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## Dynamics of China-Pakistan Strategic Partnership and its Impact on India

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### Abstract:

The cooperation between China and Pakistan which was mostly dominated in the defense sector in the past has now transformed into another area of economic interdependence where Pakistan decided to become an important part of China's flagship programs such as China-Pakistan-Economic-Corridor (CPEC). Most of the academic attention on the topic has been covered by exploring China-Pakistan friendship which is centered on CPEC and defense cooperation without giving this topic a conceptual understanding of strategic partnership along with theoretical context. Against this backdrop, the current study is unique by adding to the current literature a conceptual understanding of strategic partnership and its application in the study along with adhering to the application of theoretical construct. The study also shows the cause and effect relationship of two variables i.e. China-Pakistan as independent variable and implications for India and its counterstrategies as dependent variable. CPEC provides a new model of cooperation of China with other South Asian states which have drifted them towards China's orbit of influence. All these developments have created concerns in India where experts have believed that its influence has been minimized in the region. On its part, India is taking measures to contain China's rise by approaching to new policies at the political, military, and economic level.

**Key Words:** China, Pakistan, Strategic Cooperation, CPEC, India, United States.

### INTRODUCTION

South Asian history remained security-oriented due to the presence of different actors in the region and beyond. Strategically, South Asia has been significant for external powers which remained involved to get their strategic interests (Crane, 1968). Examples include China's current comprehensive strategic partnership with Pakistan. In this context, experts have debated and explored the independent variable China-Pakistan growing strategic cooperation that has affected various security dimensions of India which has remained among such debates a less debated area in the post-Cold War era by considering it as the largest South Asian landmass with the largest populations, economy, defense, and political profile. Contrary to India, the history of the two states is replete of China's heart winning support for Pakistan relating to defense cooperation, political support, and the establishment of trade relations in a deep crisis when India threatened Pakistan's

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territorial sovereignty in the 1965, 1971 war and beyond (Khan, 2011). In South Asia, the transformation of the Bi-polar structure into Uni-polar structure not only flustered the overall equation of power but also twisted its symmetry. They are, in one way or another, connected to the interests and intervention of the foreign power.

This study revisits China's strategic partnership with Pakistan and its impact on India in the context of South Asia. The study analyzes the current topic in different sections. First, the study is guided by complex interdependence in the case of China-Pakistan strategic partnership while in the case of India it is guided by balance of power theory such as realism. Second, the study probes the current debate on China, Pakistan, and India making a power triangle and discussion on CPEC which is an addition of a new independent variable. In response, India for its part has led the initiative of Chabahar port development with Iran previously. The third section highlights how CPEC has helped in providing strength to the geostrategic bond of China and Pakistan against India. Fourth, against this backdrop, the paper further highlights the impact on India's various dimensions of security. Fifth, the paper examines India's counter-strategies such as its close collaboration with Japan and the United States. The study finally finds out that the addition of new independent variables to the China-Pakistan strategic partnership in the form of CPEC has affected India in the broader context of South-Asia where India has reshaped its foreign policy by responding to threats at the political, military, and economic security. The study addresses these questions: What are China-Pakistan strategic partnership and their theoretical context? How China-Pakistan strategic partnership has impacted various dimensions of Indian security and what are the counter strategies of India?

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study uses qualitative methods for data collection from various sources. For this purpose, current literature was surveyed. Researchers collected data from different online engines such as Google Scholar, Google, ISI Web, PubMed, NCBI, online libraries (DRSM library, HEC digital library, and Wiley online library) and PDF Drive.Com. Further, the study is analytical and explanatory based on the literature review. The hypothesis of the study is predetermined and is not a testable hypothesis. Contrary to the testable hypothesis, this predetermined hypothesis evolved through literature review is, therefore, a hypothesis leading to research. This hypothesis is interpretative and leads to research. The study has used an active research method where the research work of other experts and scholars was analysed to have the right research direction. The main argument of the study is that how the China-Pakistan strategic partnership has affected various dimensions of security. The study is based on the theory of complex interdependence in the case of China and Pakistan strategic cooperation and the theory of realism is applicable as India is using counterbalancing which helps in building the premise of the study. The major portion of data was collected from secondary sources such as books, research articles from journals, newspapers, and reports. For this study, all the data was analysed and proper references have been given. All the research ethics are followed to avoid any plagiarism.

### **THEORETICAL CONTEXT OF THE STUDY**

Many theories such as Liberalism and Realism have an explanatory power by highlighting what lies at the core of the maximum extraction of self-interests, which mainly cater to the strategic, political, economic, and security domains. An overlapping may take bilateralism to a friendly and cooperative stature while if the operation is an emblem of disjoint sets, there will be animosity.

