

Pakistan's Influence on Sino-Indian Relations in Geo-strategy and Security

Bowei Xing

Centre for International Studies and Diplomacy, SOAS (School of Oriental and African Studies),
University of London, London, WC1H 0XG, UK

Abstract. In this paper, I analyze Pakistan's Influence on Sino-Indian Relations in geopolitics and security, economy, and military. In my dissertation, my point is that Pakistan has affected Sino-Indian relations in many ways. This impact should not be simply attributed to positive or negative impact. In fact, Pakistan's role in Sino-Indian relations is diversified. The instability in Pakistan and the Sino-Pakistani relations have exacerbated the mutual suspicion between China and India, but also provided new ideas for Sino-Indian cooperation. I use realism, liberalism and constructivism at the same time to explain my research problems. Moreover, I have integrated many new theories and viewpoints in recent years and the recent events between China, India and Pakistan into my research.

Keywords: Sino-Indian Relations; China; India; Pakistan; Terrorism; Balochistan Liberation Army; Kashmir.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the relationship between China, India and Pakistan has been increasingly referred to as the "strategic triangle" or "triangular relationship". The triangular relationship is a very common power structure in international society. In their well-known book *Triangulating Peace: Democracy Interdependence, and International Organizations*, Russett and Oneal explain triangulation as an essential condition for reducing war and maintaining peace because "each corner interacts with the other two to form a stable Equilibrium. As some scholars said, triangles working together are the easiest channels to achieve peace (Russett and Oneal, 2001). The triangular relationship between countries is a multilateral concept. It is an objective phenomenon that under certain geopolitical conditions, specific countries are interrelated and interactive in their respective diplomatic strategies because of the interdependence of interests, but they are not aligned. The triangular relationship between nations is the most basic pattern in the variable relationship (Xue, 2007). In the post-Cold War period, most countries avoided the bipolar structure characterized by alliances out of rational choice, thus forming a multilateral relationship structure with a triangular relationship as the basic model (Xue, 2007). Compared with the relationship of the alliance, the structure of a multilateral relationship has the positive significance of restraining each other and promoting balance and stability. Since the 1960s, China has been in a multi-group, and multi-level "triangular relationship" diplomatic structure, and the China-India-Pakistan triangular relationship has always been one of the most important "triangular relationships" affecting China's foreign policy and strategic approach (Li, 2008). As neighbours to each other, China, India and Pakistan have long-term exchanges and formed special bilateral and multilateral relations. The adjustment and change of the triangular relationship between China, India and Pakistan are not only related to the essential strategic significance of the three countries but also have a basic and prominent impact on the strategic pattern and the evolution of the situation in South Asia (Xue, 2007). Due to the direct geo-strategic correlation between China, India and Pakistan as neighbouring countries and the strategic influence of the three countries in regional and even world security and development, the interest structure between the three countries has both the basis of cooperation and deep-seated contradictions. This makes the game of cooperation and confrontation, exploitation and containment in the relations of these three countries very prominent (Xue, 2007). It can be said that the situation in South Asia and even the world is closely related to the role of China, India and Pakistan, both during the Cold War and today.

Geopolitics and security are one of the most important issues for a country, and it is also one of the issues that a country needs to pay attention to most. When a country is dealing with foreign affairs, the influence of geopolitics and the significance of the country with which it conducts diplomacy in geopolitics cannot be ignored. Similarly, when a country is conducting diplomacy with other countries, it should also consider whether there are security issues that may arise in diplomatic processes. In China-India-Pakistan relations, this view is also correct. First of all, Pakistan's geo-strategic significance is very important, which refers to not only Pakistan's geo-strategic importance in South Asia and Central Asia but also Pakistan's significance in global geo-strategic security. This has led to different decisions that China and India need to make in the face of Pakistan for maximum diplomatic gain, and these diplomatic decisions have also changed the relationship between China and India to some extent. It is from this perspective that one may argue that, Pakistan's domestic security issues, especially terrorism, have the potential to shape the foreign policy of China and India towards Pakistan, which in turn would have ramifications on China and India's attitude towards each other, as well as Sino-Indian relations.

2. Terrorism in Pakistan

2.1. Where does Terrorism in Pakistan Come From?

Terrorism refers to ideas and behaviors that create social panic, endanger public safety, infringe on personal property, or coerce state organs and international organizations through violence and destruction to achieve their political and ideological goals. In short, terrorism is an act "with the aim of threatening or coercing society or a government" for ideological or political reasons (Gov.CN, 2016).

