

# PAK-JAPAN RELATIONS: A MULTI-DIMENSIONAL ENGAGEMENT

*Ishrat Abbasi\**

*Mukesh Kumar Khatwani†*

## **Abstract**

*Japan being one of the key players in the arena of international politics has played a crucial role in bringing the stability and peace in Pakistan. Japan and Pakistan have been enjoying strong affable relations for the last 60 years, this affiliation witnesses a multi-dimensional engagements and development in the present and multifaceted prospects for the future. Since 1954 Japan has been extending its support to Pakistan in various fields such as peace & security, trade & economy, and social welfare & relief efforts especially aftermath of the devastating earthquake in 2005 and recent super floods in 2010 and 2011. The story of successful, robust and cordial relationship between the two countries has contributed a lot to the earnest efforts at the both ends. This paper attempts to assess the security & political, trade & economic, and socio-cultural relations between the two. Furthermore, this paper also attempts to highlight strengths and weaknesses of both the countries i.e. Pakistan is very rich in terms of resources but lacks advanced technology; on the contrary Japan is well equipped with advanced technologies but lacks resources. Therefore, both the countries can benefit a lot in areas such as agriculture, mining, energy and infrastructure by establishing cordial relations and mutual cooperation.*

**Keywords:** International politics, trade and economic engagements, socio-cultural relations.

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\* Assistant Professor, International Relations, University of Sindh, Jamshoro, PhD Student, University of Erfurt, Germany, Email: Ishrat\_ir@yahoo.com.

† Assistant Professor, Area Study Centre, University of Sindh, PhD Student, University of Sussex, Brighton, United Kingdom, Email: mkhatwani@fesea.org, mk323@sussex.ac.uk.

## **Introduction**

In the post-cold war years, the entire complexion of international relations changed. Ideology, which was the key factor of states' internal and external policies replaced with a variety of new contingencies. At present, security has become a major factor for governing the affairs of international relations. During the cold war era traditional security was a significant instrument of extending state's policies. In the aftermath of cold war non-traditional security has received an impetus as an outcome of political and economic openness. Issues like trade, technology, resources, investment, environment and counter terrorism etc., have assumed new importance (McFaul, 1992).

Pakistan is also reaching out to its wider Asian neighborhood; the major distinctive steps in this term are joining ASEAN Regional Forum; upgrading links with ASEAN and East Asia; and acquiring membership in Shanghai Co-operation Organization. Japan is the centre of this process as it can keep up with the required role for the economic advancement and mutual understanding in Pakistan. Similarly, Japan is also willing to develop amiable relations with Pakistan and other South Asian nations chiefly to create a balance of power in the region against China. In this sphere of contest, Japan has attempted to create political and security roles for itself commensurate with its enormous economic clout (Nolanremedios, 2013). With growing importance of South Asia in the changing global, political and economic scenario, this relationship assumes new significance and its present and future prospects require much exploration.

Pakistan, besides being a very important partner of Japan holds a significant position in Japanese diplomacy by dint of its radically valuable geographical position. Japan considers Pakistan as very important country in South Asia because of its geographical position surrounded by major Asian nations including China, Iran,

Afghanistan, and India. Furthermore, Pakistan as the entrance to the Central Asian Republics has enhanced its significance for Japan. Therefore, Japan is decidedly interested in the peace and stability of this region. Not only Pakistan but the whole region of South Asia is strategically highly important for Japan to run Japanese industries smoothly since it serves as the major sea-lane linking for the oil supplies from Middle East and West Asia to Japan and other East Asian countries. The coastal sea area of South Asia, stretching from Arabian Sea to the Indian Ocean constitutes a substantial part of this sea-lane linking to Japan, and Pakistan's Arabian Sea is also a part of it (Oishi, 2003).

### **Historical Background to Pak-Japan Relations**

Today's Pakistan has been the centre for flourishing Gandhara civilization in this region from 500 BC to 10 A.D. Therefore, historically, Pak-Japan relations can be traced back to 538 A.D, when this region (present Pakistan) served as a source for promotion of Buddhism to Japan (Farooqi, 2012).