Joseph Nye's theoretical interpretation of interdependency and its complex and intricate channels applies to Pakistan-China and can be well translated into the current study. The multi-dimensional cooperation ranging from cultural exchanges to strategic hues has an impact that sets all the components of the modus operandi of the state that is likely to boost the development in the context of China-Pakistan strategic partnership, in all the right directions. Nevertheless the literature on the context of bilateralism of China and Pakistan has been analyzed in contours, which only discuss the synapses and the fruits of it. Simultaneously, the other side of the coin is indeed the pinpricking of the choke points if the Indo-Pakistan and Sino-India bilateralism are analyzed within the preview of South Asian security and also the security dilemma in the theoretical construct of Liberalism (Griffiths, 2007) and Realism (Burchill, et al. 2013). Viewing the current study within the context of liberalism, the intensification of China and Pakistan's strategic cooperation in the form of CPEC favors supports this theory. The theory of realism fits in the case of India's response towards China and Pakistan's strategic partnership because India has designed to counterbalance China and Pakistan due to its enduring rivalry caused by unsettled borders.

### **Concept of Strategic Partnership**

The strategic partnership that emerged is an alternative to an alliance system among secondary powers and a post-Cold War policy to order their relations with each other. Certain elements make strategic partnership function such as the written declaration, statements, agreements, and memorandum of understanding which deepens bilateral ties with clear policy objectives. Secondly, in strategic partnerships, Track-I and Track-II diplomacy is used through formal institutions. Third, summit meetings bring the partners to their capitals to understand mutual interests and concerns. Fourth, military to military relationship is established through joint military exercises to make confidence-building measurements. Fifth, strategic partnerships foster bilateral economic ties and finally, it leads to cultural exchange programs (Nadkarni, 2010). Avery Goldstein argues that the practice of strategic partnership originated in China's and Russia's cooperative partnership which aimed to understand each other mutual interests and concerns in the post-Cold War era (Goldstein, 2005). The practice of strategic partnership has emerged as a comprehensive vision among states to address common issues and challenges. This concept of strategic partnership is a unique addition to the debate on China-Pakistan strategic partnership.

### **CURRENT DEBATE ON CHINA-PAKISTAN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP**

Academic attention on China-Pakistan mostly has examined that both the state's highest official level contacts were established by the visits of former Prime Minister of Pakistan Muhammad Ali Bogra and his Chinese counterpart Zhou Enlai at the Bandung conference, Indonesia in 1955. Later, Prime Minister of Pakistan Hussain Shaheed Suharwardi and Enlai adopted the Track-I diplomacy. The inter-governmental interactions opened cooperation on boundary discussion which was signed as a boundary agreement in 1963. The boundary agreement was a foundational component of the strategic partnership growing between China and Pakistan today. The spill-over effects of the boundary agreements extended when Pakistan the first non-communist state became to land its national flag carrier international flights in 1964. Historically, Pakistan was supported by China in its war with India in 1965 and 1971 (Pringsheim, 1965). China supported Pakistan at the defense level when the US was disappointing Islamabad on the other side in the 1970s (Yuan, 2011). Besides, cooperation at the national level ranging from border agreement to defense, Pakistan supported China at the international level for its reclaim of a permanent seat at the United Nations

in 1971. China by its part appeasing Pakistan did not recognize Bangladesh until 1975 (Khan-a, 2011). Probing the historic aspect of China and Pakistan's strategic cooperation, Pakistan was a much successful and valuable conduit while bridging the United States and China when US President Richard Nixon opened the liberal world for China in 1971-72.

The most important part of China and Pakistan's strategic cooperation is remembered in the form of China's support for Pakistan's nuclear development in the 1980s during the Cold War era (Siddiqui, 1986). Although, Pakistan was the closest partner of the United States against the former Soviet Union, even then the US opposed Pakistan's nuclear development, but China gave realistically a key foundation to the development of a nuclear program of Pakistan. China's strategic partnership with Pakistan grew in order much to the needs of both as a defensive reaction to India's animosity through the Cold War era, however, in the post-Cold War period, their partnership much intensified towards increasing cooperation in the economic realm. China-Pakistan has now entered an era of economic interdependence since the construction of the CPEC. CPEC which is a new independent variable warming the partnership to unbelievable highs as many as India and the US view it as a national security threat. China's construction of Gwadar port would provide its access cheaply to the Arabian Sea's warm water. The strategic significance of Gwadar's location, has enhanced the value of Pakistan's strategic pivot for China's strategic cooperation in the broader South Asian context (Safdar, 2015).