One of the serious problems Pakistan has faced in recent years is the loss of sovereignty and territorial security due to the independence movement of the Baluchis. Pakistan is a multi-ethnic country, with the Punjabis making up the majority (about 63%) of the Pakistani population, but the Sindhi and Pashto also each make up more than 10% of the total population of Pakistan (China Entrepreneurs Forum, 2022). The complex ethnic demography has led to structural complexity within Pakistan, for example, the lack of concentration of domestic political power, and further contributed to the contradictions and divisions in Pakistan. For instance, the Baluchis, who make up about 4% of Pakistan's population and most of whom live in disputed areas between India and Pakistan see their ethnic group as having no place in the military, government, and economy and are being "discriminated by the federal government". Therefore, some Baluchis have started to advocate for separation from Pakistan and independence. This kind of "independence" means that they want to fight for independence from Pakistan, whether it is to become an independent "Baluchistan country" or join India. Although Baluchis joined Pakistan for their shared religion of Islam during the Partition of India, the tendencies of separating from Pakistan seem to have always been visible among the Baluchis. These Baluchis who wanted to fight for independence were called together by terrorists with anti-government tendencies to form the Balochistan Liberation Army, which has been active along the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor in recent years. From 2018 to 2022, they planned a number of terrorist attacks, such as the attack on the Chinese Consulate in Pakistan and the Confucius Institute. Although these Baluchis just wanted to fight for a larger living space, the Pakistani government defined the BLA as a terrorist organization due to their excessive behavior (Xinhua Net, 2019).

In addition, poverty is also one of the important reasons for the frequent occurrence of terrorist crises in Pakistan. Poverty also limits Pakistan's investment in education. Poverty and low levels of education contribute to a high crime rate in Pakistan. Affected by poverty and education problems, Pakistan's unemployment rate remains high. The high unemployment rate has made the relationship between the people and the government worsening, and social conflicts have gradually intensified. When the long-term accumulated social contradictions cannot be alleviated, the people will express

their dissatisfaction through extreme methods such as violence, destruction, and resistance. This has greatly increased the risk of terrorist expansion in Pakistan.

2.2. China and Terrorism Attack in Pakistan

It is interesting to note that some of the terrorist attacks in Pakistan seem to target Chinese businessmen and projects specifically. As early as October 9, 2004, an engineer from the China Water Conservancy and Hydropower Construction Group sent by the Chinese government to Pakistan to help Pakistan with infrastructure construction was once hijacked by militants in Pakistan. The accident resulted in the killing of an engineer from China by militants (China Entrepreneur Forum Research Center, 2022). Another example is the Baluchistan Liberation Army (BLA). They planned several terrorist attacks against China.

There are two reasons for targeting Chinese in these terrorist attacks. The first reason is that, in order to put pressure on the government, attacks against overseas institutions have increased. China has more projects in Pakistan, which has given terrorists an opportunity. In recent years, terrorist attacks against foreign institutions, businesses, and citizens in Pakistan have been increasing to expand their influence and pressure the government. Because Chinese-funded enterprises have more investment projects in Pakistan, they are more likely to be targeted by terrorists. As Figure 1 shows, as China's only "all-weather strategic partnership" country, China has invested heavily in Pakistan before the implementation of the Belt and Road Initiative. After the Belt and Road Initiative was proposed, especially after the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) was launched in 2015, China's investment, trade, and contracted projects in Pakistan have increased significantly (China Entrepreneur Forum Research Center, 2022). Furthermore, Pakistani terrorists believe that Chinese investment in Pakistan touches their interests. Therefore, they choose to deter China and gain benefits by attacking Chinese companies and people. Although the Pakistani government has a positive attitude towards China-Pakistan economic cooperation, terrorist groups do not seem to think so. In response to the investment of Chinese enterprises, especially the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor project, terrorists in Pakistan believe that China is "plundering" Pakistan's resources. They think that some projects invested by China in Pakistan have changed the local ecology. There are even terrorists who believe that when these projects are complete, they will change the past balance of power that Pakistan has maintained between ethnic groups, terrorist organizations, and with the government in some areas (China Entrepreneur Forum Research Center, 2022). Since CPEC traverses the entire Balochistan province, so take terrorism in Balochistan as an example, this area is not only the focus area of the CPEC project, but also the core area of the confrontation between the BLA and the Pakistani authorities.

