

Geopolitics and Corridors: The BRI Example

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DOI: 10.31592/aeusbed.1759369

Geliş Tarihi: 07.08.2025

Revize Tarihi: 21.10.2025

Kabul Tarihi: 12.03.2026

Atf Bilgisi

Özder, F. (2026). Geopolitics and corridors: The BRI example. *Ahi Evran Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Dergisi*, 12(1), 18-35.

ABSTRACT

Apart from geoeconomics and trade in general, corridors are closely related to geopolitics and function as a force multiplier. In this vein, corridors have transformative impacts in reshaping the international order as well as the sphere of trade. Six land corridors and maritime routes under China's Belt and Road Initiative (the BRI) have a geopolitical scope which mainly defined in Eurasia. The BRI corridors' possible impacts on the Eurasian Rimland and Heartland, and power struggle around these regions bear geopolitical importance for the destiny of Eurasia. Although the BRI corridors widely open doors to the Heartland and the Rimland, comparatively, the Rimland's role and function are likely to deepen. While China increases the connectivity between these pivotal regions through the corridors, the US-led bloc's counterprojects, and particularly alternative corridors with an Indian extension, have mainly been positioned to restrict China's influence. Given the corridor wars which were triggered by the BRI, maintaining hegemony by any sole actor over Eurasia seems harder in the multipolar order. This study is a kind of literature analysis based on secondary sources. In this study, corridors' geopolitical aspect is evaluated in the basic conceptual framework of geopolitics. In line with these definitions, possible geopolitical impacts of the BRI corridors in Eurasia and their reflections on regional and hegemonic competition were discussed in terms of classical geopolitical theories. In that respect, this study aims to contribute literature by examining the corridor issue mainly in the context of geopolitical terminology.

Keywords: Corridors, geopolitics, heartland, rimland, hegemony.

Jeopolitik ve Koridorlar: Kuşak Yol Girişimi (BRI) Örneği

ÖZ

Koridorlar, jeoekonomi ve genel olarak ticaretin yanı sıra, jeopolitikte de yakından ilişkilidir ve bir kuvvet çarpanı işlevi görür. Bu bağlamda koridorlar, uluslararası düzenin ve ticaret alanının yeniden şekillendirilmesinde dönüştürücü etkilere sahiptir. Çin'in Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi (BRI) kapsamındaki altı kara koridoru ve deniz rotası, esas olarak Avrasya'da tanımlanan bir jeopolitik kapsama sahiptir. Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi koridorlarının Avrasya Rimland (Kenar Kuşak) ve Heartland (Kalpgah) bölgelerine olası etkileri ve bu bölgeler etrafındaki güç mücadelesi Avrasya'nın kaderi açısından jeopolitik önem taşımaktadır. BRI koridorları Heartland ve Rimland'a geniş kapılar açsa da, karşılaştırmalı olarak Rimland'ın rolü ve işlevinin derinleşmesi muhtemeldir. Çin, koridorlar aracılığıyla bu önemli bölgeler arasındaki bağlantıyı artırırken, ABD'nin öncülüğündeki blokun karşı projeleri ve özellikle Hindistan uzantılı alternatif koridorlar, esasen Çin'in etkisini sınırlamak amacıyla konumlandırılmıştır. Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi'nin tetiklediği koridor savaşları göz önüne alındığında, çok kutuplu düzende Avrasya'da tek başına bir aktörün hegemonya kurması daha zor görünmektedir. Bu çalışma, ikinci kaynaklara dayalı literatür analizi niteliğindedir. Bu çalışmada jeopolitiğin temel kavramsal çerçevesi içerisinde koridorların jeopolitik boyutu değerlendirilmektedir. Bu tanımlar doğrultusunda, Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi koridorlarının Avrasya'daki olası jeopolitik etkileri ve bölgesel ve hegemonik rekabete yansımaları klasik jeopolitik teoriler açısından tartışılmıştır. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışma koridor konusunu esas olarak jeopolitik terminoloji bağlamında inceleyerek literatüre katkı sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Koridorlar, jeopolitik, heartland, rimland, hegemonya.

Introduction

Global and regional power competition and debates regarding hegemony and multipolarity are taking new forms with the dynamic policies of the world's leading actors in different fields. Economic, technological and military breakthroughs keep the power struggle dynamic. There are remarkable

transformations both in the internal structures of political, military and economic blocs and in their relations with other blocs. The geopolitical positions of the actors and their quest to expand their dominance and influence in this area have the potential to provide new openings that may form the basis for a power struggle and redefine their areas of dominance.

Despite globalization and technological advancements, geography and borders have not lost importance. In that respect, maps are still crucial to understand world politics (Kaplan, 2012, p. 27) and as Brzezinski pointed out: “Geographic location tends to determine the immediate priorities of state” (Brzezinski, 1997, p. 38). Additionally, interactions between locations are necessary to understand the meaning of events surrounding them. Transborder corridors which create networks or hubs have a considerable potential to reshape inter-state relations as well as international order. Therefore, geopolitical considerations are critical along with economic factors.

Examples such as the diversification of international trade through different transportation channels and its reaching large volumes, the increasing importance of borders despite rapid advances in technology and the intense effects of the postmodern age on relations between societies and states, the refusal to abandon irredentist policies and even the acceleration of hot conflicts for land have geopolitical content to a large extent. The construction of new corridors diversifies and deepens this geopolitical context.

China's comprehensive the Belt and Road (the BRI) project has led to a large-scale discussion of the issue of trade corridors. This major project, inspired by the historical Silk Road, is of vital importance as it not only ensures the fast, safe and lower-cost transportation of goods but also has the potential to open up serious space for China in its struggle for hegemonic power. Ultimately, the establishment of trade corridors through different territories is critical not only in terms of geoeconomic but also geopolitical impacts, and has triggered the development of rival projects.

Today, politicians and diplomats endeavour to promote different corridors in different parts of the world. All actors are well aware of the multiplier effect of networks including sea routes which connecting different countries with different transportation infrastructures, including sea routes. In that respect, corridors are not confined to commercial gains. Therefore, corridors have become important tools of geopolitical struggle in the international arena and constitute a different example of dominance of geographical area.

Extension of the Belt and Road project encompasses the Heartland, the Rimland and Indo-Pacific areas, which were also focus of the classical geopoliticians. The impacts of the establishment of new and comprehensive international corridors in the Eurasian space on the geographical centers of gravity and pivot countries put forward in these classical geopolitical theories are still valuable in terms of determining the main routes of the future struggle for dominance. Thus, the main focus of this study is the geopolitical scope of the BRI, whether its implications to the Heartland or the Rimland, and a general assessment of the regional and global geopolitical outcomes of the struggle over the concerned areas.

