

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC): A Threat to India's Border Security

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Abstract

India has been averse to the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) since its initial launch in 2013 because one of the core components of the initiative, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), is perceived as violating the country's sovereignty and territorial integrity. This article discusses the geostrategic execution of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is viewed as a threat and constraint to India's security. The article further analyses the perception of the Indian government towards the forged alliance between China and Pakistan. Along these lines, this disquisition explains the knowledge of how infrastructural techno-political regimes shape the threat towards Indian security. It does so by building on an analysis of India's security strategy on China-Pakistan relations through the initiative of CPEC. The infrastructural techno-political regime of CPEC is discerned as a securitised threat by the Indian government. Infrastructure technology produced by CPEC promotes a securitised discourse of connectivity, flow, and territorial control as a cause of regional tension, national rivalries, unnecessary competitiveness, terrorism, and sovereignty issues. Simultaneously, other political entities might view the same regime as a border security threat.

Keywords: China – Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), India's border security, Economic integration, Regional stability, Geostrategic security

1. Introduction

China and Pakistan have a strong ally in the region as a result of their shared animosity for India. China is well-known as a powerful state and big power politics (Huda et al., 2022), but its geopolitical location that links with various partners makes it a perceived threat to India. China had always effectively constrained Indian ambition to emerge as a global power. This balance-of-threat logic was evident in 1998 when Defence Minister George Fernandes famously asserted the China and Pakistan relations as a threat to India (Scott, 2008).

In recent times, India's concerns about China and Pakistan's coordination and efforts concerning the border issues with India have risen. Infrastructural techno-political regimes are growing all over the world. One such system is the Chinese One Belt One Road (OBOR) initiative, which aims to establish transnational ties between over 65 nations in Asia, Africa, and Europe. OBOR's flagship project is the US\$62 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). India, a neighbour of Pakistan and China in South Asia, is one of the few nations that has not ratified the OBOR. Instead, India has consistently raised security concerns about the CPEC since its inception.

The CPEC projects have immeasurable implications for the Indian security strategy. India has long been restless by China's relationship with Pakistan. K. Alan Kronstadt, a specialist in South Asian affairs, stated that Chinese support for Pakistan is "a key aspect of Beijing's perceived policy as a means of preventing New Delhi's ability to challenge Beijing's region-wide influence" (Kronstadt, 2009). The geographical proximity of the three nuclear-armed countries wherein any military standoff is perceived as having the probability of a nuclear or two-front war against India (Tourangbam, 2020). China's growing military capabilities, defence modernisation, and increasing role as a development and security partner to Pakistan and other states in India's neighbourhood agitate India (Tourangbam, 2020). The partnership between both countries serves the interests by presenting India with a potential two-front theatre in war with either country (Garver, 2001).

2. All-weather Friendship between China and Pakistan

China and Pakistan are quoted as all-weather friendship relations (Syed, 1969). China's conflict with India has been essential to its strong relations with Pakistan (Chandra, 2016). The friendship between the two countries is based on respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter and the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence (Deepak, 2006). China and Pakistan established diplomatic relations in 1951. Since then, China and Pakistan have experienced strong political and military relations (Kayani et al., 2013). The frequent exchange between China and Pakistan strengthened the ties between both states (Rais, 1977). China's neutrality on Kashmir, the growing economic and military links between China and India, extremism and terrorism in China's Xinjiang province, and the Chinese preference for exporting to Pakistan rather than importing from Pakistan are all factors in China-Pakistan relations.

2.1 *The Forged Alliance between China and Pakistan*

India, Pakistan and China relations are entangled in a complex unresolved border dispute

history. Military confrontations at the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and the Line of Control (LoC) occur recurrently. The 1962 Sino-Indian war and the United States-Russia support to India led the Chinese overtures towards Pakistan as a South Asian regional counterweight to India (Singh, 1981). After the 1962 India-China war, China and Pakistan became closer by signing the boundary agreement. The agreement provides control to the Chinese of disputed Kashmir territory. Since then, Beijing has developed a diplomatic relationship with Pakistan and extensive economic ties and offers military weaponry to Pakistan.

