



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Strategic Alignments and Rivalries: Analyzing the Sino-Pak Relations in the Phase of Indian Strategies**

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**ABSTRACT**

The objective of this paper is to explore the origins and early developments of China-Pakistan ties and the threats posed by India to the robust Sino-Pakistan cooperation. It also highlights India's strategic responses to the strengthening China-Pakistan alliance. The historical analysis of the China-Pakistan relations serves as a very background to the study of contemporary dynamics. The most visible aspect of contemporary economic collaboration is CPEC. It then analyzes Indian strategic responses to this alliance that include bandwagoning with the United States, participation in the QUAD, implementation of Act East and Look West policies under Narendra Modi. In this paper qualitative method of research is used which includes data from research articles, journals, opinions, books and websites. The study further examine changing power dynamics of the China-Pakistan nexus with Indian strategies. This paper proposes that diplomatic interactions, economic diplomacy and role of regional organizations will be worthwhile to reduce acrimony among these states.

**KEYWORDS** Changing Power Dynamics, CPEC, IMEC, India-Us Strategic Alliance, Sino-Pak Relations

**Introduction**

Sino-Pak nexus began in 1950. There are many factors which strengthen the China-Pakistan relations. First, Pakistan supported "One China Policy" and in return it received diplomatic backing from Peoples Republic of China (PRC). However, China not only diplomatically helped Pakistan but also give military assistance to Pakistan without entering in war. Because of the remarkable journey that has united both governments in a solid cooperation, China and Pakistan are referred to as "strategic partners." The multifaceted bilateral relationship is built on collaboration in the areas of diplomacy, society, the economy, and military. India, one of the top 5 economies in the world, chose policies that threatened the strategic and economic relations between China and Pakistan. India is countering different projects of China-Pakistan specifically CPEC because of the Chinese investment in Pakistan in different areas which can help in build up Pakistan's economy. Therefore, to hinder Pakistan-China strong ties India has started to develop counter strategies and policies. India has adopted numerous strategies which include its robust nuclear, military and economic ties with USA. Under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP, the Indian Look West Policy sought to counter the flagship CPEC project under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) by strengthening strategic and economic ties with Middle Eastern nations through various projects such as the Indian-Middle East-European Economic Corridor (IMEEC). Furthermore, India is also involved in Proxy Wars in Pakistan's province Baluchistan which is posing a serious security threat to CPEC (Shah, et. al., 2020; Yaseen, et. al., 2017)

## **Literature Review**

The alliance between China and Pakistan is known as an “all-weather friendship” in the common parlance, which is based on historical political, military and economical linkages. Andrew Small (2015) and Muzaffar, et. al., (2018) investigated this relationship comprehensively the strategy behind this partnership, mainly to counterbalance Indian clout in that region.

The article, “China-Pak strategic nexus: its implications for India” by Jayadeva Ranad looks at the enhancing collaboration between China and Pakistan in terms of strategy and military which pose a great threat to India. The backbone of their partnership is China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)—a major component under China’s Belt and Road Initiative that has buttressed the two countries’ military and economic ties since 2015. For India, this collaboration is an example of prospective dual-front war. The growing military cooperation entails jointly developing strategic assets such as Gwadar port besides enhancing military presence that showcases Chinese regional ambitions together with its employing Pakistan as a countervailing factor against India. Also, China-Pakistan nexus does not only challenge Indian territorial sovereignty but also its position as a regional power thus demanding a concentrated strategic response from New Delhi. Siegfried O. Wolf’s (2018) paper elucidates the strategic aspects of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), suggesting that the project is not only an economic endeavor aimed at consolidating China’s dominance in South Asia.

In reaction to the developing Sino-Pak alignment, India has diversified its strategic options. As a deterrent to Chinese influence, India is interacting with other major international powers and regional players through platforms like as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad), which comprises the Japan, Australia and United States. (Muzaffar,et. al., 2017; 2020). Additionally, India’s navy and economic strategies, together with army modernization, Act East and Look West Policy geared toward strengthening ties with Southeast Asian and Middle Eastern countries to mitigate Chinese influence.

India is likewise engaging in a sustained proxy war aimed at destabilizing Pakistan, specially through support for the Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA) and different separatist organizations, and interfering CPEC.

