

# Possibilities of Sino Pak Collusion Against India In Ladakh Region

**AUTHOR BY | COL AK DAS**

**Collusive support** is a dynamic strategy adopted by a nation to pursue own interests under prevailing geo-political situation by providing overt and covert support to an alliance partner against a mutual threat. In 2010, Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jaibao had visited India (much like Chou en Lai had done in 1961) to size up his opponents and make the so called bid for peace. From Delhi he went to Pakistan and extolled the cliché ‘China-Pak friendship is ‘higher than the mountains and deeper than the oceans’. Now Gilgit has virtually been handed over to China by Pakistan. Apparently this is a gradual shedding of the POK (Pakistan Occupied Kashmir). The new Chinese approach to the western sector reveals that India’s problem could be much larger than the question of stapled visas. Like the US focus on Af-Pak, we need to focus on ‘China-Pak’ as a combined threat to India that may be manipulated more and more in the future by Beijing.

The China-Pak nexus is the strongest any country can possibly have with China. Sino-Indian friction is growing and the potential for conflict remains high. China and Pakistan are hand in gloves in waging asymmetric war on India and the situation is likely to get increasingly volatile. With heightened Sino-India friction, the combined China-Pak threat is graver than ever before. We need to review the threat holistically, evolve a strategy and implement it at the earliest. Possibility of Sino-Pak collusion against Ladakh region is a high possibility and needs to be addressed holistically.

## Historical Alliances / Collusion

The China – Pak collusion/ alliance is one of the strongest in the world and has stood the test of times. The reasons and the events which cement the alliance between Pak and China are as under :-

Recognition of China. Pak was the first non-communist and Islamic country to break relations with the Republic of China (Taiwan) and recognise the Peoples Republic of China (PRC). In 1950 It established formal diplomatic relations with PRC on May 21, 1951.

Counter Veiling Force to India.

China in its pursuit to become a superpower wants to confine India to South Asia and prevent her from realising her full potential. Pak is a willing ally of China in her effort to downsize India.

Sino–Pak Friendship Aides Chinese Expansionist Policy. Chinese expansionist policy is suited well by the Sino-Pak friendship as it forces India to extend its military logistics/resources along two fronts and thus substantially weakens it.

The Alliance- Strategic Encirclement of India. The Chinese ‘String of Pearls’ to encircle India becomes a reality due to this alliance between Pak and China. China has developed military relations with all the countries around India and transferred nuclear technology to Pak. Its port construction and other activities in Myanmar, Pak, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles are noteworthy. It is already linked with Pak by road, Tibet by road and rail and plans to extend railways to Pak and opposite Sikkim.

China –Proximity to West Asia. Alliance with Pak is of paramount importance to China in order to gain influence over the Islamic countries of west and central Asia for the realization of which china is continuously making inroad into the POK region.

Alternate Avenues to Seas Lines of Communication (SLs OC) – Arabian Sea.

China’s policy of ‘String of Pearls’ is to in expand in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) which it wants to be recognized as a Chinese sphere of influence, managed by Chinese nuclear submarines and carriers. Its strategic designs can be seen in Seychelles, where it has built refueling facilities in the outlying Island of Seychelles. China’s assistance in construction of Gwadar sea port in Pakistan on the request of Pakistan Defence Ministry, has opened alternate avenues to Seas Lines of Communication (SLsOC) in the Arabian sea and has given impetus to China’s ambition of having a blue water naval force.

**Out Come so Far**

Pakistan has an enduring, multi-dimensional and deep-rooted relationship with China. The long friendship/alliance between Pakistan and China has been advantageous for both. The outcome of this alliance so far has been as under:-

Assistance in Setting up of Defence Industry and Provision of Military Hardware. Beijing is Pakistan's principal arms supplier, producing the main battle tank-2000, giving Pakistan missile development capability, upgrading Pakistani submarines and jointly producing the Joint Strike Fighter-17 aircraft. Earlier, the transfer of the M-11 missile too was in contravention to the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) guidelines. In Nov 2009, Beijing agreed to sell J-10 Advanced Fighter Jets to Islamabad in a deal worth \$1.4 bn.

