

## Border Conflicts in South Asia: China and United States' Interests

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*The relationship between China and the US has a big impact on tensions in the region, especially when it comes to conflicts with neighboring countries like India and Pakistan. China's main goals are to protect its economic and security interests, which include big infrastructure projects, claims to certain territories, and its strong ties to Pakistan. By doing these projects, like the Belt and Road plan, China is changing the balance of power in the area and increasing its influence. On the other hand, the US is mainly involved in the region through defense cooperation and strategic alliances, with the main goal of keeping the region stable and balancing out China's growing power. The increasing military and technological cooperation between the US and India is also having an indirect impact on border tensions, especially in the context of the competition between China and India. This complex situation is making the region more unstable and prone to conflicts. The US and China have different approaches to the region, with China focusing on economic and security interests, and the US focusing on defense cooperation and regional stability. This difference in approach is affecting the balance of power in the region and making it harder to resolve conflicts. The condition with sanctuary in the region has been prejudiced by US policies concerning Afghanistan and Pakistan. That thing of the article suggests that rather than directly causing border disputes, the actions of China and the US usually heighten existing tensions by strengthening alliances, increasing militarization, and creating distrust among local actors. This essay sets out to give a real overview of the border conflicts between the USA and China in South Asia. By examining recent events and policy shifts, this study brings to light how local matters and global power struggles are intertwined, making it tougher to resolve conflicts. To craft better strategies for peace and stability in South Asia, understanding these external factors is pretty much essential.*

## 1. Introduction

In South Asia, regional rivalries and great power involvement, particularly the USA and China, almost always turn border disputes into security and great power problems (Bettani & Ahmed, 2023). For a complete understanding of their contemporary dynamics, however, one has to consider the role of external great powers. The strategic situation has changed dramatically in South Asia due to the US and the China factor. China didn't play a big role in the Cold War, when the United States sided with Pakistan (Noor, 2023). On the other hand, there has been a strategic realignment in the post-Cold War period. Pakistan's main ally is now China, while the US has improved ties with India (Pant & Rej, 2018).

Conflicts in South Asia are now part of a larger context of great-power rivalry as a result of this change. As a result, border conflicts are now impacted by global strategic considerations rather than being solely regional problems (Bettani & Ahmed, 2023). This essay aims to investigate how China and the US influence these conflicts and whether or not their participation promotes stability (Pant & Rej, 2018). Due to long-standing border disputes, particularly among India and China along their disputed Himalayan border and between India and Pakistan over Kashmir, South Asia is distinct of the biosphere's most sensitive counties (Mahla, 2024). These conflicts are no longer merely local problems, even though they originated from political and historical disputes following colonial rule (Avruch, 2022). These days, main nations like the United States of America and China have an important inspiration on how these battles play out. The United States has established a solid alliance with India, primarily to offset China's increasing influence in Asia, while China provides party-political, financial, and soldierly support of Pakistan (Noor, 2023). As a result, regional tensions are now linked to the competition for global power, making disputes more complicated and challenging to settle. According to academics, when major powers intervene in regional conflicts, they frequently exacerbate rivalry rather than finding solutions because each side seeks to safeguard its own strategic interests (Mearsheimer, 2010; Anderson, 2025).

## 2. Literature Review

South Asia, Boundaries, Borders and Beyond by Chaturvedi was published in 2020. The author highlights that a primary goal of this special issue was to encourage perilous thinking and exploration of South Asian borders. It was encouraging to see such strong papers from a well-attended international conference at South Asian University, which promotes Information without Limits. Selecting papers for the prestigious Journal of Borderland Studies, published by Routledge, was challenging. Ultimately, we decided to prioritize papers that had a regional focus and thematic insights.

