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Pakistan China Diplomatic Relations

*A famous quote often said about the friendship of two countries:
"A Friendship Higher than Himalayas, deeper than ocean, sweeter than
honey, and stronger than steel"*

President Xi Jinping

'I Feel As If I Am Going to Visit the Home of My Own Brother'

*The Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visited Pakistan in Dec, 2021 and quoted
three famous saying at different occasions:*

"A friend in need is a friend indeed."

"A neighbor is far better than a distant relative."

"A good neighbor is a blessing."

President Xi Jinping told the Pakistan Prime Minister at Diaoyutai State: Guesthouse China: *The friendship between China and Pakistan is "unbreakable and rock-solid" despite changes in the international and regional situation*¹.

Chinese President Xi Jinping said during the visit of the President of Pakistan in March 2021 for showing solidarity with Chinese nation during COVID-19, *'special friendship between Pakistan and China was choice of the history as it had deep roots in the hearts of people of the two countries'*.

¹ Read more at: <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/international/world-news/pakistan-china-friendship-unbreakable-rock-solid-xi/articleshow/71503447.cms?utm>



File photo of President Dr. Arif Alvi and Chinese President Xi Jinping
March 2020

Pakistan was one of the first countries to recognize China and the two countries established diplomatic ties on May 21st, 1951. This relationship is largely motivated by the need for security and economics. In the presence of adversary attitude and expansionist design of India as a natural opponent after the partition of United India, Pakistan has the only choice to extend warm friendship with the People Republic of China. However, over the years, this relation transformed into stronger and strategic one, based on mutual interest of the two nations. For China, Pakistan is important of their partner for its geostrategic importance as it provides link with maritime route, can strengthen the Chinese anti-India stance and support the peaceful region. The emerging geopolitical realities in South Asia and East Asian region were a harbinger of close relations between the two countries. With Chinese participation in the Korean War, Pakistan's response by not taking any position against China proved to be a rational decision².

2 Allauddi. Hongsong Liu, Raja Qaiser Ahmed 'The Changing Dynamics and New Developments of China-Pakistan Relations"- India Quarterly 76(1) 73-88, 2020

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Pakistan always found coherence with the China in the international issues. The chronology of events of Diplomatic relations between the two countries is given below ³:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Event</i>
1951	The two countries establish diplomatic relations
1955	Visit of Vice President Madam Song Ching Ling to Pakistan
1956	Visit of Prime Minister of Pakistan H. S. Suharwerdi to China
1963	Visit of Foreign Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto to China
1963	Pakistan and China concludes boundary agreement through peaceful negotiations
1964	Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) starts its flights to Beijing, becoming the first non-communist country airline to fly from Beijing
1965	Agreement on Cultural Cooperation signed
1970	Pakistan facilitates first visit by US President Nixon to China
1976	Agreement on Scientific and Cultural Cooperation signed
1978	The Karakoram Highway, a construction miracle, linking the mountainous Northern Pakistan with Western China officially opens
1983	Pakistan and China sign MoU on Educational Exchanges
1989	The two countries sign an agreement on Reciprocal Encouragement and Protection of Investments
1995	Agreement for Traffic in Transit is signed between the Governments of Pakistan, China, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan
1995	Prime Minister Benazir Bhutto visits China as a special guest to attend the 4th Women's Conference in Beijing

3 "PAKISTAN AND CHINA DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS", Ministry of Foreign Affairs, available at <https://mofa.gov.pk/pakistan-and-china-diplomatic-relations/>.