Friendly and robust relations between the two began when Pakistan courageously talked about peace, justice and reconciliation in San Francisco Peace Conference in 1951. During that time Japan was facing badly the effects of Second World War and this clear stance and gestures from Pakistani leadership resulted in the commencement of diplomatic relationship between Japan and Pakistan on April 28, 1952. Relations between Pakistan and Japan had made a steady progress through the Colombo Plan, and Japanese Official Development Assistance (ODA) in 1954 by providing technical training to Pakistani engineers and technicians. Approximately 300 people were trained to run Japanese-financed steel mills, paper industries, fertilizer plants, and ceramic industries in Pakistan between 1955 and 1970 (Khan, 1975-1976).

Thereby, since the era of 1970s both the countries are trying for steady growth of relations working upon the agendas and affairs of mutual interests. Mostly the issues of mutual interests for them are issue of the Middle East peace, environmental up-gradation, combating terrorism, drug trafficking, narcotics and education sector. Previously, Pakistan got Japanese support at the time of USSR' invasion in Afghanistan and Pakistan supported her in the wake of Hanshin-Awaji (Kobe) earthquake (1995) extending humanitarian relief package (Farooqi, 2012).

After cold war era Pakistan and Japan witnessed two turns, which could bring a long-term *vis versa* shift in their relations. The first one set back occurred in 1998 after the conduct of nuclear weapons by Pakistan. Since Japan is the only country that survived nuclear attacks during Second World War so it's highly concerned about nuclear proliferation and use of nuclear weapons. In reaction to Pakistan's nuclear detonations Japanese government and civil society voiced concerns for the fear of proliferation of nuclear weapons in Asia especially in North Korea and threat to Japan's sources of sea-link with Middle East. Therefore, following the steps of western community it suspended major yen loan assistance and other industrial and technological assistance to Pakistan. Besides, using its diplomatic channel Japan urges Pakistan for signing Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) (Farooqi, 2012).

These imposed sanctions on Pakistan were released after 9/11 in appreciation of Pakistan's participation in war on terror as frontline State. Since then the story of Pak-Japan economic relations witnesses a positive change on bilateral level as Japan was comparatively more sensitive about the humanitarian problems in Pakistan due to international sanctions and by hosting millions of Afghani refugees. Therefore, as a sign of cordiality Japan increased its OAD programme, which aims at to support the humanitarian sector such as health, education, water & sanitation, agriculture & irrigation, infrastructure and economic development so that Pakistan could

meet with humanitarian problems arose due to international sanctions and presence of a huge number of Afghan refugees. Currently, Pakistan overtakes most other South Asian countries in Japanese ODA programme (Kesavan & Varma, 2000).

### **Political and Security Relations**

Pakistan and Japan have been enjoying very friendly and cordial relations for last six decades. Both countries are well aware of benefits of having strong bilateral political relations. For enhancing the cordial and robust relations between the two nations, Pakistan and Japan have developed comprehensive institutional mechanism, which consists of: (i) Annual Bilateral Political Consultations at Foreign Secretary level; (ii) Security Dialogue (including Defense and Foreign Ministries; (iii) Expert-level Working Group on Disarmament & Non Proliferation; (iv) Expert-level Working Group on Counter Terrorism Cooperation; (v) Official-level Discussion Export Controls; and (vi) High level Economic Policy dialogue (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2002).

As a result of comprehensive mechanism both the countries have inked several agreements such as, Pakistan-Japan Agreement regarding Establishment of a Telecommunication Research Centre 1963, Pakistan-Japan Plan of Operation for Engineering and Economic Survey for the Development of a New Ocean Port at Pitti Creek in West Pakistan 1971, International Postal Money Order Exchange Agreement 1961, and Pakistan-Japan agreement relating to Air Services 1961 ("Pakistan Embassy in Tokyo", n.d.).