Strong allies of India, like Bhutan and Nepal, are also moving closer to China by writing this article in 2025. This study looks at how three landlocked South Asian nations Bhutan, Nepal, and Afghanistan relate to United States, China, and India. Our main goal is to recognize and understand the difficulties these three landlocked nations have in keeping a strategic balance with these superpowers. Because of their strategic location, the three Land Locked States are vital to major powers. According to our analysis, the US



and India have a strategic interest in opposing China's increasing involvement in the South. Do Boundaries Reflect International Relations? In the year of Southeast Asian Borders in Perspective, Kumpoh provided an explanation of this study.

In general, borders are cultural, social, territorial, geographic, political, sexual and racial barriers. This article is concerned with geographical frontiers in Southeast Asia. The countries in of that countries are mostly borders with one another. Under a range of circumstances and relationships such as trade, security and migration flows take place. The heterogeneity of Southeast Asia in terms of political, ethnic, religious, economical, demographic and spatial factors has pivotal implication on the relationships of neighbors, trade, establishment of borders, migration and refugees flow to each and every nation. This piece of writing explores the interconnection of border and heterogeneity and their consequences. We posit that the type of border defines the degree of relationship among the neighboring countries and outward facing security and mobility of trade and people.

Between a Rock and a Hard Place by Danner, "Border Minorities in Foreign Relations of China to South Asia in the year 2019". This paper will examine how the government of China treats border minorities within the foreign relations of China with their neighboring South Asian countries more closely. China has been reported to pressure its neighbors to aid in border security such as oppressive actions towards its refugees who may eventually jeopardize its internal peace by breeding and assisting secessive activities in China. This paper notes the place of two minority groups in China, the Tibetan and Uighur, in China-neighborly relations in South Asia. To the Tibetan minority, the paper will be concerned Sino and Nepalese relations as well Sino-Indian relations. With regards to the Uighur minority, the Sino to Pakistani relations will be touched on. The case studies should also be interesting due to the array of relations that China had with these countries, with Pakistan being a rather close ally. Nepal as a buffer, where China and India are striving to gain power, and where India is at least a competitor, albeit archenemy, with still to be resolved border issues. The world has the first and second largest populations of Tibetan refugees in India and Nepal respectively but in Pakistan there is only a small population of Uighurs. The relative significance of the border minorities and hence, domestic politics in China with regards to involving the selected cases in foreign relations should be expected.

Geopolitics of interconnectivity: Central Asia's strategic pivot to the South by Aminjonov deals this article in the year of 2026. For Central Asia, sandwiched between two great powers to Russia and China because of layout's tyranny, access to the Indian Ocean region suggestions one more, though potentially very important, avenue of meeting with the rest of the biosphere. While a intentional pivot to the South offers economic growth, the article battles that the synergy of the earthly and naval realms through interconnectivity initiatives such as Beijing China and Pakistan Economic Corridor or New Delhi's Intercontinental North to South Transportation Corridor adds a layer of complexity to the great power rivalry and multi-threat environment that Central Asian leaders have traditionally ignored but can no longer avoid. Therefore, the article offers a critical inside-out view of the fiscal, geopolitical and security calibrations by

Central Asian states as they involve with the Indian Ocean region. The article contributes to the studentship on Eurasian geopolitics by stressing the unnoticed maritime dimensions of the Indian Ocean in relation to Central Asia, instable the focus outside economic gains to geopolitical inferences of interconnectivity initiatives, and accentuating the action of Essential Asian states among great power competition.

The Clash of Powers: US-Chinese Hegemony in the Twenty-First Century. In: Middle East Geopolitics and the Rise of Multi polarity by Jamar highlight this in the year of 2025. A domestic cultural shock leads to a great presence in the world. This is the beginning of the story of China's opening up and its influence in the world. This chapter strives to analyze data and facts that explain the extent and impact of China Belt and Road Initiative in Asia in general and the Middle East in particular. As well as highlighting China's significant development of trade and economic relations with the Gulf Cooperation Council in general and Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and Qatar in particular. Do you know that China has more economic ties with Israel than with Iran? While we have heard that China and Iran are on a strong strategic front. The data and the bilateral relations expose that Chinese soft power in Iraq has overcome United States of America hard power. China is trying to maintain a balance between ethnic and sectarian conflicts in the Middle East. China supports the Arabs and does not want to lose them in one side, and tends to increase its market and investment in Israel on the other side. Can Donald Trump stop China? Why anti-capitalism and anti-American are on the rise? Finally, the U.S. is still strong, but it needs to be more vigilant.

