

India's Dilemma On The Two Fronts

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ABSTRACT

This research paper aims to unravel various aspects of India's strained relationship with its two neighbours- China and Pakistan. The rise of China, in recent times on economic and political fronts, has been quite concerning for the political lobby in India. The enmeshed entanglement of China with Pakistan concerning economic projects, increasing military cooperation, and rising influence in Southeast Asia has been a matter of great concern. This paper delves into various contours of this bickering engagement of the three fronts, with appropriate recommendations for India to battle its way out of emerging as a major global power.

Keywords: China, Pakistan, Two-Fronts, Military threat

INTRODUCTION

With the recent changing dynamics in the geopolitical horizon, India finds its back being pushed against the wall, slowly and gradually concerning its two immediate neighbours- China and Pakistan. The former's position can be rightly understood through Mandal's theory of Kautilya, wherein seeking peace with one's immediate neighbour (Ari) is a major political conundrum. With an emerging Sino-Pak Axis, India is faced with a primary impediment of securing its territorial borders while actively trying to counter their growing regional influence and nexus in Southeast Asia.

In recent times, a lot of attention has been drawn to the CPEC Project- China Pakistan Economic Corridor, an extension of the BRI- Belt and Road Initiative, through which China aims to revive trade relations by redrawing the ancient 'Silk Route' between Europe and East Asia. Indian leadership has time and again, objected to this arbitrary development which passes through Pakistan's Occupied Kashmir Region. This is not just symbolic of proximity in the budding ties of Beijing and Islamabad's narratives but also makes their despise towards India and its interests, very evident.

Indian External Affairs Minister- Shri S Jaishankar in 2023 highlighted the issue by saying, "The BRI goes through POK (Pakistan-occupied Kashmir). It violates our national integrity and sovereignty."¹ The issue was earlier spoken on in September 2020 by, the Chief of Defence Staff General Bipin Rawat who acknowledged, "Chinese economic cooperation with Pakistan, in Pakistan-occupied Jammu and Kashmir, along with continued military, economic and diplomatic support mandate high

¹ [Business Today](#)

levels of preparation by us. This also poses the threat of coordinated action along the northern and western fronts, which we have to consider in our defense planning.”²

Beyond the BRI initiative, Pakistan continues to harbour anti-Indian militant and terrorist groups. With the recent taking over of Afghanistan by the Taliban, the situation was anticipated to get worse as conducting transactions through hawala networks and supplying arms would become more swift. Pakistan in recent months has registered staunch opposition to the revocation of Article 370 in the Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir through official statements, election manifestos, etc. The two-front threat has been greatly acknowledged by top Indian military commanders. Challenges mount for the Indian side as the two fronts continue to have greater intersecting stances on multilateral forums (the United Nations, being the most prominent) globally.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

India-Pakistan Relations: India and Pakistan have had a distrustful relationship with mutual suspicion over each other’s intentions over the years. The Indian state has engaged in numerous conflicts with the state of Pakistan, ever since its creation in 1948 on Muhammad Ali Jinnah’s demand and the Muslim League’s campaign. With India’s accession over Kashmir signed by Maharaja Hari Singh following Pakistan’s intrusion into Kashmir, capturing about 13,297 square miles, also widely known as the POK (Pakistan Occupied Kashmir), the border tensions between the two countries have been never-ending. The question of Kashmir and the rightful ownership of the territory has hooked the leadership of both countries for decades. The two nations fought humongous wars in 1965, 1971, and 1999 with successive defeats for the Pakistani side. The Indian victory and the latter’s support for separatist groups in India have been instrumental in discrediting the influence of Islamabad’s global profile, especially from its most trusted ally once- the United States of America.