The debate on China and Pakistan's strategic cooperation in the academic attention has focused on the construction projects and India's worries about such developments (Munir, 2018). For example, experts signified Gwadar port which is located very close to strategic Iranian Chabahar port developed by India and Iran jointly on December 3, 2017, initially. In 2017, India announced to invest 200 million to develop Chabahar to compete with the Gwadar port. However, China has overtaken India, and Iran has decided to drop India in July 2020 due to China's \$400 billion strategic deal with Iran. India reacted with its serious concerns about Gwadar port due to its strategic location. Contrary to Chabahar, China by its construction of Gwadar port would have strategic advantages on India in the Indian Ocean. For example, by using the Gwadar port, China could keep an eye on the Indian and US navy's activities in the Indian Ocean (Suhasini, 2020). In the historical context, as China and Pakistan's strategic cooperation much centered on defense cooperation during the Cold War era alarmed India's security concerns, however, the construction of CPEC has created the same security concerns for India. The argument is that Pakistan agreed by allowing China to lease Gwadar port for 43 years and the significance of Gwadar port lies by connecting the other region for China and Pakistan in one hand where it is calculated as the most perfect route for oil trade. In the strategic context, Pakistan could fulfill its political and military interests by containing India's increasing aggression in the form of overt and covert activities in South Asia. Against this backdrop, India has invested in the launching of hybrid warfare to sabotage the strategic and economic security of both Pakistan and China (Shaukat, 2020). Experts have analyzed the current partnership between China and Pakistan that it would provide Pakistan with a strategic edge over India in the Arabian Sea because the presence of the Indian navy in the Indian Ocean would increase Pakistan's security concerns through the development of this port. Pakistan could watch Indian activities in the region. Indian naval capabilities were strong enough as compared to Pakistan before the development of the Gwadar port (Singh, 2020). A comparison of Indian and Pakistani navy, defense spending, and nuclear capabilities is given below.

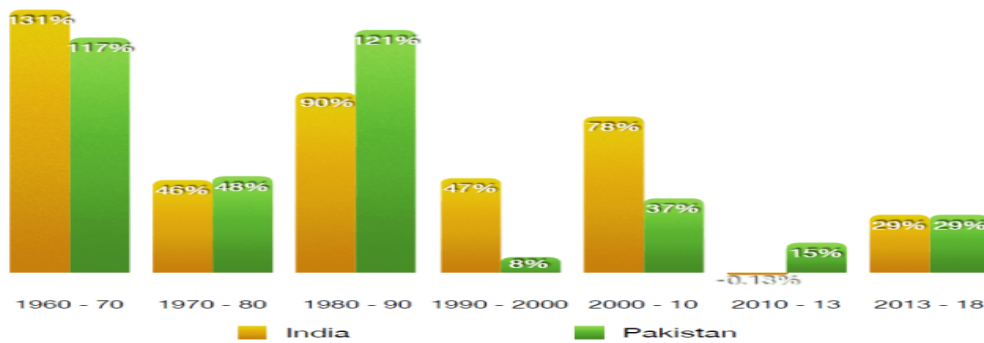
**Table 1.1**

**Operational warships of India and Pakistan**

Name of warship	India	Pakistan
Carriers	1	0
Submarines	16	8
Destroyers	14	0
Frigates	13	9
Petrol and Coastal Combatant Vessels	106	17
Combat-Capable Aircraft	75	8

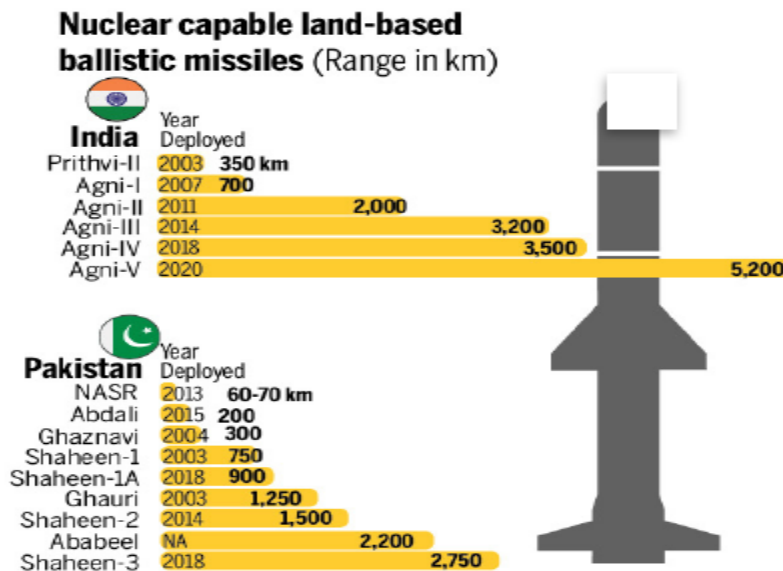
Source: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/2/26/india-vs-pakistan-military-strength-and-arsenal>

**Figure. 1**



Source: <https://www.opindia.com/2019/10/a-story-told-by-defence-spending-of-india-pakistan-and-china-over-the-decades/>

**Figure. 2**



Source: <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/why-neither-india-nor-pakistan-can-risk-a-nuclear-war/articleshow/70908000.cms>

Abundant literature regarding China's defense cooperation with Pakistan covering the Cold War period is available; nonetheless, a conceptual understanding of the strategic partnership between the two states has not been debated. Moreover, the current literature examined above has not revealed any debate regarding the broad conception of security to elaborate what serious implications the partnership has for India both in the short and long run. The sections below adds to the gap in the current literature in the form of understanding the policies shaped in response to China's growing cooperation with Pakistan in the post-Cold War period by India. The study depends on two variables i.e. China-Pakistan strategic partnership as an independent variable and observing Indian state policies as a dependent variable. The figures above confirm the understanding of the cause and effect relationship resulting from the China-Pakistan strategic partnership from 1995 to 2018 for India.