## **Material and Methods**

In order to complete this research article, I used a number of data collection approaches. I primarily used the deductive mode of analysis to deduce data from descriptive research. In this research research paper qualitative method of research is used. Qualitative research methodology includes data collection from research articles, journals and different websites and also includes supplementary comments, interviews, explanations, opinions and explanation from persons of various schools of thoughts.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **China-Pakistan Relations: Historical Analysis**

The Sino-Pak nexus essentially began in 1950. The first Muslim nation to acknowledge the People’s Republic of China as an independent state was Pakistan (Pathak, 2021). There are many factors which strengthen the China-Pakistan relations. First, Pakistan supported “One China Policy” and in return it received diplomatic backing from Peoples Republic of China (PRC) on different issues like Kashmir issue and later on the Bangladesh issue. In 1962 border tensions between China and India escalated which leads towards the Sino-Indian War of 1962. This war of 1962 also paved a way for the good relations between China and Pakistan. During India-Pakistan war of 1965, Pakistan was

despondent when US posed an arms embargo on Pakistan. However China not only diplomatically helped Pakistan but also give military assistance to Pakistan without entering in war. In 1970s both the states developed military as well as nuclear cooperation.

In the year 1990-2001, three events emphasized the importance of China's support for Pakistan. these incidents includes:

- Clash of the 1990s between India-Pakistan at LOC
- 1999 Kargil war
- And the stand-off in Kashmir in the after effects of 2001 Indian Parliament attack

High-ranking Chinese officials visited Pakistan following each of the aforementioned conflicts to guarantee the continuation of China and Pakistan's complete cooperative alliance, which includes military and assistance cooperation (Hassan, 2017-2018).

Pakistan and China have reached a high degree of agreement over the expansion of mutually beneficial defense and strategic cooperation after the 9/11 attacks. The most crucial aspect of ties between China and Pakistan has been their defense cooperation. China gave Pakistan help in the area of missile technology as well. China and Pakistan have stronger nuclear ties and increased their nuclear cooperation since the 2008 collapse of the Indo-US nuclear pact. Pakistan's sole ally in difficult times is China, that has assisted Pakistan in developing its own defense industry, transferring nuclear technology, and providing high-tech equipment (Yaseen, et. al. 2023; Khan, & Ahmad, 2015).

#### **Current Dynamics of Sino-Pak relations:**

Due to Pakistan's advantageous geographic position, Beijing has access to alternative routes for the supply of gas and oil from the energy rich Persian Gulf area (Hafez Muhammad Javed , Muhammad Ismail, 2021).

In recent years, China and Pakistan have concentrated particularly on their economic ties. Pakistan was among the first countries to sign up for the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). In its first six years of operation, the BRI trial project, CPEC, promised tangible outcomes. It has, first and foremost, helped Pakistan bridge its continuous energy deficit. Pakistan was losing more than US\$4 billion (\$5.38 billion) due to this gap before the CPEC. A number of major energy projects have been constructed at a record-breaking pace in line with Pakistan's ambition to diversify its energy mix, and more are in the pipeline. Chinese companies have installed super critical technologies in coal-based power plants to lessen environmental pollution (Khalid, 2021).

**Table 1**  
**Projects under China-Pakistan Economic Corridor**

<b>Project</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Location</b>
1320 MW Coal-fired Power Plants at Port Qasim Karachi	Coal Mining	Port Qasim
720MW Karot Hydro-power Project, AJK/Punjab	Hydro-power project	AJK/Punjab
Peshawar-Karachi Motorway (Multan-Sukkur Section)	Transport/Infrastructure Project	Punjab/ Sindh
Gwadar Smart Port City Master Plan	Port	Gwadar, Baluchistan

Development of Port and Free Zone	Economic Zone	Gwadar, Baluchistan
Rashakai Special Economic Zone	Economic Zone	Nowshera, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP)
Engro 2x330MW Thar Coal Power Project	Coal Mining / Power Plant	Thar-Block-II, Sindh
Surab-Hoshab (N-85)	Highway	Surab to Hoshab, Baluchistan
Zhob Quetta (N-50)	Motorway	Zhob to Quetta, Baluchistan

**Source:** Sacks, D. (2021, March 30). The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor—Hard Reality greets BRI's signature initiative. Council on Foreign Relations. <https://www.cfr.org/blog/china-pakistan-economic-corridor-hard-reality-greets-bris-signature-initiative>

Ministry of Planning, Development & Special Initiatives "P" block Pak-Secretariat, Islamabad, Pakistan. (n.d.). Transport Infrastructure Projects under CPEC | China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Secretariat Official Website. <https://cpec.gov.pk/infrastructure>

China and Pakistan witnessed slowdown of this flagship project due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Pakistan's economic development was impacted by the COVID-19, estimates state that the pandemic nearly stopped the country's economic growth. Government initiatives include remote-working which made people work from home because of the fear of the virus spreading. Ultimately, it caused supply chain issues for businesses because of government restrictions which had a negative impact on companies that had to perform on-site work related to the CPEC (Dr. Mubeen Adnan, Reema Murad, 2023).