The Islamic Republic of Pakistan has extended support to various non-state actors such as terrorist and militant groups breeding on its home ground, intending to ‘bleed India by a thousand cuts’. The famous attack of 2008, marked a turning point in history disrupting bilateral discourses led by the UPA government in India. Later, the Pathankot, Uri, and Pulwama attacks further broke down any communication channel between the two rivals. These consistent breaches of trust, despite reassurance break down any possible mechanism of diplomatic machinery between the two nations. The NDA captaincy has made it crystal clear that they wouldn’t want to sit at the same table with a country, which is actively sowing roots of terrorism and destruction in India.³

² [Stimson](#)

³ [The Economic Times](#)

Indo-China Relations: India and China continued to enjoy amiable relations in the early 1950s with the signing of the famous Panchsheel Agreement under Nehru's leadership. There wasn't a lot of anxiety on the side of Indian leadership until Mao Zedong's government began to work on its Five-Finger Policy in the late 1950s, aiming to encroach the Indian-administered territories of Ladakh, Sikkim and Arunachal Pradesh. With more and more Chinese intrusions in these regions and military threats, the situation ultimately boiled when both countries came to warring lockheads with each other in 1962. With a massive defeat faced by underprepared and ill-equipped Indian forces, China occupied 38,000 square kilometers of Indian Land-Aksai Chin and continues to claim the states of Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim. This war has been a very significant episode of the Indo-China trajectory as it consolidated the aggression of the Chinese over their claimed land. Indo-China relations have been a mix of cooperation and confrontation throughout most of the last century. Over the last decade, while our economic relations with China may have improved- the Doklam and the Galwan standoff has brought hostility from both sides. India and China continue to compete economically, among other areas to become a roaring giant in the Southeast Asian region. China continues to assert its influence over the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean, putting India's maritime security at risk. To counter their rise, the Indian leadership has strategized its entry into alliances such as QUAD. Thus, the Indo-China relations have continued to be 'abnormal' as rightly stated by S Jaishankar in March 2023.

BORDER DISPUTES



Source: [BBC](#)

1. **Indo-Pakistan**: Here's a look at the major territorial issues of the two countries-
 - a. Gilgit-Baltistan, and Kashmir: The unlawful annexation of approximately 78,000 sq. kilometres of land by Pakistan in 1948 has been opposed by India, since then. To top the Indian disappointment, Pakistan ceded the area of Shaksgham Valley to China in 1963, which is claimed by India as part of its territory.
 - b. The Siachen Glacier is located in the eastern Karakorams of the Himalayas, precisely east of the line that denotes the real border between Pakistan and India. The whole Siachen Glacier, including all of its significant passes, has been under Indian management since 1984 (Operation Meghdoot).
 - c. The Saltoro Mountains are a mountain range that is a part of the Karakoram Heights or Saltoro Ridge. They are in the middle of the Karakoram, on the southwest flank of the Siachen Glacier. They are claimed by Islamabad as a part of Jammu and Kashmir. India took military control of the range's main peaks and passes in 1984, while Pakistani soldiers advanced into the glacier valleys immediately west.

- d. Sir Creek is a 96-kilometer stretch of water in the marshlands of the Rann of Kutch claimed by Pakistan and India. Due to opposing interpretations of paragraphs 9 and 10 of the Bombay Government Resolution of 1914, which was signed by the then-Government of Sindh and Rao Maharaj of Kutch, Pakistan argues the line should follow the eastern side of the estuary, while India claims a centerline. There is no official demarcation of the International Maritime Boundary line (IMBL) between India and Pakistan or the International Boundary in the Sir Creek area.
2. **Indo-China:** India and China have engaged in consistent disputes over territories ranging from Kashmir right to the Eastern Front of India-
- a. **Western Front:** China and India share a boundary spanning approximately 2152 kilometers in the Western sector. It is situated between China's Xinjiang Province and the Union Territory of Ladakh, the former state of Jammu and Kashmir. There is a territorial dispute in this area about Aksai Chin. China believes it is a part of Xinjiang, whereas India claims it was once part of Kashmir. The British Empire's inability to establish a demarcated legal border between China and its Indian colony is the root of the Aksai-Chin conflict. Johnson's Line and McDonald's Line were two proposed frontiers between China and India during the British Empire. Johnson's line, which dates back to 1865, depicts Aksai Chin in what was once Jammu and Kashmir (now Ladakh), i.e. under the authority of China. However, the McDonald Line (which was proposed in 1893) brought it within the administration of India. China views the McDonald Line as the proper boundary with India, while India views the Johnson Line as the legitimate national border with China. The line that currently divides Aksai Chin from the Indian portions of Ladakh is known as the Line of Actual Control (LAC). It runs parallel to the Aksai Chin claim line in China.
 - b. **Middle Front:** There has been little to almost no dispute in the 625 km long border in this sector. It entails the border shared with the states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.
 - c. **Eastern Front:** This is a very vulnerable front wherein the states of Arunachal Pradesh and Sikkim share a border of 1526 kilometers long. China in 2023, showed Arunachal Pradesh as a part of its map and has been doing this time and again. This is not just a way to extend one's claim over territory but also to place psychological pressure into leveraging the global governments to believe the said cause.