The study in coming sections highlights an understanding of various dimensions of security ranging from political to military and economic security. India has faced serious challenges regarding its political security in various platforms followed by reshaping its military security where its strategic partnership with the US is an unquestionable example.

### **IMPACT ON INDIA'S POLITICAL SECURITY IN DIFFERENT AREAS**

One of the important impacts of China-Pakistan strategic cooperation would be on Indian hegemonic designs in South Asia. India's attitude towards the smaller neighbors was very aggressive and dominating. Pakistan has been the only state which challenged India's supremacy in the region. This was possible due to Pakistan's strategic relations with China which provided all the necessary support Pakistan needed to ensure its territorial integrity. Chinese Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) also provided opportunities to the other smaller states of South Asia such as Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, and Nepal. These smaller states also developed relations with China on the same model of China-Pakistan strategic cooperation. The main purpose of all these states is to counter the Indian desire for primacy.

Another impact of the China-Pakistan strategic partnership is to limit India's international influence by blocking its membership in an international organization such as NSG. On its part, United States has tried to promote India as a net security provider in South Asia and is supporting India's membership in various international organizations such as United Nations Security Council and Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG). On June 24, 2016, an NSG meeting was held in Seoul. Indian application was on agenda. China along with 16 other members blocked Indian entry arguing that criteria should be based on merit for any country that is willing to join the NSG (Weigold, 2016). China thereby has supported Pakistan over the NSG issue by blocking the Indian bid to join the elite club.

### **China's Refusal of India's Stance on Militant Organization**

Another important factor that further enhanced China-Pakistan mutual understanding and trust is China's support to Pakistan's stance on counter-terrorism. This helped Pakistan to counter Indian designs to portray Pakistan as a state sponsoring terrorism. China blocked four times Indian move to declare Masood Azhar, a leader of Jash-i-Muhammad in United Nations Security Council (UNSC) as a terrorist. Even India, with strong support from the US, could not achieve its objective due to Chinese diplomacy. China has a very clear stance about the blockage of Indian intentions. China has asked India to provide concrete evidence against him. India with the help of the US, Russia, and



France could not get any positive response from Chinese diplomacy over the issue of Molana Masood Azhar. China remained the only major hurdle for India to declare Masood Azhar a terrorist, despite having support from Saudi Arabia (Landberg, 2019).

The only reason for supporting Pakistan was China's desire to press India in the region and for establishing more friendly relations with Pakistan. In consultation with Pakistan, China later dropped its objections to the United Nations (UN) listing Jash-i-Muhammad chief Masood Azhar as a terrorist. On May 1, 2019, Masood Azhar was designated a terrorist in the UNSC and his name was included in the 1276 Sanctions list (Rajesh & Deshpande, 2020). Pakistan by its part has also supported China's counter-terrorism efforts on the issue of Uighur in Xinjiang, however, much to the dismay of the United States and India.

### **Improving Russia's Relations with Pakistan**

Indian think tanks warned their government for growing Pak-Russian friendship due to the CPEC project. Due to the Chinese role, Russia and Pakistan came close to each other in recent years. In 2016, Russia refused to name Pakistani terrorist Molana Masood Azhar in a joint communiqué issued at the end of the BRICS summit held in Indian city Goa. Russia also endorsed Pakistani membership of SCO on Chinese request. India has lost pushing Russia against CPEC and BRI initiatives. Another factor improving Pakistan's relations is Kashmir as an independent variable. This is largely due to Russia's diplomatic efforts to convince India for participating in BRI. Russia would not become a part and support of any Indian intention against China. Russian President Putin went to China to attend the historic conference on BRI hosted by Chinese president Xi Jinping in the great hall of Beijing. Russia is expanding its trade with Chinese companies. During his visit to China, Russian President Putin also said that "we welcome Chinese companies in Russia" (Spivak, 2017).

In addition, Putin said that Chinese involvement in the Russian economy is not a point of fear for Russia and urged world leaders to respect Chinese BRI for the enhancement of international trade. Russian support to CPEC and BRI is a sound of alarm for India as New Delhi is not happy with the Russian decision to extend its support for the said projects. Due to these projects, Russia has come closer to Pakistan on economic and security fronts. Both Russia and Pakistan held joint exercises in Pakistan for the first time for counter-terrorism. CPEC and BRI programs could be a threat for India on the political front because; they could distance Russia away from India economically and politically. This could be a setback for India as its major ally is supporting Chinese-led BRI initiatives despite opposition from the Indian side who refused to send its representative to the conference. China is playing a pivotal role in the normalization of bilateral relations between Russia and Pakistan. Pakistani Army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa went to Russia on his official visit. During his trip to Russia, he met with a Russian defense official and held a bilateral meeting with his Russian counterpart. They inked many defense agreements with each other (Gul, 2019).