Overall, it has been rightly observed that China's policy toward Pakistan is "an object lesson in how to attain long-term national goals by calculation, forbearance, and diplomatic skills" (Burke, 1973). Pakistan is a low-cost secondary deterrent to India, whereas Pakistan is a low-cost secondary deterrent to India for China (Haqqani, 2005). Pakistan is an apprehensive state that has worked tirelessly to ally. Pakistan initially allied with the United States (Venkataramani, 1982), with Muslim nations of the world (Burke, 1974) and later with the People's Republic of China. The only logic behind the such strategy, given from 1947 till today the existential threat posed by a larger and stronger neighbour, India.

The India-Pakistan conflict is explained by neorealism as a result of the South Asian international system's structure. The gross power imbalance between India and Pakistan imposes constraints on both countries, but primarily on Pakistan. This disparity also implies that India has a larger margin for error, whereas Pakistan can afford to make no mistakes. As a result, trust in Pakistan is a relatively scarce commodity. Pakistan's mistrust and fear are unrelated to specific Indian policies or even leaders' occasional insensitivity.

Similarly, it has little to do with specific disputes or their resolution because fear of India trumps all other concerns. Pakistan has a long list of issues, ranging from Kashmir to the Indus River, the Indian military build-up following the 1962 war, and nuclear weapons development. As a result, Pakistan is motivated by fear to maintain a stable balance with India.

The consequence of Pakistan's balancing efforts has been conflicted with India. Pakistan's balancing efforts were met with scepticism in New Delhi, with political leaders claiming that such measures were unnecessary. Pakistan is accused of amassing military power far beyond its legitimate needs and bringing the Cold War to South Asia by inviting foreign powers to the region. These are credible allegations, given that each of the three conflicts was started by Pakistan rather than India and that Indian terms for ending the hostilities have been consistently favourable. Nonetheless, such criticism fell short of addressing the fundamental power imbalance in South Asia. Pakistan was not responding to specific Indian threats but rather to this imbalance (Rajagopalan, 1999).

Both countries mostly cooperated at the political and military levels. At present, both countries have extended their relationship in all aspects, including social, economic and cultural exchange relations. The following sections discuss the nature of the nation's relationship and how China and Pakistan can sustain it.

2.2 China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

The growing China-Pakistan axis reveals Asia's emerging geopolitics and realignment of the forces. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) brings a dimensional shift in China-Pakistan economic and geopolitical relations. The project is a nodal part of China's ambitious Belt and Road Initiatives that connect China to Europe, the Middle East, and Africa (Hussain, 2017). The initiative is devised to reconfigure China's external sector to continue its strong growth. This route will succour China in the promotion of trade and other financial initiatives. Many experts believe that these initiatives will focus on the Chinese trade and economic cooperation and create Chinese economic hegemony at the world level (Wagner et al., 2016).

Although infrastructure development plays a central role, the Belt & Road Initiatives (BRI) is a comprehensive infrastructure development plan that includes policy dialogue, unimpeded trade, financial support, and people-to-people exchange (Huda & Xinlei, 2022). Under China's BRI project, there are six core economic corridors which are China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor, China-Indochina Peninsula Economic Corridor, China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor, New Eurasia Land Bridge Economic Corridor, and China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor (Aoyama, 2016).

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is one of the Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI) mega infrastructure projects focusing on developing roads and other transport infrastructure. The connectivity of the CPEC project has become a game changer for both countries. By connecting China to the Indian Ocean, the CPEC will enhance the economic and political ties between China and Pakistan (Small, 2015) and influence South Asia's geopolitics (Barber, 2014). Karakoram Highway and Gwadar port can be described as the symbols of Sino-Pakistan friendship that, on the one hand, offer both the country's economic opportunities and, on the other, can be used for strategic purposes. Other commitments such as Official Development Assistance (ODA) and Outward Direct Investment (ODI) also can offer various economic opportunities (Huda, 2018).

