

**China's Security Engagement with Pakistan: A Counter-terrorism Perspective and Its Impact on Regional Stability**

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**ABSTRACT**

*In the realm of security, the strategic partnership between China and Pakistan has become synonymous to China's engagement with Pakistan in the field of security, especially in the area of counter-terrorism. In the light of common concerns about regional instability and terrorism that adversely affect both nations' security, the partnership has begun to gain prominence. One of the key US adversaries, Pakistan is a close ally of China, the country which is investing heavily in the country's development. China has in particular supported Pakistan to strengthen its counter-terrorism capabilities through training, intelligence sharing and military cooperation with a view to saving the region and securing the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). But, there are questions on the wider impact on regional stability that this partnership can exert. Successes in counter-terrorism cooperation have curbed extremism in some instances, but challenges remain, especially when the balance of successfully curbing this threat with political dynamics in South Asia. This paper analyzes the effectiveness of China's security engagement with Pakistan in counter terrorism context and examines how it affects regional stability, chiefly by neighbors such as India and Afghanistan.*

**Keywords:** China, Pakistan, Counter-terrorism, Regional Stability, Security Engagement, CPEC, South Asia

**INTRODUCTION**

China's security engagement with Pakistan has unfolded dramatically in the past few decades of co-mobilization of counter-terrorism cooperation. This relationship has come to be crucial for securing the region given the inevitable rise of security threat coming from terrorist organizations hovering around their borders. Bilateral strategic ties between China and Pakistan have deepened in the context of South Asia on the basis of mutual concerns of both these countries regarding extremism and regional instability (M. Ahmad and Hashmi 2024). Both countries have engaged with more closeness and sharing of intelligence, operationally counter terrorism and mitigation of danger from transnational terrorism and other insurgent movements due to increased momentum of these concerns.

China Pakistan relationship is primarily based on the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which has been planned to involve development of wide infrastructure to improve connectivity of trade between China and Pakistan. Compared with other international development projects, CPEC has been highly regarded as an important part of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) aimed at promoting international trade and regional connectivity. However, CPEC has exceptionally large dimensions and so it needs to be secured no matter what, to protect investments on CPEC and make the project successful (Durrani 2023). Therefore, the relationship between Pakistan and China in Beijing-Islamabad relations has become an important point of contact on their counter-terrorism cooperation: both countries are especially sensitive to

the terrorist groups of the region. This cooperation is now about protecting CPEC, implementation of CPEC.

They were worried their countries, China and Pakistan both, came under persistent terrorism. Particularly in the Government of Pakistan's western FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas) and Baluchistan provinces, Government of Pakistan has proved to be difficult negotiations to handle with insurgent groups such as the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and other separatist movements. The unresolved Uyghur separatist movements and Islamic extremist groups in China's Xinjiang are also their own security issues there that have caused internal instability and violence. As both countries viewed an alliance as the only way to ensure securing both their borders and domestic peace, it allowed China and Pakistan to grow closer counter terrorism ties as the two countries have become accustomed to dealing with common threats.

Stable Pakistan is a must for China's view of ensuring regional security inasmuch as the success of CPEC or the success of the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is critical for it. A peaceful region of Central and South Asia and the peaceful investment of China's infrastructure will depend on an absence of terrorism and terrorist antics and a stable Pakistan (Raza 2024). All of this is in keeping with China's wider plans to become a major power in the world, and it is in the interest of peace in neighboring countries and, indeed, globally.

Pakistan considers China as its strategic partner while it is fighting terrorism. Experts said China's support is essential for troubled Pakistan where terrorists from Afghanistan have been attacking it from across the border and its own war has been going on for decades. The cooperation reaches more into military and intelligence sharing domains than those in the military and diplomatic fields. Both nations have sanctioned the defenses of infrastructure that constitute the core of CPEC by way of better sharing of intelligence, joint military exercises and other (Rasool and Zaheer 2024). With China at their disposal to fight terror, Pakistan is an assurer of things far unsettled in the region.