This study is a kind of literature analysis based on secondary sources. The subject was examined by reviewing the necessary journals as well as the works of well-known classical and contemporary authors in the field of geopolitics. In that respect, this study aims to contribute to the literature by examining the corridor issue mainly in the context of geopolitical terminology with special references to classical theories. The study first examines the geopolitical significance of the corridors. It then examines the general location of the BRI corridors. Finally, the study assesses the potential geopolitical impact of the BRI corridors, with reference to competing projects of other actors.

Corridors In The Context Of Geopolitics

Corridors have always been instrumental for all countries in their economies and foreign relations. However, the inception of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) by China in 2013 has ensured

that corridors are more prominent on the agenda in interstate relations. Although at first glimps, they mainly correspond to economics and trade, the term of corridor itself has strong geographical connotations and inevitably fits into the geopolitical context. Given the fact that “economic connections are inseparable from geopolitical goals and practices” (Flint and Zhu, 2019, p. 95), the BRI’s especially long-term implications will be meaningful in this context as well as economic one.

Although geopolitics is a concept frequently used in daily language and has even many distorted definitions, the relationship between space and politics is the main point of departure. Flint defined geopolitics as: “The struggle over the control of geographical entities with an international and global dimension, and the use of such geographical entities for political advantage” (Flint, 2022, p. 15). In the similar vein, Phill Kelly’s definition underlines states’ and regions’ unique spatial positions (Kelly, 2016, p. 1). The spatial dimensions of the corridors and their impacts at the international level are consistent with these definitions.

If geography is taken as the basis for strategy and geopolitics, (Kaplan, 2012, p. 60) its function as a force multiplier that increases the power of states relative to each other (Karadağ and Bilgin, 2020, p. 162) is conspicuous. Whereby we can draw the conclusion that corridors also function as a force multiplier. Given that “in geography lie the clues to the problems of military and political strategy” (Spykman, 1942, p. 41), so in corridors. On the other hand, economic and trade activities around the corridors not only affect geopolitical processes but also affected by geopolitical developments. There is a close interrelation between concepts of geopolitics and geoeconomics, even though they are different by definition.

While oil and gas pipelines are generally static, transportation corridors which may also consist of pipelines are dynamic formations and more open to mutual interaction, and risks as well due to trans-border interactions. In this context, geopolitical considerations are vital to assess the implications of corridors more precisely. First of all, it should be noted that “construction of highways, airports, pipelines, and railways is integral to a broader scope of geographic change that connects forms of economic activities” (Flint and Zhu, 2019, p. 98). In this vein, by using these connections states may create interdependence (Poon et al., 2024, p. 2). However, given the fact that there is always reciprocal dependence, actors are able to restrict each other’s manoeuvres.

Another point with regard to corridors in terms of geopolitics is that they function as a tool for hegemonic competition. Since corridors have transformative impacts, there is a link between “transnational corridor building and the reshaping of the international order, and BRI emerges as the first modern example” (Burna-Asefi, 2024). As Kaplan underlined, while “military deployments are ephemeral: roads, rail links and pipelines can be virtually forever” (Kaplan, 2012, p. 205). So, corridors with their long-term impact are vital tools for hegemonic competition as well.

At first glance, it seems that the BRI is mainly related to China's immediate surroundings but its outreach is beyond them. Although the BRI covers almost all continents, the main priority of the project particularly through the corridors is in Eurasia. In terms of the project's effects on global hegemony, it would be beneficial to first examine its impact on geographical centers of gravity. At this point, evaluating the issue in terms of classical geopolitical theories that still constitute a reference point today may provide an appropriate conceptual framework.

The BRI’s implementation area basically concerns the geographical region defined by Mackinder as the “World-Island” (Mackinder, 1919, p. 79). The BRI almost covers both the Mackinder’s Heartland and Spykman’s Rimland areas. So, before discussing the fate of global competition, it is better to address the possible overall implications of the BRI on the Heartland and Rimland areas.

While The Heartland’s boundaries are not quite so clearly defined (Mackinder, 1919, p. 140), and change from time to time, it is generally defined within the realm of former Soviet territory. Mackinder included Western Siberia, Turkestan or today’s Central Asia, the Volga basin of Europe

and most of the Iranian Upland in the Heartland. He extended it to “the brink of the Persian Mountains, the Euphrates Valley and the Persian Gulf” (Mackinder, 1919, pp. 93-95). He also emphasized that “East Europe is essentially a part of the Heartland” (Mackinder, 1919, pp. 171-172). With more striking definition, Mackinder expanded the borders of the Heartland geography to include “the Baltic Sea, the navigable Middle and Lower Danube, the Black Sea, Anatolia, Armenia, Persia, Tibet, and Mongolia” (Mackinder, 1919, p. 135).

Mackinder in his famous presentation in 1904 initially used the term pivot region of the world’s politics, then renamed it as the Heartland. In his terminology, “World Island”, “Inner Crescent” and “Outer Crescent” (Mackinder, 1904, pp. 434-436) are also useful terms for geopolitical considerations. According to Mahan, who opposes Mackinder's view and defends sea power, he asserted that “instead of the Heartland of Eurasia being the geographical pivot of empires, the Indian and Pacific oceans constitute the areas of geopolitical destiny” (Kaplan, 2012, p. 103). Mackinder’s famous dictum logically follows the Heartland formulation: “Who rules East Europe commands the Heartland: Who rules the Heartland commands the World Island: Who rules the World-Island commands the World.” (Mackinder, 1919, pp. 171-172).

Spykman, who examined the ideas of Mackinder and Mahan and created his own synthesis by the term Rimland which included the demographic centers of Europe, South Asia, Southeast Asia, China, and Japan, as well as the oil-rich Middle East, especially their littorals (Kaplan, 2012, p. 96). Briefly defined, Spykman's Rimland is the area between the seas and the Heartland (Defay, 2005, p. 33). Spykman’s dictum as follows; “Who controls the Rimland rules Eurasia; Who rules Eurasia controls the destinies of the world” (Spykman, 1944, p. 44), is even more critical given the crucial connectivity projects of BRI’s land corridors and maritime routes all around the Rimland space. How far the BRI will impact the Rimland or the Heartland and what consequences these effects will have is a fundamental question in the evolving geopolitical dimension.

The Geopolitical Scope Of The BRI

Known at least for now as a “World Factory” (Khan et al., 2020, p. 205), with its huge production capacity, China has initiated the project to increase Chinese exports by announcing in 2013 the “Silk Road Economic Belt” and modern “Maritime Silk Road” which became the “One Belt, One Road Project” that was later changed its name as the “Belt and Road Initiative” (Flint, 2022, p. 179). China’s own historical experiences like old Silk Road and The Grand Canal (Marshall, 2016, p. 37) are both a guide and a motivator in this ambitious plan.