The development of the CPEC has been meticulously planned such that Pakistan will emerge as an economic nexus for the entire region. This infrastructure project will improve the connectivity inside the country and around the neighbouring countries in the future.

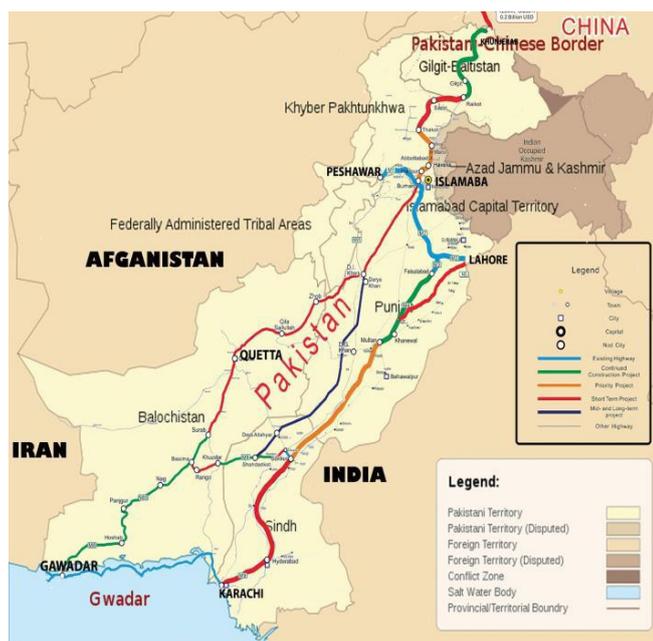


Figure 1. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) Routes

Figure 1 shows the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) various infrastructure development projects that pass-through Pakistan's regions since 2013. Pakistan's land resembles a corridor connecting China to the Arabian Sea, and it has the potential to serve as a link between China and the rest of the globe (Paracha, 2016). CPEC projects aim to rapidly upgrade Pakistan's infrastructure and strengthen its economy by constructing modern transportation networks, energy projects, and special economic zones (Hussain, 2015). CPEC aims to connect the Port of Gwadar in southern Pakistan with the northwestern Chinese area via a network of railways, roads, and pipelines for the transportation of gas and oil to create wealth and boost economic growth in both Pakistan and China.

The development project begins with road connections via the Pakistan route. The roads are aimed to be completed first, allowing the flow of people and goods to stimulate economic vitality and bring regional connectedness to completion (Weidong, 2017). The corridor in Pakistan will be unleashed to increase traffic linkage from north to south after significant projects such as the second-phase upgrading of the Karakoram Route and the highway from Peshawar to Karachi are completed. The port of Gwadar has been fully restored to capacity. The CPEC intends to fully utilise the Gwadar Port, which is located alongside the Strait of Hormuz in Pakistan's Baluchistan province. Modern transportation networks built under CPEC will link seaports in Gwadar and Karachi with northern Pakistan and points further north in western China and Central Asia (Shah, 2015). A large section of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor also lies through the areas of Gilgit-Baltistan in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK), which some analysts in India have protested (Business Standard, 2015).

Initially, India vehemently opposed corridors' development during the Musharraf era. India realised that the CPEC project would mainly pass through the disputed territory of Azad

Kashmir (Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir). However, the CPEC issue is yet to resolve between China, India, and Pakistan. The changing regional environment in Pakistan must be stopped, as it will lead to instability in the region without a proper resolution (Singh, 2015). The Indian government are aware of China and Pakistan's threat through high infrastructure development through the borderline. To a certain degree, upgrading the Karakoram Highway imposes a high-security threat to India's border security.