Though there have been complex steps in China Pakistan counter terrorism cooperation, they have been successful. In some areas, the two nations have been collaborative, but the combined effect of the two nations working together has reasons to be a worry for the stability of region. The key problem India has with China's rising bilateral relationship with Pakistan has little to do with the rows over Kashmir. The China Pakistan alliance, especially in the China Pakistan Security line, threatened to national security of India. The intelligence sharing and the military training have already triggered India's security concerns, but still the involvement to Pakistan's counter-terrorism endeavor by China has been generating India.

Second, the situation of Afghanistan is one of the security issues which have never been resolved and have remained continuing till the present day and has already a very fragile situation; and as such, it becomes a nation in which it complicates the counter terrorism cooperation between China and Pakistan. This porous border between Pakistan and Afghanistan is the main channel for terrorist movement, including the Taliban and Al Qaeda, for decades (Rasool and Zaheer 2024). The Afghan-Pakistan border is a forcing ground where two countries can't escape one of the battles against terrorism have to confront terrorism. China has been aiding in Afghanistan's stabilization, but through diplomatic channels, and the fact that Afghanistan's state of stability looms to be a possibility as a threat to counter-terrorism effectiveness between China and Pakistan is something yet to be resolved.

Attempts to develop a coherent security paradigm in the region becomes even more difficult due to the more specific geopolitical context of the region. Mainly because of suspicion and rivalry in care between the key region players, India, Afghanistan and some of the Central Asian states, it is not easy to develop a

lasting and unified structure of security. Regional dynamic security is a very sensitive issues that are influenced externally by the United States and Russians who share responsibility in policies and counter terrorism strategies. By showing its intention to continue the deal with Pakistan's security ties with China, it is also indicating to continue trying the same business with Russia under the condition of stability in the regional stability of South Asia and Central Asia.

This paper analyzes China's involvement in Pakistani security engagement under a counter-terrorism lens and examines how China's involvement forges ahead for the region. The effects of these counter-terrorism efforts will be analyzed in terms of their success and their implications for the overall security environment in South Asia (Verma 2020). This research aims to understand the long term implications of China's contribution to counterterrorism in Pakistan and in the broader regional context with respect to the success and failure of what is a critical security relationship.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

There has been extensive interest in China's security engagement in and particularly counter-terrorism with Pakistan in the academic and policy debates. Security cooperation is always mentioned in the literature on China-Pakistan relations, yet with the increased threat posed by extremism in the region, this counter-terrorism aspect has become more and more central in recent years. It has been stated by scholars that China's security strategy in Pakistan benefits it both domestically, especially in Xinjiang, and with respect to its regional aims, namely, balancing the maintenance of stability as a precondition to the operation of CPEC.

### **China's Counterterrorism Engagement Initiatives**

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<b>Initiative</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Impact</b>
<b>Military Cooperation</b>	Joint military exercises and training to enhance Pakistan's defense capabilities.	Strengthened Pakistan's military capacity
<b>Intelligence Sharing</b>	Exchange of intelligence to combat terrorism and insurgency.	Improved intelligence networks
<b>CPEC Protection</b>	Measures to safeguard CPEC infrastructure from terrorist threats.	Secured key infrastructure
<b>Joint Security Operations</b>	Coordinated operations between China and Pakistan to tackle cross-border terrorism.	Enhanced border security

Nevertheless, China is highlighted as Pakistan's key security partner in the war on terrorism. It covers direct military support such as provision of training, equipment and intelligence as well as indirect forms such as

political support in international forums. Pakistan is equally dependent on China's support to its security apparatus particularly the operations that have to do with counter insurgency and border security games (Khan 2024). Despite this, scholars hold that China backs Pakistan in a fight against some of the many militant groups, including the Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), Islamic State (IS) and Baloch separatists that threaten national stability.

At the same time, it says that literature points to the emergence of a trend of growing military and intelligence sharing and collaboration with Pakistan. The partnership brought about better tracking and debilitating of terrorist networks because they did already exist. Given that most terrorists that operate along their shared borders with Afghanistan, particularly when not viewing national boundaries, these intelligence sharing arrangements are of pivotal importance.