Since 9/11 the high-level visits have been exchanged between the two countries. In this series the first high profile visit by the then Chief Executive of Pakistan General Pervaiz Musharaf took place in March 2002. The points of mutual consensus were establishment of security dialogue, disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation, implementation of high level economic consultation and economic

cooperation, efforts towards democratization process, reduction in tension between India and Pakistan, assistance for the reconstruction of Afghanistan, enhancement of Japan-Pakistan further collaboration, and enhancement of counter terrorism cooperation through exchange of information and capacity building assistance (Prime Minister and His Cabinet, 2011).

In 2009 and then in 2011 President Asif Ali Zardari's visits to Japan provided a momentum to formidable bilateral ties. During the visit of the President of Pakistan Mr. Asif Ali Zardari to Tokyo on 21-23 February 2011 joint statement on Japan-Pakistan Comprehensive Partnerships was signed by the Japanese Prime Minister Mr. Naoto Kan and Pakistan's President Mr. Asif Lai Zardari. The two leaders decided to further strengthening bilateral relations for a comprehensive partnership for peace and development, and also expressed their satisfaction at high level dialogue, including Foreign Ministers' meetings, political consultations, high level economic dialogue, security dialogue, and government-business dialogue (Prime Minister and His Cabinet, 2011).

### **Trade and Economic Relations**

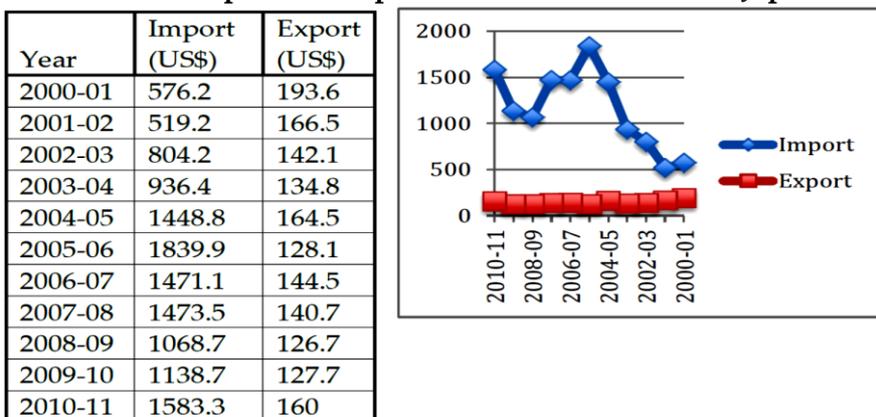
Strong and cordial trade and economic relations are very important for mutual development in both nations. Pakistan considers Japan a huge market for cotton, rice and fruits especially mangoes exportation. Therefore, both the countries have sincerely been working for last many years to improve their business ties, so that both the nations could be benefited in various sectors. For boosting up strong diplomatic relations and the trade volume many trade agreements were signed between the two i.e. Pakistan-Japan Trade Agreement in 1953, Pakistan-Japan Trade Agreement in 1954, Pakistan-Japan Trade Agreement in 1958, Pakistan-Japan Trade Agreement in 1959, Pakistan-Japan Treaty of Friendship and Commerce 1960, Pakistan-Japan Agreement for Establishment of Agricultural Training Centre 1960, Agreement for Promotion and

Protection of Investment, and Technical Cooperation Agreement in 2005 (Khattak, 2012).

Japan established office of its government organisation, Japan External Trade Organisation (JETRO) in Karachi in 1954 for enhancing the trade and economic relationships between the two. Since then JETRO has been actively working for the promotion of trade and investment including the revitalization of the industry, both in Japan and Pakistan. Japan also established Pak-Japan Business Forum in 2001 at Karachi aiming to enhance bilateral cooperation, trade and investment. Pakistan Government providing Japanese investors a friendly atmosphere has designated a 2000-acre Special Economic Zone, especially for the Japanese investors in Karachi (Iqbal, 2013). These sincere efforts of Pakistan government will attract Japanese investors which is definitely beneficial for both nations.