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1999	The contract to jointly develop and produce JF-17 was signed
2001	Premier Zhu Rongji visits Pakistan on the occasion of 50 years of establishment of Diplomatic Relations
2001	China and Pakistan sign agreement on Tourism Cooperation
2003	Preferential Trade Agreement is signed between the two countries
2005	Bilateral MoU on Cooperation in Information Technology is concluded
2005	Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visits Pakistan
2005	Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Good Neighbourly Relations" is signed between the two countries
2006	Chinese President Hu Jintao pays an official visit to Pakistan
2006	China and Pakistan sign Free Trade Agreement
2008	Pakistan welcomes the Chinese Olympic Torch in Islamabad
2010	Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao visits Pakistan
2010	JF-17 inducted in Pakistan Air Force
2013	Premier Li Keqiang visits Pakistan in May and both sides issue a Joint Statement on Deepening Comprehensive Strategic Cooperation
2013	Pakistan and China sign the landmark Memorandum of Understanding on Cooperation for the Long-term Plan on China-Pakistan Economic Corridor
2013	Pakistan awards a contract for construction and operation of Gwadar Port to China
2013	Prime Minister Mohammad Nawaz Sharif visits China and both sides agree to Common Vision for Deepening China-Pakistan Strategic Cooperative Partnership in the New Era
2013	Both countries sign Memorandum of Understanding on the Cooperation of Developing China-Pakistan Economic Corridor Long-term Plan and Action

2014	Both Governments agreed for construction of Orange Line Train 27 km
2015	Chinese President Xi Jinping visits Pakistan. The two sides conclude more than 50 agreements in infrastructure, energy and industrial development
2015	Year 2015 celebrated as Year of Friendly Exchange
2015	Chinese President Xi Jinping undertakes a landmark visit to Pakistan, both countries signed over 50 documents including agreement on CPEC outlining projects worth 46 Million USD.
2016	The two countries 65 th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations
2016	China-Pakistan unveils the Long-term Plan of China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)
2017	PM Nawaz Sharif attends Belt and Road Forum

Pakistan and China are considered as “All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership” and Iron Brothers, which has been proved by their mutual cooperation and same stance on various international issues. Pakistan remained part of the Cold war and partner with the SETO and CENTO against the communist nations but it did not affect the relation between the two countries. The Pak India war of 1965, provided a new dimension to these relations and broader partnership agreement were executed by the two countries. In 1962, an agreement was signed between them to resolve the alignment of 400-mile boarder of Pakistan in Gilgit Baltistan (GB) and Kashmir with the Xinjiang province of China. The successive visits of Chinese leader Zhou Enlai in 1964 and 1965 and subsequent statement by Chinese foreign ministry in Sep 1965 for support of Pakistan during Pak India war, showed the growing commitment of China to Pakistan. This support was very pivotal for Pakistan as the war inflicted by India was mainly aimed at internal destabilization of the country. The declaration of Chinese leader Zhou Enlai expressing solidarity of his nation for national independence, sovereignty, and national integrity of Pakistan in, proved an important milestone of these relation.

China supported the construction of strategic infrastructure of Pakistan in 1970s, which also provided a direction for the bilateral relations. During this period, China oriented its foreign policy of expansion towards South and South East Asia based on peace and balanced approach towards Pak India disputes, including the dispute of Kashmir. With this reorientation of China foreign policy, Pakistan naturally got significance. The history of bilateral relations between the two countries can be divided into different phases.

In early period, soon after independence of China in 1949, the country mainly involved in its own development and priorities under conservative communist philosophy. Hence in the beginning, the relations mainly remained dormant except some people to people contacts for trade and commerce. Pakistan recognized China is sheer confusion as it was a communism based state, but in the presence of an adversary and expansionist neighbor like India, Pakistan couldn't afford to disengage with the newly established People Republic of China. The ideological differences in the philosophies of Islam and communism also impeded the development of relations in the initials years as both the nations had very little knowledge about each other. The conservative nature of governance of foreign policy of China also restricted the mixing of two nations in the early years. The inclination of Pakistan towards US and invitation of the US President to Pakistan by Pakistani Premier Liaquat Ali Khan also gave some clear signals of foreign policy of Pakistan, more tilted towards Capitalistic bloc. Hence in the initial years, we couldn't see some tangible development in the bilateral relations of the two countries.