However, it should also be emphasized that, like any deepening of security cooperation, the limits and risks are indicated in the literature. But closer counterterrorism cooperation brings benefits to both, and there has been worry that the security impact on the region will be high (Kuszevska and Nitza-Makowska 2021). For example, India sees the growing Chinese military and security backing of Pakistan as a threat in the Kashmir issue. However, China has coupled its rising counterterrorism cooperation with Pakistan with the unpleasant side of raising anxiety between China and India and India and Pakistan.

The literature also makes the point that it is strategic but not easy for China to be involved in counterterrorism in Pakistan. China faces a complicated balancing act between terrorism and counterterrorism and its geopolitical goals: with respect to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and China's relations with South Asian countries more generally. The sustainability of China-Pakistan security cooperation has also been questioned by scholars, especially in an ever-changing political climate, and in response to terrorism's changing threat pattern in the region.

### **Research Question**

The overall research problem addressed in the study can be stated as: "How does China's involvement in counterterrorism in Pakistan affect regional stability in South Asia, in particular with regard to India and Afghanistan?"

This paper first seeks to explore behind the China's strategic objectives of the security cooperation with Pakistan especially in the context of counter terrorism operations, and how this engagement incorporates into the broader regional stability (Rahman and Zafar 2024). This study will seek to understand how China's playing a role in Pakistan's counter terrorist strategy has shaped China's geopolitical and regional positioning in consideration of the dynamics of security in South Asia. The research will inquire if this partnership has aided in peace and stability in the region or increased tension between India and Afghanistan.

Sub-questions include:

1. Details regarding the China-Pakistan joint counterterrorism strategies need to be explained.
2. The security situation in Pakistan and neighboring areas have undergone changes due to these implemented strategies.
3. In what ways does China utilize its counterterrorism partnership with Pakistan for its regional policy objectives?

4. What security events stemming from China's increased protection duties in Pakistan influence the strategic dynamics between India and Afghanistan?

The research will follow these inquiries to establish a framework that helps understand China's security partnership with Pakistan and how it influences regional stability.

### **Research Objectives**

The main objectives of this research are as follows:

1. This analysis investigates China's particular strategy for aiding Pakistan from terrorism, including military support, sharing of intelligence and even trainings.
2. In this part, the impact of China's counter-terrorism efforts on Pakistan's security operations will be evaluated along with their success rate and the detected weaknesses.
3. The effects of China–Pakistan's counter-terrorism alliance are to be analyzed in terms of how the alliance can impact South Asian geopolitical relations directly with India and Afghanistan in particular.
4. This research objective examines both these two elements by an analysis of the long term sustainability and future development prospects of China Pakistan counter terrorism cooperation.

The research addresses both fundamental perspectives of China's security partnership with Pakistan from counter-terrorism standpoints and its complete effects on nearby stability.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Qualitative research methodology combined with literature review, case study analysis and expert interviews and content analysis will be used in this study to assess China's counterterrorism impact on Pakistan. Research examines China's role in Pakistan's counter-terrorism activities to explain their impact upon South Asian regional security.

#### **1. Literature Review**

The research analyzes academic and policy works which examine China's counter-terrorism strategies along with its security relations with Pakistan while exploring effects on South Asian stability. The analysis synthetic topics related to China's security operations in Pakistan specifically regarding counter-terrorist policies through scholarly materials alongside books international institution reports and legislative documentation (M.N. Ahmad, Jathol, and Munir 2025). Through the literature review the study will establish a theoretical structure which positions China's counter-terrorism methods against its wider regional security agenda. The comparison will enable evaluation of current counter-terrorism theories and practices together with their South Asian outcomes.

#### **2. Case Study Analysis**

Past incidents of Chinese counter terrorism operations in Pakistan will serve as specific examples to understand direct applications of these strategies. The research investigates real-world operations which demonstrate China-Pakistan border collaboration through joint military drills and intelligence exchanges as well as security efforts aimed at suppressing terrorism in the Xinjiang

area. Through examination of authentic situations the research evaluates China's security partnership with Pakistan while examining counter-terrorism achievements as well as face-to-face operational obstacles (Hussain, Jaffar, and Hussain 2024). A research design built around case studies enables thorough evaluation of China and Pakistan's joint operations affecting national security structures alongside regional security patterns.