The BRI is made up of concrete geopolitical features like new roads, railways, air and shipping routes, ports and many other constructions in which infrastructure and investments come fore. These transportation routes and facilities having connections with them are interconnected networks which are called corridors (Flint, 2022, pp. 179-180). In this sense, corridors are complex entities.

While what it stands for the BRI is open to arguments, the geopolitical codes of China reveals that it is mainly about the grand strategy which has long term geopolitical aims despite visible economic benefits to all stakeholders. It is evident that the BRI corridors have two important economic contributions by “shortening transport times and increasing trade and investment” (Yu, 2024, p. 199). and certainly it should not be underestimated. However, despite counter arguments which defend that the BRI projects are not based on grand strategy and geopolitical aims, but rest primarily on Chinese economic interests (Hones, 2022, pp. 72-75), the emergence of a new geopolitical landscape is seen inevitable.

The Chinese geopolitical code “that is neighbourhood, regional, and global in scope” (Flint and Zhu, 2019, p. 98), makes the BRI the important component of Chinese grand strategy. Although the BRI has main networks and numerous concrete projects, this globally oriented project “has no clear physical boundaries” (Yu, 2024, p. 1), and investment limits. This feature, which allows changes

even in the naming of the project, gives flexibility to the BRI and the opportunity to adapt the scope of the project according to new conditions. If necessary, China will redefine the scope and area of the project according to the requirements of its geopolitical code and national and global economy.

The regional and global scale of the BRI is evident in the numbers. Totally 150 countries and 32 international organisations have so far signed up for BRI. Crucially, it accounts for 60% of global population and 40% of global GDP. On the continental basis, while all of Africa, with its 52 countries participates in the project, Asia and Europe, with 38 and 27 countries respectively, constitute the center of gravity of the project. There are 11 countries from Oceania and 22 from the Americas in the project (Yu, 2024, p. 193) albeit having a secondary place in the BRI.

Along with the maritime route, the BRI has six main corridors, which have sub-corridors and various networks:

“The New Eurasian Land Bridge, the China-Mongolia-Russia Corridor, the China-Central Asia-West Asia Corridor (CCWAEC), the China-Pakistan-Economic Corridor (CPEC), the Bangladesh-China-Myanmar Corridor, and the China-Indochina Peninsula Corridor” (The State Council Information Office, 2020).

These Eurasian continental corridors can be examined in two groups according to the Heartland and Rimland distinction. If a generalization is made, the first three corridors lead directly into the Heartland area and railways are key in these corridors. The other corridors are within the Rimland area where railways and maritime shipping are both important. In this sense, the BRI corridors justify Mackinder, who emphasized the importance of trans-continental railways (Mackinder, 1904, p. 434).

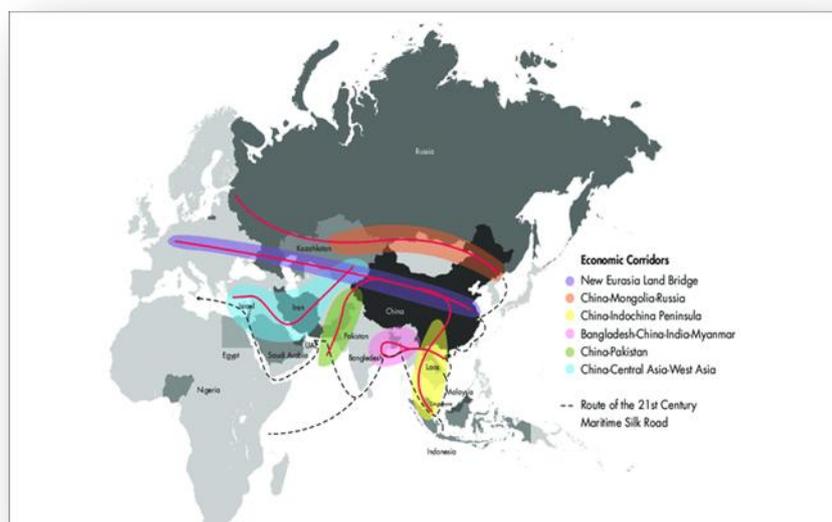


Figure 1. The BRI's six economic corridors and 14 priority countries. Source: (He, 2020; quoted from CIGI).

The construction of corridors have multiple objectives (Cariou, 2018, p. 2), and each corridor presents different opportunities. These corridors have also the potential to function both as complements and competitors to each other.

The New Eurasian Land Bridge (NELB) or shortly the Northern Corridor which connects the Pacific and the Atlantic. It starts from the China's coastal regions in the east, and reaches to the Netherlands and Belgium in the west. This “10,800-kilometer-long rail link runs through Kazakhstan, Russia, Belarus, Poland and Germany, and serves more than 30 countries and regions” (The State

Council Information Office, 2020; The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), 2023). There are several transcontinental rail routes which are considered within the corridor. Ostensibly, the geopolitical stakes of Russia and China are equal in this corridor. However, having many other alternatives, China is not wholly dependent on NELB and it means that NELB gives more leverage to China than Russia.

The China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor (CMREC) has two key routes extend from China to Mongolia and Russia. The CMREC aims to “align the BRI with Russia's proposal for the Eurasian Union and Mongolia's Steppe Road program” (The State Council Information Office, 2020). It can be assessed that it is more about China’s goal of increasing its sway in Mongolia. This in the end, will have strategic consequences.

The China-Central Asia-West Asia Corridor (CCWAEC) is an important component of the Silk Road Economic Belt and mainly follows the route of the ancient Silk Road which almost comprises the Heartland area where the Central Asia is the main intersection line. Therefore;

“The corridor starts from China and traverses Central Asia before reaching the Persian Gulf, the Mediterranean Sea and the Arabian Peninsula. It crosses five Central Asian countries, and 17 countries and regions in West Asia including Iran, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye” (Jinbo, 2022, p. 225; The State Council Information Office, 2020).

It should be underlined that this mentioned corridor also involves many other constructions and investments in different spheres, energy cooperation and other trade opportunities between China and Central Asia.

Kazakhstan is one of the crucial routes of the CCWAEC. Beside the Kazakhstan route, The China-Krgyzstan-Uzbekistan (CKU) railway project whose construction officially began in December 2024 (The Economist, 2025) is one of the main routes of the CCWAEC and considered to “become a flagship project in Central Asia under the BRI. This railway has a great chance to become the core of the region’s transport system”, (Omurkulova-Ozierska, 2019) while reviving the Silk Road. It is also expected to “transform the landlocked region of Central Asia into a transcontinental transport hub” (Yu, 2024, p. 179).

There are two main corridors in the CCWAEC after running from the Central Asia: The Southern Corridor and The Trans-Caspian Corridors. In this line; “The Southern Corridor traverses the Kyrgyz Republic or Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Iran and Türkiye before entering Europe via Bulgaria or Greece” (The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), 2023). The Trans-Caspian Corridor is also called as Middle Corridor which comprises three sub-transit routes.