2.3 Karakoram Highway (*The Karakoram Rail Corridor*)

The Karakoram Highway was a major joint venture between Pakistan and China that was completed in 1978. The roadway was constructed through Pakistani territory illegally ceded to China. The highway was built through the formidable Karakoram-Himalayan Mountain range, which significantly changed the strategic landscape that links both regions favouring China and Pakistan. The Karakoram Highway is being rebuilt and upgraded as part of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) and is fundamental to the port of Gwadar's economic growth.

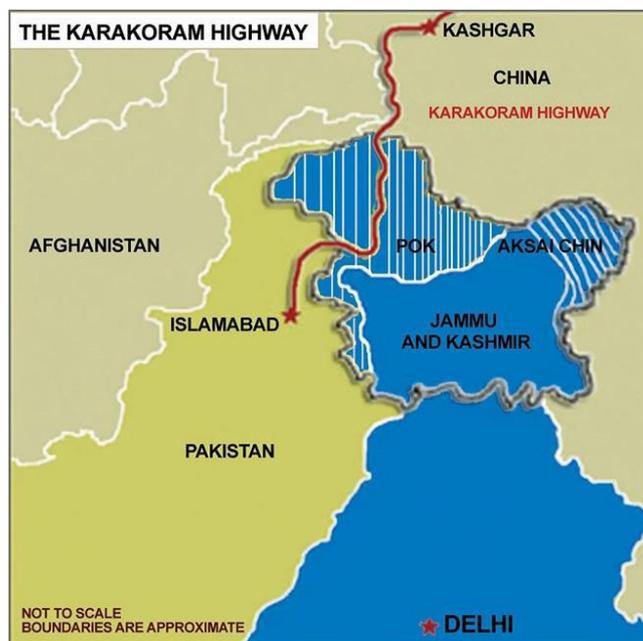


Figure 2. The Karakoram Highway

Figure 2 illustrates the Karakoram Highway routes that linked the capital of China province, Xinjiang, with Kashgar, which connects Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) to the North of Islamabad (Keesing, 1979). The highway was built through mountain terrains and has rightly been claimed as "the Eighth Wonder of the World" (Ali, 1978). The Sino – Pak 1963 agreement laid the foundation of the Karakoram highway, which was built jointly by the Chinese and Pakistani in the 1970s. As a part of China and Pakistan relations, the Karakoram Highway was undertaken "over the roof of the world" (Singh, 1981). The constructed route serves as a vital land link between Xinjiang, Tibet and Pakistan.

From an economic perspective, the built highway shortens the journey and facilitates trade between two remote areas of China and Pakistan. In terms of political strategy, Karakoram Highway's objectives outweigh the economic and commercial considerations. The former Deputy Prime Minister of China, Keng Piao, stated that the road opened new eras of friendship. In his speech, "*Whatever the international uncertainties, Pakistan's Chinese government will remain a strong ally in developing and defending the country*" (The Tribune, 1978). However, India does not support the Karakoram Highway project built through the administrated territory. It is considered a major security threat imposed by China and Pakistan. The former Indian Minister of External Affairs stated that the development of the Karakoram Highway has serious strategic implications for the region, notwithstanding the illegality of the construction (India Lok Sabha, 1978).

Despite the economic and political objectives, China took advantage of Kashmir's disputed issues between India and Pakistan. The Chinese military activities in Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK) have increased since the inauguration of the Karakoram Highway. China has a massive military built at the main axis of the Himalayan that connects the Karakoram range. China has also invaded Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK) by building a few camps operated by the Chinese soldiers along the Karakoram Highway (Singh, 1981). The 1963 border settlement with Pakistan and the construction of the Karakoram Highway might provide an alibi for Chinese military intervention in the event of settlement over Kashmir, which was parallel to China's strategy (Singh, 1981). Thus, the Chinese military strengthened its defence over India along Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK).