MILITARY STRATEGY AND PREPAREDNESS

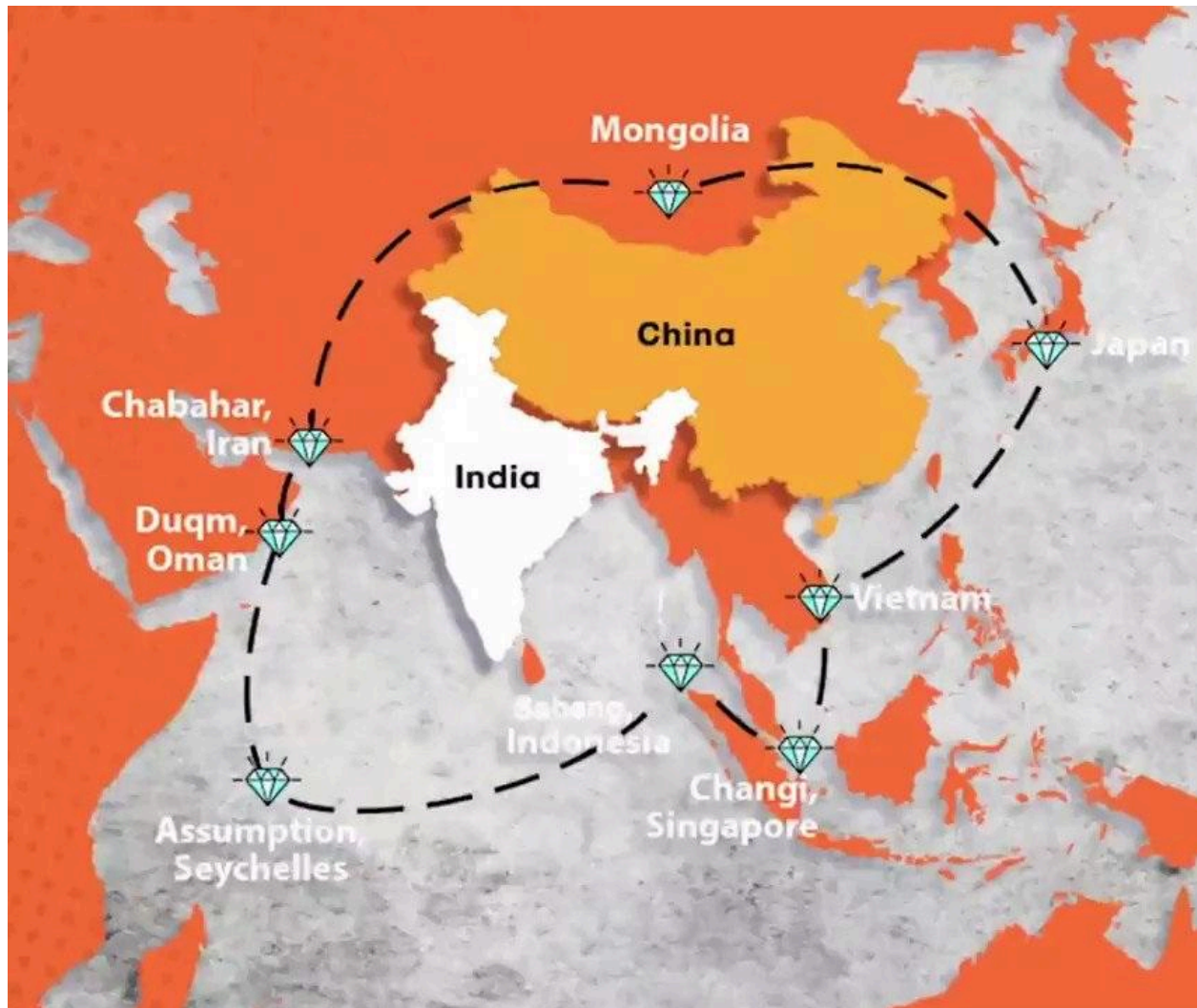
India faces a two-front military threat from China and Pakistan. China has a greater edge over India in terms of boasting the world's largest military and possessing advanced weaponry like unmanned systems of operation, directed energy electromagnetic railguns, fifth-generation aircraft, etc. The lead that the dragon continues to enjoy has caused anxiety in the minds of strategists who have suggested the development of two fronts- namely primary and secondary to combat a two-front challenge. The Indian side needs to expand our military divisions to 50+ for an offensive military engagement on both fronts. With the possession of Tejas, MiG, and Rafale aircraft and the successive backing of gallant INS-Vikrant in the Indian Ocean- India looks forward to a robust defence policy with a lot more security now.