All three of the mentioned routes pass through the Caspian Sea and reach to Azerbaijan’s capital city Baku. From Baku there are two options. One option is;

“Land-based transport options to the Georgian ports, and a maritime crossing through the Black Sea to ports in Bulgaria and Romania. Another option is to cross by land from the Caucasus directly into Türkiye by truck or rail using the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars railway” (The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), 2023).

Landlocked Central Asian states attach importance to the BRI corridors to better connect with the world and have geopolitical alternatives. In this regard, obtaining economic gains and balancing Russia and China in the very Heartland are crucial factors for them. From the Chinese point of view CCWAEC is exempt from direct intervention from Russia and the United States (Chang, 2023). So, it provides a strategic alternative to China. The geopolitical vision of Russia which considers “Central Asia as part of its near abroad, has been undermined by China’s increasing influence in the region” (Cariou, 2018, p. 11).

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is another flagship project of the BRI which spans between China and Pakistan's Gwadar port and comprises various infrastructure constructions, other investment projects in different realms, and cooperation in energy and technology as in other corridors. By connecting "the Silk Road Economic Belt in the north and the Maritime Silk Road in the South" (The State Council Information Office, 2020) makes the project critical and it has a quality that increases the geopolitical depth of the Rimland. In a wider area, its outreach involves the Middle East, North Africa, Central Asia, and many parts of the South Asia. More importantly the Persian Gulf from where oil transportation is vital to China.

Supplying energy from the Persian Gulf and OPEC states to China via Gwadar port is the key advantage of CPEC route for China (Khan et al., 2020, p. 202). The CPEC's being the shortest route connecting China to the Middle East and North Africa (Ökten, 2019, p. 166-167) is also critical. Beside these, the project will "give China a strong naval presence in the Arabian Sea" (Pant & Shah, 2019, p. 16).

CPEC shortens the distance for China to ship goods on 10 days instead of 45 days via main sea route of the Strait of Malacca (Khan et al., 2020, p. 203). From the geopolitical point, Gwadar or CPEC is highly critical because it provides China an option to act independently without overdependence and reliance on Malacca. Thus, it is a leverage for China to not only secure its energy transportation and supply chain or trade, but also policy options for political maneuvers at the regional and global scale.

Gwadar port is important for Pakistan's national security. The port is located at the furthest point from India's intervention (Ökten, 2019, p. 165) which is a dimension that should be emphasized from a geopolitical perspective. Gwadar is situated in Pakistan's troubled province of Baluchistan (Cariou, 2018, p. 6). So, stability of the region is crucial for the sustainability of the corridor. Otherwise, it would be a bottleneck for Pakistan and China.

The China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor (CICPEC) links China with the Indochina Peninsula and passes through six countries which comprise of Myanmar, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Thailand, and Malaysia. CICPEC connects the Sea and Land Silk Road. Given the Indochina Peninsula has a unique location and historically been the pivot of the Maritime Silk Road (Jinbo, 2022, p. 231), this corridor is important for China's increasing own regional connectivity. The BRI is important for the trans-national region of the Mekong River basin or the Greater Mekong Region and cooperation with the ASEAN (Association of South East Asian Nations) countries is one of the priorities of this corridor.

Given that "there are few natural impediments separating China from parts of Burma/Myanmar, and from Thailand, Laos, and Vietnam" (Kaplan, 2012, p. 207). China has an advantage to increase connectivity by construction of highways and railways. In this regard, The China-Laos Railway is among the many projects financed and built by China under the BRI (Yu, 2024, p. 57). It is also valuable for the geopolitics of Laos (San, 2022, pp. 184-185). The East Coast Rail Link (ECRL) which is the largest railway project in Southeast Asia, is an alternative trade route for China to decrease its over-reliance on the Strait of Malacca. China also has interest in the Kuantan Port (Liu, 2022, p. 166).

The idea of the Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar Economic Corridor (BCIMEC) was announced by China and India in 2013 but only Bangladesh and Myanmar welcomed the proposal. Linking of the two huge markets of China and India and enhancing regional connectivity are main two objectives of the corridor (The State Council Information Office, 2020). However, priority is given to infrastructure connectivity in this corridor (Jinbo, 2022, p. 242).

Even without India connection, Myanmar is an independently a crucial route because of its strategic location which embracing the Bay of Bengal and Indian Ocean (San, 2022, p. 177). The construction of oil and gas pipelines through Myanmar is important project providing another

alternative to the Malacca Strait. Critically, “these meridian corridors reinforce the Chinese presence in the Southern seas bypassing India” (Carrou, 2018, p. 6). China’s calculations not only rest on the chokepoint at the Straits of Malacca, but also need to overcome possible troubles arising from the South China Sea entanglements (San, 2022, p. 184).

Chinese investments in Bangladesh within the BRI are similar to other countries. It includes; “the building of the Chittagong port, the Padma bridge connecting the north and south of the country, railway lines, coal power plants, and water treatment facilities” (Pant and Shah, 2019, p. 22).

The Maritime Silk Road is the vital component of the BRI. It also has connection with the mentioned six land corridors. In that respect, ports set up maritime and land connection. Apart from the land corridors, The Maritime Silk Road has its own routes which may change in line with climatical, geopolitical and geoeconomic conditions. The Arctic Northern Sea Route is an example of this kind.

Keeping in mind that oil is mainly transported by sea as well as natural liquified gas (LNG) which China needs desperately, and political risks in Central Asia, Russia, Myanmar and Pakistan, the Maritime Silk Road is vital for China to secure oil and gas imports (Poon et al., 2024, p. 4). Beside the energy component, bulk of the commodities are shipped through maritime and will continue in the future given the limited capacity of railways.

Despite its global outreach, the Maritime Silk Road is Indo-Pacific oriented (Medcalf, 2022, p. 38). China is investing in deep-water ports in many parts of the world. Sri Lanka in this regard grewed into “an integral part of the Maritime Silk Road” (Wignaraja, 2022, p. 83).

There are also Chinese companies’ investments in container ports in the BRI countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, UAE, Djibouti, Peru, Israel, Greece, Italy and Belgium (Yu, 2024, p. 8). Chinese civilian projects, particularly in the field of logistics across the Pacific, are considered as networks having military importance as well (Tatlow and Feng, 2025).

Possible Geopolitical Implications Of The BRI and Hegemonic Struggle

China’s geopolitical code has changed owing to its unprecedented economic growth. There is a growing expectation that its geopolitical code will dominate the coming period (Flint, 2022, p. 64). The BRI is the direct outcome of this new code and has a huge potential to further transform it through possible world hegemony. China’s geographical position is consistent with both land and sea power as the BRI corridors reflect. However, sea power character of China is more visible. It meets most of the criteria of Mahan’s six principal conditions, which affect “the sea power of nations” (Mahan, 1898, pp. 28-29).