The two countries exchanged their envoys during 1951-53 and Major General N.M. Raza from Defense Service was appointed as first Ambassador to China. Though India and China enjoyed warm relations, yet the relations between Pakistan and China were mostly peaceful during this period. The border demarcation between the two countries was still pending. The barter trade between the two countries expanded and Pakistan exported cotton, whereas imported coal and jute. In the Cold war era, the geostrategic location of Pakistan, enhanced its importance of global powers like US, USSR (Now Russian Federation) and China.

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After invasion of USSR in Afghanistan in 1979, Pakistan became an important player of the Cold war as a buffer between the two important rivals Russia and US. The defeat of Soviet Union in Afghanistan led to collapse of USSR and Pakistan became an important ally of the United States in the meanwhile. Though, Pakistan remained direct victim of the Afghan War, yet it appeared an important country for the subsequent engagements in the region. Pakistan China bilateral relations during cold war can be analyzed while considering triangular interactions: (1) Pakistan-China-India, (2) Pakistan-China-US (3) Pakistan-China Soviet (4) Pakistan-China-Afghanistan triangle⁴.



Pakistani Prime Minister Huseyn Shaheed Suhrawardy and Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai after signing the Treaty of Friendship Between China and Pakistan in Beijing in 1956.

Pakistan has been providing strong political support to China at various occasions to move out from isolation as communist country and played active role in connecting China and US by facilitating the visit of US President Nixon to Beijing in 1972.

4 Umbreen Javaid, Asifa Jahangir(2015("Pakistan-Cina Strategic Relationship: A Glorious Journey of 55 Year- JRSP, Vol. 52, No. 1,2015

When the foreign minister of US, Henry Kissinger visited Pakistan in 1969 and later he visited Beijing with the support of Pakistan to pave ways for the first ever visit of the US President to China. During this visit, President Nixon reiterated Zhu Inlai, the Chinese premier to give high importance to relations with Pakistan, as an important country of the region.

The dispute over the Himalayan boundary between China and India existed after the independence of China. This dispute was further fueled by the Indian support to the uprising of Tibetans in 1959 and giving asylum to Tibetan Leader Dalai Lama. The Sino-India war broke out in Oct-Nov 1962 over the boundary disputes. The expansionist and confrontationist attitude of India dominated its foreign policy and relations with its neighbors from the beginning. This attitude is even continuing today and India has been pursuing its disputes with Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal and other states of the region one way or the other way. Initially China attempted to resolve the border disputes with diplomatic efforts, which were undermined by India. n 20 October 1962, invading disputed territory along the 3,225 kilometer-(2,000-mile-) long Himalayan border in Ladakh and across the McMahon Line. Chinese troops advanced in the Himalayan territories and captured Rezang La in Chushul in the western theatre, as well as Tawang in the eastern theatre. The war ended when China declared a ceasefire on 20 November 1962, and simultaneously announced its withdrawal to its claimed "Line of Actual Control"⁵. On the contrary, China resolved boundary issues with Pakistan more amicably in 1963, which was followed by Military Assistance in 1966. The strategic alliance between the two countries was formed in 1972 and economic cooperation started in 1979.

Pakistan always believed in the peaceful use of Nuclear Technologies. The first project based on nuclear energy Karachi Nuclear Project (KANUP) was initiated in 1967 and was commissioned in the period of ZA Bhutto in 1972. Soon Prime Minister Bhutto persuaded the scientists for nuclear research and development activities⁶. India detonated the first nuclear device in

5 Hoffman, Steven A. (1990). *India and the China Crisis*. Berkeley: University of California Press. pp. 101-104. ISBN 978-0520301726.