But now those impediments have been removed and China-Pakistan Cooperation is witnessing enhanced cooperation in different economic projects. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif Visit to China from June 04-08, 2024 bring new opportunities for Pakistan. PM Shehbaz and President Xi exchanged views on regional and global developments. Furthermore, CPEC phase II was their major concern and they reaffirmed the consensus for high-quality developments, upgradation, and timely completion of major ongoing projects which works under the umbrella of CPEC.

## Indian Strategies

### India bandwagoning with the US

Pakistan shifted its balance towards China in response to increasing US-India military partnership. India under Prime Minister Manmohan Singh and US under President Bush declared that the alliance was an inherent result of their shared interests and beliefs. As the US and India collaborate on global issues, there appears to be a broad convergence of interest regarding potential threats in the global arena, and the rise of China as a proactive, extra regional actor in South Asia due to its superior economic, technological, and military capabilities (

Two countries signed different strategic, military and security agreements:

- Defence cooperation act in 2005,
- Maritime cooperation Agreement in 2006
- Civilian Nuclear Cooperation Agreement of 2008
- QUAD

Two biggest democracies of the world India and USA came closer with each other after the tumultuous years of relationship during cold war in which US was aligned with Pakistan and India covertly aligned with USSR although they announced the policies of non alignment but still tilt was evident. Relationship between two countries improved in the era, of Clinton and legacies was continued by the different presidents relations deteriorated in the Era of Obama but then again stabilized when trump, came into power and then Joe Biden continued the policy of engagement with India which was pursued by Trump during his era. US support for India is unprecedented either it is the case of India's nuclear tests or the issue of nuclear supplier group in which India clandestinely used peaceful atomic energy for the violent purposes or it is the issue of the permanent seat of India in security Council US had always supported him. As US supremacy was distinctive in the global sphere in recent past so it is in the favor of Indians that they should maintain cordial relations with the US.

India is creating nexus with US against the Chinese influence through different forums i.e. QUAD. **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD)** is a group of four countries U.S, India, Japan and Australia initially formed in 2007 but recently in 2017 it was revived. QUAD act as an counterbalancing strategy against China's growing influence in Indo-Pacific and South Asian region. Through CPEC project China will gain access to the Indian Ocean that is the matter of concern for regional and global powers. Accordingly, the Quad might be interpreted as an indication of the US and India's readiness to respond more assertively against China's growing influence through different projects under BRI specifically CPEC (Ed Griffith, Moises de Souza, 2022).

### **India's Look West Policy under Narendra Modi**

The "Look West Policy" of Prime Minister Narendra Modi has been instrumental in fortifying India's relations with the Middle East. In 2018, during an address in London Central Hall Mr. Modi stated that,

"Yes, I will go to Israel and I will even go to Palestine. I will further cooperate with Saudi Arabia, and for the energy needs of India I will also engage with Iran." This suggests that Prime Minister Modi's India is committed to deepening its engagement with West Asia. Before the *Look West Policy* India has adopted *Look East/ Act East Policy* as a counterbalance China's influence. Likewise Act East policy, a similar tactic is intended to be implemented in West Asia via the "Look West" initiative.

The India-Middle East-Europe Corridor that was announced during the 2023 G20 Summit holds significant potential for improving trade, investments, and economic integration while also encouraging cooperation among the member nations in a number of areas. Additionally, India gains a geopolitical edge from this Corridor, which increases its influence from the Middle East to Europe (Dhyeya, 2023).

As a calculated move to undermine the CPEC, the IMEEC project was created. India is developing strategies to undermine geopolitical advantages made possible by China and Pakistan's collaboration through IMEEC. This corridor has successfully balances the hegemonic force that Beijing has imparted via CPEC and the Belt and Road Initiative, which greatly boost China's strategic influence over South Asia and the Indian Ocean area.

Along with providing a solid and stable economic base, IMEEC will effectively counterbalance the Sino-Pak axis and strengthen India's geopolitical power through its deep connections with Middle Eastern and European countries.

### **Necklace of Diamond Strategy**

As an alternative to Beijing's "String of Pearls strategy", New Delhi has embraced the strategic offensive theory of war, which holds that attack is always preferable than defense.

