



CHINA, PAKISTAN AND INDIA: A PERILOUS SAGA

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Abstract:

The deadly triangular relationship between India, Pakistan, and China is a ticking time bomb in the heart of Asia, threatening the stability of the region. This strategic triangle is characterized by a complex web of interests, rivalries, and insecurities that have far-reaching implications for the region's politics, economy, and security. China's growing influence in the region, particularly its all-weather friendship with Pakistan, has raised concerns in India, which views China's expanding footprint as a challenge to its own aspirations for regional dominance.

This research article will delve into the intricacies of this triangular relationship, analyzing historical events, conspiracies, and the impact of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) on the region. The paper will examine the economic implications of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) for India, and explore avenues for peace, reconciliation, and peaceful coexistence between the three nations.

Through a comprehensive analysis of the political, economic, and security dynamics at play, this article aims to provide a deeper understanding of the complexities of the India-Pakistan-China triangle and its implications for regional stability. The research will also offer policy recommendations for fostering greater cooperation and stability in the region, and suggest ways to address the challenges posed by this deadly triangle.

Keywords: China, India, Pakistan, CPEC, Deadly triangle, Border dispute.

1. Introduction:

India, China, and Pakistan are the primary drivers of regional complexity in Asia. Their perplex equation represents the vulnerable trajectory of their strategic ties. Constituting different nexus leads to more thwarted status quo in the region. China-Pakistan's nexus against India is responsible for many evident developments in South Asia. This trilateral equation tends to be extraordinary in wider geopolitical landscape. This research paper will initially dissect the historical overview of their trilateral relations, but in bilateral form categorically.

- **Sino-Indian Relationship: The Tangled Animosity**

The above-mentioned countries are two of the world's ancient civilizations now in a more



modernized spectrum. Each has grown through the mantra of survival and flourish through the centuries against unlimited odds. This civilization has been the most impactful and influential for other Asian civilizations, as they had daunted and impacted their civilization. Both civilizations had long superiority of strategic advantage, statecrafts, diplomacy war, and empire. In fact, the most astounding ancient book, "The Art of war" had written by these two civilizations. The Chinese perspective of International Relations, somehow make resemblance with Indian perspective. While dissecting the Chinese perspective, one can find that it was purely built on concentric circles extending from the imperial capital to the barbarians via variably dependent nations and it shows resemblance with Indian mandala (circles), as demonstrated in Arthashastra, which elucidates that any immediate neighbor of any monarch or statesman, is their natural enemy. While the king or statesmen beyond that enemy could be their natural ally. (Malik, 2009)

The slow expansion towards the west under Mongols and Qing dynasty resulted in the occupation of some portions of Tibet and some parts of Central Asia (Xiangjiang). On the other hand, India's inception or Indo-Pak partition resulted in wrecked strategic unity, which dates to the Maurya Empire. In 1950, Tibet had occupied by China, which brought two nations together geographically and accumulated the thaw. India's inception and the Chinese expansion allowed China to propagate its superiority and influence in the region, where historically China had never been in a robust form.

Sino-Indian relationship got strained after the fully escalated war in 1962 based on border dispute and another brutal confrontation in 1967 and 1987. Several reconciliation rounds have been failed to sort out this matter. Accords were signed to maintained tranquility and preventing confrontation. However, all efforts had been failed to resolve the wrangled claims and these dilemmatic commotions have further sour their relations. Some guiding principles were also set by the authorities for settlement in 2005. Nevertheless, China's revisionist policies and assertiveness led to the enhancement of assaults on Arunachal Pradesh in 2005. This further ignited the public protestation and enmity. Evidently, China has giant fear of India's power or robust position in the region. In their opinion, larger territorial concessions can declassify China's role in regional marathon. China's notion is on the return of Tawang (birthplace of sixth Dalai Lama).

