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Singh, K. J.

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# India's Strategic Gameplan vis-à-vis China-Pak Collusive Linkage

K J Singh

“For China, Pakistan is low-cost secondary deterrent to India while for Pakistan, China is a high value guarantor of security against India.”

—Hussein Haqqani

## Abstract

*The basic approach of this article is to discuss an outline optimum strategy or broad game-plan to tackle collusive Sino-Pak threats. The detailed strategy and specific action plan are beyond the scope of this article. However, deliberations and inferences drawn in this article can help refine/validate template for such formulation. It will be appropriate to reiterate that clarity on threat parameters is an essential pre-requisite for planning levels of preparedness, force structures, equipment profile, modernisation and budgetary allocations, hence these are discussed in brief. Reasonable assumptions have been factored in, where necessary, as detailed national security policies are yet to be promulgated.*

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Lieutenant General **K J Singh** PVSM, AVSM\*\* (Retd) is a former General Officer Commanding in Chief, Western Command.

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## Introduction

The ongoing Chinese aggressive deployment and prolonged face-off in Ladakh have rekindled the debate on collusive threats posed by two neighbours, China and Pakistan. The latter has maintained an aggressive and hostile posture with calibrated proxy war in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), fire assaults on unsettled Line of Control (LoC) and hostile presence on Actual Ground Position Line (AGPL). It is heartening that cease-fire inked in February 2021, has been holding for the last fourteen months. China has delayed resolution of border, coupled with orchestration of transgressions and ‘salami-slicing’ at periodic intervals, to stake her claim on shifting claim lines, on Line of Actual Control (LAC). India and Bhutan are the only two neighbours, having dubious distinction of unsettled land borders with China, due to stonewalling and obduracy by Beijing. These coercive orchestrations are primarily designed to keep India in check and unsettled, thereby denying her development, progress and stability.

The recent strategic situation on Northern borders coupled with ongoing proxy war in J&K has once again stoked concerns on challenges of two and half front threat. It has thrown up number of issues, relating to scope of collusion, likely manifestation scenarios, designation of primary and secondary threats and above all, need for an effective response strategy. The scope of collusion between Pakistan and China transcends from geo-strategic to geo-economic and other domains like defence manufacturing, transportation, power generation, nuclear weapons and space. The most notable multi-dimensional, collaborative project is ongoing China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is described as a signature project for Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and sets a new benchmark in collusive collaboration.

## Preview

The subject is analysed with a focus on the following major parameters:

- (a) Collusive Linkages—Definitions, Scope and Manifestation.

- (b) Historical Context.
- (c) CPEC—New Collusive Paradigm.
- (d) Construct and Catalysts for Collusion.
- (e) Strategic Options to Counter Collusion.
- (f) Summary of Recommendations.

### **Collusive Linkages-Definitions, Scope and Manifestation**

**Definitions.** ‘Collusion’ and its derivatives like ‘Collusive’ are terms increasingly used in geo-strategic dialogue and have spawned another more commonly used, non-dictionary but colloquially popular variant, ‘Collusivity’. The word may soon get included in the dictionary, considering its extensive usage. Webster’s dictionary defines, Collusive as “secret agreement or cooperation especially for an illegal or deceitful purpose.”<sup>1</sup> More appropriate formulation in our context is outlined in Collins Dictionary as an adjective, “Collusive behaviour involves secret or illegal co-operation between countries or organizations”.<sup>2</sup> There are many other definitions but common strand in almost all is threefold, co-operation characterised by secrecy and deceit. Collusion requires collaboration or working together, albeit in covert or secret mode combined with deceit. China and North Korea provide an apt example of such comprehensive collusive linkages. Sino-Pak relationship is another such case study. With China acting as nucleus, relationships with North Korea and Pakistan are a complex web of concentric, collusive networks including nuclear proliferation. As a concept, it is natural that alliances, especially in security domain, facilitate or promote some degree and form of collusion. Most security pacts, invariably have classified/secret clauses and even classified annexures. An apt example was, leasing of Shamsi airbase, by Pakistan to UAE for hunting and in turn, base being sublet to US forces for drone and missile operations against Taliban. Tri-lateral collusion essentially was a clever ploy for bypassing regulations and pressure of domestic lobbies. However, presence of American personnel

on air-bases like Shamsi and Jacobabad, accorded Pakistan some degree of immunity, during Operation Prakram in 2001-02. In all probability, India would have been constrained to omit these bases from possible target lists in the event of hostilities.