### **3. Expert Interviews**

During the research phase, several conversations will be held with the main actors that implement China's counter-terrorism programs in Pakistan. The list of interview participants include Chinese diplomats together with Pakistani military officials, regional security experts and India, Afghanistan policymakers. Gathering qualitative results on what participants in the China-Pakistan security relationship have firsthand experiences through face to face interviews (Gul et al. 2022). The interviews are to explore views of the affected by and of security personnel in the counter-terrorism operations in Pakistan who reveal achievements and challenges and apprehensions about Chinese security engagement in Pakistan. The interview responses would provide information on political, Security, Diplomatic and China Pakistan relations aspects and their implications on South Asia's overall security dynamics.

### **4. Content Analysis**

Measuring of the public approach by China to its counter-terrorism activities in Pakistan, involves the content analysis of the public documents and official statements and media reports. The research discusses subject portrayal in Pakistani local news media, Chinese news media and global media. In order to study how people in direct and international communities view China's counter-terrorism initiatives, available sources are studied (Jadoon et al. 2024). This content analysis technique involves how researchers study the significant storytelling components and framing strategies possibilities as well as media biases when examining China's counter terrorism program's impacts and the relations with Chinese and Pakistani and also political situation of the world. This analysis of China's security policies in Pakistan and their development provides a basis for public understanding of China's Chinese security activity within Pakistani borders and of region actor views of these policies.

The combination of this research method allows for an in depth understanding of China's approach to counter-terrorism of Pakistan and the impact on the strategic security in the area. Using literature review, case study analysis and expert interviews and content analysis, the research shows China's counter-terrorism performance and its effect on South Asian security conditions particularly on India and Afghanistan (Verma 2020b). The study leads to deeper understanding of China's emerging regional security role and China's ambivalent policy regarding Pakistan's counter-terrorism operations.

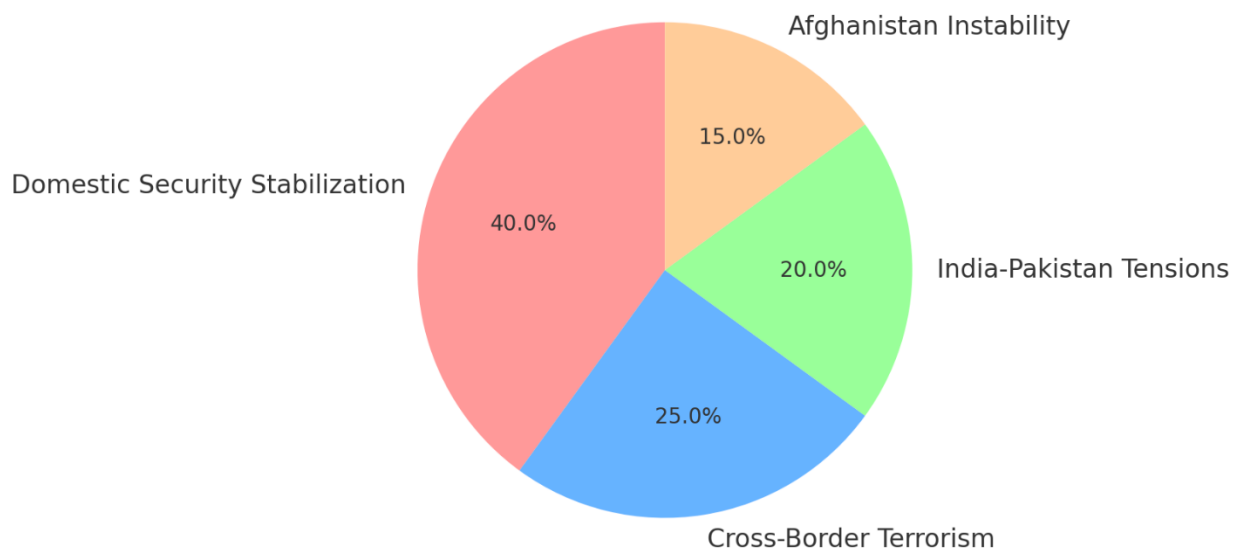
## **RESULT FINDINGS**

Among other things, this research shows that China's counter-terrorism efforts in Pakistan varied in their effect on regional stability. By delivering this partnership substantial improvements to Pakistan's counter-terrorism capabilities along Baluchistan and northwest regions, the partnership has helped some in achieving some small level of anti-terror successes. By being part of the alliance with China, Pakistan has been incorporated new counter terrorism capabilities by receiving military aid and operational intelligence and security assistance in sensitive border regions (Bano and Batool 2024). These joint efforts are used by



the nation in handling internal security threats as well as ensuring the protection of the critical infrastructure like, for instance, the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC).