### **China-Pakistan Cooperation in Afghanistan**

Another important factor where it has affected India is the case of Afghanistan. This can be viewed in the context of China, Russia, and Pakistan. Russia and China have acknowledged Pakistani efforts in their fight against terrorism. Pakistan's counterterrorism efforts have reduced Indian influence in Afghanistan. For example, Russia, China, Pakistan, and Afghanistan have worked in a quadrilateral group for peace in Afghanistan. They met in Russia to discuss the peace process in

Afghanistan with the Taliban. India and the US are not members of this group. In the context of Afghanistan, China's collaboration with Pakistan has affected the Indian role in Afghanistan. On 27 December 2017, China, Pakistan, and Afghanistan's foreign ministers met in China for the first trilateral meeting held in Beijing. China and Pakistan offer to extend CPEC to Afghanistan for their economic and security benefits (Siddique, 2019). If this plan works and Afghanistan agreed on this offer, it would reduce Indian role further in Afghanistan. China's spokesperson of foreign ministry has said during a press briefing in Beijing after the trilateral meeting that Afghanistan is a joint neighbor of Pakistan and China and wanted to integrate into the economic structure. Both countries would welcome Afghanistan to become a part of CPEC to boost up their economy which is suffering due to the 17-year-old war against terror.

During the trilateral meeting held in Beijing, Afghanistan also endorsed its support for the ambitious Chinese project BRI. This Afghani move has minimized India's role in the future as India is trying to play the main role in Afghanistan to keep an eye on Pakistan. China's foreign ministry spokesperson said that due to Afghani support for CPEC and BRI, relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan would get a new boost up ahead. This could be a turning point between Afghanistan and Pakistan about their soured relations since 2014. Pakistan and China announced to help Afghanistan in social, health, and infrastructure sectors (Safi & Alizada, 2018).

### **Impact on India's Military Security**

The importance of military security remains one of the key questions for every state. States have considered military security vital to define their territorial integrity and respond immediately where the threats are emanating (Gul, 2021). Military security in the Indian strategic calculus has focused on China and Pakistan strategic projects where the construction of CPEC is of huge anxiety.

Gwadar port is a serious point of concern and contention for India. India's naval Admiral Suresh Mehta has said that the Gwadar port has been now a threat to Indian interests in the region. With the completion of CPEC, it might be a security threat for India in case of blockade of Karachi port which is carrying 90% of Pakistani ships. Moreover, the Indian naval chief had said that China may develop a naval base in Gwadar to escape from the US monitoring and could use against India in case of any conflicting situation (Fatima & Jamshed, 2020).

According to the Indian perspective, China would build a naval base and install a modern air defense system, engage in the military build-up and constant heavy petroleum storage depot at the Gwadar port. India has further revealed that China would develop a submarines-refueling system at the Gwadar port to threaten India (Ticku, 2020). In 1971, Pakistani supply was blocked by India, but now after the development of Gwadar port, experts have believed that such threat would be eliminated in the future (Banergee, 2020). From China's perspective, Gwadar would be a very suitable route for China's goods and commodities to reach out to Central Asia and Africa with full security. India disliked China's future trade through the secure route of Gwadar (Khetran, 2014). China has expanded its goods to Africa and Central Asia by using the Strait of Malacca, which is not secure due to Indian and US influence in the region (Mustafa, 2020). With the usage of the Gwadar, China's dependence on the South China Sea would become very low which would be not be viable for India.



Gwadar port would reduce Pakistan's security concerns to some extent in the region as Pakistan could easily watch India's move in the Indian Ocean. Pakistan would have an edge over India in the region with the help of China as India is a common threat for China and Pakistan. Ex-army chief Gen Aslam Baig stated that Pakistan was the only country in South Asia capable enough to contain the Indian growing influence in the region. China's help to Pakistan has further strengthened Pakistan. The most serious strategic concern for India has been Gwadar. Gwadar could be the other naval choice of Pakistan in case of any conflict with India. Gwadar port would also increase the socio-economic development of Pakistan. In April 2015, the national security committee of Pakistan permitted to buy eight submarines from China to improve its naval defense. Both China and Pakistan agreed on this deal. This was one of the biggest deals for defense purpose between China and Pakistan in the naval sector. China announced to go ahead with this project to keep an eye on the Indian activities in the region (Ansari, 2015).

Due to the changing international scenario such as emerging power centers where China's position is the most debated one, Pakistan would maintain a close friendship with this Asian power. This has led to a Power-shift from Europe to Asia. Against this backdrop, Pakistan's geo-strategic location compelled China to engage Pakistan in the region, because no other country can be trustable for China in the current scenario. With China's support, Pakistan formed friendly relations with China. Russia backed Pakistani bid for permanent membership in SCO on Chinese pressure (Nizamani, 2018). China also supported Pakistan's entry into the ASEAN Regional Forum (Rahman, 2004).

In 2016, during the BRICS summit held in Goa, an Indian state, Russia refused to mention Pakistan as a terrorist state in the joint declaration due to successful China's diplomacy. As Russia moved close to Pakistan, India was not happy with it (Bhatti, Waris & Muhammad, 2019). In 2017, Russia refused to cancel its first-ever joint exercise with Pakistan after the attack on the Indian camp in Indian held Kashmir (Slobodchikoff, & Tandon, 2017). India pushed Russia to cancel its joint exercise with Pakistan but failed.