In terms of content and scope of the corridors, there is no doubt that all actors will benefit from the BRI corridors. However, in the context of geodeterminism of classic geopolitics, they will inevitably determine China’s foreign policy which also perceived as a geopolitical threat especially in the eyes of Asian countries as well as US. On the other hand, if depriving country of the opportunity to export is part of conducting economic warfare (Spykman, 1942, p. 266), then the multi-destinational feature of the BRI corridors secure the China’s imports and exports, and having variety of options create guarantee against any attempts of containment which target China.

Southeast Asia, the Russian Far East, Mongolia, and Central Asia are seen as “natural zones of Chinese influence and expansion” (Kaplan, 2012, p. 210). All the economic and political patterns indicate that the BRI corridors will serve China’s influence especially in these mentioned regions. As Kaplan prognosticated, China is “making inroads into Mackinder’s Central Asian Heartland and likely to have significant influence in Spykman’s Rimland” (Kaplan, 2012, p. 211). Through the corridors, Chinese influence is likely to be maintained.

The contentious issues in the South China Sea between China, Vietnam, the Philippines, Brunei, and Malaysia like the Paracel or Xisha and Spratly or Nansha Islands, the neighbouring Asian countries' fears of China's imposing "a Sino-centric order" (Yu, 2024, p. 63), dispute over the Senkaku or Diaoyu Islands between China and Japan, Taiwan issue, global trade war and world hegemony discussions are not independent from the implications of BRI corridors.

According to Flint, creating an integrated region via the BRI in Eurasia is a part of "the broader strategy of rebalancing global geopolitics" (Flint & Zhu, 2019, p. 96). If Chinese influence in the Heartland and Rimland is taken for granted, other international actors' challenge to it over the Eurasia will be decisive in line with Brzezinski's famous phrase: "Eurasia is the chessboard on which the struggle for global primacy continues to be played" (Brzezinski, 1997, p. 31). The reactions and counter projects against the BRI corridors, mainly pursued by the US-led bloc confirm the transformative geopolitical implications of the mentioned corridors.

One of the priorities for the US is to preserve its global hegemonic status. In this sense, Eurasian rimland is a critical component of the US geopolitical positioning to maintain it. The main pillars of the US in Eurasian rimland is based on favorable balance of power "enabled by its marine strength and by bases in certain pivotal areas" (Kelly, 2016, p.16), spanning from Western Europe to Pacific.

Though the Indo-Pacific theory was developed in the 1920s by German geopolitician Karl Haushoffer, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe renewed the term Indo-Pacific as a geostrategic concept (Poon et al., 2024, p. 3). However, initially Australia used "the Indo-Pacific as a basis for its foreign policy" (Medcalf, 2022, p. 36). This term has also swiftly been embraced by the US and it has started to build policy under the name of Indo-Pacific strategy instead of Asia-Pacific. Renaming of the the region itself indicate the changing geopolitical dynamics.

Given that the US has an experience of melding together diverse visions of the Heartland and the Rimland (Kelly, 2016, p. 54). it perceives the BRI corridors as the critical instruments of geopolitical superiority in Eurasia. Therefore, the US and its like-minded allies have tried to respond to the rise of China and the BRI corridors by initiating alternative or new economic, military and political structures in the Indo-Pacific region.

There is an intense effort to provide connectivity between China and other international actors to bind Asia and with other continents where Africa, Europe and the Pacific come fore. However, "the Indo-Pacific is a multipolar system, in which the fate of regional order" (Medcalf, 2022, pp. 36-37), will not be determined only by the US and China, and other actors will have a role. The US aims to keep "Eurasia and its rimlands divided and detached from interior forces" (Kelly, 2016, p. 158) due to security concerns. However, the BRI corridors which directly or indirectly unite Eurasia, inevitably raise the security concerns of the US.

Presented by the US under Trump's first term of presidency "the Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)" concept whose main objectives include providing alternatives to the BRI (Heiduk, 2022, p. 4; Ba, 2022, p. 136; Wignaraja, 2022, p. 82; Medcalf, 2022, p. 42), and former President Biden's launching of "the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework (IPEF)" in 2022 as an economic component of the Indo-Pacific Strategy, "The Build Back Better World initiative (B3W)" unveiled in June 2021, at the G7 summit and "the rebranding of the B3W as the Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII)" in June 2022 were all perceived as the G7's alternative to the BRI (Yu, 2024, p. 145; Burna-Asefi, 2024).

The Quadrilateral Mechanism (QUAD) which consists of the US, Japan, Australia and India and US-UK-AU Trilateral Military Partnership (AUKUS) are part of implementation of military and political components of the Indo-Pacific Strategy against China (Heiduk, 2022, pp. 4-5). Tough these are especially designed to contain China's military and political influence, they also target the BRI

corridors. It is not surprising that countries positioned against China have not signed up the BRI projects yet.

There are other connectivity initiatives such as “launching of the Japan-America-India (JAI)” trilateral in June 2018 (Panda, 2022, p. 111-112), “Blue Dot Network” by the US, Japan and Australia in 2019 and “Global Gateway” by the EU in 2021 (Yu, 2024, pp. 3-4) which could be considered an alternative to the BRI corridors. However, since Global Gateway is consistent with the Middle Corridor, (The Economist, 2025) it does not necessarily compete with the BRI.

Another initiation to take into account in the sphere of corridors is “the International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC) which connects India, Iran, and Russia” (Pant and Shah, 2019, p. 24) is important for Russia and India. This transport project established before the launching of the BRI in 2000 by Iran, Russia, and India. Then it included Oman, Türkiye, Azerbaijan, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Afghanistan, and Pakistan (Burna-Asefi, 2024). Another corridor to mention is India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEEC or IMEC) which comprises of two separate corridors, the east corridor connecting India to the Gulf by sea route and the northern one connecting the Gulf to Europe by railway and sea routes. The IMEEC is initiated by “India, The US, United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, France, Germany, Italy and the EU and aims to integrate India, Europe, the Middle East through the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israil avoiding the Suez Canal” (Pareek, 2025).

The Arctic region is also promising area for maritime transportation. Therefore the Northern Sea Route, which connects “Kara Gate in the west and the Bering Strait” (Burna-Asefi, 2024), has a huge potential especially for China and Russia and, probably will be important component of the BRI in the future. It is already termed as the Polar Silk Road.

In the light of of BRI corridors’ possible long-term challenges in the Indo-Pacific region, the US’s initiation of strategic partnership with India (Khan et al., 2020, pp. 209-210) is critical. In this vein, India is one of the key countries for the US to counter China’s increasing influence. India, has a certain geopolitical capability to limit China’s control of the region in some areas. Given that India could become an economic rival to China (Marshall, 2016, p. 205), and it views itself as potentially a major global player (Brzezinski, 1997, p. 46) it tries to create own transport routes other than the BRI corridors.

