

# PAK-CHINA RELATIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR UNITED STATES OF AMERICA (USA)

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## Abstract

*The relations between both China and Pakistan have been established in the 1950s and since then have been strengthened from time to time. China and Pakistan have collaborated in all the fields from common goods to the defense equipments such as JF-17 Thunder fighter jet projects. The 1974 Peaceful Nuclear Explosion by the Indian government has made Pakistan realized that they also need the nuclear weapon to balance the power with the India, and China since then has stood with Pakistan and it is assumed that China is the main architect of the Pakistan's nuclear weapons. Today China is the largest investor in Pakistan and US sees it a great threat as China is looking to the Pakistan as an allied state which will help it in future against its enemies.*

**Keywords:** *Rapprochement, Strategic Partnership, Alliance, Balance of Power*

## Introduction

China and Pakistan have established their relations on 21<sup>st</sup> may 1951 but the phase of real friendship started in General Ayub's period when Pakistan helped the China to come out of isolation, and in the 1970s the rapprochement between US and China was possible due to the Pakistani efforts as Pakistan has been a true friend of China whereas with the US it has been an ally in the Central Treaty Organization (CENTO) and South East Asian Treaty Organization (SEATO).

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The friendship was strengthened in the Zulfikar Ali Bhutto era as he tried a new policy of Look East Policy and in this the emphasis was given to the major Asian states such as China, former Soviet Union and Muslim States. The 1974 Peaceful Nuclear Explosion by the Indian government has realized Pakistan that they also need the nuclear weapon to balance the power with the India, and China since then has stood with Pakistan and it is assumed that China is the main architect of the Pakistan's nuclear weapons.

Pakistan was one of the few states who recognized Peoples Republic of China (PRC) on 21<sup>st</sup> May 1951. The issues that prevented the friendly relations of Pakistan with China were the:

### **1) Border Issue between China and Pakistan**

The Border issue was not resolved since independence and it was the main contentious issue between both the states'. In 1959 Chinese maps included the Pakistani areas in China and Pakistani president Gen. Ayub Khan sent a delegation in 1961 but China refused to negotiate on the issue until the 1962 war with India changed the situation.

The Border issue remained a top problem for Pakistan and China relations. It was not resolved until 1963 when foreign ministers of both the states Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan and Cheng Yi of China signed Border Agreement on 2nd March 1963.

According to the agreement Pakistan gained 1942 sq km (750 sq mi), whereas Pakistan recognized Chinese sovereignty over 2050 sq mi which included lands of Northern Kashmir and Ladakh area. (Sino-Pakistan Agreement, n.d.) India objected on the issue as they claimed these lands belong to the Indian federation.

### **2) Chinese Isolation**

Peoples Republic of China (PRC) or Communist China or simply China was controlled by the Communists since 1949 and they were

isolated because of the nationalist government which was previously in control of the Nationalist China since 1911 was exiled to island of Formosa (now known as Taiwan). Nationalists had the recognition as the legitimate rulers of mainland China in world and they possessed the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) permanent seat until 1972.

Pakistan was one of the very few states who recognized communist party as the legitimate rulers of China and have curtailed their relations with Nationalists government in Taiwan and since then Pakistan's foreign policy favors the Chinese policy which claims that Taiwan is the integral part of China and should be united by using any means. It was this problem that in 1949 US sent Seventh fleet in South China Sea which protected the Nationalists from communists' aggression towards Taiwan.

Pakistan not only supported the Communist China internationally but has lobbied for its seat right in UNSC and it was the result of Pakistan's diplomacy that in 1972 US President Richard Nixon visited PRC and it ended the communist isolation as they were able to get the UNSC seat in the same year and the world recognized the Communists as the legitimate rulers of China.

### **3) Pakistan's Defense Requirements**

Pakistan at the time of its independence was vulnerable as they faced the threat of Indian aggression as they were greatly outnumbered by Indian forces not only in numbers but also in weapons.