**Scope.** The scope of collusion is defined by geo-political and geo-strategic templates but transcends increasingly into geo-economic domains. Recently, Chinese President, Xi Jinping in a telephonic chat with Imran Khan hailed their ties as between ‘iron brothers’.<sup>3</sup> A commentary in state-run Xinhua news agency in 2013 during the visit of the Chinese PM to Pakistan stated that “China and Pakistan have shaped a paradigm of neighbour-to-neighbour relations. Their time-tested friendship, described by some as “higher than the mountains and deeper than the oceans,” is not just a bunch of empty words”.<sup>4</sup> The important and relevant details of Sino-Pak collusion are mapped later in this paper, in the section on historical context. It will be appropriate to emphasise growing scope of collaborative linkages, which is now being referred to and alleged in secret bio-weapon labs in China and more recently in Ukraine, reportedly funded by USA and western pharmaceutical lobbies. CPEC also has plans for vaccination projects.

**Manifestation of Collusion.** Collusive ties as per conventional understanding are described to be secretive like nuclear exchange between China and North Korea and Pakistan. They even incorporate deniability, as was attempted by AQ Khan and his clique, in proliferation of nuclear designs on Iran and Libya. Notwithstanding, the emphasis on secrecy in basic definition, there are methods to project positive aspects and hide spin-offs with security pay-offs. It is axiomatic that in age of enhanced transparency through satellite imagery and remote sensing techniques, collusion will be **couched and designated, invariably for benign purposes like communications, connectivity and economic development, CPEC, which is discussed later, is the most relevant example in this context.** In an era, where wars are described as ‘Special

Operations', **collusion rather than declared collaboration is likely to become the new normal accompanied by deniability.**

**Forms of Collusion.** Collusion may adapt various shapes like *synchronized or sequential/deferred in timing*. It may be *planned or even impromptu* to take advantage of a situation/opportunity or redress reverse/criticality. Deployment of Seventh Fleet by the USA in Bay of Bengal in 1971 operations was deferred collusion and to bail out East Pakistan in dire straits (criticality), though it failed to have the desired effect. In application, collusion may be *in same theatre or in proximity or even in different theatres*. Gulf operations witnessed application of multiple national forces in same theatre and in synchronized mode. Collusion and collaboration may have **deterrent effect, even when not actually applied, as threat in being**. Fear of Chinese posturing in 1971 forced deferring of operations to December during pass-closure period to preclude two front scenarios. Collusion can be *short term or even episodic, essentially tactical or long term or strategic* collaboration/collusion. Sino-Pak collusion meets the criterion of long-term and strategic one, having completed nearly 50 years. On the other hand, the US-Iran collusion in CENTO era was broken off with advent of Ayatollah regime in Iran, making it short-term engagement.

## Historical Context

**Setting the Stage.** Pakistan was among the first to accord diplomatic recognition to PRC in 1950. The **first signs of China-Pak collusion manifested as early in 1950s, erstwhile East Pakistan became a sanctuary for Naga rebels**. Phizo escaped to London via East Pakistan in December 1956.<sup>5</sup> Mowu Angami and others trekked to China for training.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, Naga rebels were ferried from Eastern Wing to Western one for specialised commando training in the late 1950s. **Pakistan gifted vast tracts of strategic territory of Shaksgam Valley, measuring 5180 sq km in 1963, enabling it to settle boundary issues**

with China. The treaty incorporates Section 6, which mandates that after settlement of Kashmir dispute, there will be another round between China and treaty designated sovereign state for final settlement. It actually was abject surrender of territory, which de-jure belonged to Kashmir and India. It was also flagrant violation of standstill arrangements mandated in the UN resolution. Pakistan planned 1965 operation to take advantage of situation in India after Chinese aggression in 1962. It was based on assessment of Indian forces being demoralised and unprepared. As per some media reports, US-based think tank had reportedly recommended 1965 as now or never opportunity to put it across India. In the interim, USA, as reward for membership in military pacts, had armed Pakistan with modern weapons like Sabre jets and M-48 Patton tanks, emboldening it to undertake 1965 aggression on India. Beijing having warmed up to Pakistan in early 1960s, issued an ultimatum to India during Indo-Pak war of 1965.<sup>7</sup> This was followed by formalisation of military assistance in 1966, leading to providing assorted weapons worth \$60 million. In the economic domain, there was inking of trade pacts in 1979, triggering growing economic cooperation.

