CPEC - The Way Ahead

What is the issue?

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- China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a thorn in India-Pakistan relations, and needs to be resolved soon.
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- Beyond mere symbolic opposition, India needs to evolve a concrete counter narrative to garner the deserved International support for its view.
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What is the problem with CPEC?

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- The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is China's ambitious project for increasing connectivity and economic cooperation within Eurasia.
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- Since its announcement in 2013, the BRI has been positively received by many countries covered within its ambit.
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- But India has been averse to the idea on multiple grounds of which, the CPEC (which is within BRI's ambit) is the primary factor.
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- Notably, the even recent informal meet between the Indian PM and the Chinese President at Wuhan (China) failed to resolve this issue.
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- As "CPEC passes through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir" (India claims PoK as its own territory), India sees this as an affront on its sovereignty.
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What are the larger implications?

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- PoK is an emotional issue for India, and China's push for CPEC is being seen as an act of deliberately disregarding its territorial claims.
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- At a broader level, if China invests heavily in the region, it risks becoming another party to the troubling Indo-Pak bilateral dispute.
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- Also, if CPEC gets functional, it will establish a fully functional China-Pakistan axis, which would hamper India's larger interests in South Asia.
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- Additionally, if CPEC proves to be an economic success, Pakistan's claim over Pok might become more legitimate.
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What is the way ahead?

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- There is no clarity on whether India has any road map to take the conversation on PoK forward.
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- But no country can afford to not register a protest against a project that is likely to undermine its sovereignty.
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- CPEC will indeed remain a stress point not just in the India-Pakistan relationship but also in the India-China relationship.
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- At this juncture, it is hence important for India to evolve a comprehensive outlook to confront CPEC.
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- If such thinking hasn't caught up, then there is a risk that India's claims might become irrelevant amidst other nations.
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Source: The Hindu

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