In recent years, the Karakoram Highway was upgraded to the Karakoram Rail Corridor, which falls under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project. The corridor provides a large extent of access and connectivity to the Indian Ocean and the energy-rich Persian Gulf. Modernising regional transportation infrastructure will facilitate improved connectivity between South Asia and the Central Asian Republics, exposing China's border to the region's growing security issues. China made some significant investments in constructing the Karakoram Highway, which runs across the disputed Indian-Pakistani border (Chansoria, 2015). The infrastructure project was built upon the existing Karakoram Highway passing through Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (PoK) and therefore invading Indian sovereignty and core interest.

3. India's Perspective on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor

The infrastructure development under Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI) benefits both China and Pakistan. China and Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) focuses on the significant development of road, energy and other infrastructure projects. The Chinese project development proves that the infrastructure building occurred along India's disputed territory, Kashmir. India, another significant stakeholder in the region arch-rival of Pakistan, has raised reservations about the project, mainly as CPEC passes through Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (POK). However, the backdrop of landmark planning for CPEC shows China's intention for India's border security.

Kashmir has been disputed since India and Pakistan were formed in 1947. The three nations

have a shared part in the de facto regimes, which are India (Jammu and Kashmir), China (Aksai Chin), and Pakistan (Azad Kashmir and Northern Areas). India has persistently refused to acknowledge either Pakistan or Chinese sovereignty in Kashmir. The situation becomes complex with the infrastructure development in the disputed territories. India has continuously opposed the Belt and Road Initiative ideas as it is believed to be a unilateral project concerned with the Chinese National Security plan. The Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI) projects were carried out without the concern of other countries, which is considered a challenge to each country's sovereignty (Panda, July 2021/Interview).

India has a valid reason to oppose Belt and Road Initiatives (BRI), formerly known as One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiatives. These BRI projects consist of many national security elements, which are considered disrespectful to the sovereignty and security of other countries (Panda, July 2021/Interview). The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is one of the most congested BRI corridors. The CPEC corridor affects India's historical claim on Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Gilgit-Baltistan. The Chinese project development is also considered to disrespect India's current sovereignty over Jammu and Kashmir (Panda, July 2021/Interview).

India's preceding Prime Minister Manmohan Singh stated, "*India remains committed to its objective of joining any strategic and cooperative relationship that prioritises regional peace and prosperity; maintaining cordial and amicable relations with neighbours, and exhibiting shared trust in general-particularly in regions where our ambitions are sensitive.*" (The Economic Times, 2014). However, both China and Pakistan have repeatedly rebutted Indian objections. Deputy Director-General of Asian Affairs Huang Xilian stated while dismissing Indian claims that China understands the concern of the Indian side. The Chinese infrastructure development does not contain political aspects but ensures a good life for the people. The Deputy Director-General firmly stated that China has no profitable action in that part of the region (Panda, 2016). Well aware of the potential downsides that any great country encounters during this crucial period, China has always paid attention throughout its growth as a regional or global power to the terminology used to describe its changing role in the international system.

4. China – Pakistan Defence Cooperation

Defence Cooperation between China and Pakistan since the Bandung Conference in 1955, Chinese and Pakistani leaders have emphasised their countries' commitment to each other's core security interests. In order to counter Indian power in the region, the state plays a pivotal role in China and Pakistan relations. These include bilateral military cooperation between countries, from naval cooperation to past nuclear assistance, arms sales, and combined military and anti-terror exercises. The Pakistani Army has received military equipment from China on a large scale. The Chinese have helped Pakistan establish ammunition factories, providing technical assistance and modernizing existing facilities since 1962 (Afridi. et 2010).

