

Strategic Competition in South Asia



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Session Highlights

Evolving geopolitics and authoritarian trends

- (1) Strategic competition between India and China is intensifying
- (2) India-Pakistan tensions are escalating
- (3) Authoritarian trends and exclusion of religious minorities in the broader region is increasing

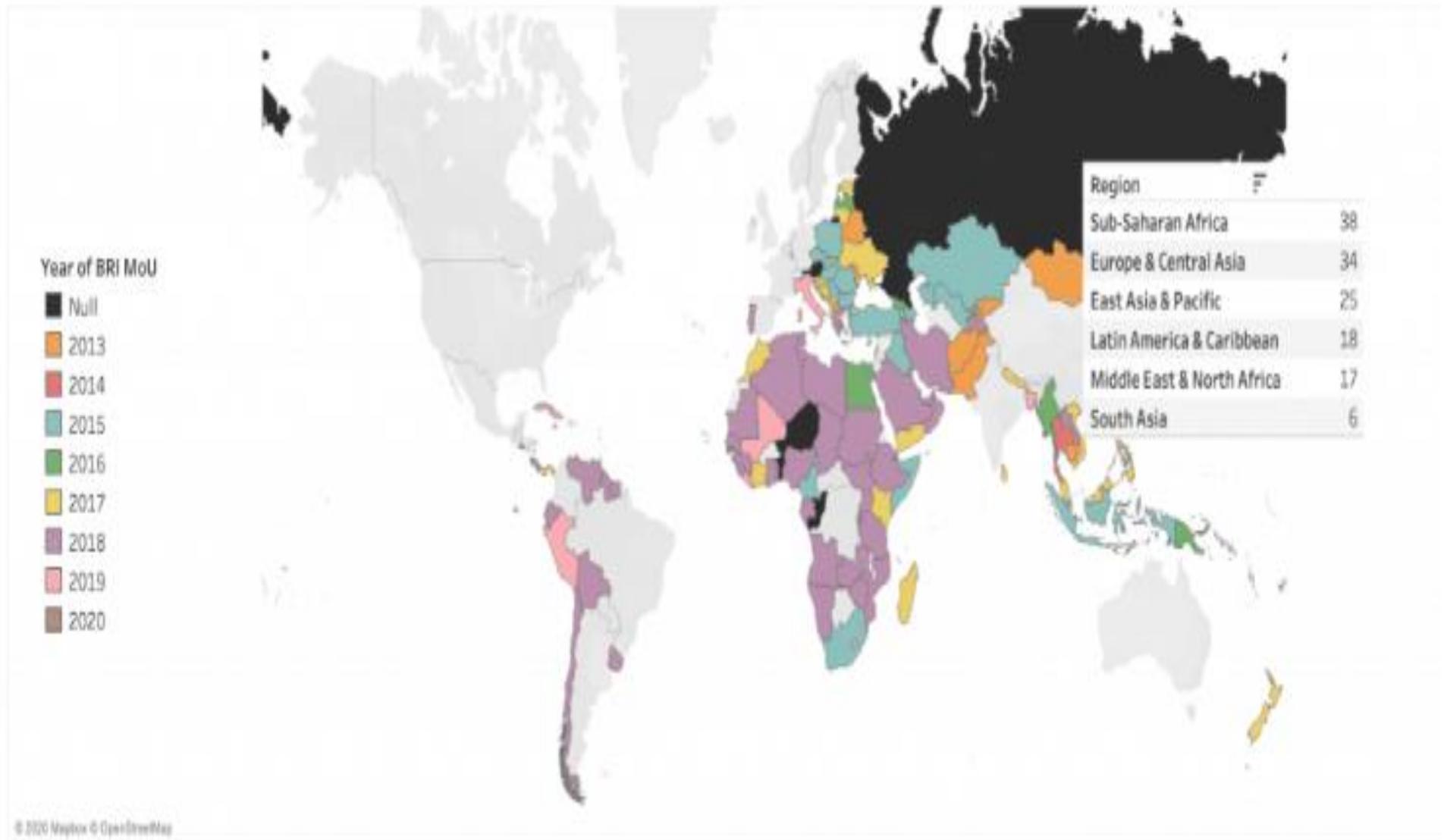
Great power rivalries in the Indian Ocean