In an effort to strengthen its military ties and influence, China is building naval outposts as a "String of Pearls" in different states including Pakistan. Changi Naval Base in Singapore, Chabahar Port in Iran, the Assumption Islands in the Seychelles, and Duqm Port in Oman make up the "Necklace of Diamonds" (Yaseen, et. al., 2023; Vidhi Bubna, Sanjna Mishra, 2020). Regarding strategic alignments and rivalries, India's "necklace of diamonds" policy has significant ramifications for the Sino-Pak relationship as well as the growth of the Gwadar Port. India hopes to advance both maritime security and regional stability in the Indian Ocean area by wooing states such as Iran, Singapore, and the Oman. This calculated action aims to weaken China's influence in vital maritime choke points and highlights obstacles to the strengthening of China-Pakistan cooperation, especially in the area of infrastructure development like the Gwadar Port. Furthermore, India is forging close connections with Vietnam and Mongolia in an effort to thwart China's "String of Pearls" tactic. India's allies are thus probably weaker than China's.

### **Indian policies to Sabotage CPEC**

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a game-changer, a radical step toward an enduring strategic partnership between China and Pakistan, a catalyst for an economic revolution in Pakistan, and an engine for advancing regional economic prosperity. In an era of resource constraints, direct foreign funding which for projects under the CPEC increased from \$46 billion to \$62 billion as of 2020 unquestionably offers Pakistan's best opportunity to date to reverse the effects of missed opportunities in the past, start down the path toward sustained economic growth, and change the nation's economic profile. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a key component of China's goal to revitalize the ancient Silk Route and have convenient access to the Arabian Sea, therefore expanding its economic interests worldwide. It unquestionably ensures a win-win scenario for the nations as well as the whole region (Rahim, et. al., 2018).

However, regrettably, some nations, including India, see this much-needed economic boom to be an abomination. India grabs each chance to sabotage Pakistan's attempts towards peace. Envy for the fascist Modi government stems from the expansion of the Pakistani economy and investment opportunities. Pakistan has experienced difficulties from India in the past. The blinding desire of India is to govern the region. New Delhi's imperial aspirations pose a grave danger to the peace and stability of the region (Pakistan, 2021).

There are significant attempts underway to undermine its execution. As recently disclosed by the EU Disinfo Lab, India has launched a persistent effort to defame Pakistan and is actively working to undermine the initiative. It is by no means content to allow any opportunity to harm Pakistan's endeavors pass. Not only has Israel not responded favorably to Pakistan's attempts to start a new chapter of friendship and peaceful resolution of their differences, but it has persisted in its confrontational approach of undermine Pakistan's interests at all costs.

As to media sources, RAW has established a unique desk with the aim of undermining and impeding the execution of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Pakistani intelligence has collected credible evidence to support this claim.

The project is personally overseen by the RAW chief, who reports to the Indian Prime Minister. Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, during his visit to China, has reportedly expressed concerns to the Chinese President about Chinese investments in Pakistan under CPEC.

The Corridor passes through a disputed area (Gilgit-Baltistan), which is why it is important to India. It is worth noting that the Asian Development Bank, one of the sponsors

of the Diamer-Bhasha Dam, was reluctant to produce documentation supporting its commitments after India lodged complaints about the same issue.

RAW has been utilizing Afghan land to support and encourage cross-border terrorism as well as the insurgency in Baluchistan. It is common knowledge that RAW, TTP, and the Afghan intelligence service are connected. Terrorist training camps and havens have been established on Afghan territory by RAW. Pakistan has persistently brought up the issue of these camps' dismantling with the Afghan government, arguing that they are being used to carry out and encourage acts of terrorism across Pakistan, destabilize Baluchistan, and threaten the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) (Muzaffar, et. al. 2020).

It is unfortunate that the Indian management is pursuing a sabotage strategy at the behest of her strategic allies who are determined to prevent China from becoming the world's preeminent military and economic force, which is ultimately doomed to fail, rather than realizing the advantages of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) for the region, including India itself. India's long-term interest hence lies in giving up its hostile stance against Pakistan and its attempts to undermine the CPEC.

The strategy employed by RAW to undermine CPEC appears to be to incite acts of terrorism that worsen Pakistan's security conditions and, as a result, foster a culture of hopelessness among the populace. It is important to remember that after Pakistan and China signed agreements to start CPEC projects in Pakistan, the number of terrorist attacks in Baluchistan and other regions of the country increased dramatically.