#### Regional Security Challenges in South Asia



Studying arrangements in the defense and counter-terrorism practices, the research shows that military partnership between China and Pakistan increases distrust between Pakistan and India in particular. India expects that its regional security is in danger because of the rise of Chinese security involvement with Pakistan's defense and counter-terrorism operations (Adil and Khan 2023). The continued border disputes in Kashmir between China and Pakistan mean that their improved military cooperation serve to create security threats against India. According to India, Chinese diplomatic movements have harmful results creating East Asian regional tensions among the states. The security cooperation between China and Pakistan may cause more border tensions but maintains smooth partnerships in the counter-terrorism measures, producing more regional security hazards.

The research evidences show that Chinese counter terrorism assistance made the parts of Pakistan stable, although there was substantial extremism threat all around the region. The final section of the research can reveal that crossing the border with Afghanistan from Pakistan is easy, thereby imposing a lot of restrictions on joint counter-terrorism operations. While there is ongoing instability in Afghanistan, and extremist threats are being inflicted by militant groups between the borders of the two states, Pakistan and China are not able to completely wipe out these threats completely. Countering terrorism operations are problematic, because the Afghan Taliban and Al Qaeda terrorist groups do not accept the national borders.

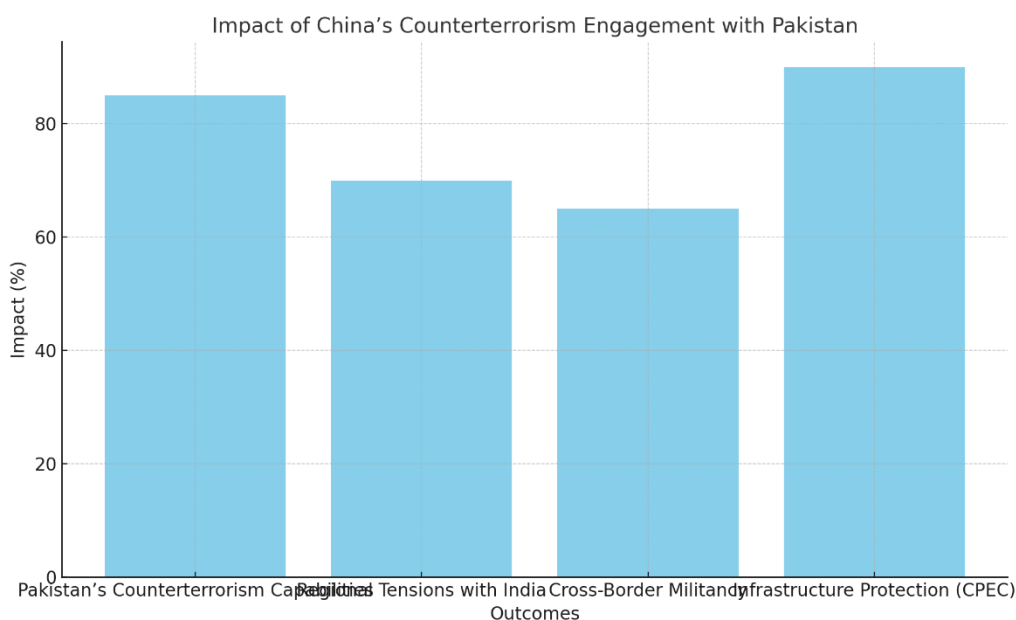
The research will show the points where counter-terrorism programs prove inadequate in areas where extremist organizations maintain their presence. Terrorism continues to plague South Asia because of unstable conditions in Afghanistan along with the difficult border control between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Throughout the research it becomes evident that China and Pakistan achieved limited success with their counter-terror operations but the Border States in the region face ongoing security challenges. A

long-lasting problem of transnational terrorism combined with non-coordinated regional security plans blocks total extremism elimination across the region (Khizar and Ahmad 2021).

