# China-led Trilateral Nexus

> Mains Syllabus: GS II - Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests, Indian Diaspora.

## Why in the News?

Reently, China, Pakistan and Bangladesh held their first trilateral meeting in Kunming, China.

## What is the China-led trilateral nexus?

- **Trilateral Nexus** – It is the strategy of China to isolate India from its neighbouring countries like Nepal, Bengladesh and Srilanka.
- **Objective** – To weaken India's geopolitical and economic position and influence in the region and increase it's iron clad.
- **Privious Attempts** - In 1965, Pakistan flirted with the idea of using East Pakistan, China and Nepal to cut off India from its strategic Siliguri corridor.
- **Bangladesh Trialteral**- China, Paksitan and Bangladesh held discussions focused on furthering cooperation and exploring the possibilities of deeper engagement.
- **Afghanistan Trilateral** - This meeting closely follows another trilateral meeting between China, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, held in May, with the aim of extending the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor and increasing cooperation.
- **Political Climate in the Region** - These trilaterals, led by China, come at a time of
    - Pakistan's little relevance to the region
    - India's increasing relations with Afghanistan
    - New Delhi's deteriorating ties with Bangladesh
- **Implications of the Trial** - The use of trilaterals underscores China's fresh attempts at making Pakistan a stakeholder in the region and keeping New Delhi preoccupied with immediate concerns.

## What were the impacts of 1962 India China war?

- The 1962 war between India and China has largely shaped regional alignments and geopolitics.
- **Shaped Regional Alignments** - Following the war, China found Pakistan to be an ally that could keep India engaged with immediate threats and limit it from challenging Beijing's interests, security, and status.
- **China Dependency in the Region** - Pakistan deemed China to be a country that would unquestionably offer economic and military assistance to support its aggression against India.
- To date, Pakistan is highly dependent on China for assistance, investments and

infrastructure development.

- **Increased Economic Dependency on China** - By the end of 2024, Pakistan had a loan of over $29 billion from China.
- **Arms Supply** - It is estimated that over 80% of Pakistan's arms imports are from China.
- **Growth of Terrorism** - China has also shielded Pakistan-backed terrorists at the United Nations Security Council and other multilateral platforms.
- **Strengthened Pakistan in Border Issues** - Pakistan deployed various Chinese-made hardware and weapons that ranged from surveillance radars, drones, missiles, guidance systems, and fighter jets.

## Why is China reinitiating the trilateral nexus?

- **Rise of Strong India** - This idea of using South Asian countries seems to have resurfaced as both China and Pakistan face a confident India.
- **Strong Retaliations of India** - Pakistan-sponsored terror attacks in Uri (2016), Pulwama (2019), and Pahalgam have seen India retaliate in a befitting manner.
- India suspended the Indus Waters Treaty, halted the trade, restricted port access, and targeted the military installations of Pakistan in response to the Pahalgam attack.
- **India's Increasing Geopolitical Prowess** - India has also used its diplomatic clout and growing economy to isolate Pakistan.
- **India's Response to Chinese Intrusion** - India's military and diplomatic responses to Chinese border intrusions in Doklam and Galwan have also likely taken Beijing by surprise.
- **Expanding Diplomacy of India** - New Delhi has also increased close cooperation with like-minded countries to limit Chinese aggressions.
- **Decling Influence of China** - India's pragmatic engagement and domestic politics of the region have slowed down China's momentum in South Asia.
- These increasing anxieties are likely to have motivated China to push for trilaterals with Afghanistan and Bangladesh.
- **Improving Pakistan Bangladesh Relationship** – With Bangladesh's regime change, It held military and economic engagement with Pakistan.
- Bangladeshi Navy participated in Aman 2025 in Karachi after a gap of 12 years and In a historic first since 1971, the two states started direct trade from March 2025.

| GeoPolitical Climate in South Asian Region |
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| • In the Maldives, Beijing appears reluctant to trust President Mohamed Muizzu and the country's economy, despite his initial anti-India rhetoric.<br>• In Nepal, despite signing the framework for Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) cooperation, major differences in funding remain unresolved and the progress of projects has been slow.<br>• In Sri Lanka, President Anura Kumara Dissanayake is developing close ties with India by respecting its redlines.<br>• In the case of Bangladesh, despite differences, India has not hindered the trilateral energy cooperation with Nepal. |

## What are the potential impacts of these nexuses?

- **Security Challenges** - Pakistan's influence, supported by China and its economic clout, could thus create new terror and security-related challenges.
- **Reduction in India's Influence** – The nexus will help Pakistan become a relevant country in the region, create rifts between India and its neighbours.
- **China Challenge** - With both Pakistan and China confronting a confident India, China sees an opportunity to challenge India through the trilateral nexus.
- **Increase in Chinese Stronghold** – By keep Delhi preoccupied with immediate security and terror-related challenges, China will make way for Chinese BRI projects, interests and investments in the region.
- **Undermines India's Security Efforts** - At a time when India is seeking support from South Asian countries to fight terrorism, Chinese efforts will create new setbacks.
- **Changes South Asian Politics** - South Asian countries will balance between India and China, as Beijing uses Islamabad to create new complexities in the region.

### What lies ahead?

- The developments in the region demonstrate, once again, that China, and not Pakistan, is India's biggest challenge.
- As China, Pakistan, and Bangladesh inch closer to each other, India must explore feasible diplomatic options.
- India can strenghten bilateral talks with the countries and regional platforms such as SAARC, BIMSTEC.
- Delhi can express redlines and convey the point that any misadventures by its neighbours could have severe economic, military, and political costs.

### Reference

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