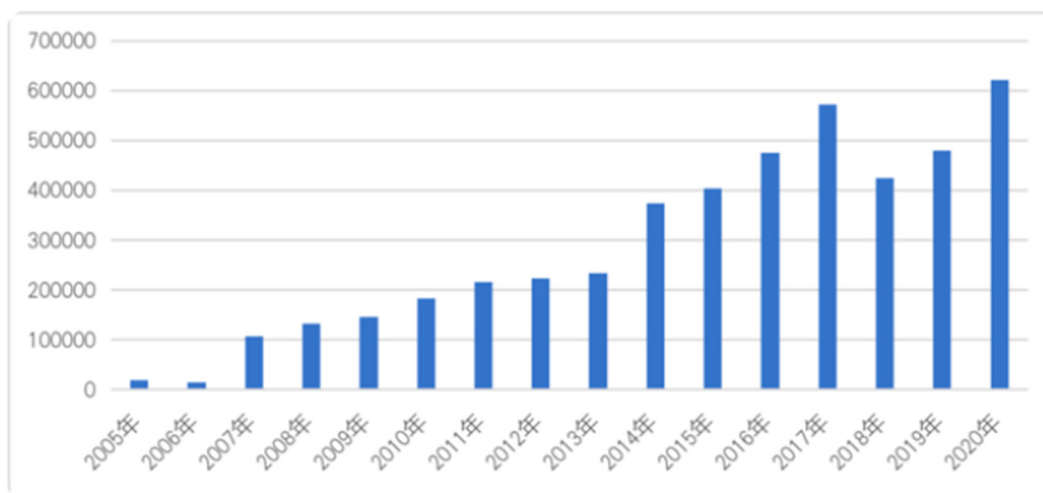


Figure 1. Changes in China's investment stock in Pakistan since 2005 (unit: ten thousand US dollars)

For terrorists, sabotaging a Chinese project can have a significant impact. This practice can not only put pressure on the Chinese and Pakistani governments but also cause delays and damage to the project process. In addition, the domestic political situation in Pakistan has become unstable due to the ouster of Pakistan's former Prime Minister Imran Khan by the Pakistani Parliament in April 2022. At this stage, terrorist forces in Pakistan are trying to further disrupt and profit from the domestic situation in Pakistan by launching terrorist attacks against Chinese citizens.

2.3. The Balochistan Liberation Army from Pakistan and Sino-Indian relations

Terrorism in Pakistan has not only had a huge impact on China but also has an impact on changes in China-India relations, especially in Balochistan, the region where terrorist attacks occur most frequently. Balochistan is a long-disputed territory between India and Pakistan. In this area, there are many residents who support India. When a terrorist attack against China occurred in Balochistan, the international community had no way to immediately determine whether the terrorist organization involved represented the position of India or Pakistan. This directly led to China's growing suspicion of India in the face of this situation and created a "fracture" in the relationship between China and India (Wagner, 2016).

In recent years, more and more people have begun to doubt the relationship between the BLA and India. They speculate that India is likely to support the BLA silently. Pakistan, the United Kingdom, the United States, and other countries regard the BLA as a terrorist organization. However, India, Pakistan's neighbor and the largest country in South Asia, has consistently refused to designate the BLA as a terrorist organization. India's ambiguous attitude towards the BLA has led to certain speculations about possible connections between the Indian government and the Balochistan Liberation Army. The Hindu, a newspaper from India, published an article in 2019 exposing the relationship between the Indian government and the BLA. In this article, the author mentions that many leaders of the BLA with the help of Indian intelligence agencies used false identities to visit India to receive Indian funding, training, and healthcare (Bhattacharjee, 2019). In May 2020, a retired Indian military officer also stated in a TV interview that India maintains contact with Balochistan separatist organization almost every day. Though these statements remain speculative and it seems impossible to verify their truthfulness, it nevertheless sheds light on how this ambivalent matter is interpreted in popular media.

Although there is currently no substantial evidence that India is indeed supporting the BLA in Pakistan, many people, especially the media, are skeptical on this issue. When scholars look at this issue from the perspective of international relations, they can analyze the underlying reasons why India chooses to support the BLA. Firstly, India and Pakistan have deep-seated contradictions on the Kashmir issue, geopolitical issues, religious issues, and historical issues. For India, it is entirely in India's interest to support the BLA to continue causing chaos in Pakistan. Furthermore, for a long time, the attitude of the BLA towards China has been highly indifferent. They have been seeking various opportunities to carry out terrorist attacks against Chinese companies and personnel. Therefore, actions to support the BLA also mean that the relationship between China and Pakistan can be damaged.