Research outcomes will show that China's counter-terrorism partnership with Pakistan has provided Pakistani national security benefits but simultaneously intensified geostrategic tensions versus India. The evolving security situation in Afghanistan creates extensive barriers for the overall success of counter-terrorism programs. The study emphasizes the necessity of implementing broad regional collaboration which involves China alongside Pakistan along with India and Afghanistan to establish permanent stability throughout the area.

## DISCUSSION

The counter-terrorism initiatives between China and Pakistan have developed their mutual security relations through increased border protection and defense of essential infrastructures like the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Through their anti-terrorism work these nations achieve enhanced security readiness together with defense of important economic assets shared by both states. China's backing enables Pakistan to fight border-based terrorist organizations so the country can strengthen its intelligence systems while enhancing its defense capabilities. The cooperative relationship secures important infrastructure projects especially CPEC because both China and Pakistan depend on this facility for their Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) and Pakistan's sustainable economic future.



China-Pakistan security cooperation makes neighbors worried about what future security conditions will look like throughout the area. India, in particular, views China's increasing military and security presence in Pakistan as a direct challenge to its regional influence. India has major reservations about intensified military cooperation between China and Pakistan because their developing alliance poses significant dangers (Kulsoom, Hussain, and Shah 2025). India has guarded Pakistan throughout the last century due to their mutual longstanding border disputes and military conflict differences. The China-Pakistan military alliance built for counter-terrorism purposes makes regional stability and peace increasingly difficult to



achieve through simultaneous creation of diplomatic barriers across South Asia and increased regional conflict.

The Chinese support for Pakistani counter-terrorism measures successfully protects domains and intercepts internal threats yet it fails to address the region-wide security problems which continue preventing enduring peace in the area. Counter-terrorism operations face their most substantial challenge from the unstable security situation which exists in Afghanistan across the entire operational area. Border operations between China and Pakistan are limited by terrorist movements because region-to-region travel prevents efficient elimination of cells and prevents border attacks. Under the current political and governance conditions of Afghanistan we face significant challenges to unite counter-terrorism efforts thus endangering regional possibilities for collective anti-terrorism actions.

Through its counter-terrorism initiatives China reaches strategic goals which encompass various South Asian nation-states. Through its partnership with Pakistan China can build a position as a security provider while supporting both BRI and CPEC success. The strategic importance of these initiatives drives China to see them as mandatory for executing its regional economic and political expansion. China and Pakistan must protect CPEC due to its location in security-sensitive areas because this threatens the economic transformation of Pakistan and China's Belt and Road Initiative success. The Chinese backing for Pakistani counter-terrorism follows two strategic goals focused on infrastructure defense together with expanded South Asian influence.

It also needs to find an appropriate balance in its obviously much improved security relationship with other countries and in which other countries can be seen with political matters concerning Afghanistan and India. In order to deal with its security concerns related to Chinese security expansion in Pakistan, India needs to preserve peace between countries in the region. China has an interest in monitoring closely the constantly instability in the security and political situation of another country at the war against Afghanistan in the country. Stable counter-terrorism from both China and Pakistan must be existing as it serves to reduce the regional tension. Thus, in the future, China has to make plans against terrorism and plans on counter-terrorism, including several South Asian partnership attempts toward satisfying the strategic goals, and also from embedding a South Asian partnership initiative toward promoting the security of the South Asia region.

Both Pakistan and China found ways through their alliance against terrorism to advance their relations and also well cover vital parts of the each country. Thus, Indian security challenge and the instability of Afghanistan over its wider region complicates walking the path towards regional peace. Its participation in the South Asian security dynamics that bear important implications on the political situation in the region and are dangerous to the international and regional consequences will impact the conduct of the operations of the anti-terrorism if conducted from within too sensitive geographical surroundings.