### **3. Theoretical Framework**

#### **3.1 Realism and Balance of Power**

The behavior of states of the South Asia can be considered through the lens of Realism. State as defined by Mearsheimer (2001) is in a state of anarchy whereby there is no central body to ensure security so state is interested in maximizing their power. The result is balancing, which is a state of alliance to maintain something that is perceived to be a threat. The trilateral connection between China, India and Pakistan can be found in the South Asian region. The backing to Pakistan by China is in a bid to balance India and the United States of America supports India in a bid of contain that emergence to China (Tellis, 2008). This forms a regime of outside balancing that strengthens local competitions.

#### **3.2 Security Dilemma**

The security dilemma that is very much further explains persistence of conflict. When Jervis (1978) points out, when one state does something to improve its security, then the other state would seem threatened by this move and this will result in escalation.

For example:

- The cooperation among India and the USA in the military is viewed as a threat by the Chinese.

- India views the development of infrastructures along the LAC as aggressive by China.
- Pakistan depends on China: This increases the insecurity of India.
- This set of mistrust leads to arms movements and instability in crises

## **4.Results**

### **4.1 The importance of China to South Asian Border Conflicts**

#### **4.1.1 Strategic Objectives**

China has a presence in South Asia due to various strategic considerations. First, China aims at keeping under check the emergence of India as a regional player. Second, it seeks to gain control over key trade and energy corridors especially in the Indian Ocean. Third, China is expanding its geopolitical power through the use of economic programs like the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) (Rolland, 2017).

#### **4.1.2 China–Pakistan Strategic Partnership**

Central part of the relationship that China has with Pakistan features in its regional policy. This alliance incorporates military cooperation, economic investment and diplomatic assistance. A good example of this relationship is the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), which is one of the BRI flagships.

The ongoing presence of China in Pakistan reinforces its place in its counter-fight with India and adds to the longer duration of the Kashmir conflict. China opposes Indian territorial claims by supporting Pakistan on the international level (Small, 2015).

#### **4.1.3 Sino-Indian Border Disputes**

China takes not hitherto decided on its edge with India, especially in Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh. A major spiral of the crisis occurred in 2020 (Ladakh crisis), where the fatal encounters and massive mobilization of troops were involved. China has not yet definite on its border with India, expressly in Aksai Chin and Arunachal Pradesh. A major spiral of the crisis happened in 2020 (Ladakh crisis), where the fatal meetings and enormous enlistment of troops were complicated.

The Sino-Indian Border Clash affects to the enduring regional conflicts between India and China, mainly concerning the Aksai Chin area in the west and Arunachal Pradesh in the east. This incongruity originates from contradictory understandings of limits established during colonial times, specifically the McMahon Line that China refuses to admit. The situation supported leading to the Sino-Indian War in 1962, which complex a short yet fierce military clash and current imprecision regarding the border, referred to as the Line of Actual Control (LAC). In recent times, events like the clash in Galan Valley have underscored the persistent instability of this dispute, despite a range of political and military discussions aiming the reduction of strains. (Garver, 2001)

China's strategy includes:

- Incremental territorial advances
- Infrastructure development

- Controlled escalation

With these tactics, China is able to keep India under pressure without engaging in a full-scale war (Tellis, 2021).

#### **4.1.4 Economic Statecraft and CPEC**

CPEC traverses contentious land in Gilgit-Baltistan, and economic development is coupled with geopolitical rivalry. Although the project gives Pakistan certain economic advantages, it also raises the tension with India, which considers the project a threat to its sovereignty (Wolf, 2020). CPEC negotiates contentious land in Gilgit-Baltistan, and fiscal development is coupled with geopolitical opposition. Although the project gives Pakistan sure monetary rewards, it also raises the tension with India, which plans the project a risk to its power (Wolf, 2020). Economic administration symbolizes the intentional employ of economic movements like trade, estimation, aid, and substructure augmentation by nations to fulfill geopolitical goals. This concept is intensely confirmed by the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), a key project of the Belt and Road Initiative began by China in corporation with Pakistan.