In the early stage of the cooperation, Pakistan joined military alliances such as the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) and the Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) to secure

the nation from India's threat. Pakistan assured China that it would not take part in any action against China in any situation. Pakistan and China became indispensable defence partners due to the geopolitics of the 1960s. Historically, both countries' cooperation was deepened after the Sino-Indian border clash of 1962 and the war between Pakistan and India in 1965 (Malik, 2016). During India-Pakistan 1965 and 1971 wars, China assisted Pakistan through military, diplomatic and economic aspects. China notably played an essential role in supporting Pakistan in this crucial time as the Indian side acted aggressively. China, at that time, exerted pressure to force India into a ceasefire. With this, China has repeatedly warned India to take responsibility for the consequences of its unlawful and prolonged assault (Hafeez, 2018). Considering India's aggressive action, China issued a strong demand for India to avoid using the Sino-Indian border as an advantage point for military installation within three days or face the grave consequences arising thereon (Hafeez, 2018).

With collaborative projects ranging from fighter jets to guided-missile frigates, China has surpassed the United States as Pakistan's major defence supplier. In a deal worth more than \$6 billion, China provided Pakistan with its most advanced indigenous combat aircraft, the third-generation J-10 fighter jet. It is an excellent future for Pakistan's national defence industry (Krishnan, 2009). There are also negotiations between the two countries about Islamabad purchasing six new submarines. Though Pakistan is accommodating the Chinese space communication station in Karachi, Beijing assists Pakistan in building and launching satellites for remote sensing and communication (Mohan, 2007).

Likewise, China played a prominent role in developing Pakistan's nuclear infrastructure. The Chinese helped to build the Khushab reactor, which plays a crucial role in Pakistan's plutonium production. A subsidiary of the China National Nuclear Corporation supplied 5,000 custom-made ring magnets to Pakistan's attempts to improve its uranium enrichment capabilities, which are an essential component of the bearings that allow centrifuges to rotate at high speeds. China has also provided technical and material support in completing the Chashma Nuclear Power Complex and plutonium reprocessing facility, which was built in the mid-1990s. Pakistan, with the Chinese, has developed a total of 2332 MWe operating nuclear capacity and 1100 MWe (World Nuclear Performance Report 2021, n.d.). These stations will be built under the International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA) supervision.

Recently, under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), more military cooperation has been taking place to ensure the safety of the Chinese workforce and Chinese-assisted projects all over the country from Gwadar to Khunjerab. With growing security threats in the region, Pakistan and China have strengthened security-related military cooperation over the past couple of years. The presence of the Chinese military in Pakistan-occupied Kashmir's Gilgit-Baltistan region, ostensibly to repair and upgrade the Karakoram Highway, has enormous implications for Indian security (Harison, 2010).

4.1 China and Pakistan Perspective on India's Security Strategy

China and Pakistan discovered a common enemy, which became the foundation of their all-weather friendship. At this point, China's and Pakistan's interests converge. Both countries rely on one another to neutralise India's conventional military strength and avoid challenging

Chinese claims on the global stage (Majmudar, 2007). China and Pakistan, however, were unable to succeed since India is regarded as an ethical international player. Under the current prime minister, Narendra Modi, India has become much more robust and assertive in handling the Chinese intrusion on the border (Singh, July 2021/Interview).

India is no longer the passive nation it once was. The implementation of Articles 370 and 35(a) and the claim on Gilgit-Baltistan tensed China and Pakistan relations. The former Pakistani President Mohammad Ayub Khan stated that India has a hegemonic design. The Pakistani government believed India would not reconcile with the Jammu and Kashmir partition. This statement was vehemently opposed by the President of the Indian National Congress, Mr Acharya Kripalani. He declared that neither the Congress nor the nation had given up its claim of a united India (Khan, 1967). The recent statement made by Amit Shah in the Indian parliament (Lok Sabha), "I want to make it clear once again that J&K is an integral and inseparable part of India. There is no doubt over it, and there is no legal dispute on this," Amit Shah said in Lok Sabha" (The Economic Times, 2019). The abrogation of Articles 370 and 35 (a) and the claim of Gilgit-Baltistan raise the insecurity of China and Pakistan. Taylor Fravel, a Chinese specialist, stated that India's decision to make Ladakh a Union territory and take back Aksai Chin substantially impacted how Beijing viewed India in resolving the dispute issues. The decision to abolish and claim the Indian territory may have culminated in the Ladakh standoff (TheEurasianTimes, 2020).