One of the unnoticed historic events took place in 2006, after approximately forty-four years, reinstate the Nathu La in the eastern Himalaya that connects the Tibet (China) to Sikkim (India). Several top-notch hierarchies from both sides witnessed the removal of fences between both countries by the soldiers. This unusual decision of reinstating the world's highest custom post braced the apotheosis of rapprochement between India and China. (Khanna, 2007)

They had a prospect of allowing the tourist to use Nathu Lal and to rejuvenate their traditional, cultural, and old ties. The pass provided a safe route for China's Buddhist to Sikkim for religious purpose and for India's Hindus for visiting sacred places in Tibet. Since 2007, China and India have also built the economic bridges. The restoration of Nathu la is mostly nominal because it had



allowed only few substantial elements for trade. However, it also signified the restoration of proximity between Asia's fastest growing Economy. (Narain, 2023)

Apart from this past progress, country around these two giants have become a battleground for their confrontation to encircle each other. Intentional hiring the proxies to contain each other have become the corner stone of their strategic policies. China has managed to deeply dive into the India's tactical backyard – from Sri Lanka to Bangladesh and from Burma to Nepal. In 2010, some Canadian scholars shed light on acute cyber threat from China to India. Cyber spying had done systematically to invade the information from the top-notch Indian institutions. (Chellaney, 2010) Apart from the above quarrels, Sino-Indian perplexity also based on water disputes. Water disputes also exacerbate their larger territorial and political rivalry. The Himalayan rivers are an essential source of water for both countries. Whose water resource are being stressed due to fast economic expansion and over population. The Brahmaputra River is the most valuable and significant water resource they share, and it also traverses their disputed boundary. China has a considerable edge over India as the higher riparian. Despite an existing hydrological data sharing agreement, it withheld hydrological data from India during the Doklam impasse. China has announced plans of building hydro power in 2020. The part of the Brahmaputra nearest to India elicited intense reactions from the Indian side. These initiatives were announced when their bilateral relation was at the lowest and weakest points. (Ho, 2021)

After the border clashes between India and China, China blocked the flow of Galvan River for Indian need. Which traversed the Aksai Chin to Ladakh in India. Indian Sholars put allegations on China for politicizing and weaponizing water in their tension. This tension further got increase due to low level institutional cooperation from both sides.

- **Sino-Pakistan Relationship: All Weather but Neutrality based Friendship:**

Pakistan and China are all weather allies in the Asian geopolitical umbrella. Since China's foundation in, Pakistan has always been considered the nearest and dearest ally of China. Pakistan was also among few countries, who initially gave recognition to China's independence. In 1951, both countries started their bilateral diplomatic ties. Their relation was and still cordial and on a positive trajectory. China didn't express deeply, but it never agreed and liked Pakistan's presence in west sponsored pacts i.e., SEATO and CENTO. China has never disapproved the insecurity and dissatisfaction of Pakistan regarding India. Pakistan has also given moral and consolidated support to China in times of need i.e., Pakistan didn't vote against China in United Nation's General Assembly, when China intervened in the Korean War to safeguard its security interest in that region. While China had been given a tag of aggressor and assertive nation, but this event further intensified their inclusive and exclusive bilateral relations. In pragmatic and systematic analysis of proximity and rivalry between states, this theory is highly acknowledgeable that the commonality and shared perspectives between depends upon their common enemy and that common animosity leads to the exemplary cooperation between them. India is a common hostile entity for both states. It is an absolute matter of fact that Pakistan's policies are revolve around



India's question, most probably Pakistan have Indo-centric attributes in their strategies. (Rashid, 2017)

China and Pakistan have always conventionally given importance to each other for containing and deterring India's influence in the region. As according to some technocrats, "For Pakistan, China is a low-cost primary deterrent to India. In contrary, Pakistan is a high-cost secondary deterrent to India for China. (Afridi and Bajoria, 2010)

China's military presence and assistance to Pakistan has irritated the Indian notions. Beijing's Pakistan supportive policy haunts the New Delhi's ability of altering the wider regional influence. China and India fought a major war in 1962 and that repercussions put Pakistan in a beneficial position. This conflict proved to be the watershed movement in the East-South Asian history. China's arms supply to Pakistan, military exercises, and joint tactical ventures consequently, kept India out of political balance and got indulge in vulnerable hysteria. Following the impositions of American sanctions in 1990, Pakistan's all weather became the key supplier of arms to Pakistan. That's mean Pakistan is in dire need of China more than China for Pakistan.

