

## Regional Implications of BECA between US and India

*Abdullah Rehman Butt*

The [Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement \(BECA\)](#) is 'an agreement signed between the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency of the US Department of Defence and the Defence Ministry of India on 27 October 2020 during 2+2 ministerial dialogue in New Delhi.' BECA will furnish India with '[access to a range of topographical, nautical, and aeronautical data](#)' that is considered crucial for the precision of firing missiles and armed drones.' This agreement will permit the United States (US) military to [provide advanced navigational guides and geospatial insight](#) to India which will improve the latter's tactical precision of computerized equipment frameworks of automated hardware systems and weapons like cruise missiles, ballistic missiles, and drones.

With the growing use of space technologies in the military domain, GPS satellites have become a crucial component of warfare as the accuracy of hitting a target is determined by the data it provides. When it comes to the employment of weapons and warfare, even the slightest error can be fatal. Globally, the US, Russia, Europe, and China have their own geointelligence satellite systems that allow them to monitor the world. They share scientific and technical information with each other, but military intelligence is not shared unless there is a specific agreement between the parties.

The [data shared under BECA](#) will aid the Indian military in the identification, tracking, and monitoring of a wide assortment of targets and their locations, both on land and in the water. This will result in significant improvement in the target acquisition capabilities of the Indian Armed Forces. Furthermore, BECA is a tool for the US to reinforce its military alliance and partnership with India. A strategic cooperation agreement like this can be viewed in the context of the US' shift to the Indo-Pacific. Its signing will fast-forward the integration of the Indo-Pacific strategies of both states. Moreover, India will be able to keep a close watch on the movement of Chinese warships in the Indian Ocean. As a result, the Indian Navy's capabilities to monitor Sea Lines of Communication (SLOC) and China's naval manoeuvres in the Indo-Pacific region will have a tremendous boost.

BECA has serious political, military, and geopolitical implications for the entire region. At the moment, the US is very anxious about China. In order to contain her growing influence, the US has sought an alliance with India, irrespective of the price it will have to pay for it. Dhruva Jaishankar, an [Indian analyst termed BECA](#) as 'a strong foundation of India-US defense partnership' but added, 'No single agreement can fundamentally change the balance of power between India and China.' However, the overall Indo-US partnership has greatly improved India's ability to secure its border against the 'China Threat.' On the other hand, Beijing has forthrightly rejected US allegations as baseless hyping up of the so-called '[China Threat](#)' and sees it as underpinning the US pretext to retain its global hegemony and contain China's development. Nonetheless, the military power gap between India and China is so huge that even the US patronage of India can never undermine China's military strength.

It needs to be pointed out that growing Indian capabilities under an agreement like BECA are also posing a direct threat to Pakistan's national security. Pakistan and China are already together in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), whereas Iran has already restricted its relations with [India by dropping it out of its Chahbahar railway project](#) and gas field exploration. CPEC's security and stabilization are also becoming increasingly vital for both China and Pakistan in this emerging strategic environment. Hence, while the long-term

repercussions of the BECA intelligence-sharing deal are yet to be seen, it could disturb regional peace and strategic balance in the region.

Amid growing strained relations between the US and China, it seems that India has already made a choice by signing BECA – how far it is ready to go, time will tell. In the wake of increasing tensions between the US and China hovering over South Asia, Pakistan needs to proceed carefully and adopt a balanced approach to establish strategic equilibrium with both, though future scenarios might prompt Islamabad to take sides. Historically, Pakistan has had a more stalwart and stable relationship with China so it should also try to revamp and improve its security and surveillance system with Beijing's assistance (as well as Russia) to cater to the probable threats from BECA.

***Abdullah Rehman Butt is a researcher at the Centre for Aerospace & Security Studies (CASS), Islamabad, Pakistan. He can be reached at [cass.thinkers@gmail.com](mailto:cass.thinkers@gmail.com)***

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