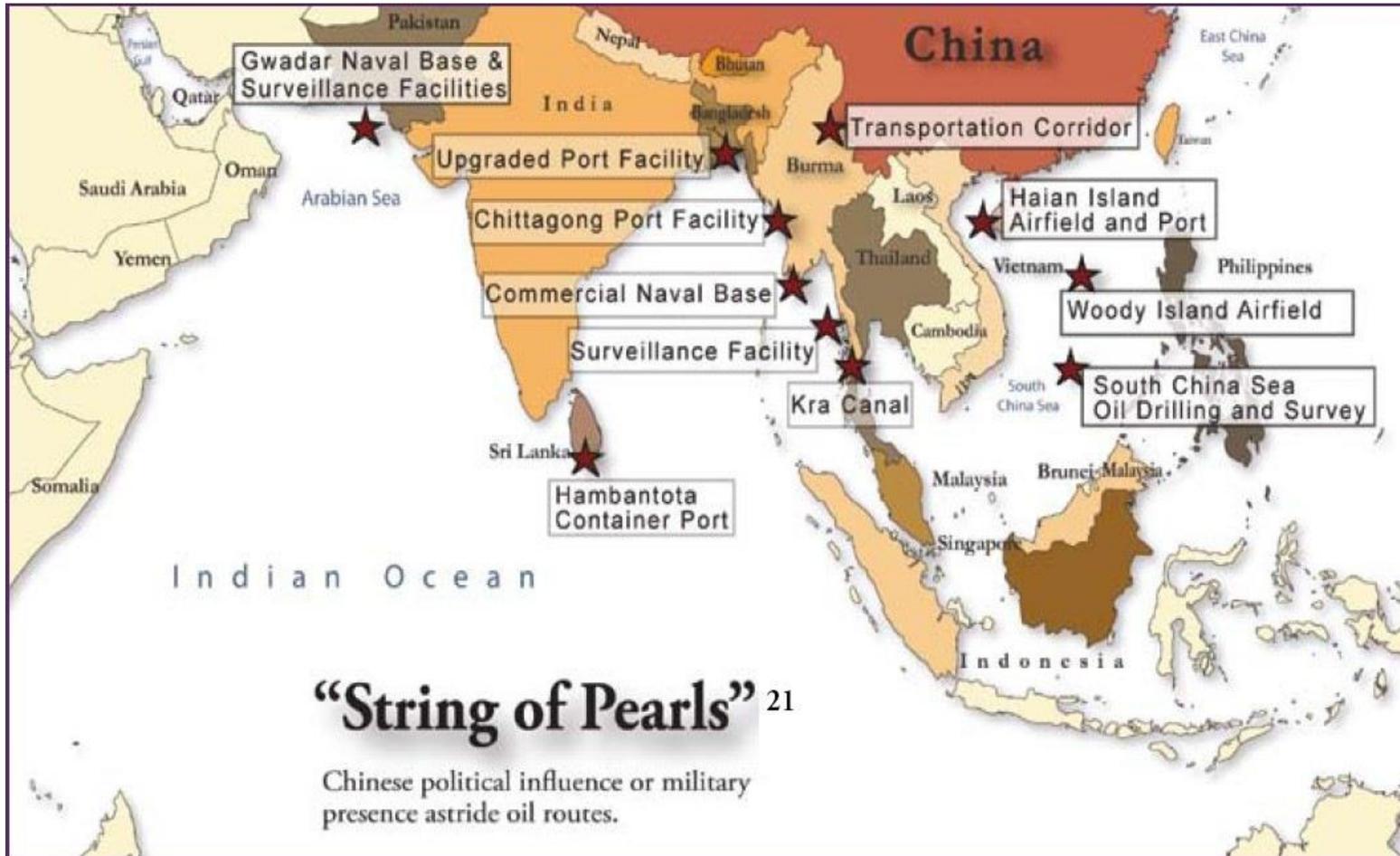
Source: USA Today

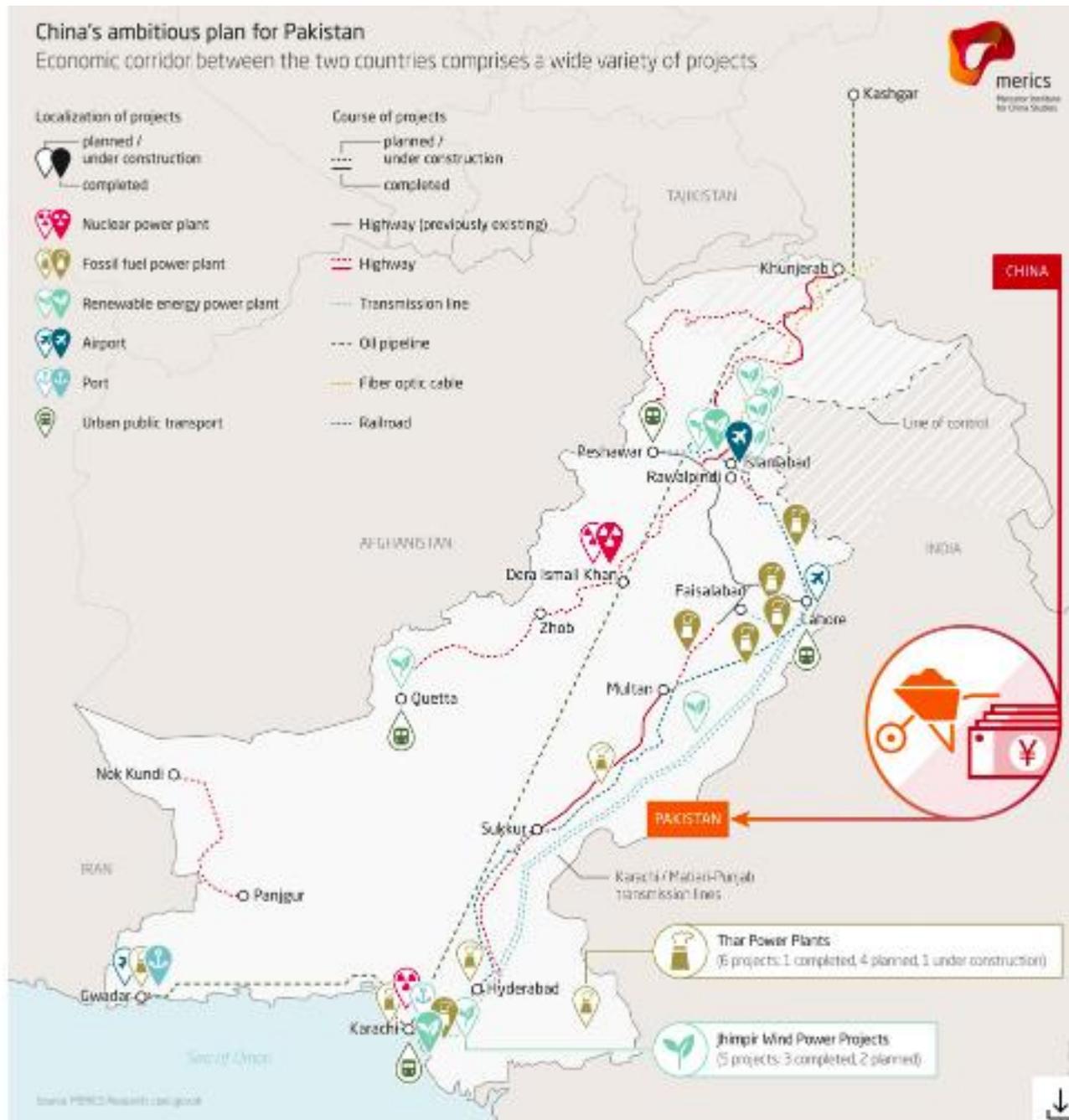
China's BRI

Countries of the Belt and Road Initiative



Containment?





Source: Merics.org. May 20, 2020.



India's Necklace of Diamonds

Garlanding China



*Map Not to Scale, and for representation purpose only.