**Pak Propensity for Alliances.** Unlike the Indian policy of non-alignment and stress on near equal partnerships, rather than alliances, **Pakistan has displayed commendable diplomatic manipulation and dexterity.** Pak has managed to leverage her geostrategic location, at crossroads of civilisations, to the hilt, by forging concurrent collusive linkages, across divergent spectrum. It first became part of SEATO in 1954, Baghdad Pact in 1955 and CENTO in 1956. This in effect, making it an outpost for the USA in Central Asia. Surprisingly, it was also cosying up to China in 1960s, as also concurrently keeping alive OIC connections. **Pakistan became surprising enabler, between USA and China.** Henry Kissinger's visit to China in July 1971 was shrouded in secrecy and concealed as diversion, during his Pak visit. After Bangladesh operations and losing the Eastern wing, it established a strategic alliance

with China in 1972, concurrently retaining active membership of US-led military alliances like CENTO. **Pakistan has shown compliance and even agreed to become a client state in unequal tie-ups.**

**Indian Response and 1971 Operations.** Trilateral linkages between Pakistan, China and USA, **forced India to sign Indo-Soviet friendship treaty in 1971, which did act as restraining check on Chinese designs to provide aid to Pakistan during Bangladesh liberation war.** However, China extended over flying rights and passage to Pakistan for operations in the Eastern wing. Pak's linkages with China impacted on India's plans, in responding to refugee crisis in 1971 and deferring planned operations to December to preclude Chinese intervention. In the intervening period of six months, India had to cope up with an unprecedented humanitarian crisis, caused by massive influx of refugees. Both in 1965 and 1971 wars, despite choosing an appropriate period to preclude Chinese intervention, minimum forces and readiness posture had to be maintained on Sino-Indian border, thereby restricting availability of forces to be applied against Pakistan.

**Proxy War and Insurgency.** The sordid chapter of collusion between China and East Pakistan and later Bangladesh, though documented is rarely discussed.<sup>8</sup> Ironically, **ISI and Chinese managed to keep camps and sanctuaries active till Sheikh Hasina regime.**<sup>9</sup> It was only Awami League government, which handed over fugitives like Anup Chetia and threw out others like Anthony Shimray, after cracking down on insurgent camps. Ruili in Yunnan province, reportedly still acts as hub for procuring weapons and sanctuary for fugitive insurgents of NE rebel groups. Pakistan employed Kabayali narrative in 1947-48 conflict and later infiltration task forces in 1965 war. Having suffered humiliation in 1971, **it adopted 'bleeding by thousand cuts' strategy.** It fomented terrorism by funding and aiding Khalistanis in 1980s and 1990s (1984 to 1995). Later, it initiated proxy war in Kashmir in 1988, which is still simmering. Kargil raiders in 1999 were also described as Mujahedeen



despite clear evidence to the contrary. The challenges for India in terms of narco-terrorism, counterfeit smuggling and arms trafficking remain. ISI has also been toying with the idea of K2 (Khalistan and Kashmir), after the opening of Kartarpur corridor.

**Mujahedeen and Taliban.** Pakistan has the dubious distinction of setting up Mujahedeen and Jihadi militias at the behest of USA in 1990s. Pakistan managed to calibrate her duplicity and perfidious behaviour to remain as America's main interlocutor in Afghanistan. The first venture was training, arming and aiding Mujahedeen militias for overthrowing Russian backed regime, from 1979 to 1989. Since then, it has remained frontline state, till US withdrawal in September 2021. It still retains some degree of control and is now engaged in carving a role for China in Afghanistan. This turnaround comes at considerable cost to Indian interests including investments of US\$ 3 billion in development projects. **China and Pak are colluding to deny India, a legitimate role in Afghan talks.**

**Calibrated Chinese Collusion.** China has taken a carefully calculated approach to supporting Pakistan. There has been undiluted support from international bodies like UNO and FATF. It put up the facade of responsible power during Kargil operations in 1999, when it chose to maintain restrained posture despite appeals by Pakistan.<sup>10</sup> This has even spawned a strong belief that in a conflict initiated by Pakistan against India, China may not intervene. Indian strategic thinkers opined that historically China had not made decisive interventions in 1965, 1971 and Kargil conflicts and limited support to providing arms, issuing ultimatums and tying down troops deployed on Sino-Indian border. Any intervention by Chinese troops is likely to generate signals of opportunism, fear and awe amongst smaller neighbours. There was also a feeling that even in conflicts initiated by China, she may not like to be seen colluding and taking help from Pakistan. However, there are unverified reports of intelligence sharing and posturing in the recent Ladakh stand-off, but

physical participation is not yet proven. There is also a belief that **Pakistan will invariably try to take advantage, of any conflict initiated by China against India.** It will be appropriate to place on record that Pakistan has acted in restrained manner in current stand-off with China in Ladakh, in all likelihood at behest of her controlling partner, China.