CPEC would be of great security importance especially for Pakistan. In case of conflict between India and Pakistan, China would automatically support Pakistan due to its strategic interest. CPEC is some sort of surety bond for Pakistan's territorial sovereignty and integrity. China could not leave Pakistan alone after the completion of all the CPEC related projects. As CPEC passes through a disputed territory claimed by India, it has been the only reason for India to raise its concerns about the project. China has endorsed Pakistan's stance over the Kashmir issue. China offered its mediation in the Kashmir dispute, which has been the only barrier to the improvement of bilateral ties between India and Pakistan. China could not afford any risk about its investment in Pakistan. On several occasions, China asked both Pakistan and India to resolve their Kashmir dispute. China's strong involvement in Pakistan would pose a serious concern for India over its stance on Kashmir. China could also press the international powers to play their due role to resolve the Kashmir dispute (Verma, 2020).

### **India's Concerns on the Increasing Role of China in Pakistan**

Several times, India has accused Pakistan of providing space to China inside Pakistan's territory especially in Baluchistan. Indian defense minister A.K Anthony, on February 06, 2013, stated that China was encircling India by developing its strategy of "strings of pearls" in the region, while taking up control of Gwadar port was one of the aspects of Chinese strategy (Datt, 2013). Pakistani

defense minister Chaudhary Ahmad Mukhtar during his visit to China in 2011 along with Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gillani asked Chinese authorities to build up a naval base as an alternative route to Karachi. Chaudhary Ahmad Mukhtar raised security concerns with China and told them that Pakistan could use Gwadar port as an alternative route in case of supply shortage and stoppage of shipments as its shipments were blocked in the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971 (Bokhari & Hille, 2011).

India is worried about China's naval supremacy through Gwadar port and has believed that it would help Chinese expansions of the People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) in the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea where such a situation would jeopardize India's security from the Seaside (Lubell, 2015). Experts have believed that freedom of navigation has a great concern for India's security especially in the Indian Ocean (Lloyd, Gul & Ahmad, 2021). As China has been extending its influence in Pakistan and some other Asian states, India would automatically go out of the scene to fulfill its desire to become the hegemony of the region. Gwadar port would provide Pakistan and China's security in Central Asian states because of its connection with BRI. Within this context, Indian defense analysts feared that China's pursuit of a string of pearls strategy could encircle India by using states in Central Asia as well (Kaushiki, 2013).

Another factor that has worried India is China's expansion to India's orbit of influence to other South Asian states. Examples include: China has acquired different ports like the Sri Lankan port of Hambantota, Chittagong port, and Myanmar's Kyaukpyu port. China wanted to keep an eye on the trade route in the Indian Ocean and the Arabian Sea. Sri Lanka officially has leased over its strategic port Hambantota to China for 99 years (Hillman, 2018).

With the new investment of China in Pakistan in the form of CPEC, it has reoriented its policy for Kashmir with more attention towards its peaceful resolution. Within this context, China has favored both India and Pakistan to solve their bilateral disputes of Kashmir through dialogue (Chang, 2017). China asked Pakistan to give full autonomous status to Gilgit Baltistan. Previously, experts from China have desired to encourage Pakistan by giving a platform for discussion in the case of Gilgit province a representation in the National Assembly and senate. For example, the Advisor of Foreign Affairs to the Prime Minister who is also head of the committee that was making its recommendation about the future of GB, recommended a fully autonomous status to GB previously (Tariq, 2020). If India joins CPEC it would weaken the Indian stance over this issue. Indian think tanks already asked the Indian government to stay away from the Chinese project. India does not want to internationalize the Kashmir issue under current circumstances. India by reducing China's growing strategic interdependence has also changed its policy which has led to closer collaboration between India and the US. In this context, the next section highlights why India forged its strategic partnership with the US.

### **India-US Strategic Partnership**

The Indo-US strategic partnership means to promote India and the US economic cooperation and address common security challenges arising from China's ascendancy to power in Asia. At the core of Indo-US relations connote shared interests and common concerns are principal reasons when leaders in both sides successively engaged to forge a strategic partnership in the post-Cold War era. Correlates and dynamics of this partnership are shared interests including internal security issues and common interests are maritime security and the protection of vital strategic areas in a stable

environment around the Asian premises. This kind of Indo-US strategy is guided by complex interdependence. However, their strategic partnership is framed by realism when both Washington and New Delhi calculate their concerns about the transformation of the balance of power towards China in the Asia-Pacific region. B.M Jain argues that both Washington and New Delhi watch the rise of China in the Asian context where the latter have created security challenges. American and Indian policymakers clinched Indo-US strategic partnership with the announcement of Next Steps in Strategic Partnership in January 2004 (Ahmad et al., 2020). This step led to the defining of the real nature of emerging partnership in a Joint Statement between Indian Prime Minister Man Mohan Singh and the US President George W. Bush on July 18 2005 in the following areas as nuclear energy, Defense, high technology trade, missile defense, counter-terrorism, environment, and investment. The Indo-US strategic partnership was declared by both sides as a global partnership (Jain, 2016).