2.4. China and Masood Azhar and Jaish-e-Mohammed

China's changing attitude toward terrorist groups is reflected in how it reacted to the classification of terrorism from 2016 to 2019. For instance, in 2019, China agreed to a proposal by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) 1267 Committee to add Masood Azhar, the founder of the Pakistani terrorist group Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM), to the terrorist list (Verma, 2020). According to Verma, JeM is supported by the Inter Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI) behind the scenes (Verma, 2020). The Inter Services Intelligence Directorate is Pakistan's top spy agency. Although ISI has always been responsible for providing various political intelligence for the Pakistani government and maintaining the security of Jammu & Kashmir, the support they provided to the Taliban in Afghanistan is already "everyone knows". The link between Masood Azhar and the Taliban and Al-

Qaeda has been confirmed by himself (Hussain, 2014; The 1267 Committee, 2017). In addition, the purpose of Jaish-e-Mohammed is to separate the Kashmir region from India and then incorporate it into Pakistan. To this end, they have launched several attacks in parts of Kashmir administered by India (but Pakistan claims such attacks are only against Indian troops and not against civilians). As far as Pakistan is concerned, JeM's behavior is in line with their political intentions. It must be mentioned that, just three years before United Nation's proposal, China blocked India's proposal to classify Azhar as a terrorist in 2016. In just three years, China's attitude towards JeM and Azhar has reversed. This means that China's foreign policy towards its two South Asian neighbors, India and Pakistan, is also quietly changing.

Although JeM (from Pakistan) has planned several terrorist attacks against the Indian army in recent years, before 2019, China has always been protecting Pakistan from accusations and diplomatic pressure from other countries. The links between JeM and their leader Masood Azhar to well-known terrorist groups are no longer a secret, but this did not affect China's decision before 2019. Many scholars interpret China's reluctance to accept the proposal of the UN Security Council 1267 Committee as competition between countries or competition between major powers, especially the "confrontation" between China and India. The long-standing rivalry between China and India and the persistent and intractable rivalry between India and Pakistan have driven China and Pakistan to establish an "all-weather partnership" against their common "enemy", namely, India. For China and India, the fundamental reason for the divergence between the two is that both countries need great power status in Asia and the world (Verma, 2020). Based on this idea, both China and India want to play a more important role in world affairs. Coupled with the border conflict between China and India since 1962, the Bank of China has not reached a consensus on the border issue until today. The combination of various factors has turned China and India into a long-term competitive relationship. And this competition is also manifested in many different issues, such as the border conflict between China and India, the Tibet issue, and the competition for strategic position and international influence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean (Garver, 2001). Many scholars believe that the reason why China chose to become a strategic partner with Pakistan at this stage was to check and balance India (Small, 2015; Garver, 2001; Fair, 2014). This does not mean that the threat of terrorism is not important to China. On the contrary, China, like other countries, is committed to combating terrorism that plagues the world, especially considering the fact that China has also suffered serious terrorist attacks in recent years, such as the 2014 Separatist attacks in Yunnan province. However, for political purposes, China still chooses to support Pakistan's position on JeM and UN 1267 committee issues, so as to weaken India.

There is another explanation for the JeM-China problem. In recent years, some scholars have begun to put forward new viewpoints on the concept of "terrorism". The word "terrorism" is often a classification created by the state to find the legitimacy of some of its policies to rule people/groups within its territory. In other words, a country or government defines an organization as a terrorist organization more for its political purposes (Zahra, 2011). China also has its political considerations when it comes to JeM and Masood Azhar. Before 2019, China's core strategy in South Asia was to contain India's development to ensure its security. Therefore, China rejected the proposal of the UN 1267 Committee. However, after 2019, China realized the importance of peaceful development with India, so China changed its attitude on this issue.

Several factors lead to this specific dynamic between India, Pakistan and China. India's rapid rise has challenged China to become "dominant" in the Asian region. Several factors lead to this specific dynamic between India, Pakistan and China. India's rapid rise has challenged China to become "dominant" in the Asian region. In this case, China needs to slow down India's rise by distracting India from South Asia's affairs through competition between Pakistan and India. Pakistan's National Security Agency has become a low-cost option for China to ensure that India remains vigilant and focuses its military and diplomatic focus on Pakistan (Verma, 2020). Indeed, China has effectively prevented India from focusing its strategy on China while also preventing India's rise and challenging China's bottom line on many sensitive topics in international relations. Further, Pakistan also needs

China's help to defend against India's hegemony in South Asia and prevent India from becoming a great power in international relations. Pakistan and India have many conflicts due to factors such as geographical issues, such as ownership and management of Kashmir. In the short term, these conflicts are difficult to resolve. This means that India-Pakistan relations may be eased, but they cannot be completely resolved. Whether it is for India or Pakistan, the rapid development of the other party makes them feel insecure.