### **CPEC—New Collusive Paradigm**

**Defining Treaty.** A special bilateral China-Pakistan Treaty of Friendship, cooperation and good-neighbourly relations, ratified by both sides in 2005-06, is the most significant milestone in China Pakistan collusion and collaboration. It mandates the two nations to desist from **‘joining any alliance or bloc which infringes upon the sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of the other side’.** It also forbids both countries to conclude a similar treaty with a third country, thereby closing avenues for strategic pact with the USA. It set the stage for China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). **It has been pitched as show-piece for Belt and Road Initiative ((BRI) adding geo-economic heft to collusion.** The project with projected investment of US\$ 62 billion is also being dubbed as colonisation of Pak economically by China, thus adding an ironical twist to the acronym itself. Dependencies and debt traps are likely to lead to China getting ownership of Gwadar and chunks of transportation corridor on long lease basis. Pakistan also figures prominently in maritime, digital and health silk routes, also described as ‘string of pearls’.

**Strategic Drivers.** CPEC is showcased as benign, economic collaboration in an open domain, yet behind this cloak of development, it conceals and down-plays, collusive strategic drivers like warm-water port (Gwadar) connectivity for China to Makran coast. The collateral benefits of enhanced interoperability between two armed forces, two additional divisions for protection of corridor, maritime co-operation, logistics and optic fibre connectivity are all downplayed. The very alignment and execution of projects in Gilgit-Baltistan (GB)

and Pakistan Occupied Kashmir like Kohala and Daimer-Basha dams are altering the very status-quo, mandated in UN resolution. **These projects challenge de-jure sovereignty of India and extend legitimacy of Pakistani claims.** Pak has allowed access and deployment of the Chinese workforce along with security personnel in GB and POK. This amounts to negating her territorial claims. **Chinese presence in operational terms constrains targeting options to avoid escalation, consequent in collateral damage to Chinese personnel and assets.**

### **Construct and Catalysts for Collusion**

**Pak Objectives.** Pakistan as a state is defined by the **self-professed raison d'être for its creation, the need to be separate theological state and anti-India in its orientation.** This urge and mindset acquired fanatic flavour, when **Pak added ideological frontiers** as an add-on to its physical boundaries<sup>11</sup> Pakistan chose to name her capital as Islamabad and even describe her nuclear bomb as 'Islamic bomb'. Most of her strategic missiles have been named after invaders like Babur, Ghaznavi and Shaheen. Even infiltration task forces in 1965 were named similarly—Saladin, Khilzi, etc. Kargil raiders were described as Ghazis and Mujahideen. This has **spurred craving for 'parity fixation in strategic domain'**, tendency of constant comparison with India, articulated recently by former Pak PM, Imran Khan's recent comparisons of Pakistan's foreign policy, with the Indian neutrality, strategic autonomy and heft in international community. In blunt terms, it amounts to Pak's desire to punch much above her weight classification. The quest for parity has degenerated into multiple aggressions, proxy war and constant affliction to foment anti-India narratives. Pak while aspiring to be leader of Islamic ummah has displayed rank hypocrisy by maintaining stoic silence on Chinese atrocities on Uighur community in Xinjiang.

**Chinese Aspirations.** China on the other hand wants to establish her hegemony and keep India hyphenated with Pakistan. It is **diabolic**

**‘push-pull’ formulation of push down India to keep her embroiled in sub-continent, denying her, rightful place on the global stage.** This is concurrently accompanied with pulling up to artificially hoist Pak to drum up notion of parity. The only glue in this collusive relationship is to deny India, strategic salience. Chinese actions in denying India membership in Security Council and Nuclear Security Group are reflective of this trend. Ironically, Beijing links Indian admission with Pak, being concurrently given membership of NSG, notwithstanding her dodgy record in nuclear proliferation. Double pincer collusion drives multi-spectral linkages like helping Pak to acquire nuclear weapons. China has aided and colluded with Pak to bypass Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) and Nuclear Proliferation Treaty (NPT). Collusion between these two nations was predicted by **Samuel Huntington** in his famous book, ‘Clash of Civilizations’, wherein he had flagged congruence between Sinic and Islamic civilisations.<sup>12</sup>

