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Issue Brief

Sabotaging the CPEC

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Introduction

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) is a multi-billion national project of China and Pakistan aimed at transforming the economy of the country and the regions surrounding it. The first mega pilot trade cargo of Chinese goods reached from Kashgar to Gwadar on November 12, 2016, and on the next day, Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif kicked off the historic ground-breaking ceremony of the first shipment through CPEC at the Gwadar Port.¹ From the very inception of the launched of CPEC, India has adopted an anti-CPEC strategy and engineered conspiracies to sabotage the project on baseless grounds.

Indian Provocations

Within hours of the inauguration of the CPEC shipment, India's sabotaging activities have entered a new stage. At least four such activities have taken place within a week. There had been a series of terrorist, sabotaging, and provocation actions carried by India. On the evening of November 12, 2016 a powerful blast killed 52 people and injured 100 paying tributes at the Shah Noorani Shrine in Khuzdar. Many found the involvement of RAW and Afghan NDS.² On the Bhimer sector across the LoC, Indian force killed seven Pakistani soldiers in an unprovoked firing on the night of November 13.³

In the third attempt, an Indian nuclear-powered submarine, a German made HDW Type 209 diesel-electric, entered Pakistani waters in the Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) in the Arabian Sea on November 18,⁴ five days after Gwadar shipment was inaugurated. Pakistan's authorities claimed that Indian submarine entered Pakistani waters around November 4.⁵ Pakistan's Navy intercepted and forced the Indian nuclear submarine to retreat from Pakistani waters. Pakistani authorities believe that the Indian submarine was "Gwadar Bound" to sabotage the CPEC shipments.⁶ They also believe these were Indian heinous designs, but they were exposed to the world. Submarine's precise mission remains unknown, but experts in Pakistan found that it was on a CPEC sabotage mission. It is clear that the submarine was on a clandestine intelligence-gathering mission of maritime movement from Gwadar and Pakistan-China maritime cooperation.⁷

Indian nuclear submarine had entered Pakistan's waters at a time when the fourth Pakistan-China joint naval exercises commenced on November 16 near Gwadar Port. China had sent the rescue vessel Changxingdao and PLA (N) ship Handan to Karachi for the exercise.⁸ This was not the first incident that Indian vessels entered Pakistan's waters. There have been other attempts in the past as well. Indian subversive activities in Balochistan in collaboration with NDS of Afghanistan, the arrest of the serving Indian Navy officer Kulbhushan Yadav, and continued violations along the Line of Control (LoC) and the Working Boundary are jeopardising the prospects of peace. Also, a day after the Indian submarine was intercepted, an Indian unmanned drone violated the air space of Pakistan near the LoC, which was shot down.⁹

Measures

Pakistan should also beef-up security measures at Gwadar, Karachi, Bin Qasim ports along with the Sir Creek area besides effectively countering maritime terrorism and piracy in the Indian Ocean. Multilateral security arrangements with a number of countries should also be increased. Japan's supply US-2i Amphibious aircraft to Indian Navy and signing of the nuclear deal with India has affected the regional security and defence balance in the Indian Ocean that might be harmful for One Belt One Road (OBOR) and CPEC. Pakistan should look at this situation to meet the challenges posed by the Indo-Japanese defence collaboration in the Indian Ocean.

Conclusion

Indian aggressive designs have become more apparent in the past few days. All these are highly provocation actions. These are not isolated incidents, but are closely linked up with the functioning of the CPEC. Given these scenarios, a growing confrontation is expected in the Indian Ocean, at the LoC, and elsewhere in the near future and the international community and the United Nations should adopt measures to prevent the occurrences of such incidents. In this context, the Indian Ocean theatre is fast emerging as a nuclear flash-point between these two nuclear-armed nations. Pakistan's maritime rights are protected under the UN Convention of Law Of Sea (UNCLOS) of 1982, and violation of Pakistani waters by the Indian submarine is a clear and blatant breach of Pakistan's sovereignty. Besides the United Nations, the United

States, Japan, and Australia can also play a role in preventing such occurrences. At the end, Pakistan and India should also take up Confidence Building Measures (CBMs) in the Indian Ocean to create an atmosphere of peace and prosperity to be achieved to ensure the security of the Maritime Silk Road and CPEC.

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