CPEC comprises a massive system of infrastructures, railways, dynamism projects then the growth of greater importance on the strategic Gadara Port to connect western China to the Arabian Sea with a view to reducing China's reliance happening lengthier sea routes through the Strait of Malacca. CPEC is an instance of fiscal statecraft. It has many uses. First, it is supposed to help in the economic development of Pakistan through foreign investing and infrastructure and energy upgrades. Second, it furthers Chinese objectives. It enables China to raise its economic and geopolitical footmark in the region, secure important trade routes, and enhance ties with a crucial ally. In addition, the CPEC's geo-political impacts change the balance of power interior south Asia along with connected strategic tensions especially over India which questions the legitimacy due to its route through disputed territory of Gilgit–Baltistan. Though it comes with potential benefits, yet the CPEC also raises questions on debt sustainability, slide and corporation of local economies, showing the complex nature of economic statecraft where economic collaboration is closely knit with strategic power and influence. (Rolland, 2017).

#### **4.2 United States' Role in South Asia**

The USA has played a noteworthy and developing role in South Asia, determined by excellent of planned purposes that contain extension regional rigidity, disputing burden, balancing the rise of China, and expansion economic and dogmatic trades with key states such as India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Correctly, U.S. employment expanded during the Cold War when Pakistan became a designed ally, while relations with India stuck limited due to its non-aligned posture. In the post-9/11 era, U.S. influence in the district expanded significantly finished the War on Terror, mainly in Afghanistan, where the U.S. wanted to pull to pieces radical grids and stabilize the country. In recent years, though, U.S. strategic focus has increasingly loosened toward formation ties with India as part of its broader Indo-Pacific plan aimed at balancing

China's rising influence, signified through originalities such as the Quadrate Sanctuary Discourse. (Pant, 2019)

### **4.3 Strategic Objectives**

The US hegemony in South Asia is influenced by its greater Indo-Pacific policy that aims at curbing the increasing power of China and ensuring the stability of the region. India is considered to be a leading partner in this endeavor. ). At the same time, Washington lasts to preserve a complex relationship with Pakistan, complementary partnership on security issues with concerns over terrorism and regional stability. Economically, the U.S. promotes trade, venture, and expansion assistance to support local growth and mixing, while discreetly it encourages conflict resolution, predominantly in long-standing disputes such as Kashmir. Overall, U.S. strategic objectives in South Asia reflect alliance of security, economic, and geopolitical priorities, as it seeks to sustain effect in a region that remnants critical to global constancy and power rivalry.

### **4.4 U.S.–India Strategic Partnership**

The United States of America and India relationship has blossomed greatly over the past few years especially as far as defense and security relations are concerned. There have been agreements like the COMCASA and BECA that have improved the interoperability of the two militaries of the countries (Pant & Rej, 2018). This alliance enhances the Indian capabilities and also adds to the polarization of the region since it promotes the feeling of encirclement by China. Relationship formed by meeting strategic, economic, and refuge benefits in the 21st century. A major substance for this alteration was the US-India Civil Nuclear Agreement, with US-India Strategic Partnership has grown into a multilayered symbolized a shift from estrangement to assistance and enabled deeper engagement in high-technology and defense sectors.

It has bolstered emerging partnerships through initial defense pacts in the form of LEMOA, COMCASA and BECA focusing inter-operability along with parameterization vis-a-vis U.S.-India. Collaboration in the Quadrate Security Dialogue (Quad) also reflects a common interest in stability and ruled-based instruction cutting-edge the Indo-Pacific primarily to countervail the rising influence to China. Complements, have also strengthened the economic tie-ups with cumulative two-sided trade and cooperation in emerging technologies like aptitude for cleanliness, cyber security etc. Even though there are still differences on issues like trade barriers and India's control over its own strategies, both countries continue to value their long-term friendship. They see each other as important partners in dealing with global challenges and security issues in their region (Mohan, 2012).