The two nations have collaborated on a few large-scale infrastructure projects in Pakistan, including roads, gold and copper mines, huge energy projects and electric power plants, and multiple nuclear power projects. One of the major or internationally recognized project between Pakistan and China is China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a multibillion project. Which potentially possess severe implications for India. Although, since 2013 this project has witnessed numerous ups and down and authorities from both sides try to revitalize the policies associated with China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). (Rafiq, 2017)

- **India-Pakistan Relationship: The All-time Foes**

Relation between India and Pakistan has always been stagnant and had wider space towards proximity and peace. The land of pure or garrison state (Pakistan) and the most celebrated democracy (India) have fought three major wars with unwavering repercussions. Both shared a critical and complex history. Apart from three major wars in 1965, 1971 and 1998, several temporary clashes and confrontations have been faced by both archrivals. Not just the higher governmental pyramid, in fact the public opinion has also been traumatized attitude since inception of both countries. Fundamentalism, fanatic elements, radicalism, ultranationalism, blame game and religious cards played by right wing parties have further aggravated the misunderstanding between both nations. History of both nations have plagued by failed negotiations and reconciliation for mitigating the animosity. (Shaheen. et.al., 2023)

Animosity between both nations have ingrained the nuclear conundrum in the South Asian region. Any escalation in their hostility can trigger a nuclear holocaust or nuclear flashpoint in South Asia. The asymmetrical relation and enduring conflict between them possess some critical nuclear concern for those having the geopolitical clout in the international arena. (Carranza, 1996)



Right after India's nuclear test (Pokhran) on May 11, 1998, all veto holders in United Nations discussed on how to punish and restrict India and to restrict Pakistan from nuclear test or processing nuclear plans. On the other hand, seeing huge public demand and hysteria in Pakistan, Nawaz Sharif the then Prime Minister of Pakistan, decided to launch the nuclear test on May 28, 1998. Later, authorities declared to launch nuclear warheads. Former President Bill Clinton of United States of America and the whole international arena disapproved and condemned Pakistan's nuclear test. However, China gave a minimal criticism to this act. As per the sanctions policy, different developed countries halted their aid to Pakistan. Even the World Bank and International Monetary fund were advised to freeze the loans to Pakistan. President Clinton wanted to drive a worldwide major sanction policy for India and Pakistan, some major countries denied being a part of this. (Johnson, 2023)

Despite being in a closely intact enmity, both countries share cultural and societal affinities. The garrison state, who has been focusing only on military superiority over its rival India, also share some kind of peaceful gesture through culture diplomacy for the rehabilitation of their relations. In 2019, both nations exchanged unconventional airstrike after Pulwama attack in Indian administered Kashmir. Which was later accepted by infamous militia group (Jaish-e-Muhammad). Indian and Pakistani media played a vital role in shaping public opinion and narrative during whole crisis. India's retraction from article 370, further ignited the situation and abrupt the tranquility between both nations. India and Pakistan can never use nuclear bomb in any situation because it can result in mass regional casualties and catastrophic condition. Regardless of deteriorating relations, some faction of both countries tries to bolster the relations through people to people contact. Amidst the political affray, their rich historical affiliations still bind them together. Distinguished initiatives have been taken to explore the avenues of peace between them i.e., Kartarpur Corridor. (Saha, 2020)

2. CPEC or Sino-Pakistan Nexus: Is It a Serious Implication for India?

Over the decade, the Sino-Pakistan nexus projects a grievous threat to India. Their severe strategic and territorial interest has been amalgamated with the ambitious China Pakistan Economic Corridor. This progression also allows China to play a pivotal and influential role in Kashmir. That's why, this plan tends to be the potential threat to India. Since 2010, Pakistan is the only all-time tested ally and all weather truly friend of China. Their relationship often described by different scholars as, "sweeter than honey or jaggery, deeper than the sea, and higher than the higher mountains." (Ranade, 2021)