Training and Guidance in Military Matters. China is conducting Joint Army, Navy and Air Force exercises regularly at both Pakistan and China locations. The policy of having good relations between armed forces was taken by leaders to counter the balance of power in Asia.

Missile Programme, Air Craft and Naval Joint Ventures. In the last 20 years, the countries are involved in the joint venture of several projects to enhance military and weaponry system, which includes JF-17 Thunder fighter aircraft, K-8 Karkorum advance training aircraft, space tech, AWACS, Al-Khalid tank, Babur cruise missile.

Nuclear Cooperation. In the past, China played a major role in the development of Pakistan's nuclear infrastructure, especially when increasingly stringent export controls in Western Countries made it difficult for Pakistan to acquire materials and uranium enriching equipment from elsewhere. In the 1990s, China designed and supplied heavy water Khusab reactor, which plays a key role in Pakistan's production of plutonium. A subsidiary of the China National Nuclear Corporation also contributed in Pakistan's efforts to expand its uranium enrichment capabilities by providing 5,000 custom made ring magnets, which are a key component of the bearings that facilitate the high-speed rotation of centrifuges.

Infrastructure Development. In 2008, Pakistan and China built first ever train route through the Karakoram highway, ultimate aim of linking China's rail route – net to Gwadar port. China is the largest investor in the Gwadar Deep Sea Port, which is strategic location at the mouth of the strait of Hormuz. China is also helping in the construction of a port in Pasni in Pakistan.

Reverse Engineering of US and European Equipment. Pakistan has established military production facilities which it claims to be indigenous, by carrying out reverse engineering of US and European Equipment.

## **Chinese Activities Observed in POK**

Over a period of time, the following major activities have been observed in POK:-

One Infantry Battalion has been stationed at Khunjerab Pass (15,397 ft) on Karakoram highway which is likely to be increased to one Brigade subsequently.

22 Tunnels being constructed as infrastructure development at secret locations which are likely to be used for stocking missiles for strategic purpose.

There are reports about the presence of 11,000 Chinese construction workers and People's Liberation Army (PLA) combat engineers in POK but no concrete moves are being undertaken to counter this rising threat. Temp shelters in POK are being converted into permanent structures. Karakoram highway upgradation project costing \$ 350 bn has been undertaken by China. The Trans-Karakoram highway, vital for commercial and strategic purposes connects the Northern Areas of Pakistan to Xinjiang Province in China. China's Gej Houba group is widening the road Jalot- Skardu by 2012. 800 Km long railway link has been constructed from Havellian to Khunjerab Pass. 767 development projects are being funded to Pakistan by China. Construction of rail road network from China to Gwadar Port has reduced travel time to 48h instead of 16-25 days as at present.

Power Generation Project. Under the aforesaid projects, China has constructed 'Gomal Zam' Dam project, raising the height of 'Mangla Dam', 'Neelum Jhelum' Hydro Power project and 'Bunji' Dam.

Mobile Network. 'China Mobile', the state owned cellular company of China has setup cell towers in Gilgit and Baltistan.

Communication Network. Another ambitious collaborated project by China and Pakistan is the laying of cross border Optical Fibre Cable (OFC) system at a cost of PKR 10 mn between Pakistan and China for secure communications. The project consists of laying 820 km of OFC along the Karakoram highway, from Rawalpindi to Khunjerab Pass. These measures are possibly being undertaken to support PLA troops stationed in Gilgit-Baltistan and POK.

Inferences. The following inferences can be drawn from the Chinese activities observed in POK :-

Political Signs of Collusion between Pakistan and China. The activities observed in POK indicate towards Sino-Pak cooperation which is proving to be an imminent threat for India, even though the Government tends to downplay it to a certain extent.

Military Building in Garb of Support Services in Northern Areas. China's mil relationship with Pakistan is no secret. There are hundreds of Chinese persons in garb of services in the region participating in some 30 odd projects in the Azad Kashmir - Northern Areas region of Kashmir.

Likely Creation of Missile Bases. China is executing a well conceived revolution in military affairs (RMA). The PLA is modernizing at a fast pace, improving operational capabilities, forging jointness, logistics improvement, defence industry reforms, more willing to undertake missions abroad and setting up of missile bases. Establish of military base in Pakistan is likely to boost the China-Pak asymmetric war against India, escalating terrorism and anti-India jihad.