Source: [Jagran Josh](#)

Under its String of Pearl Theory, China has leveraged its position as an economic surplus state by securing the strategic ports of Gwadar (Pakistan), Hambantota (Sri Lanka), and Sittwe (Myanmar). The objective of this strategic engagement is to secure pivotal defence positions while expanding its

influence over the Indian Ocean, while actively expanding trade. The situation worsens for the Indian side as China also continues to be the largest supplier of arms and ammunition to Pakistan including advanced weaponry such as JF17 Combat Aircraft, Type-90-2M tank, VT-4 tank, etc. The rising imports increase the dependency of Pak on Chinese resources, providing more and more space for China to infiltrate the hinterland.



Source: [IAS Express](#)

To combat these, the Indian side has also been passionately working on the 'Necklace of Diamonds Strategy' encircling China strategically to prevent its rise as a hegemon in Southeast Asia. India has centred a key in Oman- securing both the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean. The Indian Navy has gained access to the Changi Port of Singapore, followed by the Sabhang Port of Indonesia. India has continued to have historically great relations with countries like Vietnam while actively entering into

the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement with Japan. Gaining hardcore control militarily over South Asian countries while anchoring the socio-cultural ethos with the others- India is slowly building up on regaining its stature- it has long deserved. Indian leadership can make prudent use of alliances of QUAD to further their interest and grasp in the Indian Ocean region.

BILATERAL RELATIONS WITH PAKISTAN AND CHINA

One of the few engagements between India and Pakistan at bilateral levels was after Pakistan began its excursion of occupying Kashmir through illegal means in 1948. These talks were enforced arbitrarily through UNSC resolutions namely- 38⁴, 47⁵, and 51⁶. Throughout the last century, both countries have engaged in consistent military conflicts and standoffs with little to no scope of engagement. The two rivals, however, did agree on the Indus Water Treaty. The resolution of this dispute was symbolic of the fact that it is quite tough to bring the two warring sides to the table without the intervention of a third party.

Dialogue processes began in the 1990s, with the UPA government and Pakistani leadership led by Parvez Musharraf. A systematic dialogue process with periodic talks started under Manmohan Singh, which was hampered by the 2008 Mumbai attacks. Post this event, the leaders met at several multilateral forums. Indian Prime Minister, Mr Narendra Modi also invited Nawaz Sharif to his oath-taking ceremony in 2014. However, bilateral relations are short-lived as Pakistan continues to engage in cross-border terrorism. The Gurdaspur, Uri, and Pulwama attacks have broken down diplomatic machinery among the exchanges of the foreign ministries of both countries. After the attacks- informal diplomacy has also ceased amidst the growing distrust from both sides. The exchange of hostile statements over national television has become the only source of engagement. The only positive development in formal relations between the two sides has been the operationalizing of the Kartarpur Corridor for Sikh pilgrims in 2019. However, both sides struggled to hold conversations between political instability and growing fundamentalism in Pakistan. This calls for more efforts from Pakistan to neutralize terrorist camp operations to make situations amiable for diplomatic engagement.

On the other hand, India and China had quite friendly relations in the early 1950s. The trust broke down, however after the invasion of Aksai Chin by China in the 1962 war as a part of its Xinjiang province. Positive momentum emerged during Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi's 1988 visit. The Declaration on Principles in 2003 and the Strategic and Cooperative Partnership in 2005 further

⁴ [UNSCR](#)

⁵ [UNSCR](#)

⁶ [UNSCR](#)

cooperation. Over the past decade, high-level visits, including the Informal Summits in Wuhan (2018) and Chennai (2019), marked a Closer Developmental Partnership.