### **Economic Impact on India**

China announced its long-term economic plans for international trade through the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) of which CPEC is a flagship project. In this context, India has refused to be part of the Chinese plans citing territorial issues with China. Trade volume between China and Pakistan is increasing due to the construction of CPEC. Though India has not to trade deficit with China as compared to Pakistan, CPEC and BRI would have serious repercussions for the Indian economy. India is expanding its bilateral trade by cooperating and signing agreements with the US and Japan to balance Chinese growing influence in the region. Because India for its part has reacted that Pakistan may stop its oil supply which comes from the Arabian Sea and Indian Oceanside with the help of China. Karakoram Highway (KKH) is another strategic and economic route for Pakistan from China's side. KKH connected Pakistan with China by road. It is 1300 km long and people called it the 8<sup>th</sup> wonder of the world (Shah, 2017).

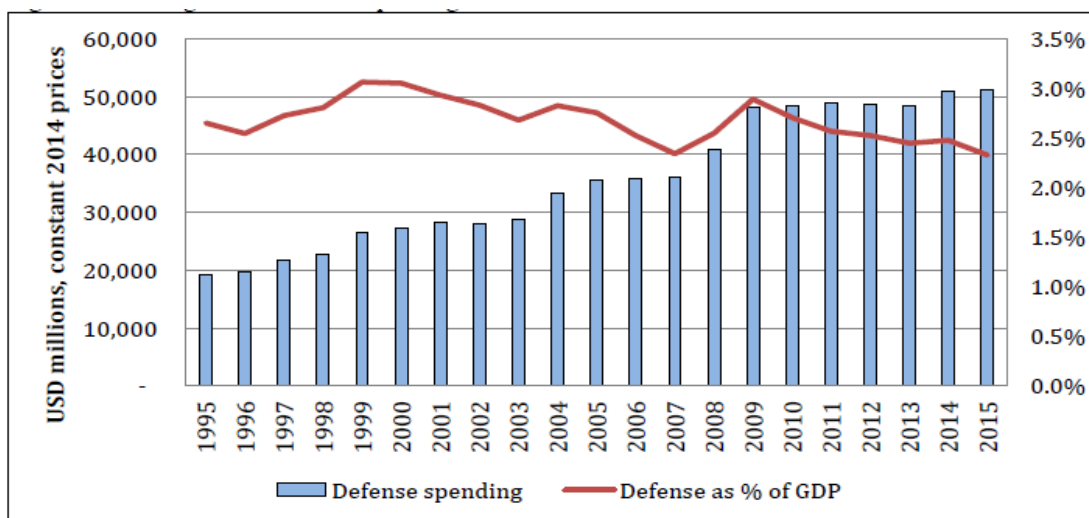
China is also pursuing its trade activities using KKH. KKH has a strategic advantage over India, like in the case of war with India. China could send its aid to Pakistan by using KKH in case of blockage from sea routes (Chaudhri, 1986). KKH linked Pakistan with the Chinese areas Xinjiang and Aksai Chin. To keep an eye on the region and its safety, both countries have set up military bases on KKH (Khoar, 2011). This route is also very pivotal for emergency use in case of an immediate threat from the Indian side. KKH took almost sixteen years for its completion of 650 km Khunjrab to Havalian. This road is also connecting KP with Gilgit. In 2006, China again agreed to renovate KKH to gear up the economic and trade activities especially for the entry of the heavy vehicle into both countries (Kreutzmann, 2009).

### **India's Counter-Strategies**

India has viewed China's closer strategic cooperation with Pakistan and Russia and other independent variables which have adversely affected its policy with South Asian states ranking from the shrinking role at the political, military, and economic domain since China's regional connectivity programs. India for its part has responded with different policy options. Among such options are strategic ties of India with rivals of China. For example, India invited the Japanese Prime Minister to India. Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited India on an official visit and signed 17 agreements with India. Japan is the only country that endorses the Indian stance about the Dokalam border issue with China (Jaishankar, 2018). Both premiers agreed to enhance their

strategic partnership to contain Chinese influence in the region. Indian foreign secretary Jai Shankar said during his press briefing that India and Japan have agreed to boost up their economic, maritime, and military cooperation. PM Modi and Abe agreed to find out alternative ways for CPEC and BRI in the Indo-Pacific region to contain Chinese flagship projects. Along these lines, India's defense spending has also increased. The figure below shows India's upward trends in military spending.

**Figure 3. Growing Defense expenditure in India**



**Source:** <https://www.stimson.org/sites/default/files/file-attachments/Military-Budgets-India-Pakistan-Trajectories-Priorities-Risks-Oct2016.pdf.pdf>

China's defense analyst has warned their government about a possible Indo-Japan defense agreement. India announced to include Japan in its Malabar naval exercise with the US in October. Chinese writer and Director Chinese academy of social sciences Lu Yaodong wrote in his article "Indo-Japanese cooperation dangerous for Asia" that both Japan and India are not happy with China's rise as an economic power and they get closer to each other against Chinese rise. India's defense minister Manohar Parriker visited Japan on his first overseas visit as an Indian defense minister. India inked an agreement with Japan to build the first-ever 500 Km long bulletproof train in India (Jain, 2019).

