

China-Pakistan Collusion

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China-Pakistan Collusion: Strategic Implications for India

Context

- **Operation Sindoor (May 7-10, 2025)** revealed a concerning development in regional security: **real-time military coordination between China and Pakistan**.
- Confirmed by **Deputy Chief of Army Staff Lt. Gen. Rahul R. Singh**, the operation marked a shift in the China-Pakistan nexus from strategic partnership to **operational-level collusion**.
- This event calls for a **strategic reassessment of India's military posture, foreign policy, and its preparedness for dealing with dual-front threats**.
- For UPSC, it highlights important aspects of **India's national security, neighbourhood diplomacy, grey-zone warfare, and defence modernization**.

Nature of China-Pakistan Collusion

1. From Passive Partnership to Active Tactical Alliance

- In previous conflicts (1965, 1971, 1999), China supported Pakistan only **diplomatically**.
- Operation Sindoor showed:
 - **Operational support** to Pakistan by China.
 - Use of **real-time ISR (Intelligence, Surveillance, Reconnaissance)** capabilities.
 - Deployment of **Chinese-made platforms** in battlefield conditions.

- Represents a move towards **grey-zone warfare**—China empowers Pakistan **without direct engagement**, maintaining plausible deniability.

2. Digital and Informational Collusion

- **Chinese state media and influencers** amplified Pakistani propaganda.
 - Coordinated with Pakistan's **Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR)** to:
 - Spread exaggerated reports of Indian losses.
 - Frame India's actions as aggressive and disproportionate.
 - Conceal the **terrorist origins** of the conflict.
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Strategic and Operational Implications for India

1. Shift in Deterrence Dynamics

- China's indirect involvement complicates India's ability to respond strategically.
- **New strategic normal:**
 - India retains the ability to retaliate conventionally.
 - China and Pakistan are building a **joint operational posture** under the **nuclear overhang**.

2. China's Arms Industry Gaining Combat Validation

- Post-conflict, Pakistan announced procurement of:
 - **J-35 stealth fighters**
 - **KJ-500 AEW&C aircraft**
 - **HQ-19 missile defence systems**

- China's weapon systems were **combat-tested**, giving:
 - Credibility to its **arms exports**
 - Incentives for **future grey-zone tactics**

3. India Facing Two Active Fronts

- Despite partial disengagement in **Eastern Ladakh**, Chinese forces remain deployed.
 - The **2021 LoC ceasefire with Pakistan has collapsed**.
 - India now needs:
 - Troop deployment on both **western and northern borders**
 - Enhanced **ISR and logistical support**
 - Seamless coordination across **two live borders**
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Strategic Recommendations for India

1. Recalibrate China Policy

- China's **military enabling of Pakistan** should impact **India-China diplomatic engagements**.
- Like India's "**no talks under terror**" stance with Pakistan, a similar position should apply to Beijing's collusion.

2. Expand and Modernize Conventional Capabilities

- India's **defence spending** has dropped from **17.1% to 13%** of central government expenditure over the past decade.
- Urgent need to:

- Enhance investment in **ISR, drones, cyber operations**, and **network-centric warfare**

3. Avoid Predictable Military Responses

- India should:
 - Diversify its response tools—**economic sanctions, covert actions, treaty-based pressure**
 - Consider reviewing the **Indus Waters Treaty**
 - Maintain **strategic ambiguity** by not publicly signaling intent

4. Institutional Integration and Doctrinal Shift

- Operation Sindoor must be seen as a **template for future hybrid warfare**.
- Requires:
 - **Inter-agency coordination**
 - **Military modernization**
 - **Doctrinal reforms** to handle blurred threat domains (cyber, psychological, and kinetic)

Conclusion

- Operation Sindoor marks a **strategic turning point**—collusion between China and Pakistan is now a **lived battlefield reality**, not just a theoretical threat.
- India must respond with:
 - **Hard power**
 - **Diplomatic firmness**

- **Strategic foresight**
- The decisions made today will determine whether India can **preserve regional strategic stability** or remain **reactive** to a **well-integrated adversarial axis**.



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