The Narendra Modi government has become more assertive and transparent with its actions. According to (Nathan, July 2021/Interview), the Indian prime minister, Narendra Modi, made a bold move by abolishing Articles 370 and 35(a) at the right time. Since the Kashmir issue is solved, India will have more sources to support its defence on the India- China border (Nathan, July 2021/Interview). In the border region, India recognised the possibility of rising extremism and Chinese aggression (Singh, July 2021/Interview). India had administered the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir entirely. Under the union territory, India has a smooth functioning defence force and security in Ladakh (Singh, July 2021/Interview). China and Pakistan were not pleased with the abolishment of Articles 370 and 35 (a). Both countries share a mutual objective which is to weaken India. However, it is not achievable due to the current strong nationalism Indian government.

The current prime minister, Narendra Modi's victory in the 2019 election, caused the government to focus more on India's Defence Policy, especially against China and Pakistan. India realised the importance of reforming the border security strategy to withstand the Chinese military aggression or perhaps two-front war. The state border security strategy under Modi's government is going through a robust transformation after two consecutive standoffs and clashes with China. Modi's government is much stronger with the relationship between the United States and Russia and involvement in Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (Quad). The transformation under Modi's government poses a stronger Indian position vis-a-vis China and Pakistan.

Nevertheless, India's strong position in defending its sovereignty made China and Pakistan realise that India is no longer a weak state. India's security strategy under Modi's government

has been enhanced and strengthened to curb further intrusions from China and Pakistan. It appears that any change in the Indian security strategy will have to be implemented gradually over time. Thus, increasing anxiety over India seems to bring us much closer to overcoming the aggressiveness of China-Pakistan relations.

4.2 India's Security Strategy on China-Pakistan Relations

India is constantly apprehensive about China and Pakistan relations. The territorial dispute between the two countries becomes a major impediment. Interestingly, China and India have friendly relations but face border disputes and competition as emerging Asian economic powers. These constraints have increased mistrust, with China-Pakistan relations creating a rivalry with India and countering its influence. These ties may be regarded as a threat by India. The history of India's relations with China and Pakistan shows there have been a lot of essential rivalries, bilateral distrust, and suspicion (Javaid & Akhtar, 2017). Hence, the relations between China and Pakistan brought high repercussions on India's security.

The collusive threat from China and Pakistan had existed for an extended period. The Chinese economic cooperation with Pakistan, sovereignty issues on Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir, and continued military and diplomatic support mandate by the high levels. Pakistan is the biggest importer of Chinese military equipment, especially high-end platforms like fighter jets, main battle tanks, submarines, and crewless aerial vehicles. The Belt and Road Initiative's China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) initiative has solidified the geopolitical partnership. The collusive threat already exists and does not demand an active physical deployment of soldiers and extra military hardware from India.

As a result, New Delhi's primary concern is combining military threats from China and Pakistan. India should not remain in a reactive mode to the Chinese provocations and should overcome the intrusion by strategising border security to defend its country's sovereignty. Since the asymmetry limits India's options concerning China's overall national strength, it must rely on realpolitik. India considered conquest a viable state strategy that was a vital state strategy for survival in defensive alliances against predation. India's security strategy is built based on the principle of non-alignment. The military strategy must be built on self-reliance, regardless of the value given to it.

India is well-known for its strategic culture of emphasising non-alignment policy. While the rise of China has shifted the global balance of power and its aggressive intrusion on the India-China border, India will continue implementing its non-alignment tradition. A particular state-level factor widely believed to implement essential effects on state security behaviours is the strategic cultures of different countries. However, under Narendra Modi's government, it seems impossible to value its strategic sovereignty over becoming an ally with any world power. India should forge partnerships with global powers such as the United States or the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (QUAD) to overcome the Pakistan and China threat. In this context, India continues to prioritise internal balancing, which preserves its strategic interdependence rather than choosing to bandwagon or balance itself with other countries. India does not want to trap China and the United States entanglement (Singh, July 2021/Interview). However, the situation depends on the Chinese aggressiveness on the border

(Singh, July 2021/Interview).