The Bay of Bengal which functions “as a bridge connecting South and Southeast Asia”, is located in a geostrategic position, and it is the battleground for dominance between India and China (Pant and Shah, 2019, p. 25). To that end, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral and Economic Corporation (BIMSTEC), and efforts through South Asia, East Asia, Central Asia and the larger Indo-Pacific region indicate India’s additional search for connectivity and regional integration. Like “India’s Act East policy with the India-Myanmar-Thailand Asian Trilateral Highway, and the Kaladan multimodal project” (San, 2022, p. 185), efforts to this direction are reflections of reshaping the regional geopolitical landscape (Pant & Shah, 2019, p. 12).

It is likely that India can contribute to the US interest in the Rimland rather than the Heartland. India’s strengthening ties with Myanmar, the Philippines, and Thailand, and “working with Vietnam and Japan to check China’s increasing domination of the South China Sea” (Marshall, 2016, p. 206) are rebalancing actions with regard to China. Although the ASEAN states are part of the BRI Corridors, and China’s and the 10 member-states of ASEAN’s announcement of “agreement on framework for a Code of Conduct (CoC) in the South China Sea” (Castro, 2022, p. 151) as well as Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), they suspect of China’s changing policy and its aggressive stance towards ASEAN countries in the South China Sea disputes. In this sense, ASEAN countries will be critical geopolitical players not only for India but also all actors competing with China. However, ASEAN countries try to avoid making a choice between the US and China (Ba, 2022, pp. 136-139).

European countries most of them comprised of Rimland littorals, have a careful approach concerning integration into the BRI corridors. Keeping in mind that some of the BRI corridors are already operational through Europe, the EU's recognition of "China as a systemic rival does not change each member country's own interests in China". (Kim, 2022, p. 55) Additionally, the US tariff policy under Trump administration may pave the way for close trade relations between China and the EU (Qian, 2025). Whatever the case, Europe directly or indirectly will have a connection with the BRI corridors like the Middle Corridor. On the other hand, the EU's own Global Gateway corridor system has the potential to allay the EU's dependence on the BRI corridors.

From the dimension of possessors of the Heartland, it should be underlined that Central Asia, Russia, Caucasus, Iran and Türkiye's position is important. The BRI corridors will strengthen the position of these countries. Since Türkiye and Iran are both within the areas of the Heartland and Rimland (Kaplan, 2012, p. 284) and areas of "geopolitical pivots" (Brzezinski, 1997, p. 41), they are expected to hold more economic and strategic gains. At this point, it should be emphasized that Mackinder's foresight of 100 years ago has almost come true. He predicted that; "When the network of railways has covered the World-Island, Istanbul will be one of the most accessible places on the globe by railway, vessel, and aeroplane" (Mackinder, 1919, p. 215). Nevertheless, it should be highlighted that in terms of Spykman's definition, rather than the Heartland, Istanbul fits into the Rimland.

Reviews that see "China as a possible candidate for Heartland possessor" (Kelly, 2016, p. 88), put the BRI corridors in spot. Even though Mackinder's fears of China's conquering Russia (Kaplan, 2012, p. 189) in the future seems unrealistic at least for the foreseeable future, China's gaining some kind of leverage in Russia and Central Asia with the BRI corridors is evident.

Keeping in mind that Uzbekistan is seen "the prime candidate for regional leadership in Central Asia" (Brzezinski, 1997, p. 130), its strategic position in the Heartland (Kelly, 2016, p. 113) could be maintained by the BRI corridors. Likewise, Kazakhstan's role in the BRI corridors is determinant. Thanks to these corridors, land-locked Uzbekistan as well as other Central Asian countries will have an alternative routes to access seas. On the other hand, Central Asia could be termed as a buffer zone between the two latent rivals, namely Russia and China for the hegemony of the Heartland.

The BRI has the potential to "shift the center of economic gravity further eastward and drag Asia as well as Africa and Europe along with it" (Burna-Asefi, 2024), Beside this, given the fact that railways have a limited transportation potential, the supremacy of sea freight (Cariou, 2018, p. 4) is highly likely to continue. Accordingly, concentration of "70% of the world's shipments in oil and petroleum is in the Indian Ocean" (Poon et al., 2024, p. 3), So, dependence of "China, Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Southeast Asia, Australia and India on the Indian Ocean sea lanes for energy, prosperity and security" (Medcalf, 2022, p. 37), makes the Rimland not only for these countries but also crucial for world economy.

In terms of geopolitics, Yu's description is striking; "the BRI has brought China to the world, and the world is approaching China" (Yu, 2024, p. 18), Since actors tend to perceive what they expect (Jervis, 2020, pp. 266-267) reactions of countries to the BRI corridors may vary from reciprocal economic gains to hegemonic power competition. On the other hand, in light of the fact that 90 % of interstate wars started between neighbors (Vasques, 2020, p. 494), and "the more populated frontiers experience more strife" (Kelly, 2016, p. 117) as evidence showed, China and its surrounding areas in the Rimland areas may be more prone to clashes than the Heartland in the future.

Conclusion

Today, corridors are crucial components of state's geopolitical codes and actors tend to use them in the service of their grand strategies. As a force-multiplier, geography still matters despite cutting-age technologies and the development of transportation facilities. As a simple example, even if modern planes have shortened the distances, they are not able to fly over the countries without

authorized permission. Therefore, corridors which connect countries or continents are crucial structures based on geographies and have become tools of hegemonic positioning of actors in the times of uncertainty in multipolar world order where prevails globalisation, protectionism, trade wars and political turmoils simultaneously.

The never-ending search for power necessitates geographical base without it impossible to build permanent international engagement. In this line, the BRI is a visible example of how to handle and increase the ability of power projection over geographical connectivity. In terms of patterns of the BRI, it could be seen that the fundamental strategy behind the BRI is multi-dimensional, ranging from economic gains to far-reaching geopolitical impacts especially in Eurasia.

While the BRI corridors through the Central Asia and Russia refers to increasing strategic width and dept of the Heartland, corridors in the directions of the South obviously expand the role and function of the Rimland. Although synergy of the BRI together with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and Russian led Eurasian Union in the Heartland should not be underestimated, it should be highlighted that parameters of the Heartland is more stable than the Rimland where great alterations are already underway. In this regard, land corridors to the Southern Asia and maritime routes which merge in the Indo-Pacific littorals or in the Rimland have already triggered regional and superpower rivalries, which are embodied by new corridor projects. Given that reaching out to sea is one of the priorities of landlocked Central Asian countries, it also makes the Rimland region more important.

