer sees it not relevant in this case.

1.6. Research and Data Collecting Method

This research uses a mixed methodology which includes both qualitative and quantitative methods. Quantitative method is typically used to describe and explain the causal relationship between variables.²⁹ While the purpose of qualitative research is to analyse the meaning, phenomena, and the interpretation of it. Hence, measurement and indicators are highly needed in this research. In accordance to the theory used in this research, it uses quantitative method to show increasing China's presence and economic activity in the region, as well as India's military and political enhancement. While qualitative method shows India's threat perception towards China's presence and activity.

In accordance to Cresswell, mixed method research involves both qualitative (open-ended) and quantitative (closed-ended) data in order to answer the research question.³⁰ Therefore, the source of data for this research is gathered from primary sources such as government's official documents, publication, speeches, as well as

²⁹ Alan Bryman. *Social Research Methods*, (United States: Oxford University Press, 2012).

³⁰ John W. Cresswell, *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Method Approaches*, (London: Sage Publication, 2009), pp. 297.

secondary sources, including books, journals, news and/or articles, surveys, and publication from legitimate platforms which can be accessed online.

1.7. Research Structure

This research with the title of “*The Implications of Sino-Indian Rivalry: the Rise of China in South Asia and India’s Response*” will be divided into four chapters.

The first chapter act as an introduction of the research which contain the background, problem identification, objectives and research purpose, literature review, theoretical framework, research methodology, data collection method, and this research structure itself.

The second chapter address China’s economic approach towards South Asia countries and Indian Ocean Region, including their growing naval presence and bilateral agreement, as well as India’s political-military in responding towards China’s activity. In doing so, this chapter serve as a data basis for the next chapter.

The third chapter primarily focus on the analyses of India’s behaviour, response, and policy, towards China’s growing presence in South Asia-Indian Ocean Region. Hence, the concept threat perception act as the basis to explain the reason behind India’s behaviour.

The last chapter serve as the conclusion of the whole research. In doing so, this chapter will answer the research question, on why India mainly responded China’s activity through political and military means rather than socio-economic one.