**Multi-spectral Collusion. China has emerged as the largest arms supplier to Pakistan replacing America.** Pakistan has allowed Chinese cloning experts to reverse engineer US-supplied equipment, in flagrant violation of proprietary end-user clauses. China and Pakistan are also engaged in regular training exercises, manoeuvres and exchange visits. All these weapons and expertise is likely to be focused against India and some of it is being used in proxy war. China allows Pak to piggyback on strategic projects like missiles, defence production and space collaboration. North Industries Corporation (NORINCO) and other Chinese arms manufacturers have upgraded Heavy Industries Taxilla (HIT), Ordinance Factories, Aviation Complex Kamran and Missile plant at Tarwanah, near Rawalpindi. It has enabled Pak to execute joint production of JF-17 aircraft, Al-Khalid main battle tanks, howitzers, missiles and a variety of munitions. China has announced joint projects in submarines and underwater vehicles. **The proliferation of Chinese origin weapons in neighbouring countries enables Pak presence**

**for servicing and repairs besides export orders.** Pak reliance on Chinese equipment has its own glitches due to relative technological and serviceability levels. There have been reports on problems in Chinese supplied equipment and its comparison with modern American platforms like Huey Cobras, Strykers, Chinooks, drones and Javelin missiles.

### **Strategic Options to Counter Collusion**

**Strategic Baggage.** Till the recent course correction on designation of primary threat, Indian policymakers believed that China can be managed diplomatically. There was marked reluctance to discuss ‘two and half front’ scenarios, with half denoting internal security threats like Left Wing Extremism (LWE). It was coupled with **primary focus bordering on Pak threat as a sort of strategic affliction or even strategic historical baggage.** There was over-reliance on Dual Tasked Formations (DTFs) and inter theatre switching of forces. This belief was based on three premises; first, the Chinese focus on internal economic consolidation and development. It was inferred that China will avoid distractions. Second, reliance on border treaties and protocols, especially on agreed Confidence Building Measures (CBM). India rightly expected maturity on part of China in keeping with her rising stature. This was bolstered by historical reticence on part of China to decisively intervene in Indo-Pak conflicts. Third, global coupling of supply chains and trade linkages, especially with the huge Indian market will discourage such adventures. However, China seems to have leveraged Indian dependencies in critical sectors in smart and coercive format.

**Recalibration.** However, the recent trend of ‘**aggressively rising China**’ and ‘**wolf warrior diplomacy**’ as also flagrant violations of agreed CBMs, treaties and protocols during Ladakh face-off have forced a complete rethink and recalibration of strategy. Discarding sort of self-generated denial syndrome, there is clear designation of China, as primary

threat. Collusion has been accepted as corollary and reality. Collusion in many facets like intelligence, info operations, cyber, surveillance, manufacturing, preparation and many more disciplines has **acquired abiding permanency and seamless fusion between the two nations**. The two-front challenge refers to a simultaneous or synergised armed conflict (aggression) with both China and Pakistan engaging India. They could follow either a collaborative or a collusive approach, the difference in these two terms has become mere semantic, as collusion is permanent. Collaboration is declaratory and becoming rare, it implies one country openly aiding the other militarily, whereas the collusion involves covert cooperation between the two. **In this case, we are confronted with collusive collaboration.**

**Response Matrix.** Indian preparation levels against Pakistan are reportedly pegged on parameters of 'credible deterrence' to be upgraded to 'punitive deterrence'. Against China, it has been indexed as 'dissuasive deterrence', to be upgraded to 'credible deterrence'. Punitive deterrence entails building up asymmetrical capabilities in niche domains to deliver sharp and surgical responses. These like Balakot air strikes can be pre-emptive, provided targets are carefully selected with due justification for international opinion. Execution has to be surgical, with minimum collateral damage and backed up by information operations to amplify the message. As a corollary, initiator has to be prepared for retaliatory response and retain control of escalatory ladder. Against??, China's mandate is to graduate from defensive dissuasion to credible deterrence, which should at least ensure stalemate, as for an aggressor, unresolved stalemate, amounts to loss of face. This would require a need to build and execute quid-pro-quo (QPQ) options like pre-emptive deployment on Kailash heights, South of Pangong Tso. **Such QPQ responses predicate meticulous and more importantly 'will power' to act.** Application of riposte or counter-offensive in other theatres facilitates horizontal escalation. This can be applied in vertical mode by enlarging

conflict to maritime or nuclear/space domains. India is opposed to both as it believes in peaceful use of space and also that there is adequate space below the nuclear threshold for conventional conflicts.