Securing Oil Pipeline and Surface Routes to Alternate Sea Routes. China activities in POK indicates that she is securing/ upgrading surface routes to alternate sea routes to fulfill the ambition of having a blue water naval force and increase its influence in IOR and Arabian Sea.

In Consonance with the Policy of Strategic Encirclement. The Chinese 'String of Pearls' encircling India is a reality. China has developed military relations with all the countries around India and transfer nuclear technology to Pakistan. Its Port construction and other activities in Myanmar, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius and Seychelles are noteworthy. It is already linked with Pakistan and Nepal by road, Tibet by road and rail and plans to extend the railway to Pakistan and opposite Sikkim.

### **Possible Collusive Aims Against The Sector**

The possible collusive aims against India could be enumerated as under :-

Pakistan Claim on Siachen. Pakistan has still not been able to reconcile itself to the fact that it was preempted by India in 1984 when India physically occupied the glaciated heights. By collusivity with China, Pakistan hopes to realign the Line of Control along NJ 9842 and Karakoram Pass.

Pakistan to Recapture Area upto 1971 Operations. 1971 war besides creating an independent nation in the form of Bangladesh and surrender of 96000 Pakistan troops, also resulted in the loss

of Turtuk heights in Siachen Brigade Sector. Pakistan hopes to regain the same with the help of China.

China to Realign Boundary Along East Karakoram and Ladakh Range. The main conflict in the sector is the frontier running from the Karakoram Pass in the extreme west to the Changchenmo valley in the south. It is a frontier between Ladakh on our side and Xinjiang and Tibet on the Chinese side. The Aksai Chin as a region is of vital strategic importance to India. For India, the boundary runs from the Karakoram Pass to the Changchenmo valley along the Kun Lun mountain range, while for China the boundary line runs along the Karakoram Mountains, southwest of the Kun Lun mountains. From the Changchenmo valley to the Spiti region, there have been a number of minor disputes such as those involving Chushul and Demchok. The area under dispute is over 1610 kms.

The collusive threat must be approached realistically. Responding in anticipation where little threat exists would lead to its materialization in a time frame that may find India under prepared. The chances of twin face-off could manifest in terms of scenarios, it could be either Pakistan led or China led. Alternatively, it could be with either state taking advantage of an adverse situation for India brought on by the other state with a grand strategic design of collusivity.

### **Recommendations**

The following suggestions are recommended to enhance the effectiveness of own counter measures against an collusive offensive :-

Abinitio deployment of mechanised forces in the Leh/Ladakh sector as counter veiling forces.

Artillery. Deployment of additional Fire Units and force multipliers like Multi Barrel Rocket Launchers and Missiles in the sector.

Air Defence. Additional Air Defence Deployment in the region. Surveillance, Intelligence Warfare, Electronic Warfare & Communication capabilities to be increase in the sector. New Surveillance And Target Acquisition Regiment may be positioned in Leh & Ladakh region.

Infrastructure Development. Strengthen project Himank, especially for upgradation of roads and bridges in the sector to facilitate movement of Mechanised forces. Dedicated helicopter lift for upto 2 x infantry companies and special forces. Raising of additional Ladakh Scouts battalions on

the lines of son of the soil concept in Area of Responsibility. Abinitio deployment of tactical SSMs & MBRLs. Forward placing of replacement bridges.

Note:- The article represents author's views and not of CENJOWS

## CONCLUSION

The China-Pakistan collusivity threat requires a comprehensive, multi pronged approach. Today, the extent of Chinese defence collaboration with Pakistan can be gauged from the fact that the Chinese are willing to transfer technology with no strings attached. They have provided weapons manufacturing factories, tanks and heavy weapons as well as aircrafts and radar rebuild factories, fast patrol boats, as well as frigates building capability to Pakistan. The Deep sea port of Gawadar, with its strategic locations has been constructed with Chinese assistance and investment. At a time when the west accused Pakistan of nuclear proliferation, imposed sanctions and embraced India, it was China that helped Pakistan establish civil nuclear facilities. India should be prepared for Pak-China collusivity at both tactical and strategic level.