Since the 1962 war, India had well-developed in terms of national defence capabilities. India's military is strong than it used to be (Krishnan, July 2021/ Interview). India has sufficient ability to counter both Pakistan's and China's border incursions. During the 1965 India-Pakistan war, India successfully defeated Pakistan, and a similar scenario applied during the clashes with China. However, the conflict between Pakistan is different as the boundary between India, and Pakistan is much more defined than in China (Panda, July 2021/ Interview). India-Pakistan border issues are much defined due to sovereignty issues over Jammu and Kashmir. Pakistan's attempt to seize Jammu and Kashmir has not been successful with India's abolishment of Articles 370 and 35(a).

India's strategic implication weakens Pakistan, which nation could no longer claim India Administrated Kashmir based on the referendum (Nathan, July 2021/Interview). However, the Chinese infrastructure development along Pakistan's territory requires the Indian government to avert future conflicts. According to China, the scrapping of Article 370 and the partition of Jammu and Kashmir into two union territories have threatened Pakistani and Chinese sovereignty and dramatically worsened the complexity of settling the border issue (Deepak, 2021).

Pakistan's intent and China's ambitions have boosted India's border security strategy process. India continuously improves its border infrastructure, linked to the national security and economic plan (Panda, July 2021/Interview). India's Border Road Organisation (BRO) is a crucial national infrastructure-building organisation responsible for carrying out the border infrastructure. However, India's infrastructure development is not optimum vis-a-vis Chinese border infrastructure building. The Chinese infrastructure building is superior to India's (Panda, July 2021/Interview).

Despite the Darbur-Shyok-Daulat Beg Oldie Road (DBO). The Bharatmala project under the current government of India aims to upgrade national initiatives and national security infrastructure (Panda, July 2021/Interview). The Bharatmala Project is an infrastructure development of railway and road connectivity from Maharashtra and then covers the entire string of Himalayan territories, Jammu and Kashmir, followed by the portions of borders of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar to West Bengal, and end with the Indo- Myanmar border in Manipur and Mizoram (The Economic Times, 2015).

With all of the above factors, India's ability to deal with domestic and external challenges will enable India to reach a new equilibrium with China and Pakistan and resolve the disputed border issues (Deepak, 2021). In dealing with the China-Pakistan threat, Modi's government appears far more forthright and formidable than the previous Indian government. However, India should prioritise upgrading the country's defend system and border security strategy to overcome the possibility of Pakistan and China's two-front war.

5. Conclusion

India lives in a mainly hostile world, and alliances with other countries are not secured. China and Pakistan's relations, known as an "all-weather friendship", are underpinned by mutual

geopolitical and historical concern for India. Mainly, the country's disputed borders with Pakistan and China continue to be a source of India's insecurity. However, in recent years, the relations between India towards China and Pakistan have become tense, marked by opposition to China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) based on two different geopolitical reasons. Primarily, CPEC enhances the prospects of China becoming a powerful hegemon by emerging as a regional superpower. Secondly, the Indian government perceived the CPEC's infrastructure, technology, and political system as a security concern. India's also apprehensive about China's approaches towards the Indian Ocean for taking control of the regional trading sea routes and energy reservoirs of Central Asia. New Delhi interprets CPEC and Gwadar as suspicious concerning its impact on the naval balance of power in the Indian Ocean Region. The establishment of peace and security in South Asia is conditioned on the relations between India, China and Pakistan productive role. CPEC is a flagship project of OBOR and is of enormous prominence and advantageous to China and Pakistan but a security threat to India.

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