However, the problem appears to be rather urgent for Pakistan. Pakistan's current economic development and military strength are not enough to compete with India. At the same time, Pakistan has gradually lost the help of the United States. Therefore, Pakistan needs to seek new allies. China can help Pakistan achieve better development in many ways, such as helping Pakistan solve the poverty problem and the education and unemployment rate derived from the poverty problem through the new economic cooperation of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. At the same time, China has also effectively helped Pakistan cope with the impact of COVID-19 on its domestic economy and medical system through medical assistance since 2020.

Nevertheless, China's foreign policy towards India has changed in 2019 after China agreed to a proposal from the UN Security Council's 1267 Committee, resulting in a new phase in China-India relations. This is not just because China is concerned that its support for Pakistan on the Azhar issue may lead to diplomatic pressure on it. Sino-Indian diplomacy and the global counter-terrorism consensus also have an impact on Chinese decision-making. Zhang Jiadong, a former Chinese diplomat in India, mentioned in an interview, "This is China's diplomatic concession to India, and it is also a hint of China's diplomatic support in the face of India. At the same time, this is also driven by the global consensus on anti-terrorism. In the new era, global counter-terrorism has become a trend. If there was no terrorist attack in Kashmir in February 2011, China may not agree to India's proposal" (Zheng, 2019). The Harvard scholar Roderick Macfarquhar also said that before this proposal, the Wuhan summit in April 2018 was seen as an attempt to turn China-India relations for the better. At the Wuhan summit, China agreed to help Narendra Damodardas Modi better ahead of the 2019 Indian elections to ensure that Modi can be re-elected as Indian Prime Minister (Daniyal, 2019).

China's new security outlook has also led to changes in China's attitudes on the issue of Masood Azhar's listing as a terrorist by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) 1267 Committee. China realizes that defending Azhar from being a terrorist has become extremely difficult. They may even suffer diplomatic isolation if China sticks firmly to their claims (Bagchi, 2019). According to Shashank, a former foreign minister in the Indian government, China's approach to protecting Azhar and Pakistanis at the UNSC has made China increasingly lonely (Economic Times, 2019). Commodore Bhaskar, a well-known Indian defense expert, believes that the improvement of Sino-Indian diplomacy has prompted China to re-examine its previous decision to reject the UNSC 1267 Committee to list Azhar as a terrorist. Bhaskar speculates that China may have struck some kind of quid pro quo with India and Pakistan (Zheng, 2019). Another speculation is that Azhar may have become so ill that he is no longer helpful to Pakistan's military security establishment, so the Pakistani government has expressed to China that it does not object to the UN Security Council's attitude toward Azhar (Kugelman, 2019). Although there are many different speculations on this issue, it is undeniable that with the implementation of China's NASC, China's attitude on the important issue of Azhar has undergone a clear change and has played an essential role in the final outcome of this issue.

Although in the 2019 proposal, China opted to remove references to JeM's attacks on Kashmir and the Pulwama region, the change in China's decision to agree to the 1267 Committee's proposal has signaled a shift in Sino-Indian relations. In the new era, JeM and its leader Azhar have changed from a factor restricting Sino-Indian relations to an element that promotes the improvement of Sino-Indian relations.

It can be argued that, although China has always been suspicious and worried about whether India is silently supporting the terrorist forces in Balochistan, Pakistan's terrorism has become an important

factor in promoting China and India to reach a consensus on counter-terrorism, and to a certain extent, it has made Sino-Indian relations closer.

3. Disputes in Kashmir

In fact, in recent years, the issue of territorial disputes in the Jammu & Kashmir area can be understood as consisting of two distinct issues. One is the well-known territorial dispute between India and Pakistan. Another is the dispute between China and India over the delineation of a border line of about 3,500 km long, which also involves the Jammu & Kashmir region (Wagner, & Stanzel, 2020). Developments in recent years have led to the gradual linking of the two previously separate conflicts, making the territorial dispute over Kashmir increasingly difficult to resolve and beginning to have a more significant impact on the relationship between China, India, and Pakistan.