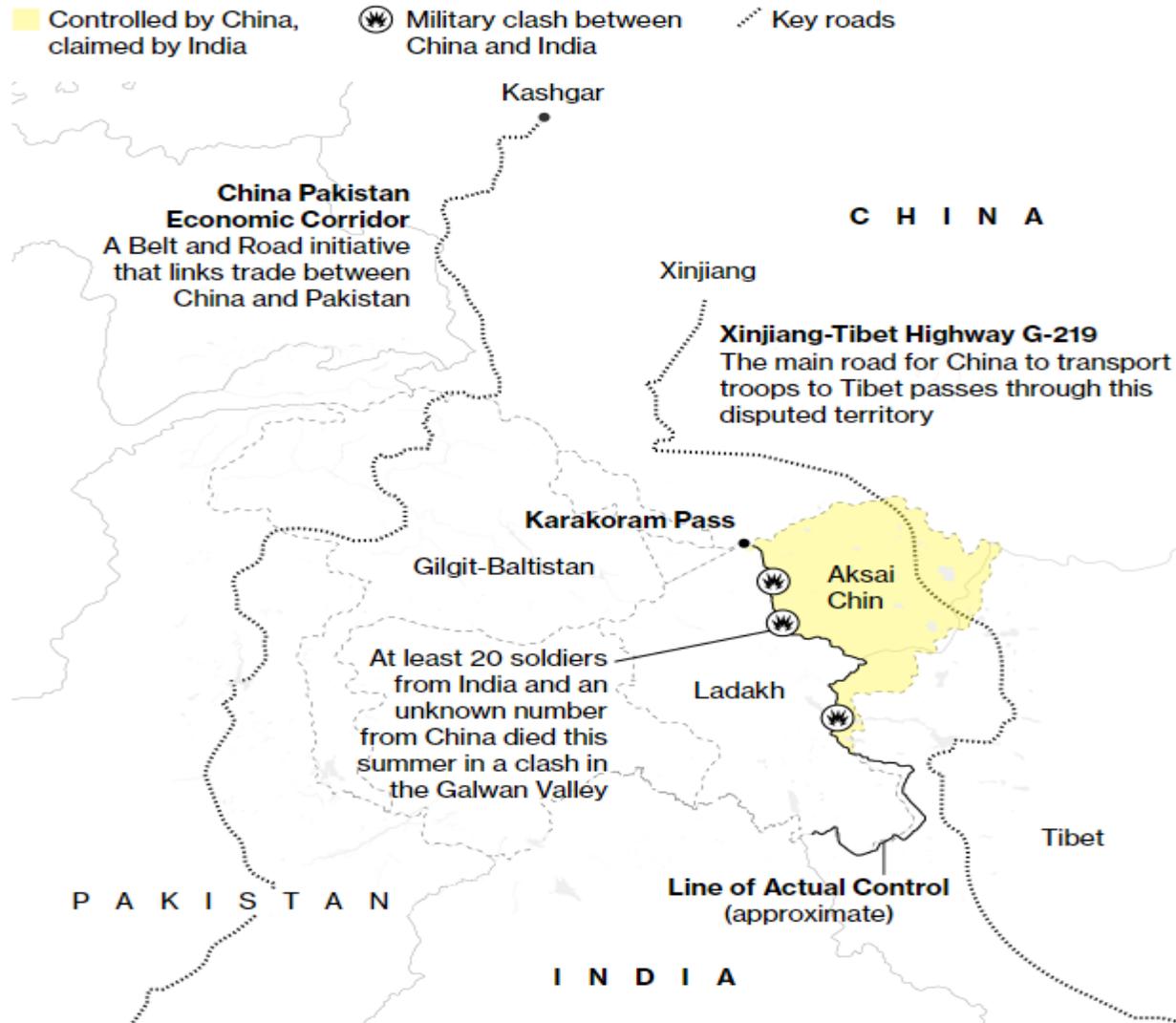
India - Pakistan and the Kashmir Dispute: A Nuclear Flashpoint



Controversial laws governing Kashmir

- *Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act (AFSPA) of 1990*
- *Jammu & Kashmir Public Safety Act (PSA), 1978*

