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China-Pakistan Strategic Nexus and India's Security Concerns

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ABSTRACT

Pakistan-China strategic nexus is unequivocally the most formidable national security challenge for India. The two countries have romanticized this relationship by the statement, "higher than mountain, deeper than ocean, stronger than steel". The foreign policy mandarins in Beijing have coined a new epithet for Pakistan - "Ba Taa", the Iron brother. Pakistan - China strategic partnership is essentially an asymmetric relationship. Pakistan is a failing state, whereas, China is on the asymmetric relationship to become a 'Great Power' by the middle of this century. What makes the two strange bedfellows click is their shared disdain for India.

INTRODUCTION

In the world of contemporary international politics, Sino-Pak relations stand out as one of the few enduring friendship that have withstood the pressure of time and shifting geo-strategic conditions. The two countries established diplomatic ties in 1951 and have never looked back. In 2011, they commemorated about 70 years of diplomatic ties, which was also designated as the China-Pakistan year of friendship. As staunch allies and strategic partner of the past few decades, China and Pakistan have shared a friendship which has proved of great value in furtherance of their geo-political and strategic objectives. Their strong convergence in security interest has led to a multi-faced strategic relationship which is reflected in a strong show of support for each other's positions across a wide spectrum of bilateral, regional and international issues.

CHINESE NUCLEAR SUPPORT AND SUPPLY TO PAKISTAN

One of the important outcomes of China-Pakistan strategic is China's extensive support to Pakistan in building up its nuclear capabilities.

China adopted an extremely supportive posture in the development of Pakistan's nuclear weapons and supplied with it a variety of nuclear products and services, ranging from uranium enrichment technology to research and power reactors.

Pakistan's missile development programme has been primarily carried out with the Chinese assistance and to some extent from North Korea after the United States imposed sanctions of China. Chinese missile assistance Pakistan ranges from providing equipment, training to transferring the complete missiles.

CHINESE MILITARY AID TO PAKISTAN

China is today Pakistan's largest defence supplier. Pakistan has not only imported the maximum types and number of defence equipment from China but managed to build up its indigenous defence capability with the Chinese assistance. Chinese equipment turned out to be much cheaper as compared to equipment from the west and the Chinese sales were further facilitated availability of credit from China on easy repayment terms. The navy also plans to manufacture and procure additional mine hunters, tanks, missiles and petrol boats. China has also confirmed the sale of six ship-based medium sized Z9C helicopters to Pakistan's Navy.

Modernization of Gwadar Port

Gwadar port has been developed with the Chinese assistance and the primary project has been the construction of deep sea port expanding its maritime role and to allow the trade from the land locked Central Asia. More importantly, the port would have the conversion facilities to allow the movement of the natural gas for the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan natural gas pipe-line when completed. Gwadar offers the

geo-economic and geo-strategic pivot to China and Pakistan. It is strategically located on the south western coast of Pakistan between three increasingly important regions of the world;- South Asia, Central Asia and oil-rich middle East. Gwadar which is overlooking the Gulf of Oman and the entrance of the Persian Gulf region is just 180 nautical miles from the straits of Hormuz. Thus Gwadar would eventually emerge the key shipping hub providing mass trade to Central Asian Republics through Pakistan and china, and important naval base.

China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)

The CPEC is strategically and economically important both for China and Pakistan. It will pave the way for China to access the Middle East and Africa from Gwadar port; enabling China to access the Indian ocean and China will support development projects in Pakistan to overcome the letter's energy crises and stabilizing its faltering economy. Additionally, the CPEC could serve as the drive for trade and economic integration between China, Pakistan, Iran, India, Afghanistan and Central Asian States Provided the frosty political atmosphere between Pakistan, India, Afghanistan and to some extent Iran gets improved in the near future.

The CPEC connects China directly to the Indian Ocean and the region of the Middle East from the deep Gwadar Port reducing its existing dependence on the South China Sea from the latter is becoming a contesting territory between various regional and global actors and can be choked any time by the completing powers in the Asia-Pacific region.

China currently transport 80% of its oil end energy needs through the Malacca strait and increasingly feels that its economic and energy security interest in the region are under serious threats due to the escalation of tension between China and the regional global players in south and east china sea. This is why China is looking for alternative viable transit routes both economically and security wise the CPEC is the best choice for China linking it directly to the Indian Ocean via Gwadar Port.

Diplomatic Support to Pakistan

In the diplomatic domain, Pakistan encashes on China's veto power at the UNSC. Islamabad swears by 'One China Policy', be it China's position on Taiwan, Tibet or feigning ignorance about the human rights violations committed against Uighur Muslim population in Xinjiang. For China, Pakistan is a conduit for spreading influence in the Muslim world. China opposes to India and support to Pakistan on Kashmir issue and Pak Sponsored Terrorism. China has moved away from the position of studied neutrality to that of overt pro-Pakistan stance.

INDIA'S SECURITY CONCERNS

The China and Pakistan military threats have been in existence for the last seven decades and stand manifested in terms of armed conflict with india. Collusive and hybrid

threats from Pakistan and China are a stark reality. At the low end of the conflict spectrum, India will continue to face proxy war from Pakistan and creeping assertiveness at the LAC from China. Currently, India will face the risk of asymmetric threats in the cyber, information and outer space. There exist a number of flash points, such as jihadi strikes and Border Action Team (BÁT) actions by Pakistan; and Depsangor Chumar or Doklam type incursions by the PLA.

INDIA'S STRATEGIC RESPONSE

Pakistan is like a toxic jelly that may change its form but will retain its toxicity towards India. China and India, with divergent and venerable cultures and vast population, are likely to compete with each other for resources and influence. For the decades to come, India will encounter strong Pakistan – China strategic nexus. For India, it is a strategic imperative to remain a pre-eminent power in South Asia and the IOR, be a strong Asian power and an important global stakeholder.

Diplomatically, India should step up its efforts to garner international support to pressurize Pakistan on the issues such as grey listing of Pakistan in the FATF and sanctions under the UN resolutions 1267. To reclaim its strategic influence in the immediate neighborhood, India will have to become a credible net security provider, an anchor of regional economic integration and a soft power hub. India should continue to follow a multi-vector policy foreign and leverage its stature to build a concert of middle level states in the balance of power. In order to mitigate the 'two front dilemma', India needs to balance out by investing in the 'Free and Open Indo-Pacific Policy' and India-Iran-Afghanistan Strategic Partnership for a sustained engagement in Afghanistan.

CONCLUSION

The growing China-Pak relations can have larger implications for India. Presence Chinese Navy in the Indian Ocean which is facilitated by Pakistan poses a serious threat to India's security in the region. With China trying to dominate the South Asian sphere by following its policy "String of Pearls" so as to reduce India's sphere of influence and trying to secure the vital energy routes, India will have strategize, devise and trigger its military operation following the "Necklace of Diamonds" policy as a counter measure to hold on to and amplify its sphere to influence.

Also the China-Pak axis can cause trouble to much establish influence India has in Afghanistan. A reduced footprint for Indian intelligence in Afghanistan could be on the cards as well. The transfer of Chinese defence technology does not pose as a warning only to India to upkeep its security but also the another non-proliferation regimes are at a risk. Moreover, with China trying to flood Chinese in Tibet so as to make it loose its cultural identity and looming with own Dalai Lama establishment, India might lose its only bargaining chip to China. It is crucial for India to create stakeholders in China in order to gain some discrete influence and have a stay in its policies.

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