## **CONCLUSION**

The cooperation with the other on terrorism has been crucially based on China and Pakistan's security alliance and development of stable regions in selected Pakistani regions. In India, apart from India's military collusion with Pakistan, China on its part has become much stronger in counter terrorism over the boundaries of Pakistan's territory with its military collaboration with Pakistan. Pakistan's activities in counter terrorism have been essential to stop the looming insurgencies, of the threatening insurgencies in tandem with the separatist militant groups and extremist factions. China also so far along with Pakistan

together worked at protecting the China Pakistan economic Corridor (CPEC) infrastructures system and in bringing up the security levels in the former traditional terrorist zones.

The effect of the partnership of the two countries is complicated with regards to stability in the whole region. While the China support has enabled Pakistan to gain the muscle to fight terrorism, unforeseen circumstances, the industry it has given to the region's regional geopolitical frame, is still a question. This has brought great tensions especially towards India in the region that Pakistan and China have taken up for security cooperation. For such examples, it is through its counter-terrorism cooperation with Pakistan that Chinese military power has been expanding on the Indian flanks directly, threatening to India's security interests and Indian regional clout. The apprehensions in Indian security cooperation with China come from combining Pakistan defence operations with matters handled by military as well as counter terrorism-related in Kashmir dispute. India perceives China's efforts to promote influence in South Asia and challenge India's regional supremacy, for the most part on the basis of cultivating ties with India, as the start of a strategic partnership.

As the Chinese military camped nearer and nearer the defense system of Pakistan particularly, the security situation of Afghanistan in the South Asian region, the question becomes more and more important. Instability in political affairs, insurgency and an unstable security situation in Afghanistan only make it a hard task to China to conduct counter terrorism against Pakistan. It is freely crossed by militant forces who are spreading terrorism in the area since the uncontrolled border between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The negative impact on China's security partnership with Karachi is that it can not make stability in the region, as it remains an unstable political environment in Afghanistan. In regards to terrorist operations in this border region, these counter-terrorism actions become more difficult still, because the groups are supported and provide hidden bases for themselves in the surrounding region. All these plans could be bad for Afghan domestic security and for perpetuating Afghanistan-Pakistan diplomatic tensions and the Afghan government's skepticism about Chinese security deals for Pakistan.

China ties Pakistan through strategic measures such that these countries do not have political frictions with the surrounding countries. For the circumstances in Afghanistan and for India, Chinese counter-terrorism cooperation with Pakistan seems to be indeed quite close to watch. In addition, the Chinese counter-terrorism initiatives are the organization's primary strategic goals and security objectives and thus the organization should also take caution in reducing heightened risks of regional conflict. Consciously China has to perform choice to avoid reconstituting the regional power it is building in a region which is causing India and Afghanistan to feel as if they had the justification for their perceived doubts about their security.

With the progress of domestic leadership as well as foreign expansion tactics, China's continued work to achieve stability in South Asia will be successful. China has already strayed from the delicate balance of strengthening its military relationship with Pakistan while avoiding any possible negative repercussions for the old and new conflicts and instabilities, but this, itself is to be expected. To enhance the trust and eliminate the security fears which exist between countries, both India and Afghanistan required to work together on an economic partnership as well as an open dialogue and diplomatic efforts.

China must now adjust its anti-terrorism response as the situation of South Asian terrorism requires it. Cybers attacks; recent security risks of terrorist cells of a single operator or those movements in international jihadist (in preventing with previous years' counter-terrorism approach). On the other hand both China and Pakistan have to be adaptive in structural counter-terrorism measures to meet, the next security threats, and should respond with a counter-terrorism that is responsive and, thus, survivable. Counter-terrorism strategies will act by stabilizing Pakistan and the region as a whole so that South Asian

security has the perfect balance of interaction between neighboring nations through neutral counter-terrorism actions.

China, however, had come up to offer cooperative counter terrorism assistance to Pakistan which had improved joint defense capabilities but could not guarantee the peace, and the future stability of the region was not yet predictable. Given that South Asian geostrategic conditions comprise of periods where China and India are in heightened tensions and Afghanistan is still volatile; China must be strategic cautious in its use of security in South Asia. In an effort to maintain long term stability in South Asia and to create secure security systems by means of partnership alliances, China has no other choice than to create secure spaces through existing regional tensions for both its benefit and maintenance of serenity across the region. In the process of enhancing its cooperation methods for regional peace building, China generates the resolution to be called a global security actor.

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