Despite border tensions in Eastern Ladakh in 2020, leaders met at various summits and sidelines, emphasizing the importance of preventing differences from escalating into disputes. The bilateral dialogue mechanisms, comprising over thirty dialogues, cover political, economic, cultural, and global issues. Travel restrictions due to COVID-19 impacted the frequency of these meetings.

Notable visits include Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's visit to India in 2022. The Special Representatives mechanism, initiated in 2003, has held 22 rounds of talks, focusing on the boundary question. The Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs has been instrumental in discussions for disengagement since June 2020. Regular exchanges on water resources cooperation managed through an Expert-Level Mechanism, have been ongoing, with the latest meeting in June 2023. Despite challenges, diplomatic engagements and mechanisms persist, highlighting the multifaceted nature of India-China relations.

ECONOMIC RAMIFICATIONS

India and Pakistan enjoyed better economic relations at the beginning of the century with the opening of bus services, the formation of forums, etc in 2003. Cross-border people-to-people linkages also assisted in augmenting trade and trust based on investments. Around 2008-09, the two rivals finalized arrangements regarding the ideation of the movement of trucks, permits, security aspects, code of conduct for drivers, and so on, boosting a cross-LOC trade. However, the two economies have had very strained economic relations since 2016, witnessing a major downfall since the Pathankot, Uri, and Pulwama attacks respectively. India revoked Pakistan's 'Most Favored Nation' Status and imposed 200% customs duties on all Pakistani goods. The relations came to an absolute halt when Pakistan suspended bilateral trade, post the revocation of Article 370. However, a positive ray of hope could be seen with the coming of Prime Minister Shahbaz Sharif who sought initiatives to restart economic engagements from both sides bringing relief to the trade community and reigniting CBMS like cross-LOC trade can be the founding stone for diplomatic rapprochement.

Economic relations between India and China are much more complex. With a distressing trade deficit of a stooping 38%, the entanglement is rather distressing on the Indian side. During 2022-23, India exported 450 billion dollars, while importing 714 billion dollars implying a major trade deficit.⁷ Apart

⁷ [The Economic Times](#)

from that, China continues to treat the Indian economy as a major dumping ground for its cheap finished products while actively making Indian consumers dependent on them.

The most concerning are the relative economic ties between Pakistan and China. Under the 'China-Pakistan Economic Corridor', Chinese investment in PoK is rather concerning for the India High Command. This also includes huge hydroelectric projects among others which pose a major strategic as well as economic challenge for India and its influence. However, another area of major concern is the 69 billion Chinese debt trap which Pakistan, unfortunately, finds itself in. Data shows that China has lent out 68.91 billion in long-term loans to Pakistan and has been consistently providing credit for emergency fund loans from 2012 to 2021 every year.

INDIA AND IT'S NEIGHBOURHOOD

China has strategically expanded its influence in South Asian countries, challenging India and regional interests. Here's a look at the increasing Chinese influence in the Pacific-

1. **Myanmar**- China has signed 30+ contracts with Myanmar including those of railroads and strategic ports, deepening India's suspicion of a tightening choke. The recent emerging competition between the Indo-Chinese for infrastructural projects in the province of Rakhine is symbolic of the desperation of the two, in expanding their sphere of influence. Myitkyina Economic Development Zone. In the last year, China has been expanding its trade routes through Myanmar, while actively gaining control of the Bay of Bengal region.
2. **Sri Lanka**- In Sri Lanka, China became indispensable during the civil war, providing economic support, military equipment, and political protection. China and its investments, especially in projects like the Hambantota port, give it a strategic foothold in the Indian Ocean. In 2023, China pledged to help resolve China's debt crisis with Sri Lanka acknowledging the Chinese leadership as its 'closest friend' last year.
3. **Bangladesh**- Whilst in Bangladesh, China and its growing influence has become a concern for India, especially after the Galwan Valley standoff. Chinese initiatives to build a mega smart city and airport in Bangladesh and economic pressures are raising fears about India. Not just that but in 2023, China extended Bangladesh's Duty Free Access to enable adequate growth for domestic industries in the latter while also issuing visas to its students.