3.1. The Conflict between India and Pakistan in Kashmir

Recent scholars have mentioned that the possibility of intensifying conflict between India and Pakistan, even losing control of the relationship, is one of the underestimated global risks (Cliffe, 2020). Indeed, this problem still cannot be ignored. The issue between India and Pakistan remains unresolved, and the potential for escalation of the conflict remains.

The situation in Jammu & Kashmir has changed significantly in recent years. On August 15, 2019, the Indian government decided to delineate the Jammu & Kashmir region as two states within its territory. In response to India's policy, Pakistan has also chosen to publish a new version of the country's map with Kashmir marked as Pakistan's territory on the map. Additionally, India revoked the autonomy of Jammu & Kashmir in 2019 and began imposing citizenship laws in the region that were deemed "anti-Muslim" (Cliffe, 2020). These two things directly exacerbate the conflict between India and Pakistan in Jammu & Kashmir.

Kashmir is highly symbolic for both India and Pakistan (Wagner, & Stanzel, 2020). For India, Kashmir is an essential representative of India's secularism and openness to all religious groups as a "new country" regained its independence after World War II. For Pakistan, as a Muslim country separated from British India in the last century, it has always believed that Kashmir, where the majority of the population believes in Islam, should be part of Pakistan (Wagner, & Stanzel, 2020).

The geopolitical conflict between India and Pakistan began to become international as the two countries became independent successively. From 1947 to 1972, the United Nations intervened several times to mediate the conflicts between India and Pakistan in the Jammu & Kashmir area. The UN Security Council has advocated for the withdrawal of Pakistani troops from Jammu & Kashmir and the establishment of an interim government with the assistance of the Indian army, and then the people of the region will choose the next government through a referendum. However, neither India nor Pakistan has endorsed the UN's opinion, as the UN Security Council resolution does not provide for the independence of Kashmir (Wagner, & Stanzel, 2020). But in this phase of the India-Pakistan conflict, China had little involvement because the People's Republic of China did not become a member of the UN Security Council until 1971.

Following the Simla Agreement between India and Pakistan in 1972, India suspended cooperation with the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) (Wagner, & Stanzel, 2020). Since then, the territorial conflict between India and Pakistan has gradually turned into a bilateral issue.

However, Pakistan does not seem to be satisfied with this, and the Pakistani government is trying to continue to internationalize the Kashmir issue in its way. For example, Pakistan provoked the Kargil War in 1999, got the military and intelligence agencies to support terrorist groups that carried out terrorist attacks in Kashmir, and condemned the actions of Indian forces in Kashmir as human rights violations in international public opinion (Wagner, & Stanzel, 2020).

Pakistan's position has drawn China into this India-Pakistan conflict. The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is seen as China's largest and most expensive project in the entire Belt and Road Initiative. The original intention of CPEC is to strengthen exchanges and cooperation between China and Pakistan in the fields of transportation, energy, and ocean, to strengthen the interconnection between the two countries, and to promote the common development of the two countries (CPEC.Gov Net, 2017). The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor will help to further strengthen and strengthen the China-Pakistan "all-weather strategic partnership" and provide new opportunities for the development of China and Pakistan. The CPEC traverses Pakistan's part of Kashmir, much to India's displeasure. China invited India to join CPEC because the Indian government has claimed that they own the entire Kashmir region several times. But the Indian government believes that China's CPEC plan violates their sovereignty, so India chose to refuse to join CPEC. In addition, the Indian government is also worried that CPEC will strengthen Pakistan's comprehensive national strength and will give China a more convenient opportunity to contain India. Therefore, India rejected China's proposal to invite it to join CPEC and began to worry more about the threat China poses to it.

However, China's attitude towards the India-Pakistan conflict in Kashmir is different from what Pakistan envisages. China did not support Pakistan in internationalizing the issue of Kashmir as Pakistan expected. Rather, China's government firmly believed that the issue should be resolved bilaterally between India and Pakistan. In the early days of China's CPEC investment, many scholars believed that China would support Pakistan because if Pakistan incorporated all of Jammu & Kashmir into its territory and managed the region through laws and other means, it would ensure China's investment is more secure (Mitter, 2019). However, China's proposal is closer to India's position.

In this case, India hopes to ensure China's core diplomatic strategy by deepening ties with China and ensuring that China will continue to maintain its position; China hopes that India and Pakistan can resolve their conflicts as soon as possible to ensure China's core diplomatic strategy (BRI) can proceed smoothly. Therefore, the Kashmir conflict between Pakistan and India has actually not pushed China and India further apart but has pushed China and India to stand on the same page.