Pakistan looked for outside support for its security needs and initially it was US which provided the weapons to Pakistan but the 1962 Indo-Chinese War has changed the situation as India gained sympathies from both former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and US. It greatly created a huge gap but in 1965 war India was outclassed by Pakistani superior skills.

China began its military assistance to Pakistan in 1966 and after the disastrous defeat in 1971 war with India when US and its allies had abandoned Pakistan it was China who came for its help and formed Strategic Alliance with Pakistan in 1972. Since then China Pakistan relations have blossomed in every field of life.

### **Pak-China Relations Since 1972**

The year 1972 has marked the beginning of the new era in the relations between both the states as Pakistan and China signed the Strategic Partnership Agreement in the year. As the Prime Minister of Pakistan Zulfikar Ali Bhutto has initiated the new policy commonly known as Look East Policy which has began the fresh relations with its neighbor China.

The year of 1972 has witnessed two main events:

- 1- Pakistan which has suffered a huge defeat by India and East Pakistan became a separate state. More than 70,000 Pakistani troops in East Pakistan surrendered to the Indian forces and the Simla Agreement has ended the episode. The US played a vital role in this fiasco, and in return Pakistan made an effort by making the rapprochement between US and China possible in 1972 when US foreign secretary Richard Nixon visited China due to Pakistani efforts.
- 2- PRC was handed the UNSC permanent seat which was earlier controlled by Nationalist government who after the revolution in 1949 fled the mainland China and established the government in island of Formosa (Taiwan).

The relations between both the states have benefited as in 1978 Karakorum Highway was opened which has resulted the increase of bilateral trade between both the states. In 2006 both the states have signed the Free Trade Agreement which will increase the trade as well as end the import duties on certain goods. In 2013 Economic

corridor is under construction. Kashgar to Khunjrab and Gwadar route. Currently 6% of oil goes from Persian Gulf to only commercial port of China that is Shanghai 16,000 km, and it takes to two to three weeks of travel during which different threats such as pirates, weather and other security threats to oil ships.

The military assistance to Pakistan began in the 1966 and since then China has provided weapons to Pakistan such as Chengdu J-10B Fighter Jet, which is equal to Lockheed Martin F-16 Block 52/60, and the joint ventures which included JF-17 Thunder, K-8 Karakorum Advance Training Aircraft, Al-Khalid Tanks.

### **Post Cold War Era**

In 2005, China and Pakistan signed a landmark Treaty of Friendship and Co-operation (Aneja, 2006), which brought Pakistan and China near to the declaration of Strategic Partners which is the hall mark of this era. The Treaty signed between Pakistan and China has greater influence on the regional as well as global politics as earlier in 2004 Indo-US Strategic Partnership has put Pakistan in an awkward position and asymmetry remained between both the nations, but Chinese realized that their friends are in deep depression, and it resulted the Pak-China Agreement in 2005. The Partnership has not only made in defence sector but also in economic sector. The strategic partnership has also expanded the nuclear programme of Pakistan and it has been increased to 400%, which made Pakistan's nuclear programme on the fastest growing programme. The following year in 2006 Gen. Pervez Mushraf signed the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with the PRC which has increased the trade as it can be witnessed that in the year 2010 in Pakistan there are more than 120 companies and about 10,000 Chinese working in different sectors like mining, energy exploration and infrastructure building. Pakistan also offered China access to emirates through Pakistani ports. Pakistan always encourages China to reap maximum benefits from Gwadar Port (Sabir, 2010).