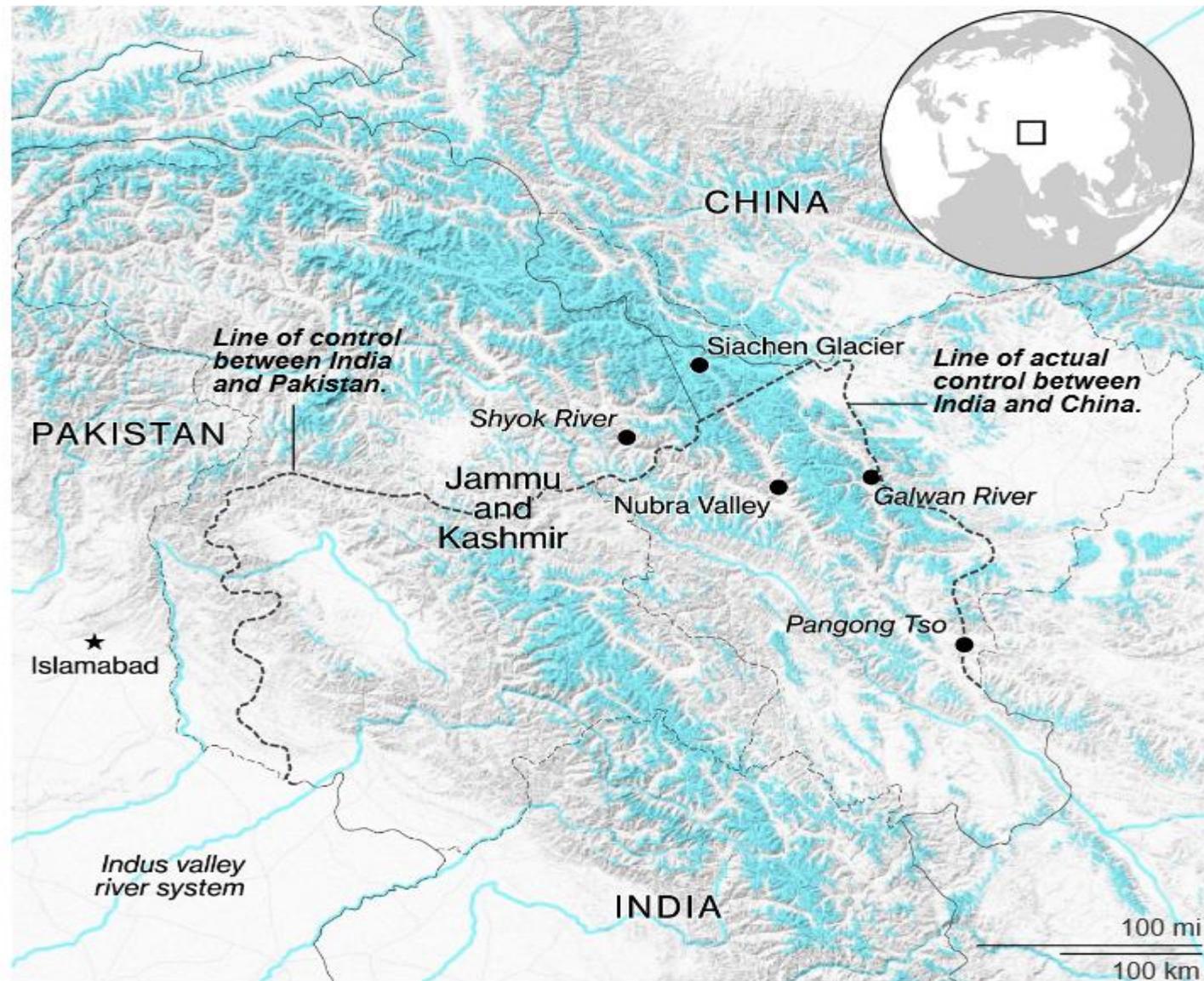
Renewed Conflict Emerges Along Ancient Silk Route



Sources: Bloomberg reporting, Natural Earth, CPEC Ministry for Planning, Development & Special Initiatives