6 Akhtar Ali, *Pakistan's Nuclear Dilemma*, Economic Research Unit, Karachi, 1984, p. 46.

1974, apparently for peaceful use but the Mr. ZA Bhutto reacted very strongly to this action. He convened the meeting of the National Assembly and described the Indian action as threat to the regional peace and stability. Subsequently, he strengthened Pakistan Atomic Energy Commission of Pakistan for more focused and intensified research and development in nuclear energy. This was really very important step in the defense history of Pakistan to create deterrence to protect sovereignty of the country. This led to high-tech research in the nuclear field. Pakistan executed agreement with the France for acquisition of Plutonium Enrichment and reprocessing Plant from France in 1978 under the International Atomic Energy Association (IAEA) certification. However, under the pressure from US, France cancelled the agreement. Pakistan under the PAEC, endeavored to develop its own reactors for Chshama Power Plant at Mianwali and installed the first unit in 1982, which was a hallmark development in the history of the nation to acquire nuclear capacity for energy production. United States, in the meanwhile remained adamant to revert the nuclear technology of Pakistan by either destroying it or impose stringent sanction over Pakistan. The third option with the US was to strengthen the military power of Pakistan, through conventional weapons. The Chashma Nuclear Power Plan (CHASHNUP) was initiated in 1993 in collaboration with the China Nuclear Energy Industry Corporation (CNEIC). The Indian test fire of nuclear weapons on May 11, 1999 astonished the entire world, when the Indian Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee, announced it publically. In response to Indian five nuclear explosions, Pakistan tested six explosions on May 28, 2021. This provided nuclear deterrence to Pakistan against the hegemonic designs of India.

Pakistan believes in non-proliferation of nuclear weapons in the region, yet in the presence of expansionist enemy like India, Pakistan cannot be indifferent to its sovereignty. Pakistan has been proposing various treaties and agreement for curtailing the arms race and proliferation in the region to India but these were not accepted. These include South Asian Nuclear Weapons Free Zone (NWFZ), proposal for the Mutual Inspections of Nuclear Facilities, Simultaneous Signing of Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), proposal

for Five Nation Conference on Nuclear Nonproliferation, Compliance with IAEA Safeguards, Proposal for Nuclear Restraint Regime in South Asia and Nuclear Confidence Building Measures (CBMs)⁷. Unfortunately, India has never been serious to respond positively to these proposals from Pakistan, rather they continued with weaponizing the South Asia. For Pakistan, it was natural to develop its arms and nuclear capacity for creating minimum deterrence. During this period, the support of China for Pakistan's nuclear program for peaceful uses remained very exemplary. US has been pressurizing and discouraging Pakistan and China one way or the other way, to discontinuance with this cooperation. On the other hand, US signed agreement with the India for nuclear technology. These double standards of US towards Nuclear Policy in South Asia, led to arms race in the region, which has been spearheaded by India.

The Kashmir conflict emerged as unresolved part of the partition of Indian subcontinent. The failure of the UN to resolve the issue according to its Resolutions, has created high level of instability and arms race in the region. The dispute remained the major reason for at least three wars between the two archrivals India and Pakistan. In contrary to the spirit of partition, India does not link its control of Kashmir to the Pakistani strong stance of Two-Nation Theory that marked Kashmir a Muslim majority state. Under the Simla Agreement in 1972, both the countries committed to resolve their mutual issues through peaceful negotiations. Pakistan has seriously highlighted and recorded seventy years of human rights violation in Indian-administered Kashmir by killing the innocent people including women and children⁸.

China supported Pakistan in its nuclear and missile program as a strong ally and a comprehensive agreement for nuclear cooperation was signed between the two countries. Initially, when China has border issues with India, it openly supported Pakistan's stance on Kashmir. In post Sino-Indian conflicts in 1962, China countered India by strengthening the defense system of Pakistan through mutual cooperation. In the post-Cold War era,

7 Iftikhar Ali (2010), Pak-China nuclear cooperation and Pakistan's non-proliferation initiatives - Asia Pacific, Research Journal,

8 Cohen, S. P. (2004). The idea of Pakistan. London: Brookings Institution Press.

China has been more interested in peaceful resolution of the Kashmir dispute to avoid any nuclear war in the region. Like other powers in the region, China asserts Kashmir dispute a bilateral issue between the two countries, which may be resolved through peaceful negotiations and under the UN resolutions. The brutal decision of India on 5 August 2019 to end the disputed status of Kashmir and divide the state of Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) into two Union territories, triggered a new wave of uncertainty and threats to the region peace. In response to this, Pakistan issued a new map showing the entire Kashmir as its part on 4 August 2020. Pakistan also changed the name of disputed territory to “Indian Illegally occupied Jammu and Kashmir”. The Chinese government also criticized India’s decision of 5 August 2019 and the creation of the Union territory of Ladakh, which formally includes Aksai Chin.