### **4.5 U.S.–Pakistan Relations**

The relationship between the United States of America and Pakistan takes had both good and bad times. Even though Pakistan was seen as an important partner through the Cold War and the War on Terror, things have gotten worse in new ages. As a result of Pakistan's development proximity to China, the U.S. shape in the region is declining. (Fair, 2014). The relationship between the US and Pakistan has always been intricate

owing to shifting strategic goals and periods of strong cooperation and distrust. Pakistan became a key US ally during the cold war cooperating with Western organizations SEATO and CENTO to reduce the influence of Soviet power in the region. During the Afghan war Pakistan as the frontline country power-assisted US to back Afghanistan resisting forces which strengthened this alliance.

Pakistan, an ally in the war against terror, was renewed after the 9/11 attacks. Pakistan was given military and financial support in return. But, this partnership has regularly faced tension due to U. S. apprehensions regarding terrorism, Pakistan's domestic security measures, and its connections with various groups in the area, together with Pakistan's qualms about the U. S. as a dependable partner and its regional strategies, especially concerning its increasing collaboration with India. In the past few years, the relations between the U. S. and Pakistan have moved toward a more controlled and practical communication, ranking regional stability, chiefly regarding Afghanistan, collaboration in counterterrorism efforts, and economic relations, while both nations circumnavigate strategic disagreements through careful diplomatic efforts (Haqqani, 2013)

#### **4.6 Crisis Management Role**

In the past, the US has been involved in averting crises between India and Pakistan such as the Kargil War. However, it is seen to be biased against India thereby limiting its efforts of being a neutral mediator (Tellis, 2008). The historic relationship between the United States and Pakistan has been the military security issues, particularly in the conflict-impacted regions such as Afghanistan, which has been a tempered crisis management issue between the two nations. The United States has turned to Pakistan as one of the most important partners to share information and fight terrorism and seek assistance with logistics, particularly after the attacks of September 11. Meanwhile, Pakistan has played a significant role in negotiating with groups of militants, solving issues in the region, and ensuring its own security. Despite tensions that have arisen due to factors such as differences in control and various other long-term objectives, the two countries have constant to collaborate in times of crisis to ensure that conflicts do not escalate and to hold the region together. According to experts, this tricky relationship is a combination of collaboration and suspicion, which complicates the handling of crises and makes it significant and challenging (Kronstadt, 2021).

#### **4.7 Case Studies**

##### **4.7.1 Kashmir Conflict**

The Kashmir war is certainly the greatest territorial dispute in South Asia. China is in favour of Pakistan whereas the US favours India. This international intervention assists both parties to consolidate their stand and minimize their urge to compromise.

##### **4.7.2 Ladakh Crisis (2020–Present)**

The Ladakh crisis reveals the influence of the global powers on local issues. The circumstances became a part of the larger conflict between major world powers as the U.S. came into support of India and China took decisive measures.

### **4.7.3 CPEC and Local Politics**

CPEC demonstrates the interrelation between economics and politics. On the one hand, it assists in the development, whereas on the other, it may lead to conflicts and competition among nations. At this point, China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is more about the national development objectives of Pakistan. It is not merely constructing large-scale infrastructure projects and instead, it is doing such things as developing industries, agriculture, and employment. The current stage (the CPEC 2.0) involves new projects based on the establishment of special economic zones, the enhancement of agriculture and mining, collaborating on industries. These initiatives are aimed at providing additional employment and contributing to the economic stability of the locals. This is aimed at ensuring that the Pakistan economy becomes stronger through efficiency, more exports and good jobs in less developed areas. Recent news indicates that CPEC is evolving to be more people-oriented and needs oriented linking national projects with the true economic needs of local communities and their advantages.