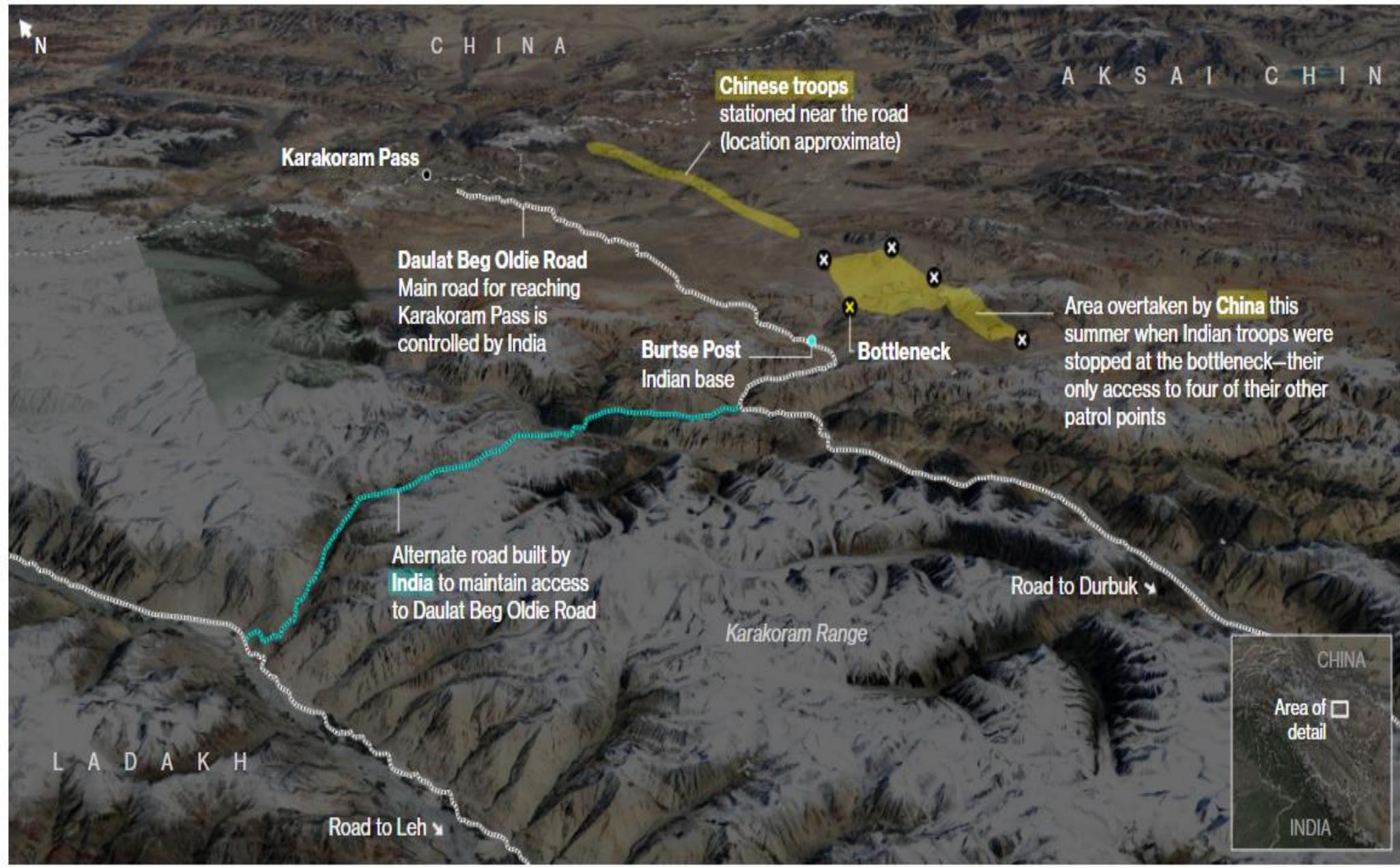
Contested Territory

Border clashes between India and China are adding to regional tensions



Sources: NASA, OpenStreetMap contributors and Natural Earth

India Builds New Road to Gain Better Access to Border



Sources: Bloomberg reporting, Google Earth, Landsat/Copernicus

U.S. India Strategic Partnership perceived as anti-Chinese by Beijing



From left, US Secretary of Defence Mark Esper, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Indian Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar address a joint press conference at Hyderabad House in New Delhi [Altaf Qadri/AP Photo]

Authoritarian Trends and Evolving Regional Norms



Religious exclusionary policies in India



- Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA, 2019)
- National Register of Citizens (NRC, 2019)
- Detention Centers (2020)

Gen. Bipin Rawat, front, in New Delhi in December. "These people need to be taken out separately, possibly taken into some deradicalization camps," he said of radicalized Kashmiris. Arvind Yadav/Hindustan Times, via Getty Images

Rohingya Muslims

The largest group of stateless people



A Myanmar police officer patrols the Thet Kae Pyin camp in Sittwe township where Rohingya Muslims have been confined since 2012, Rakhine State, Myanmar, September 7, 2016. © 2016 Kyaw Kyaw/Anadolu Agency/Getty Images

GPC: What's at stake for India, China and the U.S.

1. India plays a vital role in achieving U.S. shared vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific.
2. Steady emergence of a defense partnership in this decade
3. Slow but steady expansion and diversification of India defense partnerships and procurements.
4. Beijing sees the growing Indo-US partnership as anti-Chinese.
5. New Delhi will need to improve relations with Beijing
6. New Delhi will also have to forecast likely Islamabad-Beijing collusion to upset the Indo-US defense partnership.
7. New Delhi will also have to balance the Indo-US and Indo-Iran relations



Discussion

India's relations with its neighbors

- India's economic blockade of Nepal (2015)
- Nepal India border dispute (2020)
- Bangladesh: India's anti-Muslim laws (2019)- implications for Bengali migrants
- Sri Lanka: Considers India a "relation" while China and Pakistan are friends.
- Pakistan: Escalation of tensions

The Quad, an emerging “Asian NATO” or a mirage?

- “Quad seems to be nothing but putting psychological and geopolitical pressure on China, which Beijing is aware of.” Asia Times, Lakhvinder Singh and Rajiv Ranjan
- India’s weapon of last resort to stop China.
- Lessons from the first Quad