In 2000, US President Bill Clinton described Kashmir as “the most dangerous place in the world”. Apart from the possibility that Pakistan and China might cooperate politically and militarily on Kashmir in the future, recent developments have added another conflict component to the “world’s most dangerous place”⁹. There seems remote possibility that the dispute will be resolved through peaceful means due to hegemonic and expansionist approach of India. In this background, the China’s support to Pakistan in the Kashmir dispute is expected to increase for mutual benefits. The role of US, supporting India in the dispute is also creating China’s backup for Pakistan.

The strategic relationship between Pakistan and China will further intensify in view of the global and regional and global dynamics. According to the Neorealist theory of International Relations, States around the world are affected by the international systems and the relations with other countries is also subject to shared common interests like forming an alliance, security dilemma, maintaining the balance of power and the balance of threat to secure their main objective of ensuring their

9 Wagner, Christian; Stanzel, Angela (2020) Redrawing the maps in Kashmir: New geopolitical realities in the conflict between China, India, and Pakistan. (SWP Comment, 52/2020)

security etc.¹⁰ The Pak China collaboration initially focused on military and political dimensions but for the last two decades, this partnership has focused more on social, economic and cultural exchange relations. The Pak China cooperation has been now focused on four areas under CPEC, 1) energy projects, 2) transport infrastructure, 3) building of the Gwadar port and 4) industrial cooperation.

Pakistan started negotiations on Free Trade Agreements with China in 2005, which lead to signing of Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the two countries, which became effective in 2007¹¹. In next couple of year, both the counties are willing to increase their bilateral trade by USD 20 Billion from its current level of USD 15 Billion. With the completion of CPEC projects, the partnership between the two countries will become stronger and mutually beneficial. The close relations between a strong Islamic country and Neo-liberalized Communist country, China is always considered as a good example for creating tolerance and peace in the region. With the new relations based on historic ties and shared economic and development interests, the relations between Pakistan and China will strength further, which can also be a catalyst for sustainable peace in the region.

Pakistan's Vision 2025 aims at making Pakistan as one the Asian Tigers, through resource mobilization and capacity building of the human resources. The ultimate destination under this vision is to become one the top ten economies of the world by 2047-The Centennial year of our independence. In first phase of its vision, Pakistan has to revive its growth by strengthening the developmental foundation to become a top 25 global economy. In next phase during 2025-35, Pakistan has to achieve the level of global and regional leadership in the targeted sectors. In third phase, Pakistan has aimed at becoming top 10 global economy by year 2047¹². This is certainly a highly optimistic vision, which

10 Minhas Majeed Khan and Mirwais Kasi (2017). Pakistan-China Relations Source: Strategic Studies, Vol. 37, No. 3 (Autumn 2017), pp. 55-74 Published by: Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/48537557>

11 "China FTA Network: China-Pakistan FTA," n.d, <http://fta.mofcom.gov.cn/topic/enpakistan.shtml>

12 Pakistan 2025, Panning Commission, Ministry of Planning, Development and Reforms One Nation One Vision-Available at <https://www.pc.gov.pk/uploads/vision2025/Pakistan-Vision-2025.pdf>, retrieved on Sep 11,2021.

requires highly focused approach. This will also require, to establish close link with China, South Asia, Central Asia and Middle East regions¹³, to establish better communication and transportation system to facilitate trade and commerce in the region.

13 Majeed Kamil Hamzah, China-Pakistan Relations for the Next Decade (2020-2030)-
International Journal on Humanities and Social Sciences, (20), 300-322.
<https://doi.org/10.33193/IJoHSS.20.2021.232>