Islamabad is trying to deepen ties with Beijing as relations with the United States have come under strain following the killing of Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden in Pakistan this month...China invested \$200 million in the first phase of the construction of the port, which was inaugurated in 2007 (Haider, 2011). The current data shows that trade between both the states is US \$ 9 billion which makes it the second largest trading partner, and largest arms supplier to Pakistan. Pak-China Economic Corridor is under construction. It will connect Pakistan with China and the Central Asian countries with highway connecting Kashgar to Khunjrab and Gwadar (Khan, 2013)

### **Pak-US Relations**

United States has remained the close ally of the Pakistan since their independence, and it was the first Prime Minister Liaquat Ali Khan when he received the invitation from the both superpowers US and USSR, and he opted to visit US. Since then Pakistan has remained close ally of the US except for the Z.A.Bhutto era of 1973-77 when he announced his Look East Policy. In 1954 US exhibition of Atom for Peace has encouraged Pakistan to develop their own nuclear programme i.e., for peaceful purposes. In 1959 Pakistan and US signed a defense agreement to face the communist threat in the region. During those years of alliance United States also declared that any attack on Pakistan could be considered as attack on America (Daily Dawn, 1959)

In order to survive in harsh security environment Pakistan looked for outside support for its security and development needs. Cooperation between US and Pakistan began in the 1950s when US was looking for the containment of former Soviet Union and in this regard Eisenhower's policy of Containment was the prime example of their involvement in Pakistan. It was US which provided the weapons to Pakistan. Pakistan joined CENTO and SEATO in large unnecessarily in hope of pleasing American boss. They made an

imbalance in Pakistan's alliance with the western countries as well their own standing (Burke, 1973: 240). In 1959 Pakistan-US signed the Treaty of Friendship and Commerce which encouraged the Pakistani exports to the US. US under the Kennedy administration have also tried to settle the Kashmir issue between the India and Pakistan but they were unsuccessful. Pakistan's quest for economic assistance, as Mohammad Ayooob discusses in his research article was a leading factor in the determination of its relationship with the US (Ayooob, 1995: 498).

But the 1962 Indo-Chinese War has changed the situation as India gained sympathies from both former Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and US. It greatly created a huge gap and in 1965 war Pakistan suffered the costs but it was Pakistani forces' superior skills that outclassed Indian forces which outnumbered Pakistan not in number of forces but also in weapons.

In 1979 when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan a neutral and a buffer state between Soviet Union and Pakistan (a western ally), this resulted the fear that Pakistan would be the next target of the Soviet forces because of USSR ambitions to reaching towards warm waters of Indian Ocean. US and other western allies realized the importance of securing Pakistan and it resulted in the support for Pakistan in both the military equipments as well as financial support so that Pakistan can face the Soviet aggression and counter them on the Afghani soil. This approach led towards a proxy war in Afghanistan where Afghan mujahiden were involved in the fight against the Soviet forces and they were helped by the Pakistani and western forces.

This era has been greatly marked by the Pak-US era of friendship as Pakistan has been completely supported by the US government until the end of the Afghan war. But on the other hand China was also remained a silent supporter of Pakistan and has been helping during these difficult years. At the end of the War US has imposed the

economic as well as military sanctions on Pakistan due to its nuclear programme, and this led the vacuum in the Pakistan for long time to come and China comes to fill the vacuum. It was Chinese assistance in many military projects that Pakistan was able to meet the demands of the defence requirements.

The 9/11, 2001 has changed the situation as Pakistan became the frontline state against war on terror and US lifted the economic and military sanctions since then, and the relations continued to remain friendly until the 2004 Indo-US Strategic partnership which gave India the most favorable position against Pakistan with the US.

### **Impact of Pak-China Relations on United States**

The relations between both China and Pakistan has remained friendly since their establishment and they have expanded to all the fields of the life, and due to the heavy investments from China in Pakistan they have remained one of the key players in the region. Whereas US has remained one of the key defense and economically of the Pakistan, and sees Pakistan as one of the important geo-strategic location as it is situated at the mouth of the Persian Gulf and the Gwadar Port gives it a significant control in the Arabian sea as in future China may use it as a base for its transportation to the outside world and may secure the sea lanes by guarding the Indian Ocean through Gwadar. China has steadily increased bilateral trade agreements with Pakistan and has invested heavily in infrastructure and energy projects in Pakistan, including the financing of highways, mines, power plants, and most significantly, the deep-sea port at Gwadar (Afridi & Bajoria, 2010).