Right after the 2015, CPEC has brought different geopolitical metamorphosis in the region. Initially, it was the first flagship project of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to get operationalized. Their economic development and military capabilities are intertwined. Since the announcement of CPEC in 2015, India's nervousness is on its peak. India considers this project as a more aggressive and contentious plan to abrupt and shift the regional order. Apparently, this assertiveness is getting



more evident after seeing Beijing's national strength progress which is quite comprehensive. After the revival of China and United States of America's fault lines in 2018, China is truly and evidently confident to confront Uncle Sam's cunning agendas. China's Xi has set numerous national policy agendas as well, which strives to reinvigorate the giant Chinese civilization. Another implication for India is that India perceives CPEC as Xi's clandestine tactic to recover their claimed territories namely, Sikkim, Aksai Chin, Ladakh, Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir. China's national strength making it more aggressive towards border dispute i.e., China's wolf warrior diplomacy. Xi's third term has further instigated India's trauma. For deterring China, United States of America is also standing at the Indian front. However, China still maintains the undeterred posture even after the Nancy Pelosi visit and overall Taiwan's saga. Communist Party of China trying all hard to infuse the citizens with ultra nationalism, CPC's monopoly, reinforcement of party's comprehensive agendas on a wider range. Nevertheless, apart from giant CPEC ambitions, China is also trying to convey its unfathomable interest worldwide through its geotechnology mantra.

In contrast, Pakistan's interest is relatively low scale. Pakistan being a garrison state, firmly supports the CPEC. The military institution seeking the advantage by bolstering partnership with China's military institutions. Even the opposition couldn't be able to undermine this partnership. Partnership with China is kind of life saving drug for Pakistan. With the increase of huge investment in Pakistan, Chinese influence also reciprocate with this aid.

China's string of pearls is another major implication for India. The Indian Ocean region politics could be a viable option for China to restrain India. CPEC's well emphasized structure regulates the crucial aspects of Indian Ocean politics. China seeks to control and connect with the states in Indian ocean region with the tool of CPEC. Thus, wants to consolidate its economic, political engagement for intensifying its presence in the region. CPEC tends to be risk reverse tool for driving China's geopolitical interest and for achieving power status. India has several times declare objections and elucidate the risk prone attitude of China bringing a lot of repercussion for India with CPEC tool. (Gill, 2019)

However, the credibility and reliability of CPEC is still a big question on major geopolitical canvas. Recently, Pakistan and China celebrated the 10th anniversary of China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Tenth anniversary of CPEC raised numerous questions on its credibility and functionality. Pakistan has failed to complete its Special Economic Zone, the backbone of CPEC. Pakistan has failed brutally to realize the real worth and potential of CPEC. (Rana, 2023)

Pakistan's ad hoc policies, political turmoil and handicapped economy is a major reason behind the fractured CPEC. It is troublesome to anticipate the future of CPEC and stake of China in it. The ambition of CPEC was quite massive, but Pakistan failed to execute this ambition successfully. The misery of CPEC sends the good news to India and Uncle Sam. As per contemporary Fragile CPEC, China and Pakistan can never project dreadful implications to India. In fact, CPEC has



provoked some severe domestic fault lines in Baluchistan, which have the higher potential of disrupting the law-and-order situation CPEC-centric province. (Fazl-e-Haider, 2023)

3. India's Organizational Engagement: Exclusive Tool to Deter Sino-Pakistan

To encircle China and Pakistan, India has been engaged in different regional organizational blocs. India has put itself on certain trajectory to counterbalance China's assertiveness. India is doing well for mitigating its strategic headache by being a member in numerous organizations such as Quads, Indo-US alignment, and many other regional experimental blocs. (Khan, 2023)