As a result of these sincere efforts, trade and investment has increased between the both countries sufficiently, especially imports from Japan continuously going on and on. Table and chart given below show the volume of export and import between the two nations (Iqbal, 2013).

**Table 1: Import and export between Pakistan and Japan**



**Source:** State Bank of Pakistan, Annual Report 2011-2012

Many major projects in Pakistan such as the Indus Highway Project, a number of power projects, rural roads construction project and the children hospital (PIMS) Islamabad Project were completed with Japan's financial and technical assistance. Besides, the Kohat Tunnel Project also known as Pak-Japan Friendship Tunnel and the Ghazi Brotha Dam Project are also recently completed with the Japanese assistance. Simply, Japan has played a vital role in developing and improving economic and social infrastructure in Pakistan (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2005).

On 30th April 2005 Pakistan and Japan signed an agreement on Technical Cooperation for the promotion of the social and economic development of Pakistan. In this regard grant aid for two projects-the Faisalabad water purifying plant project and Taunsa Barrage rehabilitation project was granted.‡ In 2005 Japan provided emergency assistance to Pakistan against the large-scale earthquake. This assistance included the materialistic and moral support in the form of high profile visit of Japanese government officials to the affected areas including 49 members Japan Disaster Relief Team comprising officials from Foreign Ministry, National Police Agency, Fire and Disaster Management Agency, Self Defense Force, Coast Guard, Medical Teams, Japanese NGOs and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). They conducted search and rescue operations and medical care in Battagram in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (Previously known as North- West Frontier Province) from 10 to 14 October, especially the Self-defense forces worked in the Battagram till the end of November. Japan also provided all monetary assistance to Pakistan to procure daily life materials to the earthquake-affected folk (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2002).

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‡ On 30<sup>th</sup> April 2005 Pakistan and Japan signed an agreement on Technical Cooperation for the promotion of the social and economic development of Pakistan, Embassy of Islamic Republic of Pakistan in Tokyo. Available at <http://www.pakistanembassyjapan.com/content/brief-history-pakistan-japan-bilateral-relationships>

Japan welcoming the return of Democracy in Pakistan in 2008 extended its support to consolidate democracy and facilitated social and economic development in the country. In this regard Japan's role as the host of the Friends of Democratic Pakistan Ministerial Meeting and the Pakistan Donors Conference in Tokyo in April 2009 is highly appreciable. These two events conveyed pledges in excess of \$5 billion (Farooqi, 2012). In the aftermath of flood 2010 in Pakistan Japan came forward once again to support for the flood relief and rehabilitation efforts and provided self-defense forces with helicopters and medical teams for the survivors of the disaster (Farooqi, 2012). Similarly, aftermath of the devastating earthquake and tsunami in Japan in March 2011 Pakistan expressed full solidarity and support and provided two C-130 aircraft loaded with relief goods. Pakistani Embassy in Tokyo as well as Pakistani community there in Japan helped the survivors by providing them food, disposable water and voluntary services in the relief work (Farooqi, 2012).

Key areas of trade and investment between Pakistan and Japan are coal, agriculture, energy sector; automobile industry and cotton. Pakistan being an agrarian country is facing problems like water logging, salinity, soil erosion and low crop yield because of lacking modern technologies and techniques in agriculture sector. Japan is assisting Pakistan in agriculture sector, and recently signed agreement between the Zarai Taraqati Bank Limited (ZTBL) of Pakistan and two Japanese companies, Finetech Japan Limited and Waternet Invention Limited will help to overcome these problems.

### **Social and Cultural Relations**

Cultural diplomacy, currently also known as 'soft power' (Joseph, 2008: 95) 'the ability to persuade rather than coerce through elements of 'hard' power such as the threat of strong military' (Hoogwaerts, 2012:1) has played a crucial role in developing relations between the two nations. 'At times of political difficulty

culture can keep doors open until relations improve...Culture can provide a positive atmosphere in which political statements can be made; museums provide a space where 'work and pleasure can coexist' (Bound, Briggs, Holden & Jones, 2007, p.53, 54).