United States sees China as the potential challenger to its hegemony around the world and it has been noted that China has overtaken economically but the militarily and politically US still controls the vital parts of the world and holds the significant voice in the world affairs. But the Chinese emergence as an economic power has

compelled it to secure the energy resources for continuing its economic growth and since US controls the major energy resources i.e., Middle East, and Africa, so Chinese has took for some unconventional areas such as South America and Africa. Pakistan in this regard plays an important role as it is located at an important geo-strategic location and gives China an opportunity to hold vital routes of its oil supplies. It is viewed warily by both America and India as a possible launchpad for the Chinese Navy, giving them the ability to launch submarines and warships in the Indian Ocean (Staff Reporter, 2010).

The initial concern by US to the growing Pak-China relations can be seen after the 1963 Border agreement between China and Pakistan after which China granted a loan of US \$ 60,000,000 to Pakistan. Although Pakistan played a crucial role in the rapprochement between US and China in 1970s but the growing Chinese influence in Pakistan since the 1972 Strategic Agreement between both the states is viewed by US a counter to the US neglect of Pakistan during the crucial years of Pakistan's history.

China Pakistan relations are compared as equivalent as Israel-US relations. In 2010, when a US delegate confronted a Chinese diplomat about Beijing's uncompromising support for Pakistan, the Chinese reportedly responded: "Pakistan is our Israel." (Daily Times, 2009). Different researches carried out during different times show that Pakistanis view China as a friend rather than US as Pew research in 2010 shows that 84% liked China as a friend whereas only 16% favored US. In another research carried in 2013 81% Pakistanis favored China compared to only 11% to US. As China becomes a leading economy in the world, China's rise not only changes bilateral and regional relations in Asia but is also having a global influence. The rise of China is both a regional and global phenomenon that creates new power relations and norms for international society (The Tokyo Foundation, 2011: 9).

## **Conclusion**

China Pakistan relations are compared to equivalent to Israel-US relations. Different researches carried out during different times show that Pakistanis view China as a friend rather than US an indication which highlighted the importance of Pak-China friendship. Pakistan is located at an important geo-strategic location as it gives the access to the landlocked Central Asian Republics (CARs) through Gwadar, which is also present at the mouth of the Persian Gulf a route of some 60% of global oil tankers, and China with the possession of this important Port and a friendly state will control the Indian Ocean and will dominate the most important part of the world, and will threaten the US interests in the region.

Although Pakistan is a close ally of America since 9/11, 2001, but its reliance over India by seeing it as a natural ally of US in the region has compelled Pakistan to look towards China for its stable and secure future. The Pak-China cooperation will lead towards the prosperity of the region and will create a balance of power which is offset by the Indo-US alliance. US interests in Afghanistan, Central Asia and Middle East are connected with the Pakistan's geo-strategic location and Pakistan-China strategic partnership will decrease the US influence on Pakistan and China-Pakistan alliance will play their part as a renowned force against the US involvement in Afghanistan, and Pakistan, and also will make a strategic alliance with Iran the rival of US in Middle East.

Pak-China cooperation will also counter the Indo-US Strategic Partnership, and will form the greater nexus against US in the region. Pakistan wants China to remain in Indian Ocean through the Gwadar Port not only to counter the US influence in the region but also to counter the US strategic partner and Pakistan archrival India. Since the 9/11, 2001 US has pressurized Pakistan in the name of war on terror and Chinese partnership will certainly make a positive impact on Pakistan and will enable Pakistan to fight the terrorists

according to its own policies rather than US wishes this will certainly jeopardize the US interests in the region as they will lose their frontline ally in the war on terror. Pakistan- China cooperation is certainly a death blow to the US interests as they have already showed signs that US influence has been reduced to a greater extent in the region as they are losing the battle in Afghanistan, and Pakistan has initiated a gas pipeline project with Iran, which will also be shared by China, and the most important of them China is the most favorite country loved by Pakistanis, and US most hated state by common public in Pakistan.

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