China - Russia - Pakistan Axis

What is China- Russia- Pakistan axis geostrategic ambition?

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- China is steadily increasing its geostrategic presence in South, Central and West Asia.
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- There is a China-Russia-Pakistan axis on the rise in Southern Asia.
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- China and Russia are resuming harmonious relationship with the aim **to fill the geopolitical vacuum bound to be created by the U.S. withdrawal** from the Central Asia region.
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- A retired Pakistan army chief is all set to take over as the first Commander-in-Chief of the Saudi-backed Islamic Military Alliance (IMA).
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How was China-Russia-Pakistan relationship in the past?

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- Alliances are natural to international politics and friend-enemy relationship.
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- China and Pakistan have been allies since the 1960s.
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- China and the Soviet Union were not the best of friends during the Cold War, nor did they have a great relationship in the post-Soviet days.
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- Pakistan and the Soviet Union were Cold War rivals, and Russia did not, until recently, share a close relationship with Pakistan.
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Why China-Pakistan-Russia are allying together and what is the implication on India?

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- China-Pakistan-Russia are ganging up **to remove American dominance** in the region.
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- Apart from constraing the US, it could also potentially constrain Indian influence in the region.
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- **The Afghan reconciliation process is a major focus of this new partnership.** In a December 2016 Moscow meeting, they highlighted the importance of seeking a “flexible approach” to dealing with the Afghan Taliban.
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- China and Russia improved their relation through joint military exercises and the Russian sale of advanced weaponry to China could hurt India’s strategic options globally.
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- China’s engagement in the Asian region is a logical extension of its **One Belt, One Road (OBOR) project.**
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- Both China and Russia have been active in the West Asian theatre. Having vetoed U.S.-sponsored sanctions against Syria, they believe that it is necessary to reconcile the warring Syrian factions to negotiate.
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- Beijing has also been reaching out to and balancing the various adversaries in the region such as Israel, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Iraq and Iran, and increasingly talking the language of reconciliation.
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- In the matter of reconciliation, India was under pressure from Washington to take sides while Beijing refused to be under the pressure from the US.
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- Compared to the West Asia, engaging South Asia is easier for China given that the smaller countries in the region see China as an infrastructure provider.
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- Bangladesh, one of India’s close allies in the region, is likely to attend the OBOR summit and may even sign up for it.
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- Chinese interest in Afghan reconciliation stems not only from a **security/terrorism angle** but also more significantly to ensure the sustainability of OBOR given its importance in providing access to Central Asia.
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How has Russia – Pakistan relation impacted India?

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- **Russia is looking beyond India in South Asia.**
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- Moscow has gone ahead with forging strategic ties with Islamabad, from lifting the arms embargo, selling weaponry, discussing the future of Afghanistan, to joint military exercises.
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- When Russia formally joins OBOR, it will have indirectly taken a position on Kashmir which is not necessarily in keeping with the Indian stand on the issue.
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How has Pakistan relation with China and Russia impacted India?

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- **Pakistan is today an inevitable lynchpin of Southern Asian geopolitics.**
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- Pakistan relation with the US has faded ever since the assasination of Osama bin Laden and strong evidence of state sponspored terrorism.
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- Past few years, China and Russia started helping Pakistan financially and militarily and it fits well with the Chinese and Russian **regional grand strategies** which can indirectly affect India strategically.
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- Pakistan has consistently used terrorism as a tool of statecraft, and yet there is a recognition today that it is a pivotal state in addressing terror as evident in the formation of **Islmaic Military Alliance (IMA).**
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- At present it is an Sunni sectarian force, as a potent regional military alliance in the years to come.
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What has India done to counter this axis?

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- **India has done little to counter them** or to propose a collective regional future.
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- The SAARC, which should have been the central plank of India's 'neighbourhood first' policy, is in sluggish state today.
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- The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) will pass through Pakistan-controlled territory that India has claimed, it **should analyse the pros and cons of the project** rather than publicly dismiss the initiative.
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- The OBOR is a futuristic mega-project, its benefits as well as cross-national and inter-continental linkages, will only become clearer in the years to come. It is too early to calculate the cost benefit calculations.
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- If India continues to sideline China or Russia, India could end up far more isolated.
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Source: The Hindu

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