Today's Pakistan possesses the rich heritage of Gandhara civilizations, which flourished in South Asian region and extended to East Asia including Japan during the sixth century. This civilizational linkage is a source of strong cultural bondage between the two countries in the current time as well. Keeping in mind the importance of culture and tourism Pakistan and Japan have established as well as maintained their strong and robust bilateral relations through promotion of respective cultures. In 1957 both the governments signed a Cultural Agreement, which provided a conducive environment for promoting cultures of respective countries by following means: (i) books, periodicals and other publication; (ii) lectures, concerts and theatrical performances; (iii) art and other cultural exhibitions; (iv) radio, disks and other similar means; and (v) scientific, educational and cultural films. This agreement has become a basic instrument to broaden and deepen cultural relationships, the exchanges in culture, sports, and youth through the ways of demonstrations, public performances, exhibitions and human exchanges etc. Currently, Pakistan-Japan Cultural Associations (PJCA) based in Pakistan's five major cities Islamabad, Karachi, Lahore, Peshawar and Quetta while the Japan-Pakistan Association based in Tokyo are working for promotion of cultures of respective countries through conducting various activities such as arranging seminars and publishing bulletins and newsletters ("Pakistan-Japan Business Forum", n.d.).

Besides these cultural activities and events, Japan government has introduced the Cultural Grant Assistance, a part of ODA, aiming at the promotion and preservation of cultural heritage, organizing higher educational activities. Under this grant programme 16 projects related to culture and archeology were implemented in

Pakistan, some of them are as under: (a) Equipment for the Restoration and Preservation of relics of Mohenjo Daro; (b) Equipment for National Institute of Folk & Traditional Heritage (Lok Virsa); (c) Equipment for preservation of cultural properties for the Archaeological Museum, Swat ; (d) Equipment for Repairing and Preserving Old Documents for the National Archives of Pakistan; and (e) Equipment for Archaeological Research for the Archaeological Conservation and Research Laboratory, Taxila (Japan Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2012).

The current Japan-Pakistan cultural relations formally started in October 1995 with the introduction of many Japanese cultural events and celebrations in Pakistan such as; exhibitions, film festivals, Ikibana workshops (Flower making workshops), children art & speeches competitions, concerts, lecture series by Japanese scholars, stage performs organized by Japanese Embassy and Consulate General in different cities of Pakistan. Besides, Japan Foundation exchanges scholars between the two countries to promote the respective culture in each other's countries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2012).

## **Conclusion**

Pak-Japan bilateral relations are based on mutual trust and interests. Concisely, Japan is the key stone of Pakistan's East Asia policy aiming at promoting economic and social development. Similarly, Pakistan is also cornerstone of Japan's Policy for promoting its influence to the entire Asia continent. Pakistan with rich resource, geographical location along with Arabian Sea and an attractive market for Japanese items keeps a very important position for Japan. Similarly, Pakistan with its economic needs and urge of technological advancement considers Japan as a potential source of investment in various fields such as agriculture, energy, mining, and infrastructure.

Pakistan possesses huge natural gas and coal reserves while Japan is the number one hard coal importer in the world, therefore, Pakistan can seek Japanese assistance in this regard, and similarly, this is a golden opportunity for Japan to invest in this sector. Besides, some areas in province of Sindh like Keti Bander, Jhampir, and Garho are declared as huge sources for wind energy and Pakistan can also seek assistance from Japan in this sector as Japan has successfully developed renewable sources of energy, such as biogas, wind, thermal and solar.

Concisely, Pakistan is an agriculture country, but for lack of modern technologies it has not achieved enough success in this sector. Seeking the assistance from Japan Pakistan can improve its agriculture and irrigation system, which will definitely increase per acre yield.

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