The BRI corridors are expected to provide considerable gains to all actors involved in the project along with China. Likewise, Chinese political and military sway is also estimated to search significantly. However, the BRI corridors are fully operational, possible to transform Southern Asia where corridors to Pakistan and Myanmar are especially critical with their game-changer potentials especially by decreasing over-reliance of China to Malacca Strait. The Indochina region is also critical due to its proximity to the Malacca chokepoint, and ASEAN members may face difficulties in balancing China and the US.

China's securing of its supply chains by the alternative channels of BRI corridors not only serves for the sustainability of its economy and trade but also creates a leverage for its political influence and military might. All actors from the US to other regional powerhouses like India and Japan, which considers China as a rival giant are aware of China's reality and they collectively try to create their own corridors and utilise them for own geopolitical aims to ensure the balance particularly in the Indo-Pacific or in Rimland where the bulk of trade and energy transportation continues.

Under all circumstances, the immediate and long-term geopolitical implications of the BRI corridors in the Indo-Pacific will manifest themselves through observable intensity of reactions and interactions in and around the mentioned region. Therefore, the Rimland as a main geoeconomic and geopolitical playground is certain to strengthen its position vis-a-vis the Heartland.

On the other hand, *ceteris paribus*, it will not be a prophecy to urge that China may unite the Heartland and the Rimland by increasing and diversifying connectivity between two pivotal regions. Since it intrinsically implies that China may possess both regions, the US and other actors will try to contain China's expansion through corridors. In this sense, corridors with India extension will also be decisive. However, due to changing political and economic dynamics as well as the breadth of geography, the containment of China will not resemble to containment policies pursued by the US against the USSR during the Cold War.

Today, trade wars and global ambiguities all around the world oblige all international actors to save their national interests by pursuing multilateral relations as reflected in corridor policies or in interest-driven ad hoc alliances. In an era of transition, new geopolitical dynamics accompanied by corridors as well would prevail. In this vein, owing to the multifaceted efforts of global hegemon or regional actors over the corridors, evolving competition in the pivotal regions will likely not result as a zero-sum game.

Since it is tough for any actor solely to control the Heartland and particularly the Rimland due to geopolitical reasons, redefinition and recalibration of hegemony over the Eurasia in the coming period seems harder especially in light of the multipolar global order. However, it should be underlined that, through the BRI corridors China has taken an advantage to empower its geopolitical position in Eurasia and diversified its leverage to pursue its own policies more confidently.

Author Contribution Statement

The author contributed 100% to this article.

Conflicts of Interest

There is no conflict of interest in this article.

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Genişletilmiş Özet

En yalın tanımıyla bile mekan ve politika ilişkisi boyutundan jeopolitiğin kapsamına giren ve bu anlamda sadece ekonomi ve ticaret sahasına indirgenmesi mümkün olmayan sınır aşan koridorlar, ağlar veya merkezler oluşturma suretiyle hem devletler arası ilişkileri hem de uluslararası düzeni yeniden şekillendirme potansiyeline sahiptir. Farklı topraklardan geçen ticaret koridorlarının tesisi, yalnızca jeoekonomik değil, aynı zamanda jeopolitik etkiler açısından da kritik öneme sahiptir. Bu durum, farklı ülkeler tarafından yürütülen ve rekabete konu olan projelerin gelişimini tetiklemiştir.

Tüm aktörler, farklı ülkeleri çeşitli ulaşım altyapılarıyla – bunlara deniz yolları da dâhil olmak üzere – birbirine bağlayan ağların çarpan etkisinin açıkça farkındadır. Bu nedenle koridorlar, uluslararası sahnede jeopolitik mücadelenin önemli araçları haline gelmiş ve belirli coğrafi alanlar üzerindeki egemenliğin yeni bir ifadesi olarak öne çıkmıştır.

Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi'nin (BRI) genişlemesi, klasik jeopolitik kuramcılarının da odaklandığı Heartland (Kalpgah), Rimland (Kenar Kuşak) ve Hint-Pasifik bölgelerini kapsamaktadır. Bu genişlemenin, Avrasya bölgesinde yeni ve kapsamlı uluslararası koridorların kurulmasının, klasik jeopolitik teorilerde belirtilen coğrafi ağırlık merkezleri ve mihver ülkeler üzerindeki etkileri dikkate alındığında, söz konusu teorilerin bugün de geçerli olduğunu ve gelecekteki hakimiyet mücadelesinin ana güzergahlarını belirleme açısından değer taşıdığını göstermektedir. Bu bağlamda, bu çalışmanın temel amacı BRI'nin jeopolitik kapsamını analiz etmektir. Özellikle girişimin “Heartland mı yoksa Rimland üzerindeki etkileri mi ön plandadır” sorusu çalışmanın cevap aradığı temel konulardan birisini oluşturmaktadır. Bunun yanı sıra, çalışmada ilgili bölgeler üzerinde yaşanan mücadelelerin bölgesel ve küresel jeopolitik sonuçlarının genel bir değerlendirmesi de yapılmaktadır. İkinci kaynaklara dayalı literatür analizi niteliğindeki bu çalışma, koridor konusunu esas olarak jeopolitik terminoloji bağlamında inceleyerek literatüre katkı sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır.

Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi, Halford Mackinder'ın Heartland ve Nicholas Spykman'ın Rimland olarak tanımladığı bölgelerin neredeyse tamamını kapsamaktadır. Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi'nin Rimland ya da Heartland üzerindeki etki düzeyinin seviyesi ve bu etkilerin ne gibi sonuçlar doğuracağı, günümüzün şekillenmekte olan jeopolitik ortamında cevaplanması gereken temel bir sorudur.

Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi, yeni yollar, demiryolları, hava ve deniz yolları, limanlar ve altyapı yatırımlarının ön planda olduğu çok sayıda somut jeopolitik özelliğe dayanmaktadır. Her ne kadar Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi'nin ne anlama geldiği üzerine tartışmalar sürse de, Çin'in jeopolitik kodları bu girişimin uzun vadeli hedefleri içeren büyük bir stratejinin ürünü olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Proje, tüm paydaşlara görünür ekonomik faydalar sunmakla beraber, asıl olarak uzun vadeli jeopolitik kazanımları hedeflemektedir.

Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi bünyesinde altı ana koridor yer almakta olup bunlar da alt koridorlar ve çeşitli ağlarla desteklenmektedir: “Yeni Avrasya Kara Köprüsü, Çin-Moğolistan-Rusya Koridoru, Çin-Orta Asya-Batı Asya Koridoru (CCWAEC), Çin-Pakistan Ekonomik Koridoru (CPEC), Bangladeş-Çin-Hindistan-Myanmar Koridoru ve Çin-Hindochina Yarımadası Koridoru.” Bu Avrasya kara koridorları, klasik jeopolitik teorilerdeki Heartland ve Rimland ayırımına göre iki ana gruba ayrılabilir. Eğer genel bir sınıflama yapılırsa, ilk üç koridor doğrudan Heartland bölgesine yönelmektedir ve bu koridorlarda demiryolu taşımacılığı temel ulaşım biçimi olarak öne çıkmaktadır. Diğer üç koridor ise Rimland bölgesinde yer almakta olup burada demiryolu kadar deniz taşımacılığı da kilit önemdedir.