**Rebalancing.** There has been **rebalancing of force levels and resources across frontiers in keeping with reappraisal of threats.** The most notable change is re-orientation of one strike corps from western to northern borders, primarily for Ladakh theatre and its reconfiguration from mechanised to mountain. It enables two mountain strike corps to focus on their respective theatres. **The scope of rebalancing is holistic and extends to mechanised, firepower, surveillance, airpower, cyber and communications domains.** There is also enhanced focus on development of infrastructure, logistics and connectivity in border areas. This reorganisation has consequences on reduced force levels on the western front. It can impact notion of ‘decisive victory’ and emphasis has shifted to focused surgical capabilities and synergised integrated battle groups with limited objectives. It will be appropriate if integrated theatres are formed, on priority, to synergise and orchestrate more coherent response. There have been concerns on ammunition stocking for two-front wars, especially with earlier decisions to prune stocking levels to cater for short war scenarios. The ongoing Ukrainian war has brought into question this premise, it is axiomatic that stocking policy and levels for collusive threat are reviewed. It is imperative to maintain enhanced focus on internal security and need to expedite conflict resolution to tackle ubiquitous half front threats and internal fault lines. India also needs to evaluate its ‘No First Use and Massive Retaliation’ nuclear policy to inject certain degree of ambiguity for better deterrence vis-a-vis China. **In a scenario, where all three players are armed with nuclear weapons, need is to build genuine CBMs, more transparency and reduce collusion.**

Ramping up of deliberations, interoperability exercises and other connected initiatives, **alliances/partnerships are not silver-bullets or**

**panacea and have their inherent limitations.** It is unlikely that alliance partners will commit troops on ground especially as India is the only Quad nation to.

**Strategic Autonomy.** Countering collusive linkages requires strategic autonomy, which can be achieved by **Smart Atam Nirbhar.** **The thrust should be on minimising dependence on strategic and critical technologies.** Some examples are power plants for aircraft and naval crafts; cyber, guidance, surveillance and communications; autonomous and remote systems, rare earths, API for pharmaceutical industry and many more sectors. It bears reiterating that self-reliance is not self-isolation. A smart edge can be acquired by transiting to role of lead integrator. It will be axiomatic to gain autonomy in strategic sectors coupled with acquiring leverage in niche areas. **This is long term agenda and predicates sustained focus backed up with budgetary allocations to acquire 'know why' besides 'know what'.** This will entail expenditure on research and development (R&D) and building up domain competence.

### **Summary of Recommendations**

In conclusion, the following need to be emphasised:

- (a) Collusive collaboration between China and Pakistan is abiding strategic reality.
- (b) Aggressively rising China has emerged as the primary challenge, yet Pakistan remains permanent irritant.
- (c) Internal fault lines need to be addressed and conflict resolution expedited to reduce scope for collusive interference.
- (d) Alliances/strategic partnerships are certainly not enough and reliance has to be on building own capabilities.
- (e) The whole of Nation approach to boost Comprehensive National Power can make Pak irrelevant due to decisive asymmetry and reduce gap with China.



- (f) Force rebalancing and theatrisation needs to be expedited to synergise integrated responses.
- (g) Modernisation, capability building and infrastructure require sustained focus, backed up by adequate budget.
- (h) Terrestrial and maritime domains need to be concurrently developed.
- (i) Smart Atamnirbhar is the recommended way forward to gain salience in niche and disruptive technologies.
- (j) Realistic scenario-based war-gaming and simulations, backed up with net assessment should be carried out to improve responses and preparation levels.
- (k) Notwithstanding, Chinese obduracy, India should continue efforts to resolve boundary dispute and also build credible CBMs to avoid border flash-points.

Collusive two and half front threat is the ultimate challenge and requires synergy at all levels and ‘whole of nation’ approach. It will be appropriate to quote Clausewitz, “War is the continuation of policy with other means”. Deft diplomacy is required to prevent and mitigate this threat. Intelligence and surveillance agencies should remain vigilant to generate appropriate warnings. Security agencies have to rebalance and reorganise optimum force levels to generate appropriate responses. Preparation in itself is the best deterrent.

## Notes

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