Economic thinkers believe that Indo-Japan growing partnership could equalize the China-Pakistan strategic partnership. The recently announced Japan-India strategic partnership is a point of concern for China as both countries are actively working to contain China. India is currently pursuing the policy of look east and go West in the Indo-Pacific. China has announced to take over Sri Lankan strategic ports. Hambantota, India, and Japan are announced to increase their cooperation with the shores of East Africa by using ISRO. They also announced that people would get more infrastructures with the entire Indian Ocean region as compared to China. The US, Australia, and Indonesia already extend their support for the promotion of security lanes of the South China Sea. They are also working to upgrade their maritime cooperation in the Indo-pacific region to keep an eye on China (Suzuki, 2020).

The Cooperation with a blend of competition is what the CPEC project highlights. Now, the intriguing dimensional analysis and the contemporary international developments highlight the national interests of all the participants individually at a debate, which needs to be aligned in an equation that sets regional cooperation and security at a proper set of measures for the drafting of further plans. The era of globalization and regionalization is another aligning parameter that is defining historic bilateralism in an entirely new light. However, what lies at the base of all the foreign relations and their compendium is that national interests in terms of economic strengthening are gaining immense prioritization. The projects like CPEC and BRI, if on one side are seen as a golden star-studded opportunity to marginalize the centuries-old animosity, also have an induced potency to strike the Indo-Pakistan competition at an even more complex and nettled angle. Followed by the military factor, the ground of Indo-Pakistan bilateralism is to get over even more competitive chalk that is likely to instigate antagonistic developments in the region. The need of the time is the pouring in of effective office at all the levels, political, economic meaning the entrepreneurial section (both the private and governments sponsored) and military to pour in their sincere efforts in a balanced and calculated way that can build up the state and the region positively and peacefully. The implications that the BRI initiative apparently categorizes is competitive that hinders India from joining the project, though there are other immense cooperative sit over of the offices and the opinions as well as in the SCO, SAARC, and many other significant forums, yet the competition prevails as seen in the context of India's buildup of Chabahar project in Iran. It is also very close to Gwadar port. Parallel to the ongoing Gwadar project, this is the nerve base of CPEC. Gwadar port can easily address Pakistani and Chinese interests in the region.

Through the development of the Gwadar port, Pakistan can watch Indian activities in the region. Indian naval capabilities were strong enough as compared to Pakistan before the development of the Gwadar port. The strengthening of the states, in term of development parameters, can cast a positive effect over the grass-root level, striking comparatively less developed and conflicted regions, with awareness and an understanding of the ongoing political and economic processes to help maneuver a positive change at the regional level, in terms of mass development. The strand of globalization with an obvious trend of a shift in global superpower status is opening up new horizons for forging cooperation in various regions and continents. This is, undoubtedly, based on an echelon of interests (self) maximization on comparative notions, yet is the mark on an era, where the interest, especially in the economic domain and comparative advantage, is to be translated as the chief components of foreign policy yet needs to be marked with far-sighted vision is the impact and implication of any such move on the direct bordering neighbors.

In the case of Indo-Pakistan bilateralism, a change of plan, in all the evolving trends of the pattern of interaction amongst states, the choking points must be dealt with amicable leadership at all the levels, be it political, military, or economic. The value of general mass understanding should also be added where the local community is equally equipped with an analytical understanding of the merits and demerits of all such sorts of bilateralism. Within this context, the CPEC will go far beyond its estimated index of yield and output. The international world order is arranged in such a complex way that despite having differences, states have to be pragmatic in the pursuit of their national interests. States should visualize a world of peace and cooperation rather than a world of competition that could lead to self-annihilation especially when states possess weapons of mass destruction. China-Pakistan strategic cooperation should seek to dilute the effects of Indo-US



strategic partnership, hence trying to maintain a balance of power in South Asia through diluting Indian hegemony in the region.

## CONCLUSION

The review of the above discussion indicates that the addition of CPEC as an independent variable in China-Pakistan strategic cooperation has increased Pakistan's strategic value for China. Consequently, China has supported Pakistan's stance on counterterrorism, facilitating its membership in an international organization such as NSG and regional organization such as SCO. SCO membership has improved Pakistan's strategic relations with Russia in the defense and economic spheres. These developments in China-Pakistan strategic cooperation particularly in the form of CPEC have affected South Asian states. The first impact is that it has minimized India's influence in South Asia. Within this context, the smaller states of South Asia are following the CPEC model and drifting towards China for investment in economic cooperation. This has led to India's shrinking influence in the region.

In response, India has developed its strategies to contain China's rise by developing a strategic partnership with the US and Japan and at the same time creating security threats for China's investment in Pakistan. Another impact is on China's involvement in Afghanistan where it supports Pakistan's positive role and building peace and opposing Indian involvement and influence. This China's greater dependence on Pakistan has spilled over effect on Afghanistan to join CPEC. Further, India and China have border disputes in Ladakh which are further intensified with the Indian decision of revocation of Article-370 and changed status of Kashmir.

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