India is regarded as the hollow and fragile link to Quads, focusing solely to deter Sino-Pak pattern, reluctant to make firm military alliance to eliminate wider conventional threat. While understanding the intricacies of its weak link, it solidifies the need of preventing the multi-polarity challenges and evaluating the sole focus on individual's credible interference. However, the presence of like-minded actors in the organization allows India to pursue its flexible policies for gaining regional power status. India has one imperative position to tackle China's influence in the region collectively through other member's support. Additionally, through securitization, India can also engage other Indo-Pacific nations for similar cause. Quads helped India to maintain pressure on China by calculation the risks. (Malhotra, 2023)

India has also Look East Policy (LEP), which get rebranded as an Act East Policy. The altering world order after Soviets disintegration instigated India to adapt this kind of foreign policy. LEP has brought a significant shift in the geopolitical landscape. This shift in India's foreign policy gave India a new identity. The Act East policy enables India to extend its political and economic ties with the Southeast nations to counterweigh China. (Tanveer, 2023)

To counter China's String of Pearls, India has come up with a contrary strategy, necklace of diamond, which narrates that offence is the best defense. This policy is also known as counter-containment or encirclement policy. This policy intends to extend the Indian naval bases and formation of alliances with strategically imperative nations to contain China. Indian foreign ministry claimed that they are doing whatever can protect their interest. If China is expanding their port facilities, so India is working to cultivate its naval cooperation with all giant stakeholders in Indian Ocean region. (Tanveer, 2023)

Apart from all above-mentioned policies, India has also contributed on Chabahar port. Which is a potential hub of international trade in major geopolitical marathon. This port is considered as a building block for bolstering India and Iran's relation. (Tanveer, 2023)

4. Probability of Tranquility Between China, India, and Pakistan:

The road to rapprochement between these nations is quite thorny. India is in a more dangerous



situation because it is probably facing the two front challenges- China and Pakistan. Because of the diverse characteristics of the acute hazards presented by two totally dissimilar opponents, China and Pakistan, India lacks adequate responses to the potential of a full-fledged war on two fronts at the same time. Any escalation with one of these countries can distract the geopolitical blurry image towards each other. To undermine this power gap, India looked upon global powers for preserving their territorial integrity. Which in return intensifies their grievances. (Singh, 2021) However, sustainable peaceful resolution is imperative for regional stability. To eliminate the paradoxical dilemma between this triangular relationship, economic connectivity is necessary. Three of these countries can engage in different dialogues and negotiations for peaceful coexistence. These nations need to cut off their bone of contention through pragmatic and rationalized ways. Extensive framework is requiring drawing workable peace process and cooperation. For boosting peace, these nations need to avert the structural violence through consolidated measures for conflict resolution. These nations need to identify the contradictory factors which entangled the relationship between them. Along with identification, these countries can also propagate the soft power approaches for tranquility. These nations need to be flexible enough for accommodation altering in regional dynamics in their foreign policy. (Sultan, 2023)

5. Conclusion:

The trilateral relationship between India, China, and Pakistan is a complex and multifaceted one, with each nation having its own interests, concerns, and motivations. While China and Pakistan have historically had a close relationship, India has viewed China's growing influence in the region with suspicion and concern. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) has further heightened tensions between India and China, with India perceiving it as a threat to its regional influence and security.

However, it is important to note that the relationship between India, China, and Pakistan is not simply a zero-sum game. There are areas of common interest and potential cooperation, such as trade, economic development, and regional stability. Moreover, the three nations have a shared history and cultural heritage that can be leveraged to build bridges and foster greater understanding.

Ultimately, the key to a peaceful and stable relationship between India, China, and Pakistan lies in finding a balance between their respective interests and concerns. This can be achieved through sustained dialogue, diplomacy, and cooperation on issues of common interest, such as economic development, regional security, and environmental protection. By working together, the three nations can create a win-win situation that benefits all parties and promotes peace and prosperity in the region.



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