4. **Maldives-** Meanwhile, in the Maldives, Chinese investments in strategic areas such as Feydhoo Finolhu and military aid agreements have strengthened bilateral relations. The recent erosion of Indian relations with the Maldives has ripened the ground for better Sino-Maldives relations. Maldives has taken an anti-Indian stance with its 'India Out' policy while also ending the Water Pact signed with the Indian Navy in 2019. China seeks to leverage this anti-Indian sentiment against the Indian interests to gain global capital.
5. **Nepal-** Finally, in Nepal, China has increased its political and economic influence, investing billions in the Belt and Road Initiative. Chinese investments and aid have exceeded India's contribution, affecting India's influence in Nepali politics. Through the extension of aid during the last decade, China hopes to win Nepal in its favour.

These developments reflect China's strengthening and comprehensive strategy to increase its geopolitical influence in India and neighbouring countries. India faces challenges in maintaining its regional dominance as China uses economic, military, and diplomatic means to expand its footprint. All these developments have undermined India's position in the subcontinent, as Pakistan and its' ally continue to ace investments, winning over India's neighbours.

RECOMMENDATIONS

As the apprehensive Indian side evaluates the ongoing situation, it is necessary to understand that it is the world of Realism as stated by Kenneth Waltz. The emergence of India as the 'Vishwamitra' is only possible by working on defence, economic, and political fronts while also subtly making use of its soft power. With the ongoing tussle that India finds itself in, here are a few recommendations India could act upon to eliminate the raging threat on its two fronts.

1. **INDIA'S NECKLACE OF DIAMOND STRATEGY-** India must seek to expand investments in countries like Iran ('Mitra'- sharing border with 'Ari')- also a hub of natural resources like natural gas and oil to further India's interests through active infrastructure development in hinterland and ports and Foreign Direct Investments in local industries of Iran - the situation being adequately ripe in the light of recent Iran-Pakistan hostile cross-border exchanges. India, under this strategy, can further seek to expand its naval capabilities through the stationing of more submarines and warships in the Indian Ocean region. For the achievement of this objective, India must strengthen ties with QUAD countries especially Australia to maintain Coastal Radar Systems for Chinese movement in the Indian Ocean while

actively increasing submarines through more defence expenditure from its ally- The United States of America.

India's soft power and widespread diaspora can be of great use as India can systemically engage more with South Asian countries sharing common socio-cultural ethos (Vietnam, Malaysia, and Cambodia) through bilateral engagements such as student exchange programs, informal meets, track-II diplomacy, and greater space for dialogue and discourse. This will assist in expanding India's global profile in the Pacific.

2. **DEFENCE PREPAREDNESS-** In the case of open military combat, protecting the Indian territory has to be a primary task for the Indian forces. To combat a powerful nation like China, India has to work on its military including expansion, modernization, acquiring advanced weaponry, and introducing specialized units in all three forces. India, currently with 43 divisional units, must expand it to 50+ units to successfully combat and tackle military threats from the two fronts. India must also increase its defence expenditure in its annual Budget to allocate a greater share for this expansion and maintenance. The Defence Ministry should station more aircraft carriers in the Indian Ocean region as INS Vikrant and INS Vikramaditya are not sufficient to battle huge submarines like Xiang Yang Hong 06 of China alone. At the moment, the Indian Air Force has 30 squadron aircraft- which must be doubled to secure strategic points of India's borders in the tough terrain of the Himalayas, further looking forward to expanding its infrastructure with more checkpoints, military bases, and accessible roads in geographically challenging areas like Siachen, which can win wars because of the geographical benefit of high altitude. Therefore, the maintenance of these remotely inaccessible areas can be managed through the division of responsibilities between hierarchies of leadership to improve administrative efficiency.

Further, the defence objectives of India can only be achieved by working more on indigenous projects by reducing dependency on foreign powers. This can be achieved through the introduction of more liberal reforms- like tax exemptions, improving ease of doing business, etc. in India's financial planning i.e., to encourage private players to enter the defence industry while actively increasing efficiency and reducing dependence on foreign allies for defence equipment.