3.2. The Conflict between China and India in Kashmir

With the India-Pakistan dispute over Kashmir flares up again, China and India have also "tacitly" put the issue of the border between them in Kashmir on the agenda. With the rapid development of China and India, those issues between China and India that were originally ignored by the governments of both sides have once again been noticed by the governments, such as the border issue. Geopolitical disputes are an unavoidable conflict in the "scramble for supremacy" between China and India over the South Asia/Indo-Pacific region. Because of this, both China and India hope to resolve the dispute as soon as possible so that they can devote energy to other foreign affairs. China and India seem hopeful that the border issue between them can be resolved, but once again amplify the conflict between them. This directly led to the dispute over Kashmir turning into a conflict between China, India, and Pakistan.

Although the geopolitical conflict between India and Pakistan has led China and India to choose the same position (both of China and India believe that the India-Pakistan issue on Kashmir should be resolved bilaterally), the conflict between China and India in the Kashmir region has actually had a more significant impact on China-India relations. This seems to be an important factor contributing to the deterioration of Sino-Indian relations.

Although China and India signed a number of agreements between 1993 and 2013 to ease the confrontation between China and India over territorial issues, the conflict between India and Pakistan has once again been brought to the forefront as China and Pakistan have grown closer. The agenda, which led to the border conflict between China and India, was also highlighted again.

The intensified border conflict between India and Pakistan has led China and India to re-examine the border issue between them. Therefore, the differences between China and India on the border issue have also been put on the agenda of the two countries. In recent years, the issue of ownership of the

Aksai Chin area has further intensified the contradiction between China and India, and small-scale military conflicts between China and India in the border areas have become more and more frequent.

Against the background of more and more frequent border confrontations between the Chinese and Indian troops, the attitude of the Chinese media can also reflect some problems. From the perspective of Chinese media, India is described as the initiator of the Sino-Indian border conflict, and the attitude of the Chinese media towards India has also become more hostile. Due to India's provocative behavior, China's military actions for defense are considered reasonable. In August 2020, the Global Times and China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR) conducted a survey on China-India relations in China. The results showed that more than 70% of the interviewees believed that the Indian government's attitude towards China was too hostile. Nearly 90% of the interviewees thought that China should take appropriate retaliatory measures against India's actions in the border areas (Global Times Research Center, 2020). In India, some experts and scholars have pointed out that China is the "invader" of the border issue. China wants to take back the territory under its actual control before 1995 and has already controlled about 1,000 square kilometers of territory previously controlled by India (Wagner, & Stanzel, 2020). Although the speeches and interviews of the two countries may only represent some native people's attitudes, they reflect the domestic public opinion in China and India. This attitude from China and India is not actually a good outcome. Relations between China and India have taken a nosedive in recent years due to "endless" clashes along the border.

However, this does not mean that the border conflict between China and India is an irreconcilable contradiction. Although the origins and root causes of the conflicts are different, the issue of the ownership of the border areas in Sino-Indian relations and India-Pakistan relations belongs to the same type of conflicts, that is, conflicts caused by geopolitics. When China and India face such problems, they can refer to India's solution to the India-Pakistan conflict—considering this problem as a problem of bilateral relations rather than a conflict that requires the intervention of a third country or an international organization. At the same time, China has always been committed to resolving all international conflicts through peaceful diplomatic channels, regardless of whether China is involved in this conflict. The position of China and India provides a reasonable and practical solution to the border issue between them (Mitter, 2019). If China and India can communicate this subject candidly in their bilateral peace talks, the border issue between China and India will no longer be a major issue that has become a dilemma between China and India.

4. Summary

Generally speaking, in terms of geopolitics and security, the positive impact of Pakistan on Sino-Indian relations is far greater than its negative impact. It is undeniable that China still doubts whether India is really supporting some terrorist organizations in Pakistan, and India is also worried about the close relationship between China and Pakistan. However, the common strategic goal and the same counter-terrorism strategy between China and India on the issue of terrorism in Pakistan provide sufficient conditions for cooperation between China and India. Judging from the current relationship, the consensus on strategic cooperation between China and India on the issue of anti-terrorism exceeds the contradictions between the two caused by mutual suspicion. In addition, although China-India-Pakistan relations have a large-scale dispute over border ownership, the same solution proposed by China and India on this issue has made cooperation and easing relations between China and India no longer impossible. Yet, the existence of occasional small-scale confrontations along the borders of China and India may reveal another dimension of the story. India is worried and even hostile to China, as it is concerned with the close relationship between China and Pakistan. If China cannot dispel India's concerns, then the conflict between China and India is likely to escalate again in the future. Therefore, China needs to deepen ties with India and gradually improve relations with India through economic and security cooperation to ensure regional stability.