### **4.7.4 Water Disputes**

The presence of rivers that cross borders such as the Brahmaputra, compounds the existing conflicts in the area. Water security is increasingly becoming linked to territory- and strategy-related issues. (Mirumachi, 2015).

## **4.8 Effect of Sino-American Competition**

The increasing rivalry amid the United States then China is influencing international economics, politics and security in a number of ways. This struggle has led to supply chain issues across the globe and compelled nations to be more self-sufficient, particularly in critical sectors such as semiconductors and artificial intelligence. It has also politically complicated the collaboration of international groups and smaller nations now need to weigh sides between the two large powers. Regarding the military issues, the situation has been aggravated by tensions in such areas as the South China Sea that have led to the risk of conflict and have raised concerns regarding the stability in the region. Global concerns such as climate change and trade regulations are also affected by this rivalry to which collaboration is frequently hampered by distrust. According to experts, although this competition may result in innovation and even a level of balance between the two countries, there is also a lot of uncertainty and the possibility of conflicts unless it is managed by negotiations and diplomacy. (Allison, 2017).

### **4.8.1 Polarization**

South Asia is experiencing a divide between those who are on the side of China and those who are on the side of the United States. This decreases the cooperation of nations and makes them more dependent on external forces.

### **4.8.2 Militarization**

External assistance has led to an arms race within the region particularly in regards to updating nuclear weapons and increased expenditure on defense.

### **4.8.3 Crisis Instability**

This is even more complex due to the fact that it concerns major world powers and, therefore, there is a likelihood of errors occurring and the situation escalating very fast. Crisis instability occurs when nations believe that they have to move quickly in the course of a conflict since they fear that delaying may give the other nation an upper hand. This idea is linked to the manner in which nuclear powers acted during the cold war where both parties feared that the other could initiate a war before the other and thus have an advantage. Such instability increases the likelihood of making mistakes, increasing tensions without any intent, and escalating fights into full-fledged wars very soon, despite the fact that both parties may not desire an all-out war. According to experts, such aspects as vague messages, mistrust, and sophisticated military equipment may complicate the situation in the crisis, making it more difficult to resolve the conflict without violence.

### **4.9 Part in Minor States**

Smaller South Asian nations, such as Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka, compete with each other. They attempt to maintain a balance in their ties with the United States or China. This poses a strategic weakness in addition to economic opportunities. (Scott, 2019). Even though smaller states may lack a powerful military or economy, they impact other countries in the major world events. Starting businesses, engaging in diplomacy, and taking recourse to international organizations are some of the strategies that these countries employ in order to safeguard their interests and maintain their independence. As the big powers fight each other, such as between China and the United States, the smaller states are able to act either as mediators, switch sides or act as a shield, which influences the local security. The fact that they can control relationships with opposing powers makes them understand the importance of the role that they play in crisis management as well as the manner in which the world is governed.

## **5. Conclusion**

South Asian border disputes have completely changed as a result of China's and the US's involvement. Their rivalry intensifies regional rivalries, boosts militarization, and makes resolving disputes more difficult. In a world where territorial tensions, nuclear battles, and complex geopolitical alliances persist, South Asia remains to be unique to the least stable regions in the world. This paper will analyse how both China and the US influence border quarrels in South Asia, but more specifically focusing on the China-India and India-Pakistan border disputes. The paper argues that Sino-American competition has transformed the regional conflicts into forums of international strategic competition on the basis of realist and security dilemma ideas. China has become more polarized, militarized and unstable in a Himalayan crisis as a result of its identification with Pakistan and aggressiveness the Himalayan frontier and US strategic relationship growing closer with India. Their broader strategic competition impedes long-term settlement, despite the fact that the two powers sometimes contribute to management of conflicts. As per the findings of the study, South Asian stability is increasingly getting

interdependent with the U.S.-China relations development. It is essential to limit the great-power competition, strengthen regional institutions, and promote diplomatic interaction as the key steps to the long-term stability.

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