It wasn't just a coincidence that the Ismaili community in Karachi was massacred on May 13, 2015, the day the Chinese leadership and the general public were invited to a briefing on the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Instead, it was a carefully planned operation aimed at raising concerns about public safety and the viability of enforcing the proposed projects. All of this seemed to be a link in the same chain that coincided with Modi's visit to China and his discussion of the issues with Chinese authorities.

TTP and Daesh, who are believed to have ties to New Delhi, used to claim credit for this incident. The recent wave of terrorist attacks in Baluchistan and KPK also bears the imprint of Indian participation. There was no question regarding Indian support for the insurgency in Baluchistan and its sponsorship of terrorist activities within Pakistan following Kulbhushan Jhadav's arrest and admissions. In March 2016, Jhadav confessed while being detained by Pakistani law enforcement in Baluchistan;

"My purpose was to hold meetings with the Baluch insurgents and carry out terrorist activities with their collaboration,"

Another aspect of the US-India cooperation intended to undermine the partnership between China and Pakistan is undermining the CPEC. A concerted effort has been launched to cast doubt on the viability of the CPEC and Pakistan's likely benefits. It is important to remember that China and Pakistan have repeatedly requested that India join CPEC and contribute to the region's shared economic growth, as outlined in the objectives of Chinese President Xi Jinping Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

The "One Belt, One Road" initiative asks for cooperation with the countries that border the route in order to upgrade infrastructure, which is necessary for any state to prosper sustainably. A significant step toward providing partner countries with the capital they require to improve essential infrastructure so they may participate to the shared financial prosperity and see the project through to completion was also taken by China with the establishment of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB). The yearly trade volume between China and the "Belt and Road" states is expected to surpass \$2.5 trillion in

the next two decades, bringing about a significant shift in the political and economic landscape of the world (Ashraf, 2021).

### **Conclusion**

The Sino-Pak nexus has evolved from historical cooperation to contemporary strategic alignment, particularly highlighted by the ambitious economic corridor under CPEC. India, cognizant of this growing alliance, has crafted a multifaceted strategy aimed at mitigating its strategic challenges. Firstly, India has pursued a policy of bandwagoning with the United States, participation in QUAD, and bolstering its Act East and Look West policies under Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Over the years, the Sino-Pak nexus-the alliance between China and Pakistan has changed. Originating in past collaboration, it has evolved into a modern strategic alignment. One of the primary draws of this partnership is the expansive economic corridor i.e. CPEC. India has developed a multi-pronged approach to tackle its strategic difficulties, cognizant of this expanding coalition. To begin with, India has made the decision to stand in solidarity with the US by taking part in programs such as the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD). Furthermore, under the direction of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has been bolstering its Act East and Look West initiatives.

Moreover, the Indian-Middle East-Europe corridor (IMEEC) initiative of the Modi Government has been put into action to counter CPEC. Additionally, India has been charged with using its intelligence organization, the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW), to wage proxy warfare in Baluchistan. Such tactical responses aim at undermining strategic and economic cooperation between China and Pakistan. India's actions testify to its determination to protect its interests in this region and parry the supposed onslaughts of the CPEC. But there are too many variables involved in the process of how India's policies impact China-Pakistan relations. Much as China and Pakistan's relations might be momentarily assailed by India's attempts, the sound foundation of their alliance which is based on shared economic interests and common geopolitical imperatives has largely remained unaffected. Also, both China and Pakistan, going through the period of experiencing outside challenges of their strategic alliance, have displayed elasticity. Looking ahead, India will have to dynamically readjust the plans since the factors are evolving at the global level also. A fine balance will have to be struck between firmness and diplomatic engagement for the protection of interests and furtherance of stability in the region.

Finally, the Sino-Pak cooperation is a too-hot-to-handle pressure for India, and hence, it requires a carefully thought-out and flexible strategy to negotiate the complex web of strategic alliances and rivalries in South Asia. Fundamentally, their long-held friendship indicates that real disturbing factors are not likely, even if India's realpolitik behavior complicates the Sino-Pak relationship. India must thus choose a balanced approach that will determine its future in order to safeguard its own strategic interests while promoting regional cooperation.

### **Recommendations**

India should began diplomatic interaction with both China and Pakistan for the sake of regional growth and stability. The economic diplomacy will be proved fruitful for alleviating acrimony among these countries. Second, India should explore economic outcomes by joining BRI and CPEC. Moreover, CPEC has the potential for regional integration which eventually reduce differences among the nations. Third, these three states can be involved in a regional dialogue under the auspices of regional organizations like SCO.

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