References

- [1] Bagchi, I. (2019) "The diplomatic game of chess behind Masood Azhar's designation as a global terrorist.", *The Economic Times*, 5th May 2019.
- [2] Bhattacharjee, K. (2019) "Explained: The Baloch Liberation Army", *The Hindu*, 3rd July 2019. Available at: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/explained-the-baloch-liberation-army/article61599528.ece>.
- [3] China Entrepreneurs Forum, (2022) "[One Belt, One Road, Observation] Why is there a high incidence of terrorist attacks against China in Pakistan?", *Yabuli China Entrepreneurs Forum*, 28th April 2022. Available at: <https://baijiahao.baidu.com/s?id=1731366356411803968&wfr=spider&for=pc>.
- [4] Cliffe, J. (2020) "The world in 2020: ten crucial questions", *New Statesman*, 149(5502), pp. 30–33.
- [5] CPEC.Gov Net. (2017) "Introduction". Available at: <https://cpec.gov.pk>.
- [6] Daniyal, S. (2019) "Why China helped India put Masood Azhar on UN's terror list – and does it matter?", *Scroll Explainer*, 2nd May 2019. Available at: <https://scroll.in/article/922094/scroll-explainer-why-china-helped-india-put-masood-azhar-on-uns-terror-list-and-does-it-matter>.
- [7] *Economic Times*. (2019) "Masood Azhar's blacklisting symbolic victory for India: Experts.", 3rd May 2019.
- [8] Fair, C. C. (2014) "Fighting to the end: The Pakistan army's way of war.", New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- [9] Garver, J. H. (2001) "Protracted Contest: Sino-Indian Rivalry in the Twentieth Century.", Seattle: Washington University Press.
- [10] Global Times Research Center, (2020) "Report on Public Investigation of China-India Relations", *Global Times Research Center*, 31st August 2020.
- [11] Gov.CN (2016) "Anti-Terrorism Law of China ", Available at: https://www.gov.cn/zhengce/2015-12/28/content_5029899.htm.
- [12] Hussain, Z. (2014) "The return of Masood Azhar", *Dawn*. Available at: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1084328>.
- [13] Kugelman, M. (2019) "Masood Azhar Is China's favorite terrorist, foreign policy.", *Foreign Policy*, 21st March 2019.
- [14] Li, X. (2008) "The Triangular Relations of China - India - Pakistan in the Era of Post - cold War", *Journal of Jiangnan Social University*, 10(2), pp. 47–51.
- [15] Mitter, R. (2019) "Kashmir's new power player", *New Statesman*, 148(5461), pp. 15–16.
- [16] Russett, B. & Oneal, J. (2001) "Triangulating Peace: Democracy Interdependence, and International Organizations", [M]. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2001: 82–85.
- [17] Small, A. (2015) "The China-Pakistan Axis: Asia's new geopolitics.", New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- [18] *The Hindu Net Desk*. (2017) "The 1267 Committee, China's hold and Masood Azhar: A short history.", *The Hindu*. Available at: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/international/the-1267-committee-chinas-hold-and-masood-azhar-a-short-history/article61561293.ece>.
- [19] Verma, R. (2020) "China's new security concept: India, terrorism, China's geostrategic interests and domestic stability in Pakistan", *Pacific Review*, 33(6), pp. 991–1021.
- [20] Wagner, C. (2016) "The effects of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor on India-Pakistan relations".
- [21] Wagner, C. and Stanzel, A. (2020) "Redrawing the maps in Kashmir: New geopolitical realities in the conflict between China, India, and Pakistan".
- [22] *Xinhua Net*. (2019) "Pakistan welcomes US designation of Balochistan Liberation Army as terrorist organization". Available at: http://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2019-07/04/c_1124706999.htm?baike.
- [23] Xue, Y. (2007) "The Triangular Relation Among China, India, Pakistan and China's South Asia Policy", *South Asian Studies Quarterly*, (1), pp. 36–41.
- [24] Zahra, N. (2011) "Terrorism, Realism and the State", *Pakistan Horizon*, 64(1), 61–74. Available at: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24711143>.
- [25] Zheng, S. (2019) "Why China dropped its opposition to UN blacklisting of Pakistan-based terror chief Masood Azhar.", *South China Morning Post*, 2nd May 2019.