3. **REDUCING ECONOMIC DEPENDENCE**- China's exports to India have increased rapidly since 2001, recording overtaking \$125 billion of exports in 2023. ⁸There is a composite trade deficit between India's exports and imports, leading to a greater dependency of domestic consumers on Chinese products. This can be achieved through promoting and pushing young startups by opening separate sub-committees/bodies within Ministries of Commerce headed by respective Ministers, catering only to them. The government of India can encourage domestic producers by giving more tax exemptions, reducing costs of advertisements, and providing resources such as land at economically beneficial locations(Special Economic Zones), especially around areas of manufacture of raw materials- thus helping them save costs of transportation. India's Eastern neighbours with their large manufacturing capacity enjoy trade surplus relations with almost all partners.

India and China have also been engaging in a cut-throat competition over exporting to the Eastern and Central African countries. This competition can be brought down slightly by making use of India's diplomatic channels and the goodwill of African countries to become their biggest importers. Times have come to reconsider schemes like the Nehru-Mahalanobis plan to boost the manufacturing sector in India, instrumental in shifting the economy from an agrarian state.

In light of such circumstances, strengthening local initiatives such as Make in India and Digital India become extremely crucial. The government of India must seek to move, beyond just various relaxations but also organize workshops at semi-urban and rural levels, as well as college level to enable employment through skill-building. India can further push for the India-Middle East- Europe Economic Corridor with the assistance of the USA, aiming to obtain economic benefits while also outsourcing labour to these countries. India must combine diplomatic efforts with massive development activities to transition from a balancing player to a leading player.

4. **STRATEGIC ALLIANCES**- India can effectively counter the emerging bipolar powers of the two nations by forming and joining strategic alliances with global and regional partners. Democracies such as the USA and Europe are equally desperate to counter the increasing influence of China in the Indo-Pacific. India should be working on forging more partnerships with the unexplored potential of the European Union and the USA. India can also leverage the

⁸ [Times of India](#)

insecurities of the Biden administration, persuading them to include India in the Big Five, so that India can gain access to the intelligence of superpowers.

Not just that, but India can seek to win the support of other South-Asian nations through their inclusion in larger strategic alliances (For eg- Adding Africa to the G-20 recently). This expands the arena of trust fostering better relationships, while actively indebting smaller countries with a greater sense of security and cooperation. India, under its leadership, can create strategic allies, especially those concerning the Indian Ocean. A network of strategic alliances based on common interests, and democratic values and ensuring regional stability can strengthen India's security position and prevent potential threats from its neighbors.

5. **USAGE OF MULTI-LATERAL FORUMS**- India must strategise the use of multi-lateral forums to gain traction and support regarding its issue. India must officially table its agenda regarding the impending threat we continue to face from China at forums such as the United Nations, ASEAN, BRICS, etc. On chairing a Summit, the Indian Foreign Ministry must always remain tactful to harbour more and more support through active and passive engagements with the political leadership and bureaucrats of the guest country.

A very important aspect of India's foreign policy is to mobilize unanimous support for a permanent seat of India at the United Nations Security Council. This can be righteously done by persuading the already existing five members, except China to officiate India's stance to the United Nations.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the research paper delineates India's rising impediments from its two immediate neighbours- Pakistan and China. The roots of most of the territorial disputes between the countries can be traced back to colonial rule. The erstwhile princely state of Jammu and Kashmir(Madhyama: buffer region among the three) has emerged as a prime region for deadlock and has started the discourse of power struggle among the nations. In addition, China's long-lost claims over territories in the Eastern Frontier of India have made the situation more dire for the Indian High Command. India has, historically, been engaged in a relationship of estrangement with both countries as it grappled with wars in 1948, 1962, 1965, 1971, and 1999.

While the military has been continuously aiming to equip itself with more advanced weaponry and ammunition, the ordeal to counter this challenge goes beyond that. India must seek to resolve its issues with the allied powers by also pressuring them across global platforms, reducing economic dependence, and focusing more and more on its Look East Policy.

India must also look forward to strengthening its maritime security in the Indian Ocean. China and Pakistan have been besetting their eyes on the 'waters' for long enough. A confident Indian leadership can bring forth its South Asian neighbours as its allies by actively engaging with superpowers such as the USA and Russia. With the onset of the NDA government in 2014, India has been more robust about its intolerance regarding issues such as cross-border terrorism and aggression. India's alignment with the QUAD has been significant in this domain. India might also have to look at an alternative of reviving its age-old friendship with Russia. As India faces regional security challenges, a comprehensive approach can go a very long way toward leading India forward.

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