Koridorların içeriği ve kapsamı açısından bakıldığında, tüm aktörlerin Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi'nden çeşitli düzeylerde fayda sağlayacağı açıktır. Ancak, klasik jeopolitiğin coğrafi determinizmi bağlamında, bu koridorlar aynı zamanda Çin'in dış politikasını şekillendiren unsurlar haline gelecektir. Bu durum, Asya ülkeleri kadar ABD tarafından da jeopolitik bir tehdit olarak algılanmaktadır.

Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi kapsamındaki koridorlara karşı başta ABD olmak üzere çeşitli aktörler tarafından gösterilen tepkiler ve geliştirilen karşı projeler, bu koridorların dönüştürücü jeopolitik etkilerini doğrulamaktadır. ABD açısından temel önceliklerden birisi küresel hegemonik pozisyonunu muhafaza etmektir. Bu çerçevede Avrasya'nın Rimland kuşağı, ABD'nin bu pozisyonunu sürdürme stratejisinde merkezi bir bileşen haline gelmiştir.

Çin'e karşı denge kurmayı hedefleyen ABD öncülüğündeki çeşitli girişimler, projeler ve mekanizmalar hayata geçirilmiştir ve bunlar Kuşak ve Yol Girişim koridorlarına alternatif oluşturabilecek niteliktedir. Bu alternatifler arasında en dikkat çekici olanı Hindistan-Ortadoğu-Avrupa Koridoru'dur (IMEEC). Bu proje iki ayrı koridordan oluşmaktadır: Hindistan'ı Körfez bölgesine deniz yoluyla bağlayan doğu koridoru ve Körfez'i Avrupa'ya demiryolu ve deniz yolları aracılığıyla bağlayan kuzey koridoru.

Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi'nin Hint-Pasifik bölgesinde uzun vadede yaratabileceği sorunlar göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, ABD'nin Hindistan ile stratejik ortaklık başlatması büyük önem taşımaktadır. Bu ortaklık kapsamında Hindistan'ın Heartland'dan ziyade Rimland bölgesinde ABD çıkarlarına katkı sunması daha olasıdır.

Kuşak ve Yol Girişimi'nin Orta Asya ve Rusya üzerinden ilerleyen koridorları Heartland'ın stratejik uzamını ve derinliğini artırırken, güneye doğru yönelen koridorlar Rimland'ın işlevini ve rolünü bariz biçimde genişletmektedir. Heartland'ın coğrafi parametreleri Rimland'a göre daha istikrarlı bir yapıya sahipken, Rimland'da büyük değişimlerin yaşandığı dikkat çekmektedir. Bu çerçevede Güney Asya'ya uzanan kara koridorları ile Hint-Pasifik kıyılarına ulaşan deniz yolları, halihazırda yeni koridor projelerinde cisimleşen bölgesel ve küresel güç rekabetlerini tetiklemiştir.

Şayet Kuşak ve Yol koridorları tam kapasiteyle işler hale gelirse, Güney Asya bölgesini dönüştürme potansiyeline sahip olması muhtemeldir. Özellikle Pakistan ve Myanmar'a uzanan koridorlar, Çin'in Malakka Boğazı'na olan aşırı bağımlılığını azaltarak, stratejik dengeyi değiştirme potansiyeli taşıyan projelerdir.

ABD'den Japonya ve Hindistan gibi Çin'i rakip olarak gören diğer bölgesel güçlere kadar tüm aktörler, Çin'in yükselişinin farkındadır ve kendi koridorlarını oluşturarak bu yükselişi dengelemeye çalışmaktadır. Bu çabalar özellikle Rimland'da ve Hint-Pasifik bölgesinde yoğunlaşmaktadır; çünkü küresel ticaretin ve enerji taşımacılığının büyük bölümü bu hatlar üzerinden gerçekleştirilmektedir.

Tüm bu koşullar altında, Kuşak ve Yol koridorlarının Hint-Pasifik bölgesindeki kısa ve uzun vadeli jeopolitik etkileri, ilgili bölgedeki tepkiler ve etkileşimler yoluyla açık şekilde gözlemlenecektir. Bu bağlamda, Rimland bölgesi, Heartland'a kıyasla jeoekonomik ve jeopolitik ana mücadele alanı olarak konumunu pekiştirecektir.

Diğer yandan, koşullar değişmediği sürece, Çin'in Heartland ile Rimland arasında artan ve çeşitlenen bağlantıları sağlayarak bu iki kilit bölgeyi birleştirmesi olasıdır. Bu durum, Çin'in her iki bölge üzerinde de kontrol kurma ihtimalini ortaya koyduğu için, ABD ve diğer aktörler Çin'in bu genişlemesini koridorlar yoluyla sınırlandırmaya çalışacaktır. Bu bağlamda, Hindistan uzantılı koridorlar da belirleyici bir rol üstlenecektir.

Günümüzde yaşanan ticaret savaşları ve küresel belirsizlikler, tüm uluslararası aktörleri ulusal çıkarlarını korumak amacıyla çok taraflı ilişkiler kurmaya ve bu çıkarları koridor politikaları ya da çıkar temelli geçici ittifaklar yoluyla güvence altına almaya yöneltmektedir. Geçiş döneminde, koridorlarla birlikte şekillenen yeni jeopolitik dinamikler daha da baskın hale gelecektir. Bu bağlamda, küresel hegemonların ve bölgesel aktörlerin koridorlar üzerindeki çok yönlü çabaları nedeniyle, söz konusu bölgelerde yaşanacak rekabetin sıfır toplamlı bir oyunla sonuçlanması fazla olası görünmemektedir.

Heartland'ı ve özellikle Rimland'ı tek başına kontrol etmek, jeopolitik nedenlerle hiçbir aktör için kolay değildir. Bu nedenle, çok kutuplu küresel düzen bağlamında Avrasya'daki hegemonya tanımının yeniden yapılması ve bu yapının yeniden şekillendirilmesi önümüzdeki dönemde oldukça güçtür. Ancak şunun altı çizilmelidir ki, Kuşak ve Yol koridorları aracılığıyla Çin, Avrasya'daki jeopolitik konumunu güçlendirme yolunda ciddi adımlar atmış ve kendi politikalarını daha kararlı ve özgüvenli bir biçimde uygulamasına olanak sağlayacak etki araçlarını çeşitlendirmiştir.